

Seán Crosson and Werner Huber (eds.)

TOWARDS 2016:
1916 AND IRISH LITERATURE, CULTURE & SOCIETY

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6

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Towards 2016:

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Contents

Acknowledgements	7
<i>Seán Crosson (Galway)</i>	
1916 and Irish Literature, Culture & Society: An Introduction	9
<i>Nils Beese (Munich)</i>	
From the Frying Pan into the Fire: James Connolly and the Transnational Importance of Scottish and Irish Slums	15
<i>Michael C. Connolly (Portland)</i>	
“Changed Utterly”: The Shaping of the Modern Irish Labour Movement in the Aftermath of Easter 1916	27
<i>Hannah Wood (New York)</i>	
Irish Identity Onstage: How Irish Culture, Nationalism, and Rebellion Molded the Abbey Theatre into Ireland’s National Theatre	43
<i>Verena Commins (Galway)</i>	
Musical Statues: Monumentalising Irish Traditional Music	57
<i>Terry Phillips (Liverpool)</i>	
“Our dead shall not have died in vain”: The War Poetry of Harry Midgley	69
<i>M. Teresa Caneda Cabrera (Vigo)</i>	
Trans/atlantic Mobilities: Translating Narratives of Irish Resistance	83
<i>Laurent Daniel (Lorient)</i>	
The Changing Symbolism of Greyhound Sports in the Work of Bryan MacMahon	97
<i>Valérie Morisson (Dijon)</i>	
Rewriting Irish History (1916-1921) in Popular Culture: <i>Blood upon the Rose</i> and <i>At War with the Empire</i> by Gerry Hunt	113
<i>Claudia Luppino (Florence)</i>	
A Terrible Beauty Was Born? Memory, History, and Forgetting in Colm Tóibín’s <i>The Heather Blazing</i> and John McGahern’s <i>Amongst Women</i>	133

<i>Elena Cotta Ramusino (Pavia)</i>	
Neil Jordan's <i>The Past: A Journey in Time and Memory</i>	145
<i>Donatella Abbate Badin (Turin)</i>	
"People mired in history": Sebastian Barry and Cultural Memory in a European Perspective	155
<i>Joanna Kruczkowska (Łódź)</i>	
Tom Paulin and Ulster: Subversion or Sabotage?	167
<i>Eilís Ní Dhúill (Galway)</i>	
Cleachtas na Scéalaíochta i gCorca Dhuibhne: Cumadh agus Láithriú na Staire Shóisialta i Measc Phobal Traidisiúnta Gaeilge	183
<i>Timothy J. White (Cincinnati), Mack Mariani (Cincinnati), Fiona Buckley (Cork), and Claire McGing (Maynooth)</i>	
Women's Political Role in Old and New Ireland: From Marginalization to Gender Quotas	203
<i>Alan Ahearne (Galway)</i>	
Economic Sovereignty in Ireland: A Thing of the Past?	219
<i>Patrick McCabe (Clones)</i>	
"1916 I think impossible to think about without thinking of Yeats and O'Casey": Public Interview with Neil Jordan	229
Notes on Contributors	255

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Seán Crosson
Werner Huber

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1916 AND IRISH LITERATURE, CULTURE & SOCIETY: AN INTRODUCTION

Seán Crosson

Historians in tanks. Historians with contradictory State birth certs. Relatives in conflict. Taoisigh at loggerheads. Royals invited then uninvited. Poets aflame. The prospect of Proclamation as junk mail. And it is only 2015. Were he here to witness it, Flann O'Brien would have a field day.

– Diarmaid Ferriter, *Irish Times* 27 Feb 2015.

1916 was an important year in the development of modern Ireland. However, as historian Diarmaid Ferriter's remarks above suggest, as we approach the centenary, events during that year, in particular the Republican Easter Rising, continue to provoke contrasting and often strongly contested perspectives. The continuing resonance of the Rising to contemporary Ireland was evident in the now much quoted editorial of *The Irish Times* (18 Nov 2010) the day after it was announced Ireland was to receive a financial bailout from the EU and IMF. "Was it for this?" the editorial asked, "the men of 1916 died," thus also highlighting the gendering of the commemoration of that event. However, the Rising was but one of a range of significant events in 1916. Beyond the political sphere, 1916 marked the publication of James Joyce's first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and also saw the foundation of Ireland's first indigenous film production company, The Film Company of Ireland, whose co-founder James Mark Sullivan was arrested after the Rising and charged with complicity. 1916 was also the year in which Ireland was aligned to Greenwich Mean Time for the first time, supplanting Dublin Mean Time, bringing the island temporally closer to the rest of the United Kingdom in the same year that would mark an important point in the changing political relationship between the UK and Ireland.

As the varied subjects of our contributions indicate, this collection is cognisant of the multiple perspectives and events that are associated with 1916 in Ireland and their continuing relevance to Irish literature, culture and society. The collection begins by reflecting on the immediate aftermath of the Rising and the legacy of one of its leaders – James Connolly – before moving to consider a range of cultural forms and societal issues, including theatre, traditional music, poetry, Joyce, greyhound sports, graphic novels, contemporary fiction, documentary, language, political representation, and the Irish economy. The multidisciplinary range evident throughout this collection reflects not just the relevance of 1916 to a broad range of disciplines but also the evolution of Irish Studies itself as a focus of academic enquiry. Facilitated through organisations such as the European Federations of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS), which hosted the conference at which initial versions of the contributions here were first presented, Irish Studies today has expanded well beyond its

initial home in historical and literary studies to encompass a varied and expanding range of disciplines, many of which are represented in this collection.

Our volume begins with Nils Beese's chapter which considers the complex and sometimes challenging figure of James Connolly, particularly for those who have attempted to incorporate him within nationalist-conservative readings of Irish history. For Beese the failure of poet, dramatist, and Nobel laureate William Butler Yeats and others to find an appropriate position for Connolly within their nationalist configurations "arises from Connolly's explosion of conventional national and cultural categories." Connolly, in Beese's analysis, was centrally a transnational writer who pioneered a "politics of cultural alternatives," a politics informed by his experiences in the Edinburgh and Dublin slums. While Connolly's execution denied Irish Labour of one of its most articulate intellectuals, Michael C. Connolly nonetheless views the Labour Movement in his contribution as continuing to play a crucial role in Irish affairs in the immediate aftermath of the 1916 Rising. Indeed, for Connolly the movement was prominent in all of the major issues of the time "strongly promoting the programmes and agendas set by its membership in annual meetings and special conferences."

The 1916 Rising has been described by Declan Kiberd as one of the "most theatrical insurrections in the history of western Europe"¹ and certainly the events of that week and some of the actions of leaders of the Rising would lend credence to such an assertion. Patrick Pearse famously wore an ancient sword during the entirety of the Rising and eventually insisted on its formal handing over during his surrender to the leader of the British forces, General Lowe. For Yeats, a play may well have inspired some of those who took part in the Rising itself; as he asked some years later, "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" The play Yeats refers to is *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, the first performance of which on 2 April 1902 was produced by the Irish Literary Theatre, founded by Yeats and his long-time patron and collaborator Lady Gregory and a precursor to Ireland's National Theatre, the Abbey. The relationship between Irish culture, nationalism, and rebellion and the emergence of the Abbey is examined in this volume by Hannah Wood, who contends that the theatre was not only "national," in its origins but "nationalist," growing out of resistance to Britain and engaged in a project of "nation-building." For Wood, in highlighting distinctive features of Irish culture in the plays it hosted, "the Abbey and its founders created a defined sense of singular Irish identity that they thought was previously absent." In this focus, Wood finds parallels between the concerns and hopes of the founders of the Abbey and the leaders of the 1916 Rising, "except with performance in the place of violence."

1 "The Easter Rebellion: Poetry or Drama?" (2006). *The 1916 Rising: Then and Now*. Papers from a conference held at Trinity College Dublin, 21-22 April 2006, organised by The Ireland Institute and Dublin University History Society. <http://www.theirelandinstitute.com/institute/p01-kiberd_drama_page.html> (10 Feb 2015).

Among the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation was the notable uilleann piper Éamonn Ceannt, and the same year also saw the death of a further influential figure in Irish traditional music, Donegal piper Tarlach Mac Suibhne. 1916 also marked the first recordings of Irish traditional music in the United States, a development that would have far-reaching consequences for the evolution of regional styles in Ireland, particularly through the influence of recordings of Sligo-born fiddler Michael Coleman. Verena Commins' chapter charts the increasing prevalence since the 1970s of monuments to named Irish traditional musicians, representing, she contends, "the development of new spatial coordinates of the identity of Irish traditional music." Furthermore, through this process local communities, Commins argues, have reclaimed local Irish traditional music narratives while simultaneously presenting "a new basis on which interpretations of Irish culture and heritage can be both proclaimed and understood."

For many Unionists in Ireland, 1916 is remembered principally as the year in which the Battle of the Somme took place, a World War I military encounter which continues to hold an important place in constructions of Unionist identity. Much as with the nationalist remembering of the 1916 Rising, the Battle of the Somme has also been frequently rendered as an exclusively Unionist experience. However, in Terry Phillips' analysis of a collection of poetry from one of the most prominent Northern Ireland politicians from the first half of the twentieth century, Harry Midgley, Phillips identifies a challenge to the Unionist appropriation of memory and a search for "a more inclusive form of remembering." While Midgley's only published collection of poetry, *Thoughts from Flanders* (1924), offers a powerful testimony of his experiences during World War I on the Western Front, it also reveals, Phillips argues, a fervent hope in the possibility of a shared collaborative future in creating a just society.

As noted already, 1916 was also the year in which James Joyce published his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and M. Teresa Caneda Cabrera provides in her chapter an analysis of the impact of this work in post-revolutionary Cuba, including the significant and distinctly political decisions taken in its translation into Spanish by Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes. Drawing on the conceptual framework of Atlantic studies, Caneda Cabrera contends that Desnoes's 1964 translation incorporates a revolutionary discourse which foregrounds the notion that both nations share forms of resistance and "encourages readers to discover a number of relevant analogies between the Cuba of the 1960s and the Ireland that witnessed the rebellion of 1916."

A cultural form possibly less associated with 1916 is greyhound coursing. However, that year also marked a significant moment in the 'nationalising' of this sport in Ireland when the Irish Coursing Club (ICC) was established. In his analysis of greyhound sports in the work of Bryan MacMahon, Laurent Daniel reflects on the similar path the administration of greyhound coursing took in Ireland to that of the Gaelic Athletic Association and on the role of greyhound coursing "in shaping a very similar aspect of Irish identity" among its followers. Daniel views the representation of coursing

ing in MacMahon's work as playing a comparable role, "travelling some way towards reconciling sport with literature as well as politics" while also bearing witness, as this representation evolved, to "the changing nature of Irish politics and identity" over the twentieth century.

Daniel's work marks the movement of this collection to reflections on the relevance of 1916 to a range of contemporary cultural forms and indeed contemporary Irish society as a whole. Valérie Morisson examines two recent graphic novel renderings of the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence, *Blood Upon the Rose, Easter 1916, The Rebellion That Set Ireland Free* (2009) and its sequel, *At War With the Empire, Ireland's Fight for Independence* (2012), both written and drawn by Gerry Hunt. For Morisson these graphic portrayals articulate the social memory of Irish history if tinged with distinctively nationalist undertones. The rendering through sequential art of these events reflects the growing prominence and influence of this mode in Irish as well as global popular culture, evident for instance in the popularity of comic-book-themed films in recent years. Indeed, Morisson views Hunt's representations of the Rising and War of Independence as indebted to film, in particular the style of gangster movies, in their privileging of violence over thorough analysis.

Contemporary Irish fiction has also engaged with the aftermath of 1916, and Claudia Luppino's contribution here considers two works in which echoes of the Rising continue to reverberate, John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990) and Colm Tóibín's *The Heather Blazing* (1992). Luppino examines in particular the ways in which Ireland's struggle for freedom from Britain affected the lives of both the participants and their children as evident in these novels, drawing on Paul Ricœur's work on memory and forgetting in her analysis. A further Irish novelist for whom the past has been a recurring concern is Neil Jordan (an interview with whom concludes this collection), most obviously in his 1980 novel *The Past*, the focus of Elena Cotta Ramusino's chapter. Cotta Ramusino views Jordan's novel as one marked by the reconstruction of the past in a process where personal history is intertwined with the history of the nation with "enlistment, Home Rule, independence, the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War, De Valera and the Free Staters" all prominent concerns.

Cotta Ramusino's contribution begins with an epigraph from Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture*, and Barry's work is the central focus of Donatella Abbate Badin's contribution. Abbate Badin notes the continuing "obsession" among many contemporary Irish writers with history and the national myth concerning 1916, though she finds Barry's work distinguished by "a backward look cast in the direction of the forgotten (or suppressed) aspects of past history that still impinge on the present." This process, Abbate Badin further contends, is informed by Barry's own family history and "the half-forgotten, distorted or misunderstood stories" that allow him to reconstruct history attentive to "individual events and to the common man."

A further contemporary Irish writer for whom legacies of the past are important is poet Tom Paulin, the subject of Joanna Kruczkowska's chapter. Though Paulin grew up

within the Ulster Protestant community, he has been critical of what he has described as the “narrow-mindedness” of Protestant Unionism and has looked to the Protestant tradition associated with the 1798 Rising (an event alluded to in the 1916 Proclamation) for inspiration in his poetry. Kruczkowska in her essay confronts a number of issues preoccupying not just Paulin but Irish writers over the past century, including “identity, struggle, home, language, tradition, politics, myth,” and identifies, in Paulin’s writing, an evolution of themes oscillating between subversion and sabotage. While Paulin’s poetry involves a search for self-definition, it has simultaneously, Kruczkowska contends, become a search for the definition of the Irish nation.

Defining the Irish nation was an important concern of the leaders of the 1916 Rising. Leading nationalists, such as Patrick Pearse, looked in particular to the Irish-speaking communities in the West of Ireland for the values an independent Ireland might be founded upon. In the aftermath of the Rising and the eventual emergence of an independent Irish State, the Irish language and Gaelic culture continued to be a proclaimed concern of Irish nationalists. However, references to the Irish language and Gaelic culture in nationalist rhetoric offered limited insight into the dynamic and sophisticated communities where the Irish language continued to be spoken. Eilís Ní Dhúill examines the contemporary rendering through documentary of an Irish-speaking community against this historical background. In her analysis of the testimonies of members of the Great Blasket Island community as presented in the documentary *Deireadh an Áil (The Last of the Blasket People)* (1996), Ní Dhúill argues for a new interpretation of the tradition of storytelling as a cultural practice, an interpretation that offers insight into the lived experience of the storytellers and their understanding of that experience.

In the final two contributions to this collection, we turn to analyses of contemporary Ireland against the backdrop of stated concerns – as evident in the 1916 Proclamation – of the leaders of the Easter Rising. One of the distinctive features of the Proclamation is its commitment to equal rights for “every Irishman and *Irishwoman*” (my emphasis), an aspiration towards gender equality that was unusual, and fiercely contested, in early-twentieth-century Europe. While this aspiration was reflected in the prominent role women played throughout the independence struggle, social and political attitudes would affectively marginalize women from the political sphere in post-independent Ireland. White, Mariani, Buckley, and McGing in their co-authored chapter examine the role women have played in political life in Ireland in what continues to be a male-dominated milieu. Through an analysis of each stage in the process of the development and election of candidates, they assess how the introduction of recent gender quota legislation might potentially increase the opportunity for women to emerge as viable candidates in future elections.

The Proclamation also placed a considerable emphasis on the attainment of Irish ‘sovereignty,’ declaring “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland” as “sovereign and indefeasible,” recalling how in “every generation the Irish people

have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty,” and proclaiming “the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State.” In more recent political statements, including some by Taoiseach Enda Kenny, sovereignty continues to be a recurring concern; Kenny remarked in 2011 that he wanted “to be a Taoiseach who retrieves Ireland’s economic sovereignty.” However, in economist Alan Ahearne’s contribution to this collection, he questions the relevance of ‘sovereignty’ to contemporary Ireland, particularly in a small open economy that uses the euro as its currency. Ahearne’s chapter also includes an analysis of the background to the collapse of the Irish economy in the late 2000s, highlighting the important lessons that may be learned from this experience.

This collection closes with an interview with Irish film director and novelist Neil Jordan, which was conducted by novelist Patrick McCabe at the EFACIS 2013 conference. Jordan has been a major figure in Irish and international filmmaking and literature since the early 1980s and was responsible for one of the best known re-enactments of the events of the 1916 Rising in the opening scenes of his 1996 biopic *Michael Collins*. As he reveals in his interview, his perspective on 1916 is also very much informed by the Rising’s subsequent representation, particularly in the work of Yeats and Sean O’Casey. As well as providing an overview of Jordan’s views on 1916 and its aftermath, the interview also offers important insights into the director’s life, work, and creative process.

Ireland is a much changed island since Patrick Pearse first publically read the Proclamation of the Republic in front of the GPO on Easter Monday morning 1916. Irish culture and society have evolved in ways that would likely have been unimaginable to the leaders of the Rising or indeed to those involved with other significant events in that year, including the Battle of the Somme. Nonetheless, as the contributions to this collection reveal, 1916 continues to be a particularly resonant year for Irish literature, culture and society. As we approach the centenary, we hope this collection will contribute in some small way to the ongoing debates that year continues to provoke, whether between historians, Taoisigh, poets, or others.

FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE: JAMES CONNOLLY AND THE TRANSNATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF SCOTTISH AND IRISH SLUMS

Nils Beese

James Connolly – socialist, anti-imperialist, feminist, Irish nationalist, anti-racist, Catholic, rebellion leader, and martyr. For almost a century, Connolly has often been regarded in categorical, sometimes apparently mutually exclusive terms. Many times he has forcefully been ‘kidnapped’ by one ideology or the other and has been mummified into a symbol, which sometimes completely distorts his written works and his life. Particularly the Fianna Fáil Party under Éamon de Valera imposed its own nationalist-conservative version of the Rising, discarding unwanted elements of the highly multifaceted event, such as the importance of female involvement and feminist and socialist thought (Moran 6-7, 68-83). During this process, James Connolly was stripped of his subversive ideas and was safely celebrated as “a leader of men,” as *The Irish Independent* wrote in 1935. Connolly’s biography has similarly been politically skewed, with some commentators indicating his place of birth as County Monaghan and not, as now historically proven, Edinburgh. These claims, as Chloe Ross Alexander rightly examines, “have a ‘political angle’ in that many Nationalists post-1916 would not have liked to publicise that such an Irish hero was in actual fact born outside of Ireland” (Alexander 74-75).¹ Thus, Connolly was rather “a subject for hagiographers rather than historians” (Laffan 116).

Aside from blunt nationalist propaganda, W.B. Yeats’s poem “Easter 1916” undoubtedly excels any post-mortem assessment of Connolly by neutering his legacy through what Elizabeth Cullingford termed Yeats’s “process of mythologizing” (96). In stanzas one and two, Yeats’s lyrical persona homogenizes the very heterogeneous crowd of rebels not only by neglecting to acknowledge in detail some of the more important rebel leaders and their ideology (among the neglected is Connolly), but also by eventually writing out their names in a verse like chiselling names onto a “national gravestone” (Foster 23). The lyrical “I” is the stonemason who forges and forces his version of the Easter Rising upon Ireland in the coming times. The final result is a petrified poetic account of the rebellion, which is sanitized from any socialist or feminist concerns.² Yet, in how far this ellipsis is indicative of Yeats’s scorn for the filthy modern tide, which perhaps upsets stable hierarchic categories, is not as important

1 One has to add that Connolly was good at confusing biographers as well, as he gave his place of birth as County Monaghan in the Census return of 1901 (Nevin 168).

2 For an in-depth analysis of this process of mystification, see Backus.

here as the fact that it highlights Yeats's uneasiness in finding an appropriate position for Connolly in his poetic oeuvre.

As I will argue, this discomfort or failure of Yeats and others to fix Connolly without distorting him arises from Connolly's explosion of conventional national and cultural categories. My emphasis will be on Connolly as a transnational writer and what I term Connolly's "politics of cultural alternatives." He found the tools for these politics in the Edinburgh and Dublin slums, which were similar in their desolate reality and set apart in stark contrast from cosy middle-class suburban life.

In 1868, James Connolly was born in a slum, namely in the Cowgate in Edinburgh, which was given the name "Little Ireland" (an Irish colony in Scotland, as it were), as it was replete with about 14,000 Irish immigrants, who all struggled to survive in the poverty-ridden and unhealthy conditions of the tenements (Nevin 5-6; Ellis 9). According to Donal Nevin, one of Connolly's biographers, his "boyhood was one of deprivation, harsh poverty, grim housing conditions and hard toil. He had little schooling and from the age of nine earned paltry wages to help keep the family above the bread-line" (5). This description, although lacking the backup of direct historical source material, is consistent with the description given of the area in the book *Slum Life in Edinburgh* published in 1891 by the *Scottish National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*. One of the 12 sketches reads as follows:

A walk through the Grassmarket or Cowgate, or down the Lawnmarket and Canongate, is at times a very depressing experience; but one has to explore the huge tenements that tower on either side of the street, to enter the houses and speak with the people, to arrive at an adequate idea of what life in some parts of the slums means. A night spent in such an exploration – climbing foul and rickety stairs, groping your way along a network of dark, narrow passages, and peering into the dismal dens which the wretched inhabitants (and their landlords) call "houses" – a night passed in this manner will give an experience of horrors that will for ever remain imprinted on the memory. (10-11)

Of course, this description and others, previously "printed in the *Weekly Scotsman*, and which strongly excited the attention of the Public" (5), have to be treated with caution, as their primary philanthropic motives cloud the distinction between investigative journalism and fiction. Nevertheless, this sketch and the biographical accounts of Connolly's early life in the Cowgate area fit the overall historical assessment that life in the Cowgate slums during the second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by hardship (Rodger 444). Tenement dwellers lacked social security and were consequently at the mercy of poor relief by the Poor Law system, the church, philanthropic endeavours, and, of course, their landlords.

If we accord some credibility to the idea that Connolly's upbringing in the Cowgate did in fact "for ever remain imprinted on the memory" of Connolly, we are able to approach his fierce hatred towards "rack-renting slum landlords [...] and parasites of every description" (*Justice* 12 Aug 1893, in Greaves 48) from a new perspective. His special attention to the urban slum misery which we later on find in his political pamphlets in Dublin seems to have its roots in his experience in the Edinburgh slums.

During his first public appearance in October 1894 as a socialist candidate in the municipal elections for the depleted St Giles Ward in Edinburgh, he focussed almost exclusively on housing issues demanding an instant end to one-roomed houses (Nevin 39).³ In a remarkable speech he says:

Perhaps [the working-class] will learn how foolish it is to denounce tyranny in Ireland, and then vote for tyrants and the instruments of tyrants at their own door. Perhaps they will begin to see that the landlord who grinds his peasants on a Connemara estate and the landlord who rack-rents them in a Cowgate slum, are brethren in fact and deed. Perhaps they will realise that the Irish worker who starves in an Irish cabin and the Scotch worker who is poisoned in an Edinburgh garret are also brothers with one hope and destiny. Perhaps they will observe how the same Liberal Government which supplies police to Irish landlords to aid them in their work of exterminating the Irish peasantry also imports police into Scotland to aid Scottish mineowners in their work of starving the Scottish miners. (*Edinburgh Labour Chronicle* 5 Nov 1894, in Howell 26)

What is most striking in this quote is his cultural-political bridge-building not only between rural and urban spaces, but also across the Irish Sea: between Scotland and Ireland. The Irish and Scottish are “brothers with one hope and destiny” and thus closer to each other than to any national or even racial ideology. They have one common enemy – British colonialism in the disguise of liberal capitalism. Here one feels most clearly Connolly’s impetus for transnational ethics, which goes beyond insular nationalism or a narrow-minded perception of national identity. Moreover, he already addresses what he later would repeatedly stress: that the crux of the Irish situation does not lie first and foremost in the issue of achieving national independence, but in the problem of the capitalist institution of private property. The worst results of this exploitative institution could be found in the Scottish and Irish slums. They were the residues of a rack-renting antisocial capitalist agenda.

In the 1880s Connolly had spent about seven years in the First Battalion of the King’s Liverpool Regiment, and it is likely that he “was among the troops who took part in the celebration of Queen Victoria’s jubilee in Dublin in 1887” (Nevin 17; see Greaves 27). When he thus campaigned in Edinburgh in 1894 he had most probably borne witness to similar misery in the Dublin slums as he had known from Edinburgh. After all, the “urban ‘fever nests’” (Prunty 76) in Dublin were not contained to one area but spread all over the inner city. Furthermore, in light of the fact that Dublin had statistically the highest death-rate in Europe (almost twice as high as Edinburgh’s death-

3 The St Giles Ward was mainly occupied by poverty-stricken inhabitants of Irish origin. The main issue for Connolly in this ward was, as Chloe Ross Alexander says, “the Irish working-classes who inhabited the slums of St Giles tended to vote Liberal as opposed to his socialism”. This was due to the fact that the Irish National League “encouraged its members to vote for the Liberals” because of their preoccupation with Home Rule in Ireland. In this sense, “while the Irish working classes were passionately enthusiastic about voting against tyranny in Ireland”, they actually “cast their vote in support of the promotion of tyranny against themselves and their own class in Scotland” (81). This possibly strengthened Connolly’s conviction to give the slum inhabitants a strong political voice.

rate⁴), that it had been hit hard by epidemics (Prunty 153), and that it also had suffered a serious problem of unemployment during the 1880s (Daly 107), perhaps Connolly had even sensed that the Dublin slum situation was particularly precarious. After losing his job as a “dust carter” in Edinburgh (Nevin 167), Connolly and his family first moved to Dublin and lived in tenement housing in Queen Street. This move, stimulated by poverty in Edinburgh and a job offer for Connolly as the secretary of the Dublin Socialist Club (Nevin 58), has also to be seen in terms of finding a stronger breeding ground for his socialist ideas. Although Edinburgh was the home of a lively socialist scene in 1890, the propaganda did not quite spark off as Connolly had hoped for. In 1893 he gives vent to his frustration:

The population of Edinburgh is largely composed of snobs, flunkeys, mashers, lawyers, students, middle-class pensioners and dividend hunters. Even the working-class portion of the population seemed to have imbibed the snobbish would-be respectable spirit of their ‘betters,’ and look with aversion upon every movement running counter to conventional ideas. (*Justice* 12 Aug 1893, in Greaves 48)

Edinburgh, in a nutshell, had too much of an élite flair about it. After they lived in Queen Street in Dublin, the family relocated to 76 Charlemont Street from May 1896 (Nevin 59). In 1897, they eventually moved to a house at 54 Pimlico. According to Thom’s Street Directory for Dublin for 1898, these streets contained a large number of tenement buildings. It is quite likely that the Connollys faced scenes of urban misery, which were worse than what they had experienced in Edinburgh.

From his personal experience and overall socialist, anti-imperialist conviction, the slum situation for him was both a testament to, and a subversion of, British colonialism. Successively, Connolly proposed an alternative reading of history focussing on the colonially submerged remnants of an alternative form of community, which he believed existed in the slums. During this re-evaluation of an alternative culture, Connolly highlighted the fact that the slums were a colonial product and that they, as a periphery in a colonial space, offered the possibility to rediscover potential pre- and anti-colonial forms of cultural identity. Connolly was convinced that the slums, be it in Edinburgh or in Dublin, were the perfect loci to uncover a means of defiance to colonialism.

In his first article in *The Labour Leader* in 1897, Connolly begins with a quote from the British philosopher John Stuart Mill, which in Connolly’s view is “the key for unravelling the whole tangled skein of Irish politics”: “Before the time of the conquest the Irish people knew nothing of absolute property in land. The land belonged to the entire sept [...]” (“Erin’s Hope”). Connolly believes that Ireland is exceptional because primitive communion was intact up to the seventeenth century:

[I]n Ireland the system formed part of the well-defined social organization of a nation of scholars and students, recognized by Chief and Tanist, Brehon and Bard, as the inspir-

4 In 1879 Dublin had a death-rate of 35.7 per 1,000 inhabitants compared to Edinburgh’s 21.3. In 1899 Dublin’s death-rate was 33.6 per 1,000 inhabitants compared to 19.2 in Edinburgh (O’Brien 104; Prunty 74).

ing principle of their collective life, and the basis of their national system of jurisprudence. ("Erin's Hope")

An alternative reading of history would thus rectify the fatal tendency of the Irish "to worship the glories of the past, while remaining indifferent to the evils of the present," such as the slum squalor (*Workers' Republic* 7 Oct 1899, in Nevin 131). Later on, in the first American issue of *The Harp* in January 1908, Connolly radically explicated the Benjaminian method to brush history against the grain, when he calls for no less than "a correct interpretation of the facts of Irish history, past and present" (*The Lost Writings* 93). Furthermore, in his book *Labour in Irish History* (1910) Connolly excavates historical sources in order to illuminate layers of history, which had been concealed by the hegemonic view of history.

Considering Connolly's endeavour to reveal an alternative to dominant history, which can be used as "a lamp to [the worker's] feet in the stormy paths of today" (*Labour in Irish History* 137), it seems fruitful to draw on an argument put forward by David Lloyd. "The non-modern," he writes, "emerge[s] out of kilter with modernity [...] in a dynamic relationship to it [...] It is a space where the alternative survives [...] as an incommensurable set of cultural formations historically occluded from, yet never actually disengaged with, modernity" (2). This alternative form of culture is exactly what Connolly attempts to bring into focus, as it includes alternative values and ethics, which are diametrically opposed in "character from the deadly embrace of capitalist English conventionalism" (*Labour in Irish History* 9). Connolly is confident that the cultural formations of the non-modern can be "sought and found [in] its last fortress in the hearts and homes of the 'lower orders,' ... [in] the same 'wretched cabins [which] have been the holy shrines in which the traditions and the hopes of Ireland have been treasured and transmitted'" (9). For him, the forgotten riches of Irish culture are located in the most abject places – the wretched cabins, the slum tenements. *Locus horridus* inverted becomes an alternative *locus amoenus*, in which the foundation for the restructuring of society can be found. The so far discarded and disregarded dwellings are now the most important places for cultural (re-)discovery and consciousness.

From a straightforward Marxist perspective, this parallaxic shift is not half as interesting (at least for literary historians) as when one considers that Connolly saw his works as "an integral part of the Revival," as Gregory Dobbins has highlighted ("Connolly, the Archive, and Method" 51). In the foreword of *Labour in Irish History* Connolly writes, "this book, attempting to depict the attitude of the dispossessed masses of the Irish people in the great crisis of modern Irish history, may justly be looked upon as part of the literature of the Gaelic revival" (9). His position adds a new view on the politics of the Revival, as it attacks predominantly escapist, allegedly non-political visions such as Yeats's early attempt to find alternative forms of culture in his faeryland in the West of Ireland or even Synge's apparent realist search for authentic Ireland among the peasants on the Aran Islands.

If one regards Connolly as part of the Irish Revival, as he does himself, he indeed is one of the few writers who actually had experienced slum life (another exception being James Stephens) and who knew the hardship and social inequality of the situation. When he prepared his return to Dublin in 1910, he writes to William O'Brien, "I do not see my way to live after I once more set foot on Irish soil. And that part of the problem is the hardest, as of course I could not go into the Dublin slums again to live; one experience of that is enough in a lifetime" (in Nevin 315). And again he stresses his dilemma a few months later, "[y]ou see I am grown cautious. I do not want my family to do any more starving" (318). Indeed, as in *Slum Life in Edinburgh*, the experience of horrors of slum life did seem to remain forever imprinted on his memory.

In addition to his personal experience, Connolly was very well aware of the recent development of the overall slum conditions, which he would study at the National Library of Ireland. In *The Re-Conquest of Ireland* he quotes recent slum statistics from 1911 that estimate that "the death-rate in Dublin was 27.6 per 1,000 [which] was the highest of any city in Europe," even higher than the death-rate of "such cities like Moscow and Calcutta" (211). Bashing the jovial comment of an Alderman of the city, who "airily described [the situation] at a public dinner the other day as 'trifling'," Connolly concludes "that there is permitted in Ireland [...] the ceaseless slaughter of precious human life" (212). Furthermore, he assesses that "[t]he higher the social status the lower the death-rate, and the lower the social status the higher the death-rate" (212). These conclusions are in line with historians' assessment that the efforts of the Dublin Corporation were ineffectual (Prunty 320) and that "Dublin was a markedly unhealthy place to live" (Daly 270) in which "the most important determinant of children's health was social class" (266). Highly accurate in its historical assessment, Connolly's criticism is even more impressive in the light of the Irish Revival and its mostly rural trajectory, as he was one of the few prominent writers and thinkers of this loosely tied literary movement who clearly voiced their opinion about the plight of Dublin's inner city.⁵

Already in 1897 Connolly had stressed that literature must not solely be preoccupied with the past but must also be engaged with "vital living issues":

In Ireland at the present time there are at work a variety of agencies seeking to preserve the national sentiment in the hearts of the people. These agencies, whether Irish Language movements, Literary Societies or Commemoration Committees, are undoubtedly doing a work of lasting benefit to this country in helping to save from extinction the precious racial and national history, language and characteristics of our people. Nevertheless, there is a danger that by too strict an adherence to their present methods of propaganda, and consequent neglect of vital living issues, they may only succeed in stereotyping our historical studies into a worship of the past [...]. (Connolly, "Socialism and Nationalism")

5 George Russel (Æ) being a notable exception when he writes a letter of indignation after the Church Street Disaster of 1913 (Corlett 41).

For Connolly, the literature of the Revival should commit itself more on the non-modern as the bearer of alternative knowledge and values – anti-materialist and anti-imperialist, social and egalitarian at heart – and its ineluctable entanglement with present social ills.

To stress the importance of this alternative non-modern, Connolly had to resort to an aggressive reversal of commonly acknowledged values. During an election campaign in the Wood Quay Ward in Dublin in 1903, he tirelessly emphasised “the threats and the bribery” of slum owners, whose efforts would forfeit “clean, healthy, or honest politics in the City of Dublin.” After having lost the election, he penned the angry poem “Song of the Elections.” In it he depicts the misery of the people and the bribery of the landlords:

[...]

Tell us of the Death Rate,
High in Dublin Town;

[...]

Sing of workers' children
Dying in the slums;

[...]

Tell how the slum voters
On Election Day,
For a pint of porter
Sell that chance away.
Sing us how the publican,
The landlord, the employer,
Strive to press the workingman
Deeper in the mire,
Tell how Socialist voters,
Yet with righteous wrath,
Will sweep these slimy vermin
Out of Labour's path. (qtd. in Nevin 176)

This politically straightforward poem has a bitter undertone, as it illuminates Connolly's frustration with the socio-political situation in Dublin. Yet, it also highlights the problem that the dispossessed subjects in the Dublin slums and slums elsewhere are easily stripped of their agency.

In order to restore this agency and thus to empower the dispossessed in the space of the non-modern, Connolly resorts to a reversal of values by inverting the middle-class trope of dirt and dirtiness as being a reflection of morals. As “Song of the Elections” shows, it is not that the slum inhabitants are dirty and thus morally infected, as it were, but the ruling class, the “slimy vermin,” who obstruct clean politics. This Nietzschean motif of moral inversion of cultural hegemonic values concerning cleanliness and dirt can be found in the entire corpus of Connolly's writing. In the *Workers' Republic* editorial from 15 July 1899, he calls the British army “a veritable moral cesspool corrupting all within its bounds, and exuding forth a miasma of pestilence upon every spot

so unfortunate as to be cursed by its presence" ("Soldiers of the Queen"). This is the exact vocabulary used in contemporary discourse about slums in Dublin, Edinburgh, and elsewhere,⁶ which expressed a middle-class fear of infections of moral and manners by the filthy and thus morally corrupt inhabitants (Prunty 36). In *The Workers' Republic* in March 1916 Connolly asserts that Ireland is run by the "foul minds of those in charge" ("Notes on the Front" 207) and in 1914 that the working class is "surrounded by the most unclean pack of wolves that ever yelped at the heels of honour" ("Address to the Delegates" 135).

In one of his most powerful writings, "The Slums and the Trenches" (1916), he completely upsets the acknowledged idea of slums nourishing immorality by stating that "death in a slum may be the noblest of all deaths if it is the death of a man who preferred to die rather than dirty his soul by accepting the gold of England." Connolly's statement had previously been triggered by "a speaker at a recent recruiting meeting in Dublin [who had] declared that the Dublin slums were more unhealthy than the trenches in Flanders." Considering the statistics that the British Army recruited more than 140,000 Irishmen during World War I (Jeffery 7) and that up to the 1916 Rising 13,000 of these came from Dublin's inner city (which equalled 20% of all inner-city Dublin men aged fifteen to forty-four) (Callan; qtd. in Thompson 17), Connolly's dilemma was the fact that recruitment cut the ground from under the anti-imperialist working-class movement. Reflecting upon that and the conviction that the slums are the devastating results of immoral British politics in Ireland, in 1915 he says, "Ireland is rotten with slums, a legacy of Empire" ("The Manchester Martyrs"). This leads Connolly to the statement that a person dying in the Dublin slums is "a hero and a martyr fit to be ranked with and honoured alongside of the greatest heroes and noblest martyrs this island has produced" ("The Slums and the Trenches"). By comparing the horrible conditions of the trenches with the similarly horrible conditions in the Dublin slums, which are "worse than those of any civilised people on God's earth," he thus elevates the slums and turns them into a frontline and combat zone, in which one can honourably die for one's country.

To conclude, it seems at first paradoxical to regard James Connolly's method of excavating alternative forms of cultural and societal life of pre-colonial times as more than just a straightforward national approach. Yet Connolly constantly attempted to empower dispossessed subjects beyond a plain and simple nationalism. Whether Scottish or Irish, he saw the slum inhabitants as victims of rack-renting British capitalist destruction. Furthermore, his focus on the slums as a place of resistance and hope and thus as a place where alternative forms of culture and knowledge exist is innovative and subversively daring, as it goes beyond any contemporary literary or political discourse. That is, his transnational nationalism and his politics of cultural

6 For a comparative analysis, see Rodger. For a general study on the concept of the slum, see Mayne.

alternatives as a self-declared Revivalist writer broke the mould of conventional categorical thinking about Irish culture. With regard to a historical assessment of his role in the Easter Rising, this calls for a more open-minded, more careful, and less biased approach, as Connolly is a far more complex figure than often assumed and portrayed. Quite possibly, this complexity accounts for why Yeats and others, searching for a more straightforward national categorization in deed and thought, were not able to accurately locate Connolly on their respective map of cultural identity.

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“CHANGED UTTERLY”: THE SHAPING OF THE MODERN IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF EASTER 1916

Michael C. Connolly

James Connolly was gone, executed by a British firing squad at Kilmainham Jail in Dublin. Jim Larkin was incarcerated in America, sentenced for his militant opposition to the First World War. How would Irish labour respond to the loss of their two most eloquent speakers and strategists? What effect would the Easter Rising of 1916 have on Ireland's fledgling labour movement? The two-and-a-half-year period immediately following the Easter Rising and leading up to the December 1918 General Election was significant in several ways, both to the Irish labour movement and to the early formation of the nation itself. It fell directly in the middle of what has often been described as Ireland's "revolutionary decade," the period from 1912 to 1922. Irish labour helped cause, and certainly was also affected by, the radical nature of the changes that occurred within this seminal decade. The years 1916-1918 also marked the latter half of the Great War that in itself was arguably the primary cause of this revolutionary fervour. The growing demands on Ireland caused by this war for more supplies, more soldiers, and more loyalty to the Empire acted to speed up the process of alienation which was already well underway before 1916. Finally, this period was bookended by historical events which undoubtedly must be considered as among the most influential in modern Irish history: the Easter Rising and the 1918 General Election. These two events will serve to frame the scope of this essay.

The major argument made by this essay is that the Irish labour movement was front and centre in all of the crucial political and economic debates and decisions that occurred in the immediate post-Rising years. Historians and political commentators of all stripes in later years have offered criticism of labour, with the most prominent theme being that labour conceded far too much to Sinn Féin on the political front, especially in its decision not to contest the seminal General Election of 1918. While the labour movement is certainly not beyond criticism, this essay maintains that it had valid and substantial reasons for making the decisions that were made, and further that Irish labour took a back seat to no other political party or movement in Ireland in these years in promoting the unity of the country and the agenda of its core supporters, the Irish working class. Essentially, this essay argues that while Sinn Féin could concentrate on the national question, Irish labour had to balance its promotion of nationalism and unity with its social and economic programme among its more diverse membership and supporters.

Several main issues will be discussed, if only briefly, to support this argument: the Anti-Conscription crisis and General Strike of 1918; Labour's withdrawal from the 1918 election and deferral to Sinn Féin; the anti-partition campaign; rural versus urban

support for labour; the 'English' background of some of its leaders; and divisions within the labour movement, epitomized by the Connolly/Larkin/O'Casey/P.T. Daly more radical wing versus the William O'Brien/Thomas Johnson moderate wing.¹

Of particular importance in promoting the argument for the Irish labour movement's centrality in the post-Rising period was the impressive and instrumental role it played in the Anti-Conscription campaign, almost from the beginning of the Great War but especially the crucial days between April and May of 1918. James Connolly's writings on this issue are well known, but as early as 18 April 1916, Thomas Foran, General President of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU), also stated Labour's objection to participation in the Great War with absolute clarity:

The ITGWU is opposed to conscription for military service. In many ways it has expressed its determination to resist any attempt to slaughter its members whether in Ireland in the interest of the British Empire or in France in the interest of international capitalism. (Thomas Johnson Papers, MS 17,115 (ii))

Labour helped to cement almost all shades of opinion within the island, with the notable exception of Ulster unionism, against the imposition of conscription on Ireland by the government of the United Kingdom. Labour was prominent in the Mansion House Anti-Conscription Conference (18-19 April 1918), which adopted a resolution that stated:

The passing of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war against the Irish nation. The alternative to accepting it, as such, is to surrender our liberties and to acknowledge ourselves slaves ... The attempt to enforce it will be an unwarrantable aggression which we call upon all Irishmen to resist by the most effective means at their disposal. (*Dublin Saturday Post* 20 April 1918: 1)

When Labour leader Thomas Johnson was dismissed from his Belfast job due to his anti-war, anti-conscription stance, his London-based employer stated that, "We discourage anything in the shape of disloyalty." Johnson quickly responded:

Such steps as I have taken in connection with the opposition to conscription in Ireland were inspired not by what you call 'disloyalty' but by love of Ireland and her freedom. To me, tyranny is equally detestable, whatever the name of tyrant, be he Kaiser, Tzar, Sultan or British statesman ... Your own attitude towards me is a parallel of England's conduct towards Ireland. (Mitchell, *Labour* 89)

The General Strike of 23 April 1918 was called immediately after an All-Ireland Labour Conference where the following resolution was enthusiastically passed:

1 The major sources of primary material used in researching this essay were the Thomas Johnson and William O'Brien Collections in the National Library of Ireland. Other primary materials included the Annual Reports of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party (ITUC&LP) and select contemporary newspapers, especially the *Irish Opinion and Voice of Labour* and the *Dublin Saturday Post*. Secondary sources by Arthur Mitchell and Joseph Lee, among others, often used and reinforced these same primary sources.

That this Convention of the Irish Labour movement representing all sections and provinces of Ireland pledge ourselves and those whom we represent that we will not have conscription; that we shall resist it in every way that to us seems feasible; that we claim the right of liberty to decide as units for ourselves and as a Nation for itself; that we place before our fellow-workers – both men and women – in the Labour movement all the world over our claim for independent status as a nation in the International movement, and the right of self-determination as a nation as to what action or actions our people should take on questions of political or economic issues. (ITUC&LP *Annual Report 1918*: 37-38)

One month later, Irish conscription was postponed and never imposed. This was a highly effective, albeit rare, example of Irish political unity in these years, and the role of labour was central to its success. For Irish labour this was a seminal moment. It called for a definition of ‘Irishness’ within what was usually seen as an internationalist movement:

This Conscription Act involves for Irishmen questions far larger than any affecting mere internal politics. They raise a sovereign principle between a nation that has never abandoned her independent rights and an adjacent nation that has persistently sought to strangle them. (Thomas Johnson Papers, MS 17,115 (iv)).²

Leaving the topic of the Great War and labour’s prominent role in the Anti-Conscription movement, this essay will now focus more closely on the relationship of socialism and nationalism, specifically the relationship between labour and Sinn Féin in the years immediately following the Easter Rising, in the absence of Connolly and Larkin. Joseph Lee in 1975 provided a brief but well-reasoned critique of Arthur Mitchell’s influential study, *Labour in Irish Politics 1890-1930*, published the previous year. In this review Lee discusses what he labeled the “remarkable record of failure” of the Irish Labour Party in the years 1912-30 (Lee 758).

Lee’s critique creates a dialectical structure around which many of my subsequent arguments may be constructed. Much of this essay will be in the form of a critique of Lee’s critique. Lee maintains that Mitchell’s analyses subscribe to the three conventional explanations for Labour’s failure in these early years of modern Ireland’s political and economic development: (1) the primacy of the national question over social questions; (2) Labour’s withdrawal from the 1918 election; and (3) the separation of rural southern and western Ireland from the industrial north-east of the country through partition.

Countering what he describes as Mitchell’s three central explanations, Lee argues that: (1) social radicals (by which he likely means labour supporters) should have been as good nationalists as were many social conservatives (likely a reference to many in Sinn Féin, especially those from rural areas or among the middle class); (2) the withdrawal from the 1918 election was merely a recognition of reality, because for Labour the “real failure had already occurred between 1916-18”; and (3) while “Sinn Féin paid too little attention to Ulster, Labour paid too much.” Lee further contends

2 For more on the Conscription Crisis, see Mitchell, *Labour*, Chapters 3 and 4 (87-89); Gaughan 86-116; Morgan 194-197; and Clarkson 330-333.

that this over-emphasis on the northeast was symptomatic of Labour's belief that its only support could come from an urban, industrial workforce, and this myopia resulted in a nearly total rejection of the rural and agricultural segment of the population by Irish Labour (Lee 758).

There is much evidence to support Lee's contention that Labour's electoral withdrawal in 1918 was a pragmatic appraisal of its potential voter strength, relative to Sinn Féin. "Initially it seemed that Labour's involvement in the [Anti-Conscription] campaign would also enhance its prospects of winning parliamentary representation" (Gaughan 117). In the weeks between the announcement of Labour's intention to contest the election in September 1918 and Labour's Special Congress held in Dublin in early November, there was an increasingly negative response from supporters in many urban areas, outside of Dublin, indicating either unwillingness or in some cases an outright refusal to nominate or support Labour candidates at that particular time.

This electoral reluctance was prevalent both in the North and in the South. In the debates on this question many Labour delegates spoke in terms of allowing a battle between the two 'political' parties, this being a reference to Sinn Féin and the Irish Parliamentary Party. This was a painful indication that the Irish labour movement had not yet done a sufficient job in educating its supporters of its dual role, including that within the political sphere. This is illustrated by the widespread image of labour, then held by many of its most fervent union members, as essentially being a trades union body organised to primarily play an economic function. By late 1918 the political machinery of labour had grown quite rusty from lack of use. Unfortunately for this movement, it would become rustier still as the Irish Labour Party would now be forced to wait until 1922 before contesting a general election, a costly interval of twelve years.

There were several issues, however, which could be analyzed in a slightly different perspective from that proposed by Joseph Lee, who asked, "Why were social radicals unable to bang the nationalist drum as loudly as social conservatives?" Arthur Mitchell provided his own answer to that question in an earlier article on the prominent Labour leader William O'Brien:

Because of the combined structure of the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party they were forced (as Sinn Féin was not) to take into careful consideration the existence of tens of thousands of northern trade unionists who were hostile to the cause of Irish nationalism. Since it could not carve out its own political territory, the Labour Party did not want to appear as a tail attached to a purely nationalist body. (Mitchell, "William O'Brien" 321; see also Boyle 244-271 and Munck 36-51)

With this concern in mind, and in consideration of the solid record of Irish Labour in opposition to partition, it is at least understandable why the labour movement in the years 1916-1918 did not more aggressively 'play the green [nationalist] card.' While Lee posited that the failure to do this was "a major tactical error," perhaps this critique would only be valid from the perspective of hindsight concerning the eventual crea-

tion of the Northern Ireland state, an understanding that was not yet a certainty in 1918.

The consistent and determined stance of the Irish labour movement against the partition of the nation, in any form or for any period of time, as well as its equally determined efforts to achieve international recognition for Ireland as a separate nation, together formed the core of Labour's programme on the national question in these crucial years. Labour's forthright stand on these two vital issues was second to none, including that of Sinn Féin. What Labour could not do in this period, partly because of its geographically, politically, and religiously diverse base of membership, was to compete with Sinn Féin on their distinct and unqualified call for a sovereign Irish Republic. Seán O'Casey, former Irish Citizen Army comrade of James Connolly, early in 1918 penned his concerns regarding Labour's political deferral to Sinn Féin:

Labour will continue to grow and can do without Sinn Féin; Sinn Féin cannot do without the sons of Labour. What has the present political and National movement to offer the workers in return for their allegiance? We ask for Bread, let it be certain that we will not be content with a Stone. (Seán O'Casey, "De Valera and Labour," *Dublin Saturday Post* 19 Jan 1918: 1, found in Thomas Johnson Papers, MS 17,239)

Additionally, perhaps, a tactical error was made in not supporting earlier the policy of abstention from Westminster, even though this did eventually become the position of Labour's leadership. But Labour's earlier indecision and waffling on this tactical question created mistrust among the broad body of Irish nationalists, and for a while it became an emotional point of contention between Labour and Sinn Féin. Eamon de Valera was quoted as saying, "Their enemies were trying to get Labour and Sinn Féin opposed to each other and put them in different camps." This was followed by nationalistic critiques of labour being overly influenced by "men with English accents" and a reference to "English socialists coming over to Ireland" (Gaughan 117).

Unlike Sinn Féin's firm demand for a Republic, some in Labour in these years would probably have been content with a sufficient degree of Home Rule for all thirty-two counties. This, at least, might have secured Labour's ultimate concern, the all-important unity of the country. At what future point in time it may have become realistic, or at least expedient, to concentrate on a diminished twenty-six county political entity is another question entirely. The answer to that question, however, would not have fallen within these years of 1916-1918. In 1918, however, Irish labour leaders worried that strongly nationalistic positions on self-determination, Anti-Conscription, and withdrawal from the national election would prompt unionist workers, especially in the north, to look upon them as "a wing of Sinn Féin" (Gaughan 118). Most of the labour executive feared that the loss of Protestant workers would "deal a fatal blow to the unity of the labour movement," and were thus open to the suggestion made by Seán T. O'Kelly at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in late October 1918 when he asked Labour to "stand aside to allow the election to be fought on the clear issue of Ireland versus England" (Gaughan 120).

Joseph Lee, in a further analysis of the relationship between labour and nationalism, asserts that the 1916 Proclamation was “a socially revolutionary document.” He further states, “The wheel had turned full circle in the two years since the IRB had felt obliged to restrain the nationalist impetuosity of James Connolly” (Lee 758; see also Mitchell, *Labour* 79-80). Even though the Proclamation of 1916 was certainly politically revolutionary, to classify it as socially revolutionary might represent a bridge too far. Its guarantee of “religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens” is most praiseworthy and certainly progressive, but these are guarantees which could be found in the aspiring constitutions of many newly formed bourgeois states by the early twentieth century. One exception, however, would be the Proclamation’s inclusive and clear embrace of the perceived future role of women, in its famous salutation to “Irishmen and Irishwomen,” probably at the forward-looking insistence of Connolly.

Standing alone, this document changed little as far as the relationship of the people to the ownership and distribution of Irish wealth was concerned. The Proclamation was basically an impassioned demand for national sovereignty. Not by any stretch of the imagination could even its eloquent nationalist demand for “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies” be portrayed or interpreted as embodying the most modest version of a “Workers’ Republic” along the lines that James Connolly had argued for long before the Easter Rising. Certainly the revised Constitution of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress (ILP&TUC) of November 1918 and Labour’s Democratic Program of January 1919 were far more socially revolutionary than was the 1916 Proclamation of a Provisional Irish Republic.

In all of these examples, from the question of the tactic of abstention and the ultimate decision not to contest the 1918 General Election, to an analysis of the social content of the 1916 Proclamation and labour’s demand to more firmly address relevant national and local economic questions, and finally to the heart of the matter concerning labour’s somewhat ambivalent position on the national question, these collectively represented a crucial period of indecisiveness for labour. This lack of clarity had many valid causes, particularly the diverse nature of labour’s membership north and south, but regardless of these causes this ambiguity would continue to pose problems for the Irish labour movement in these critical years and going forward.

Joseph Lee’s assertion that “the wheel had turned full circle” since 1916 represents a reference to a perceived diminished nationalist fervour within the Irish labour movement in the post-Connolly, post-Rising period. The facts do not completely bear this out. It should be remembered that neither Connolly nor the Irish Citizen Army represented the mainstream of opinion within the labour movement as a whole on the national question before the Rising. Connolly’s militancy, despite its subsequent popularity, especially following his execution, had placed him far in advance of most ITUC&LP members on the issue of the primacy and compatibility of the national

question with the more practical and parochial concerns of Labour. The compatibility of nationalism with socialism would remain a central question for many countries in the twentieth century.

The core of Connolly's support could be found primarily within the ranks of the Irish Citizen Army itself. In retrospect, it might seem appealing to portray Connolly as representing the norm, but in socialist terms he would surely be considered to have been 'in the vanguard,' at least concerning the feasibility of joining socialism and internationalism with pure nationalism.³ George Russell (Æ) in a letter to the Under-Secretary of Ireland, Sir Matthew Nathan, subscribes to the importance of Connolly's militancy on the national question and also clearly sets him apart from most of the other leaders of the Rising and, by extension, from many within the labour movement itself:

I am very sad over Ireland just now. I knew many of those now dead and had a genuine liking for them. They had no intellect. Connolly was the only one with a real grip in his mind. They were rather featherbrained idealists ... and now they will be national heroes. If I had remembered Connolly was in the counsels of the Irish Volunteers I would have been frightened. He lay low, and I believe he cast the torch on the pile. (Levenson 329)

Lee further contends that "nationalism was ideologically neutral on social issues" (Lee 758). Theoretically, this statement may be correct. But, realistically, nationalism in Ireland in the years 1916-1918, and in subsequent years, was largely manifested by such prominent figures as Arthur Griffith, Eamon de Valera, and Michael Collins, among others, who would not be considered neutral on social issues. With several notable exceptions, such as Constance Markievicz (née Gore-Booth), many post-Rising nationalists, both within and outside of Sinn Féin, shared little or no common ground with Irish workers on their most basic economic and social demands (see Van Voris). At best, many Irish nationalists were either laissez-faire and undecided, or merely apathetic concerning these issues, as was argued in a seminal 1925 study of the Irish labour movement:

At the head of the Sinn Féin organisation stood Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith. The latter had changed not a whit since those eventful years when, through the pages of *Sinn Féin* he bade Labour repudiate Socialism and resume its rightful place as the humble servant of the Nation – occasionally to be petted, perhaps, but never to speak until it was spoken to. Eamon de Valera, who, as the sole surviving commandant of Easter Week, had soared to the highest place in the esteem of his countrymen, had imbibed nothing of the ideals of Pearse and Connolly. Long steeped in the abstractions of mathematics, he was an easy prey to the social abstractions of his colleague [Griffith]. (Clarkson 336)

Seán O'Casey advocated that workers should participate in these nationalist movements and thus help to imbue them with a distinctly working-class perspective. This suggestion was followed, to varying degrees, by several different Labour leaders. Even William O'Brien, with whom O'Casey had many serious disagreements, was

3 For a first-hand recollection of the Irish Citizen Army, see Robbins.

extremely active in early 1917 in the national movement. "In the middle of January 1917, William O'Brien was approached by Arthur Griffith with a proposal to bring together the various groups opposed to both the Unionists and the Parliamentary Party" (Mitchell, *Labour* 81-82). O'Brien later recalled and wrote concerning this episode:

Shortly after arriving home [from internment], Griffith called to my residence and had a two-hour discussion with me, in the course of which he proposed that a new organization, something like a Federation, should be formed – consisting of the Volunteers, Sinn Féin, the Irish Nation League and Labour. I did not believe that the Volunteers would work with Griffith but I did not say so. I contented myself with saying that I did not believe the Labour Party would merge in such an organization. (MacLysaght 134-35, and also in the William O'Brien Papers)

The problem which Labour faced at this time was how to support the nationalist inclinations of the majority of its membership, while simultaneously being seen to clearly promote its own distinct social and economic programme throughout the country – all this while keeping its own movement from fracturing. Thomas Foran, the General President of the ITGWU, stated just prior to the 1918 election, that "none but the Labour Party stands for democracy in the full sense," referring to its dual objective of achieving both political and industrial freedom, and he concluded by reminding union members to support Labour's national, social and industrial programme in the General Election.⁴

The decision of the Labour executive to withdraw from the 1918 election was contentious. The recently called armistice meant that this election would be a peace-time rather than a war-time vote, although some critics said that they could not "follow the subtle distinction," with others bitterly referring to this abdication as "a big sell-out." The vote of the general membership to support the executive's recommendation was 96 to 23. Labour's electoral abandonment would only add to the prestige and political power of Sinn Féin. But now they and all of Ireland's political parties and movements collectively "were soon caught up in the maelstrom that was the Anglo-Irish war" (Gaughan 121-122). Above all, however, they wanted to avoid splitting the nationalist vote between Labour and Sinn Féin, thus allowing the possibility of electing "undesirables." As Clarkson observes, "The delegates hoped that they would have a stronger lien on the affections of the Nation for their sacrifice in sinking the issues of the Workers' Republic. The result was the election, in 73 out of Ireland's 105 constituencies, of Sinn Féiners, pledged to the Irish Republic, but not to the Co-operative Commonwealth" (Clarkson 338).

In an additional important critique, Lee contends that Labour's "obsession with Belfast's electoral potential reflected the Dublin leadership's conviction that Labour could

4 "The ITGWU and the General Election," a gift of William O'Brien to the National Library of Ireland, LO P108, Item 21. See also the ITGWU *Annual Report 1918*: 110-12. Several references to this question can be found in the *Freeman's Journal* and especially the *Dublin Saturday Post* from this time period.

not sink deep roots in rural soil" (Lee 758). This argument probably relates more directly to a slightly later time period, the 1920s and 1930s and beyond, when the Irish Labour Party was then operating within a largely rural and socially conservative twenty-six county Irish Free State. As early as 25 July 1916, Labour's M.J. O'Lehane, speaking at an anti-partition rally of the Dublin Trades Council only three months after the Rising, had foreseen this possibility and had presciently issued the following warning:

If the proposals [partition] had come into being, Trades Unionism would be a very minor force in the Government of the 26 counties during the next half century. Practically half of the Trades Union forces were drawn from the area proposed to be excluded from the Home Rule Parliament. The organized workers in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and elsewhere would be at the mercy, if not of the most reactionary, at least of the most conservative forces in the country, viz. the landed and agricultural classes. (*Dublin Saturday Post* 22 July 1916: 1, found in the Johnson Papers MS 17,119)

Once partition had robbed the Irish labour movement of the industrial northeast, it had no option but to attempt to organise the rural agricultural labourers and other potentially sympathetic rural workers to their cause. Joseph Lee's point that rural Labour's strength was found mainly in areas that contained large numbers of agricultural workers is well taken. In the 1918 Membership Census of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU), all classes of agricultural workers made up the largest category of membership by far. This accounted for nearly one quarter of the entire strength of the Union. However, this was a period of boom prices for all agricultural produce, largely due to the wartime economy. In the years following the war, the amount of organization among agricultural labourers predictably declined along with commodity prices. The neglect of agricultural workers would be a continuing and serious shortcoming of the labour movement as it progressed into the 1920s and 1930s.

In another argument partially related to this urban-rural split, Joseph Lee states that a "disproportionate number of Labour leaders come from English backgrounds. Most of the rest were Dublin-orientated trade unionists" (Lee 758). In this regard Ireland was not unique as the urban nature of labour parties in Ireland, Britain, America, and elsewhere was then and is even now a nearly universal reality. That this reality in Ireland contributed to the neglect of rural agricultural workers is unfortunate, but perhaps understandable. Concerning the former point about 'English' backgrounds, Lee cites James Connolly, Jim Larkin, and Thomas Johnson, with the former born in Edinburgh and the latter two in Liverpool. In the case of the first two, Connolly was no doubt primarily interested in the urban workers of Belfast and Dublin, as was Larkin, even though Larkin had earlier been somewhat successful in organizing agricultural workers, especially in County Dublin (Greaves 264-83).⁵

5 See also Emmet Larkin, esp. 116-118. Other sources on these leaders would include Newsinger, Boyd, and Morgan.

Thomas Johnson was arguably the most important labour leader in Ireland in the post-Rising years. He became 'a popular national figure' because of his central role in the Anti-Conscription campaign. The famous English writer G.K. Chesterton, then visiting Dublin in October of 1918, was asked by William Butler Yeats to debate Johnson on the topic of private property at the Abbey Theatre. Looking back on this event, Chesterton later wrote that Johnson was "an Englishman like myself, but one deservedly popular with the proletarian Irish" (Gaughan 116).

Although born in Liverpool, Johnson had been in Ireland since the age of twenty. Even though he had spent most of his years in Belfast and later in Dublin, he was more than aware of agricultural concerns and rural issues. Johnson was very active in the co-operative movement, and his diligence along these lines could be witnessed by the prominence of agriculture as a major theme in his address to the 1916 ITUC&LP Sligo Congress. Throughout the years 1916-1918, Johnson served as the leading Labour spokesperson on food conservation and prices. At the 1917 ITUC&LP Annual Congress in Derry, and to loud applause, Johnson spoke militantly on the subject of exporting food to Great Britain at a time of food shortages in Ireland:

If the government declined to take steps and insisted that the market for agricultural produce must determine who shall consume that produce, then the responsibility would be on the Government, and he should not be sorry if the people rose up in some way to prevent the export of food. (ITUC&LP *Annual Report 1917*: 25-28; see also Mitchell, *Labour* 86-87)

An unsigned enclosure in the Johnson Papers contained this witty remark, "God divides us, but bacon and butter bring us together" (Thomas Johnson Papers, MS 17,113).⁶

In summary, three of the central themes of this essay, especially when considered together, clearly indicate labour's significance in both the national/political movements in Ireland as well as the social/economic struggles in the years immediately following the Easter Rising, despite the major realignments and re-thinking going on both within and outside of labour itself. It truly was a 'revolutionary decade.'

The national question was, undoubtedly, the dominant issue of this period. But the Irish labour movement, while making several tactical errors on this front, nonetheless did advocate and support a consistent program of Irish national unity and self-determination. Labour should not be criticized for its failure to demand a Republic and nothing less in the period leading up to the 1918 General Election. For better or for worse, and for the reasons previously stated, this simply was not their decided policy at this time, but rather the existential policy of Sinn Féin.

The withdrawal from the 1918 election must be dealt with more thoroughly and at least in two manners. What were the reasons for this decision? What were the results

6 Together with many other references to Johnson's efforts on behalf of food conservation, can also be found in MS 17,112. See also Gaughan; Mitchell, *Labour*, on "The Co-operative Ideal," 224-226; and Mitchell, "Thomas Johnson."

of this decision? On the first question, the main reason for Labour's withdrawal from the election was not purely the altruistic motive, as officially stated at their Special Congress and elsewhere, to unite the country politically, but rather also because they had pragmatically decided that they would do poorly in an electoral sense. Thus, they would likely be blamed for splitting the nationalist vote in the process. This would represent a doubly disastrous outcome for Labour, and such a losing proposition had to be avoided. Ironically, this decision in November 1918 was taken at exactly the same time as the movement, "though retaining the unions as the base of the structure, the emphasis was shifted to the political side." This supposed shift was given form by reversing the order of its previous name, ITUC&LP, to the new ILP&TUC, Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (Clarkson 325).

On the second question concerning the results of Labour's decision not to contest the 1918 General Election, my opinion conflicts with that of the noted Irish political commentator Brian Farrell, who maintained that "placed in the context of the enduring influence of that election on Irish political development, it might be argued [...] that the significance of the Labour decision cannot be over-stated" (Farrell 477-502). Farrell's statement on its own represents an over-statement. Labour's own considered and stated electoral goals were, as of late in the year 1918, already quite modest. Farrell himself reported that Labour was then thinking in terms of only contesting four Dublin seats, one each in Cork and Derry, and possibly one each in Limerick, Waterford and North Sligo (Mitchell, *Labour* 91-103).⁷

If Brian Farrell's argument is that the labour movement did not sufficiently prepare for the aftermath of the Easter Rising on the political front, then he is on solid ground, but the prospect of giving up a meager total of between six and nine seats in 1918, as was Labour's reasonable expectation, could hardly be viewed as being absolutely crucial. This rather widely accepted critique of Labour in the post-Rising years should be further analyzed in a slightly wider perspective. The fact remains that when Labour finally did stand independently in the general election of 1922, just four years later, it was able to secure seventeen out of the eighteen seats it contested. This number represents at least twice the number of seats that Labour might have won had it contested the General Election of 1918, as originally planned. Clearly, for the Labour Executive in 1918 the benefits of contesting politically simply did not outweigh the potential risks of doing so.

The hypothesis of the Sinn Féin Standing Committee was that Labour, while probably unable to win seats from Sinn Féin in 1918, might have allowed the Irish Parliamentary Party to slip in between them by splitting the purely nationalist and the socially progressive vote. The greater threat to Labour, at this crucial moment, was to avoid a substantial split from within. This was also very nearly the final argument of Thomas

7 Farrell (496-497) provides an extensive analysis of Irish Labour's decision not to contest politically; and also Gaughan (119-120).

Johnson before the Irish Labour Special Congress on 1 November 1918. This argument is shared by other historians of this period:

Had the Labour party stood in the election it would have been obliged to take up a position for or against abstention from the British parliament, and would thus have been thrown into disarray over a national rather than a social question. Its reason for backing down, therefore, was as much to avoid splitting itself as to avoid splitting the national front. (Rumpf & Hepburn 22-23, citing Farrell 477-502)

There is a tendency to generalize when speaking of hypothetical trends in politics. Therefore two points should be made here. In 1922 when Labour first stood in a general election, it received 22.1% of the first preference votes. This was the so-called 'pact election' in which the pro- and anti-Treaty forces were intended to vote for a common slate of candidates. In 1923, just one year later, however, Labour's share of the first preference votes was nearly halved, dropping to a mere 11.6% (Farrell and also Mitchell, *Labour*, Chapters 6 and 7). By this time two factors were very important. The first was the highly emotional split over the proposed Treaty to end the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921). This split eventually led to the Irish Civil War (1922-1923) and Sinn Féin's violent rupture into two distinct factions and, therefore, two separate voting groups. This, of course, represents the origin of the two major political parties in twentieth-century Ireland, ultimately taking the form of anti-Treaty Fianna Fáil and pro-Treaty Fine Gael.

A related concern was the much-anticipated return of Jim Larkin from America and the disastrous O'Brien-Daly-Larkin conflict and split within the labour movement that ensued (Larkin, Chapter XI "Homecoming"; see also MacLysaght and Mitchell, *Labour* 123-124). These factors, I would argue, were of much more importance to Irish labour in 1922 and 1923 than the absence of Labour Party candidates from the one election cycle four or five years earlier.

Finally, there remains the question of partition and its detrimental impact on the Irish labour movement. Labour was uniquely vulnerable to splitting over non-social and non-economic issues:

More than any other party, Labour surely was struck a vital blow by the loss to the Republic of the industrial north-east, the area which with Cork and Dublin had formed one leg of the urban tripod upon which so much of Labour strength in the early years of the country had been based. It is as much this, perhaps, as any other factor, which has orientated Labour's attention away from industry and towards the more conservative rural worker, until the ludicrous point has been reached in which what is historically a party of the industrial working class can hold only a single seat in the one great urban concentration in the Republic. (Thornley 21)

David Thornley, albeit from the perspective of the mid-1960s, seems to join with Arthur Mitchell on the significance of this matter, and both of them are to varying degrees at odds with Joseph Lee. Labour clearly was more damaged by partition than any other Irish political party. Partition had drastically changed the perspective of the Labour Party and the labour movement in general from 1922 onward, well into the twentieth century. The worst fears of Thomas Johnson, M.J. O'Lehane, and countless other

labour leaders, expressed so eloquently by O'Lehane in 1916, would be realized by the advent of partition. Indeed, "during the next half century," representing the fifty years between the Easter Rising and 1966, the Irish labour movement would "be at the mercy of the most conservative forces in the country," within a largely rural twenty-six county state (M.J. O'Lehane; qtd. in *Dublin Saturday Post* 29 July 1916: 1, found in the Thomas Johnson Papers, MS 17,119).

In conclusion, on all of the major issues of the day, in the years following the Easter Rising, the Irish labour movement was front and centre, strongly promoting the programmes and agendas set by its membership in annual meetings and special conferences. From its central role in the Anti-Conscription Crisis and General Strike of 1918, where such an industrial action could never have succeeded without labour's endorsement and clear-eyed leadership, to the much-criticized decision to stand down politically in the General Election of 1918, labour carefully assessed its options and moved in what was considered to be its best interests. Despite the 'English' or urban nature of most of its leaders, Irish labour was highly active in campaigns for food conservation and the cooperative movement and supported agricultural labourers when possible. The splits that occurred within the movement, especially after the death of Connolly and the emigration to America of Larkin and his eventual return, were inevitable, as with any large organization with such a multitude of social and political persuasions to be taken into account.

Finally, Irish labour in the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising of 1916 was not blind to the possible effects of partition, and it was neither slow nor tentative in taking a firm stand against that despised policy. The long struggle of Irish labour against the partition of the country and for a united all-Ireland labour movement, however, was of little consolation to its loyal members and supporters as their worst fears and predictions gradually became all too real.

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IRISH IDENTITY ONSTAGE: HOW IRISH CULTURE, NATIONALISM, AND REBELLION MOLDED THE ABBEY THEATRE INTO IRELAND'S NATIONAL THEATRE

Hannah Wood

If W.B. Yeats had ever written a play about the history of the Anglo-Irish War, the 1916 Rising may well have been the inciting incident – the occurrence that set subsequent events in motion. Not only did it set events in motion politically or militarily, though it certainly had those effects, it also became a point of inspiration for subsequent Irish Republicans who went on to fight for the IRA or at least tacitly support it. Of course, events like the Rising do not just happen without cause. The backstory is as important as the story it engenders. Just as the architects of the 1916 Rising sought to increase Irish national consciousness leading up to the clash (O'Malley 47), the founders of the Abbey Theatre sought to do similarly, except with performance in the place of violence.

On a rainy afternoon in September 1897, three Irish writers sat in a drawing room in a house in County Galway and decided to form a theatre. These were not just average authors, but Edward Martyn, Lady Gregory, and W.B. Yeats. Lady Gregory later noted that “though [she] had never been at all interested in theatres,” it was “a pity [there was] no Irish theatre where such plays could be given” (Gregory 6). Indeed, when all three came together they realized that a theatre was just the creative spark that Ireland needed. They were inspired to form a performance space that was not commercial, but based on a system of patronage. What was at first called the Irish Literary Theatre and the National Theatre Society became the Abbey Theatre in 1904 and the National Theatre of Ireland in 1925 (Morash 115). However, it is the tumultuous years leading up to 1925 that proved the most crucial for the development of the cultural and political nationalism that shaped the artistic vision of the Abbey Theatre and led to its designation as Ireland's National Theatre.

When embarking upon this discussion of national theatre, it is important to determine a definition of the term, what this designation means and why is it so important to have one. A national theatre is a playhouse that is subsidized by the government in its home country. It can be partially or fully funded (the National in London and the Abbey have subscriber bases as well), producing plays that contribute pieces to the puzzle of its home state's national identity. Even though it is not necessary for a country to have a national theatre, if a state has a good one it provides a sense of national pride and a reference point for foreigners looking to learn more about the country. Good theatre also attracts tourists and can add to the cultural and artistic reputation of a state.

The Abbey was not just a theatre; it was the first national theatre in the western world ("Abbey Theatre"). Yes, it had seats, lights, and a stage, but it represented much more than that. Seeking to depict Ireland as "not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment [...] but the home of an ancient idealism," the founders produced plays written for Irish audiences that described particularly Irish ways of life (Gregory 8-9). In its aims to capture only the Irish experience, the theatre was not only "national," but "nationalist."

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 7-8). Yes, most nations have delineated borders marked by signposts and map lines. However, a nation is also formed as a place in the imagination. Though a man may never meet most of the people in his country, he can identify with them based on the fact that they are of his ilk; a part of the nation formed not only on paper, but in his mind. Therefore, nationalism is the love of one's nation and its contents: the people, the land, and the sunrises and sunsets. This zeal for a country can include the willingness to defend it and even to die for it (7-8). In the Irish case, nationalism has long been a way of subverting English rule in Ireland and keeping alive the dream of an Irish state.

Though Ireland's history of oppression is a key inspiration for Irish nationalism, Irish myth and ancient traditions have also been focal points for the movement (English 37-38, 483-484). In his introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm discusses how states or groups can create new rituals even while referring to them as ancient customs: "What it does is to give any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history" (Hobsbawm 2). The founders of the Abbey called on a practice of traditional Irish folk theatre (as well as characters from mythology) to justify why Ireland should have its own Irish theatre that produced plays created at the source (Yeats, "Preface" 1). Hobsbawm goes on to say that "inventing traditions [...] is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition" (4). Indeed, the Abbey put on plays like Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan* as well as Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon*, which depicted times past. The founders of the theatre sought to create a contemporary theatre scene by relying on Ireland's folkloric history to show that their playhouse was a natural continuation of this tradition.

Irish nationalism also takes on a distinctly Catholic flavour. According to Richard English, "from the Reformation onwards, Catholic faith and Irish distinctiveness were interwoven, and religion rather than ethnic unity was the binding element in the seventeenth century Irish proto-nation" (442). Indeed, nationalist skirmishes often focused on Catholic problems. Though one did not have to be Catholic to be a nationalist, many elements of the nationalist struggle came to be defined by principles of Catholicism. In constructing an Irish identity, nationalists focused on what most of them were not:

namely not British, and by association, not Protestant. This opposition allowed for a specific type of Catholic nationalism to be created. From the Fenians all the way down to Sinn Féin and the IRA, many Irish people took nationalist stands and followed nationalist political parties, defining themselves in opposition to what they viewed as an occupying power (179-181, 257, 442, 503-506).

Though Yeats and Gregory were Protestants, they were not necessarily Unionists. In fact, both “chafed under the dead hand of conservative Irish Protestant society and [were] conscious that change was afoot” (Foster 1: 109). Yeats and Gregory would drift back and forth between enthusiastic and more tepid nationalism throughout the first and second decades of the twentieth century. However, at the threshold of the new century, both seemed optimistic about the idea of Irish independence. Yeats joined the “armchair-Fenian” Young Ireland Society in 1885, and Lady Gregory professed her nationalist leanings in a magazine article in 1900, just as the Abbey was getting up on its feet (Foster 1: 43, 169). Clearly, political ideology would increasingly take precedence over religious affiliation for both theatre founders.

In this way, the Irish National Theatre also came out in resistance to Britain. Indeed, the Abbey was an endeavour of “nation-building,” as Yeats, Lady Gregory, Martyn, and company chose and wrote plays that defined what it meant to be Irish (Trotter xiv-xv). “To enact an idealized image of the Irish nation on the stage was to embody a representation of the Irish counter to the negative images found in English discourse and to the oppression or colonialization” that Irish nationalists claimed they dealt with every day (Trotter 6). Indeed, the three founders began to create a picture of the Irish nation as it was and as they wished it to be. Irish republicans were starting to do this as well. The push for nationhood would come to a head in the next decade.

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The second decade of the twentieth century was a pivotal one in Irish history. In 1916 the Irish nationalist struggle for a republic left the arena of rhetoric and occupied the Dublin General Post Office in a violent revolt. After the rebellion was put down and its leaders executed, the Anglo-Irish War followed several years later and thousands of Irish rebels fought for Ireland’s freedom. This struggle finally culminated in a treaty in December of 1921 (Norman 259-262, 272).

W.B. Yeats constantly sought to resurrect a notion of “Romantic Ireland” that he perceived to have perished in the early nineteen-teens with the defeat of the third Home Rule Bill and the creation of both the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1912 and the Irish Volunteer Force in 1913 (Norman 249-250). For Yeats, the formation of these units cemented the reality that there were “two rival nationalisms” at work in Ireland that had differences in religion as their driving force. He commemorated the month of September 1913 with a lament about the momentum he thought Irish people had lost

during the centuries-long fight for self-determination. In his poem, titled plainly “September 1913,” Yeats wrote:

What need you, being come to sense,
 But fumble in a greasy till
 And add the halfpence to the pence
 And prayer to shivering prayer, until
 You have dried the marrow from the bone:
 For men were born to pray and save;
 Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone,
 It’s with O’Leary in the grave. (*Collected Poems* 107)

John O’Leary was a founding member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a rebel organization formed in resistance to British rule in the nineteenth century. He organized opposition to the Irish Parliamentary Party. Later in life he was also a supporter of nationalist writers and rebels and became friendly with Yeats. He died in 1907 (Maume, McGee). Yeats equated the death of O’Leary with the fading of “Romantic Ireland,” because O’Leary was a staunch nationalist who fought for Irish freedom and self-governance. In the poem, Yeats despairs at the apathy and shortsightedness of the Catholic and bourgeois classes who will not lift a hand for Irish freedom. The twin strictures of Catholic morality and rigid adherence to laws imposed by England constrained the Irish capacity to support the fight for self-determination. This lack of heroism from a generation who “were born to pray and save” rather than act is an attitude that Yeats regarded as unfortunate as well as disrespectful to the memory of John O’Leary and other men who fought and died for an Irish Free State (Waters).

Yeats was also a participant. In April of 1912 he signed his name “to a public letter from Irish Protestants who supported Home Rule and contradicted the claims of unionist politicians that they feared for their future in an independent Ireland” (Foster 1: 459). Those who signed the letter were mainly average middle-class professionals living in Dublin, not radical nationalists. This group believed that a new Irish government with a Catholic majority would not discriminate against the Protestant minority. However, though Yeats was a Protestant who was tolerant of Catholicism, he would not go so far as to support the establishment of the British Board of Film Censors (1912) in Britain, which, he feared, the Irish Catholic church might use to limit media coverage of issues which they viewed to be morally reprehensible like divorce. Barring the two extremes of Catholic discrimination against Protestants, or Protestant discrimination against Catholics, Yeats was a Protestant for Home Rule and he wanted the same benefits his minority religion was given under British oversight for the followers of the majority religion in Ireland (459). Despite his dealings in the realm of policy, Yeats also thought “that a man of letters should have no part with [politics], for his life if it has meaning at all is the discovery of reality” (qtd. in Foster 1: 460). Though Yeats’s dramatic work hardly ever broached politics (he reserved his political laments for his poetry), they were certainly allegories for the modern Irish situation. This was never truer than in the nineteen-teens. Therefore, though Yeats’s statement is technically accurate, there were also artful nationalist thematic undercurrents at

work. As can be seen in the plays the poet wrote for the Abbey, Yeats was for Ireland before he was affiliated with any religion or creed. However, in those days, supporting Ireland in its unadulterated, purely Irish form – that “Romantic Ireland” that Yeats so eloquently bemoaned the loss of in “September 1913” – was a political statement nonetheless.

The situation in Ireland was becoming more intense. The realities of a country rehearsing for an insurrection crept its way into everyday life. People who normally would not pick up a pen were writing plays and staging them in avant-garde ways in order to express how they felt about the current tense political and social situation. These same people would then rush “from rehearsals to the drill hall” in order to be literally prepared for any kind of violent clash. One actress even began performing in variety shows to raise funds for the purchase of weapons (Morash 152). In short, things were getting seriously dangerous, and those involved with the Abbey Theatre would either be close observers or participants in this impending madness.

Just three years later, the 1916 Rising presented itself as the cataclysm that Irish nationalists were waiting for. On Easter Monday, 1,000 Irish nationalist Republicans descended on Dublin, taking over the General Post Office. A week later it was over and many were executed (Norman 259-262). One of the Abbey’s actors was the first man to die in the Rising (McHugh 105). In the aftermath, the members of the Abbey were obviously shaken. Roger McHugh has noted a shift in the general attitudes of the public after the Rising. He quotes the autobiography of IRA Officer Ernie O’Malley, who recognized a change in the Irish population: “Something strange stirred in the people, some feeling long since buried, a sense of communion with the fighting dead generations, for the dead walked around again” (qtd. in McHugh 105).

The rebirth of this revolutionary spirit was something that Yeats recognized as well. He lamented the violent change in Irish society wrought by the Rising and the subsequent Anglo-Irish War. In the poem “Easter 1916” he called out some of the instigators of the rebellion:

MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born. (*Collected Poems* 182-183)

Though Yeats looked positively toward the idea of an Irish Free State, this “terrible beauty” gave him pause. He saw the repressive, though familiar status quo of Irish society transitioning from a grumbling hegemony to violent rebellion with an irreversible momentum. He even thought that he might have played a part in causing the rise of patriotic fervour, and the idea seemed to nag at him. He reflected over a decade later in “Man and the Echo”:

I lie awake night after night ...
 Did that play of mine send out
 Certain men the English shot? (*Collected Poems* 353-354)

With the mention of “that play of mine” Yeats was referring to *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, a piece that was first produced back in 1902 before the Abbey building was in use. So though Yeats worried that he had influenced young men to die for Ireland with one of his first plays, the theatre responded in that crucial year not with more pieces which might contain hidden revolutionary messages, but by producing works which were more escapist than relevant.

George Bernard Shaw’s work *John Bull’s Other Island* was an example of this trend. Performed at the Abbey five months after the Rising, the play featured dual protagonists, one Irishman and one Englishman. The Irish character was stoic and cynical, while the English character was a romantic. Shaw was playing with stereotypes and perhaps painting a comic picture of future relations between the English and Irish that had less to do with nationalism and identity than economic improvement. For example, at the end of Shaw’s play the two characters go off to buy a hotel together (Morash 158-159). However, audiences may not have been focusing on the underlying lessons in *John Bull’s Other Island*. Most just found the play humorous and it seemed to provide an escape from the serious events taking place outside the Abbey’s doors. Though there is more than one kind of good theatre, and comedy can be a powerful cathartic tool – letting the audience forget about their troubles for a while and just have a laugh – the Abbey had started out with a more comprehensive and purposeful mission than that. So ironically enough, in 1916, the year when it would seem that a strong and meaningful theatrical voice was needed most, the Abbey reached a point of decline (158-159).

W.B. Yeats also seemed to lose interest in his theatre that year. He began leaving many of the larger duties to Lady Gregory. The 1916 Rising did not seem to directly precipitate the poet’s disinterest in theatre, as he had long had a short attention span. Yeats always spent time away from the Abbey in England, taking breaks when he needed time off (Foster 1: 457, 2: 5). However, this was a particularly difficult period for Yeats to be disengaged. Just when the Abbey needed the voice of arguably its strongest literary figure, he handed the reins to Lady Gregory. However, she was no slouch. She handled the daily operations of the theatre during this time and “she wrote more for the theatre than any other dramatist of the period, having thirty-one opening nights [...] at the Abbey between 1904 and 1921” (Morash 161). Her hard work paid off and Yeats was not unaware of it. In 1919 he thanked his friend in an open letter, acknowledging that she had made the majority of the effort to keep the Abbey running. The Abbey was not totally out of Yeats’s mind, however, as he wrote six new works of drama between 1910 and 1920, but only two new pieces and two revisions were produced (160).

Though he declared that writers should stay out of politics, Yeats did pen one overtly political play that was inspired by the 1916 Rising. It was called *The Dreaming of the*

Bones. He wrote it in the spring and summer of 1917, but held back from producing it. He told Lady Gregory that it was “too politically explosive” to be performed right away (qtd. in Morash 160). The play was set during the Rising and had three musicians acting as a Greek chorus of sorts. A rebel who is running from the Rising happens upon the ghosts of Diarmuid and Devorgilla (The two were responsible for welcoming the Normans into Ireland in the 1100s.) At first, the young man thinks that he can find forgiveness in his heart for the pair, who are apparently condemned to wander the earth in sorrow for their deed. However, the next morning he changes his mind. He tells them that they can never be forgiven for opening Ireland to conquest and mayhem for thousands of years hence. According to Christopher Morash, “if the future had been open and mutable at the time of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in 1902, by the time Yeats wrote *The Dreaming of the Bones* [...] it was locked into the implacable logic of war” (160). Indeed, it seems that Yeats’s distance from the situation did not hurt his perception of it. Ireland was hurtling towards war with Britain and that was not going unnoticed by its bard. Though the play would not be produced at the Abbey until 1919, Yeats was indeed taking stock of the situation and putting it onto the page. Even if he wrote it with the 1916 Rising as a backdrop in his mind, the fact that he waited to have it produced placed it into an even more critical juncture for Irish nationhood.

As the curtain rose in 1919, *The Dreaming of the Bones* would serve as a side-note to the larger picture of political maneuvering and violence. During that year, another parliament was established to counteract the British one. It was named Dáil Éireann. A Declaration of Independence was also drawn up. However, there were skirmishes happening outside of the negotiation rooms. In January of 1919 the IRA shot and killed two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary in Tipperary. This is the event that is referred to as the inciting incident for the Anglo-Irish War between England and Ireland. According to Richard English, “there then developed a cyclical pattern of vicious violence: republican, state and loyalist brutality marred life across much of Ireland in gruesome, repellent and vengeful fashion” (287). It was against this grim backdrop that Yeats’s play was produced and during this bloody and contentious time that the Abbey had to soldier on by either cheering up the population or providing catharsis for them.

In 1919, the Abbey Theatre began to pick up steam again, producing plays with political messages. Not only was *The Dreaming of the Bones* performed, but *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Rising of the Moon* were staged again, as well as another Yeats play set in a fictional ancient past called *On Baile’s Strand*, about the Irish folklore hero Cúchulainn. Gregory and Yeats chose a very topical play for August 1919. Written by Brinsley MacNamara and called *The Rebellion in Ballycullen*, the story is set in 1917 and 1918 in a town somewhere in the Midlands. The play focuses on how the Rising affects the attitudes, politics, and daily lives of the people residing in the small town as seen through the eyes of a young man who is coming home from university in Dublin and decides to write a book about his birthplace. The Abbey closed out

1919 with a comedy, *The Whiteheaded Boy* by Lennox Robinson, about the son of a rich family who retaliates when they decide to stop sending him to medical school (Robinson). All in all, it was a well-balanced year of theatre where humour coexisted with topical drama.

The 1920 season was very similar to its predecessor. *The Enchanted Trousers* by Oliver St. John Gogarty is a satire with a message. It is about the strings the aristocracy had to pull to get political appointments in the Irish countryside before 1922. Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon* was produced again in May of that year, as it continued to provide valuable commentary about the Irish situation. A comedy by W.F. Casey, *The Suburban Groove*, ended the year on a humorous note (Casey).

While these two theatrical seasons came and went, Lady Gregory had been working on *Aristotle's Bellows*. While writing the play, she remarked in her journal that her goal as a writer was to keep away from politics. "My formula has long been 'not working for Home Rule but preparing for it,'" she said (qtd. in Morash 162). *Aristotle's Bellows* focuses on Conan, a man who is obsessed with the teachings of none other than Aristotle. He realizes that he can harness the power of the philosopher with a bellows. He decides to use the power to change the attitudes of the people in his town by eradicating their ignorance (Gregory, "Aristotle's Bellows"). Though slightly absurd in premise, the play is also an allegory for how Gregory and others at the Abbey hoped that Ireland would be transformed once the Anglo-Irish War was over and independence was a reality.

The possibility of change in Ireland may not have been as far-fetched as Lady Gregory portrayed it. The next year, on 7 January 1922, the Dáil, now Ireland's parliament, ratified the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which ended the war and created an Irish Free State (English 307). Several days later, T.C. Murray's *Aftermath* (a fitting title for the first Abbey play performed in a free Ireland) premièred. The piece tells the story of an old woman who dreams of getting her people's lost land back. In her mission to do this, she ruins the lives of her family and friends. Obviously Murray could not know that the Anglo-Irish Treaty would be signed days before his play opened. However,

he could have been writing a prescription for the culture of Free State Ireland, which was to be dominated by a harsh tone of disappointment, shot through with a resentment that the young should be sacrificed for the ideals and cravings of a previous generation. (Morash 172)

Indeed, though in this case the grass was greener on the side of the Free State than under British rule, Ireland had new problems to deal with. When people collectively fight for something for so long and they finally get it, the form that it takes can never be as perfect as they imagined. Therefore, there was some disappointment with the Irish Free State. This dissatisfaction extended to the Abbey, where patrons were tired of its penchant for idealism and grand patriotic statements (173). That era seemed to be over, having been replaced with an Irish constitution, the realities of running one's own country and the hardships and impossibilities of molding it to fit those ideals.

Even as the new government settled into place, there were some Irish forces that were against the treaty. This group, known as the Anti-Treaty IRA, was holed up at the Four Courts judicial building in Dublin, and Irish Free State forces tried to flush them out. On 30 June 1922, the Free State Army bombarded the Four Courts. Meanwhile, Sean O'Casey was writing *The Shadow of a Gunman* and was perhaps inspired by the events going on around him. The play was set in a 1920 Dublin tenement. The protagonist is Donal, a writer who pretends to be a gunman to impress the other residents of the complex. The themes of subterfuge and violence in this piece were certainly perfect for a year in which things were still not quite certain and Ireland was on the precipice of another war – one which would pit Irishman against Irishman.

The next year, on 12 April 1923, *The Shadow of a Gunman* had its opening night at the Abbey. Two days earlier, the leader of the Anti-Treaty IRA had been killed at the Four Courts. There were threats to the Abbey by other members of that organization so two Free State Army guards were stationed at the theatre during the performance. One helped an actor playing a Black and Tan (or British soldier) with the accuracy of his costume and instructed him on how to carry his gun. The play was topical enough that it “disconcertingly merged with the world outside the theatre, pointing up the uncomfortable similarities between what had been seen as the glorious struggle of the War of Independence, and the sordid viciousness of the Civil War” (Morash 174).

Certainly this play, of all the plays performed at the Abbey in the previous nineteen years seemed to get at the heart of the pain and suffering caused by the struggles of the past seven. This was never more apparent than when art melded into life backstage before curtain.

This ability to cross the line from dreams to reality and back again in the effort to quantify and define the Irish experience in these years is perhaps what prompted the Irish government to designate the Abbey Theatre as Ireland's National Theatre in 1925. The Free State was to give the playhouse an annual subsidy, and as the first cheque from the government rolled in the Abbey Theatre became the first theatre in the English-speaking world to be funded at all by its state (“Abbey Theatre”).

Yeats and Gregory did not want to be beholden to anyone. However, whether they were using the theatre to promote nationalism and the creation of a free state or whether they had turned their attention to focus on enriching Irish culture: they always had a responsibility to the people because they were creating something that was supposed to belong to the citizens of Ireland. The new Irish state was involved in the same type of social contract between the people and the establishment, promising to create a society that was beneficial to all Irish citizens. The theatre, its actors (some of whom were nationalist activists in the early days), and the government were attempting to cater to the entirety of the population of Ireland, functioning as a voice for Ireland and attempting to express the general social and political landscape in the alternate universe of theatre and through the reality of legislation (Trotter 7, 95, 110; Pilkington 87).

The founders' motives in accepting the money might not have been totally altruistic, however. Eileen Morgan suggests that the Abbey took this money because it was almost bankrupt, not because it felt any kind of kinship with the new Irish Free State (Morgan xviii). I would offer that there were deeper links between the two bodies than financial need and the wish to expand the state's cultural horizons. This seems especially true since the situation remains the same today (almost ninety years later), as the theatre receives a yearly sum from the Arts Council of Ireland ("Abbey Theatre"). Thus, though the Abbey Theatre was not the only playhouse in Ireland, least of all in Dublin, its trajectory seemed to mirror that of the state it inhabited: full of controversy and battles (both ideological and bloody), not always smooth, but ultimately successful nonetheless.

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The Abbey Theatre has come a long way from a mere kernel of an idea at a gathering in a parlour in 1897. However, in many ways the modern Abbey retains similarities with the initial concerns of its founders. It continues to explore the roots of Irish identity, promoting Irish playwrights, directors, actors, designers, crewmembers and ideas. Though the National Theatre in London has become probably the première national theatre in the west, if not the world; it was the Abbey that came first. I would argue that it is that idea that theatre can represent a nation (a courageous one in that tenuous time and contested space of 1897 Ireland) that the Abbey brought into western popular consciousness. With its greater resources, the National Theatre in London does dominate the international arena. However, new incarnations in Scotland and Wales continue to elbow their way into the conversation with increasingly louder voices. The wonderful thing about theatre though, especially in this globalized world, is that fresh ideas are always being heard. These theories are not just new, they are ancient themes rebroadcast; a discussion of old topics of identity made visible and fresh for a new generation.

From the one, to one among many in Europe, the Abbey has retained many qualities of its original identity. But what kind of theatre was the Abbey originally? How did it negotiate its aims of creating a national identity or nationalist drama? In the end, there are major differences between the words "national" and "nationalist," both semantic and ideological. An Irish national theatre would be a playhouse with the purpose of producing the work of Irish playwrights and employing Irish actors and directors, while also strengthening a communal sense of Irish identity. An Irish nationalist theatre, on the other hand, would be dedicated to espousing nationalist political and cultural values as well as openly advocating for an Irish Free State. In its early years, the Abbey – still Irish National Theatre today – held a middle ground between the two terms. Its nationalism was perhaps a by-product of its national aims as well as a reaction to the political turmoil sometimes literally going on down the street. However, the founders' mission was to promote Irishness rather than explicitly advocate for Home Rule or a Free State. Their aims seemed to err on the side of creating strong

Irish theatre before espousing a specific political agenda, though it appears that during the later years of the Rising and during the Irish Civil War, they had more trouble containing their views.

The Abbey started out as a national project that would create a body of Irish theatrical work to be performed for Irish audiences. It was not always well received. However, whether an audience member liked a play or abhorred it, it became a part of the national conversation about the nature of Irish culture and identity. Though Yeats might have once said that he wished his theatre to be a closed space for those who really appreciated the performing arts, that is not how he usually felt. Yeats and Gregory wished to create a place where Irish people could learn, invest, and take pride in their heritage. Does this motive of promoting Irish culture also extend into the nationalistic desire to place one's state over all others? The answer is yes and no. Though Lady Gregory was originally in favour of British rule, she changed her mind. Yeats would have rather not have been involved in politics and, in fact, believed that creative people should stay out of such things. However, with his plays he did sometimes step into the arena of nationalism. For example, he worried about whether *The Countess Cathleen* would encourage young men to join the War for Independence. Though the founders did not show the most nationalistic works possible, the *zeitgeist* of the beginning of the twentieth century certainly fed into their choice of plays and their own creative output, as it would for anyone who bothered to read the newspaper or talk to a friend or even step outside into the street. It is the cultural impulse that made and continues to make the Abbey a strong theatre.

The choices that Yeats, Gregory, and Martyn made ensured that the plays that graced the stage of the Abbey Theatre in its early years were not necessarily all "nationalist," but they were all certainly "national." These national dramas taught lessons to everyone involved not only about the nature of the group of creators, but the spirit of the Irish audience. These plays were not plain peas in the soup of Irish national identity; however, they were also good. The dramas were well written (by some of the preeminent writers of the twentieth century working in any country). The actors were accomplished, and so were the directors. Thus, the Abbey was a national theatre that had the ability to attract the old, stalwart, upper-middle-class audiences, and new ones, too. Through it, many of the most famous Irish plays of the twentieth century were performed. The strength of the founding mission is still apparent, as the Abbey remains the National Theatre of Ireland and continues to produce plays that delve into the various layers of Irish identity.

Every country can benefit from a national theatre. It creates a cohesive voice for the culture and identity of the state. An organization like this was especially crucial for Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. Carving out the differences between English and Irish people, in mythical, folk, historic and contemporary terms was very important. In marking these differences in basic culture, the Abbey and its founders created a defined sense of singular Irish identity that they thought was previously ab-

sent. The Abbey continued to play a vital role (both as instigator and commentator) in the seminal events taking place in Ireland in the first two and a half decades of the twentieth century. As the Irish Free State was born in 1923, so was the Abbey designated as the theatre of the new nation two years later. The Abbey's role in those years is impressive, but the fact that it still survives today with the essence of its original mission intact is even more noteworthy. Currently, the Abbey Theatre is also representative of a broader need for states and regions all over Europe to have venues for the expression of unique national identities. Whether that freedom is spoken through educational plays about national culture or vehement nationalist pieces, the beauty of having one's own playhouse, just like a free state, is that it provides a space and a stage for a unique type of identity expression that speaks to the population and the individual in only the way that a national theatre could.

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MUSICAL STATUES: MONUMENTALISING IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Verena Commins

The year 2016 has generated a considerable degree of both academic and popular interest into processes of remembering and public forms of commemoration which in turn provoke questions about the meaning and interpretation of heritage and culture. Contributing to that conversation, this essay reflects on the commemoration of Irish traditional music and musicians, a practice that has emerged over the past four decades. It gives particular attention to monumentalisation, that is, the material expression of placing statuary and monuments in honour of Irish musicians. Entwining geographical resonances from other 2016 centenaries that pertain to Irish traditional music, this essay considers the ways in which these have become embedded into the cultural and musical identity of contemporary Ireland.

1916 saw the death of two notable uilleann pipers: the old Donegal piper, Tarlach Mac Suibhne (1831-1916, Gweedore, County Donegal, also known as *An Píobaire Mór*) and the young piper (and Proclamation signatory) Éamonn Ceannt (1881-1916, Ballymoe, County Galway).¹ Descending from a line of pipers (both Tarlach Mac Suibhne's father, Éamonn Rua and his grandfather played), Mac Suibhne himself formed part of a generation that witnessed the virtual extinction of the uilleann piping tradition in Ireland (Breandán Breathnach, "The Pipers of Kerry"; Meehan). His performances brought him to the attention of national and international audiences, notably in appearances at the Chicago World Fair (1893), annual visits to Glasgow and closer to home at the early Feiseanna Ceoil of 1897 and 1898 respectively.² Despite this, however, primary sources of information on Mac Suibhne are scant, consisting of a brief biographical note by Francis O'Neill, which includes what Seosamh Breathnach later describes as "the buffoonery about his relations with the fairies which McSweeney indulged in in Chicago" (Seosamh Breathnach 6; O'Neill 289-295).³ He remains, therefore, a somewhat irreducible figure. With no extant recordings, the opportunity to champion and advocate his music is therefore absent and his legacy con-

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- 1 According to Breandán Breathnach, Kerry piper Michael O'Sullivan (Micí Cumbá) also died in 1916. A plaque in commemoration of Cumbá at Castlecove, Co. Kerry, however, cites his dates as 1835-1915 (Breandán Breathnach, "The Pipers of Kerry" 49).
 - 2 He was awarded second place in the uilleann pipes competition and first place in unpublished airs at the first Feis Ceoil in 1897. He does not appear to compete at the Feis Ceoil again, but is listed to play at the opening Feis Ceoil concert in Belfast the following year (1898).
 - 3 O'Neill had the opportunity to meet with Mac Suibhne during the months Mac Suibhne spent at the World Fair in Chicago. Ó Giolláin drawing on Joep Leerssen suggests that "the fascination with fairies – something which Catholic intellectuals shied away from as an embarrassing part of their recent peasant culture – was part of a Romantic embrace of the irrational and the mysterious as a source of creative inspiration" (Ó Giolláin 112).

tinues to exist largely outside both the realm of musical commemoration and monumentalisation.⁴ Éamonn Ceannt on the other hand is widely commemorated albeit primarily on political grounds.⁵ A key aspect of his legacy, mostly absent from popular commemorative narratives, is his role in the revival of Irish traditional music, the uilleann pipes in particular, during the early twentieth century period of cultural revival.⁶ A founding member and secretary of Cumann na bPíobairí (the Dublin Pipers' Club, founded in 1900), Ceannt undertook the vital revivalist initiative of bringing older piping practitioners, such as blind Galway piper Martin Reilly, to Dublin. Invariably, however, Ceannt's piping legacy is reduced to just one anecdote: that he performed on the war (not the uilleann) pipes for Pope Pius X during the Catholic Men's Society's visit to the Papal Games in 1908. The Pope's reaction to the war pipes is recounted by Ronan Ceannt, Éamonn's son: "the pope of course got a full blast of the war pipes. He was a little bit pained by it, but very charmed all the same."⁷ Like Mac Suibhne there is no sonic record of Ceannt's uilleann pipes playing. Ceannt's role in revivalist activity demonstrates the cultural impetus that compelled him to take part in the 1916 Rising. Yet in commemorative tributes to Ceannt, this is ultimately subsumed under the legacy of his "supreme sacrifice" (Henry).

One further musical centenary resonates with the timing of this essay: the one-hundred-year anniversary of the establishment of the Irish music recording industry in the United States. In 1916, Ellen O'Byrne DeWitt, a New York music seller and travel agent, contracted Columbia Records to make a recording of Irish traditional music for retail in her shop (Ní Fhuartháin, "Copley Records" 205).⁸ Subsequently recognising the inherent market potential within the Irish immigrant community, the American recording industry's contribution to the commodification of Irish traditional music led to one of the most significant changes in its reception both at home and abroad.⁹ The recordings that ensued, particularly those of Sligo-born musicians, created a stylistic

4 A small plaque was raised to Mac Suibhne in 1999 at the old church in Derrybeg during a McSweeney clan gathering and the newly founded (2012) association of Donegal uilleann pipers take his name: *Cumann Píobaireachta Tharlach Mhic Suibhne*.

5 Official narratives of the Rising pass little comment on his piping legacy. Tim Pat Coogan mentions briefly that he played the pipes and had a place on the Governing Council of the Gaelic League (Coogan 64). Therefore the monuments in which his name is immortalised remember Ceannt as one of the executed leaders of 1916 and a signatory of the Proclamation. These include Ceannt Station, Galway (officially renamed in 1966), one of the Ballymun towers (built in 1966 and demolished in 2005), Áras Ceannt, 14 Thomas St., Dublin, Ceannt Barracks, Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare, and a large portrait bust (1963) by Domhnall Ó Murchadha for the series of Anglo-Irish War heroes in Leinster House (Turpin 77).

6 The third chapter of William Henry's biography *Supreme Sacrifice* is devoted to Ceannt's contribution to the Gaelic Revival (Henry 12-18).

7 *On Behalf of the Provisional Government* (documentary film, RTÉ, 1966).

8 This consisted of an accordion and banjo duet by Eddie Herborn and James Wheeler.

9 In Ireland, even after the establishment of the Free State, there was no independent Irish recording industry.

imprint which, as this essay will seek to demonstrate, is a significant influence on the current geographical pattern of Irish traditional music monumentalisation.

Concretising what had previously been a sonic and print legacy, the stones, statues, and monuments dedicated to Irish traditional musicians begin to appear in civic spaces from the 1970s onwards, representing a new cultural trajectory of commemoration in Ireland. Undertaking research on the Willie Clancy Summer School led me somewhat unintentionally to the discovery that the monument raised to Clare piper Willie Clancy in 1974 was in fact the first public monument to a named Irish traditional musician.¹⁰ This monument, a bronze relief portrait plaque of Clancy playing the pipes created by sculptors John Behan and James McKenna, is situated at Ballard Cemetery in Miltown Malbay, County Clare. Placed adjacent to the grave of Willie Clancy it was unveiled in 1974, eighteen months after his death and during the second year of the Willie Clancy Summer School.¹¹ Whilst the school itself is widely acknowledged as the first summer school of Irish traditional music and the blueprint on which all others have subsequently been modelled, it is not widely credited with pre-figuring the first monument to an Irish traditional musician. In fact the process of monumentalising Irish traditional musicians and a discourse on that process is still in its infancy. The incorporation of this monument into an annual commemorative ritual, along with the actual summer school itself, creates what Emily Fitzgerald describes as a “social praxis of iterative remembering that sustains its on-going significance” (Fitzgerald 86). In doing so, it has shaped a devotion to Willie Clancy, arguably introducing what Nigel Hamilton calls “the commemorative instinct” in stone into the field of Irish traditional music (Hamilton 9).

Daithí Kearney draws attention to monuments and statuary specific to the commemoration of Irish traditional musicians, opening up a geography-centred perspective on the tradition (Kearney). Expanding on this research by chronologically logging the geographical spread of monuments dedicated to Irish musicians, this essay reveals the emergence of an interesting and specific pattern of temporalised and territorialised commemoration. The general project of monumentalisation in Ireland demonstrates that it was politically driven, moving from a symbolic royal domain to a primarily nationalist one (Johnson, “Sculpting”; Hill). According to David Fitzpatrick, “the commemoration of dead heroes or saints, and the events by which they left their mark, is an essential element of Irish political, religious and social organisation” (Fitzpatrick 184). It recurs consistently as different groups and political factions attempt to legitimate their own activities by celebrating particular interpretations of the past. Ac-

10 This research situates the harper Turlough Carolan (1670-1738) outside of the Irish traditional music canon. The first of numerous monuments to Carolan consists of a bas-relief in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, 1824.

11 Despite its location in a cemetery, the Willie Clancy monument does not constitute a headstone (which are discounted for the purposes of this research) but forms a discrete memorial. This makes it distinct from the memorial headstone raised to uilleann piper Jack Wade in 1968, discussed further in Commins.

ording to Paula Murphy, monuments provide a “concentrated visual manifestation of Irish cultural identity” (Murphy 29), and likewise Judith Hill states that they “inculcate a sense of Irish identity” (Hill 147). Earlier cultural monuments that date from the nineteenth century were raised as a means for the Anglo-Irish to create a connection to the native tradition, echoing their attention to antiquarian research into traditional aspects of Gaelic culture (Davis). The first sculpture of an Irish musician, Thomas Moore (erected on College Green in 1857), was followed by Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke, who as “Protestant men of letters were comparatively uncontroversial and could comfortably coexist with the more imperial statues gracing the city” (Johnson, “Cast in Stone” 59). Monuments and statues provide a backdrop for both the representation and framing of national and local identities in public spaces. However, for the most part, as Joep Leerssen explains, “the native tradition in Ireland had no control over the dedication and monumentalisation of public space” (Leerssen 210). The traditional decoration of major urban centres, and of Dublin in particular, with statues of firstly royal and then political leaders was an attempt (mirrored across Europe and North America) to construct and galvanize a sense of national identity. Ireland’s cultural heritage, therefore, does not figure highly in the commemorative realm until later in the twentieth century due to the hegemony of monumental nationalism.¹² However, this position changes from the 1960s onwards following rapid social and political change in Ireland. Joe Cleary makes the point that “the most [...] consistently innovative figures of the contemporary Irish cultural scene [are] its singers and musicians,” demonstrating what Dowling refers to as “an important cultural shift [...] in the study of Irish identities [...] where identity [can no longer be] quickly reduced to national identity” (Cleary 32; Dowling, “Rambling” 112). Until recent times Irish traditional music, and indeed other aspects of Ireland’s cultural heritage, have clearly played second fiddle to that of its political heritage in terms of commemorative fervour. This chimes with wider debates about Irish identity, not least the discourse and practices surrounding music revival. Tensions were inevitable between the cultural tastes of predominantly middle-class revivalists and the values of the folk culture of the “old” Irish nation. Martin Dowling’s exposition of the differing opinions and intentions held by members of the Feis Ceoil committee, the Gaelic League and other commentators during the revival period of the early twentieth century, illuminates the status of “the music of the ‘peasant’ class [before it] would eventually move to the centre of the discourse of the nation’s music” (Dowling, *Traditional Music* 205).

The monument to Willie Clancy, identified by this research as the first monument to a traditional musician, was quickly followed by the raising of a cenotaph to fiddle player Michael Coleman in Gurteen, County Sligo. This was unveiled in September 1974 just a few months after the monument to Willie Clancy but thirty years after the death of Coleman, in the United States, in 1945.¹³ A country-wide survey catalogues the

12 A notable exception is the statue to Pádraic Ó Conaire erected in Eyre Square, Galway in 1935 (since relocated to the Galway Museum).

13 Planning for the Coleman cenotaph began, however, in 1963.

placement of a total of 79 monuments to named Irish traditional musicians since 1974.¹⁴ These are clustered in just 17 counties (therefore a further 15 counties are monumentless). A closer analysis of their topographical arrangement places County Sligo at the top of the musical leader board with 14 monuments, followed closely by the other western seaboard counties of Clare (12), Galway (11), Kerry (8), and Cork (7). The appearance of such monuments represents the development of new spatial coordinates of the identity of Irish traditional music, as more wide-scale and affective commemoration emerges towards the end of the twentieth century.

Clearly the performance practices of Irish traditional music are replete with intrinsic modes of commemoration prior to Irish traditional music's debut on the plinths and bases of Ireland's cultural landscape. Nomenclature is one such commemorative tool; individual musicians are remembered through the naming of tunes, versions of tunes, and more recently the naming of festivals, lecture series, and branches of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*. Furthermore, the enactment of playing a tune or singing a song resounds fundamentally with commemorative content. Yet invariably, such commemorative acts sit within the confines of a particular community of interest. Even where these take place within the public sphere, they are largely contained within the community of practice of Irish traditional musicians. Appositely, the raising of a monument brings Irish traditional music into a wider public sphere. Engraved stones and plaques solidify the intangibility of performed utterances, placing them as permanent, visible, and therefore less ephemeral records.

The trajectory of the monumentalisation of Irish traditional music, emerging in the mid-1970s, demonstrates that urban landscapes are no longer the sole "depository of symbolic space" (Yvonne Whelan, "The Construction" 509). Indeed the majority of the 79 inventoried monuments occur in small towns and villages, townlands and crossroads. This locally driven placement of monuments and statues, particularly in non-urban environments, stretches the canvas of Irish identity back into rural Irish spaces. Furthermore, it speaks clearly to the re-territorialisation of Irish music in local and rural places, corresponding to a de-nationalisation of Irish traditional music narratives (Commins). The appearance of small-scale monuments, such as those to Willie Clancy and Michael Coleman, continue sporadically in the years that follow 1974.¹⁵ However, the project of monumentalising Irish traditional musicians gathers momentum with the approaching millennium, coinciding with the Celtic Tiger years and the finances that it made available for the costly process of monumentalisation.¹⁶ The

14 This does not include monuments to institutions of Irish music, abstract representations of music, and/or unnamed musicians or monuments inside buildings.

15 For example, a bronze plaque to Joe Cooley, Peterswell, County Galway, 1975; a stone monument to John 'Piper Reilly', Dunmore, County Galway, 1977; a monument to John McKenna, Tarmon, County Leitrim, 1980.

16 Emilie Pine suggests that the plethora of monuments raised during the Celtic Tiger years have themselves "become a memorial to a time of visible wealth, security and prosperity, now lost" (Pine 11).

moving statues of the mid-1980s are replaced both physically and metaphorically with stationary musical ones demonstrated by the fact that more than half of these 79 monuments have been raised since the millennium.

The myth of the West as a traditionalising musical narrative becomes further solidified in stone as 63 of the 79 monuments to Irish traditional musicians occur in western seaboard counties. This has particular importance for Sligo and Clare, counties that might both legitimately claim the label “home of Irish traditional music.” Sligo’s claim is fuelled by the prodigious American success of the ‘Sligo Three’: champion fiddle players Michael Coleman (1891-1945), James Morrison (1893-1947), and Paddy Killoran (1904-1965), who left Sligo as young adults in the early 1900s and spent the rest of their lives in the United States. Their music, popularised by the nascent (post-1916) recording industry in the States, returned to Ireland and to the homesteads of countless traditional musicians via 78 rpms. Collectively the performance rubric ‘Sligo style’ is assigned to their music with the result that these recordings achieved national significance. Sligo style sonically instated itself throughout the country due to the geographic accessibility offered by recorded sound. This accessibility resulted in imitation, and the subsequent success of Sligo style as a winning style at Fleadhanna Cheoil co-opted and reinforced its position as the national standard. The death and burial of Michael Coleman in 1945 in the United States deprived County Sligo of a graveside at which to pay tribute. The 1974 Coleman cenotaph located just outside Gurteen, County Sligo, remedies this absence to some extent, but more significantly represents a repatriation of not just Coleman himself, but the label ‘Sligo style’ back to County Sligo. Indeed County Sligo’s claim on Irish traditional music as a central part of its Sligo identity draws its legitimacy from the American success of the ‘Sligo Three.’

In November 2011 a monument stone was unveiled near Ballintogher, southeast County Sligo, listing the engraved names of 48 deceased musicians drawn from the local Lavally townland. Four other stones just like this one have been raised in County Sligo in the previous ten years, celebrating the names of musicians in Moylough, Castlebaldwin, Doocastle, and Tubercurry. This monumental naming of musicians is unique in its magnitude to County Sligo, projecting the image of a county saturated with music-making. It is also reminiscent of political monuments that list the names of volunteers who gave their lives in the fight for Irish freedom. This in turn reiterates an older bardic tradition of recalling people’s names and thereby recognising their worth, a system of tracing, which prevents names from being forgotten. Reflecting a process Guy Beiner labels “social remembrance” (Beiner 28), local communities negotiate a particular identity of abundant musicality. This is achieved through a listing process, affiliating particular localities to a deep seam of music-making, which in turn reinforces and legitimises Sligo’s claim to being a music-rich county.

Sligo's first monument, the Michael Coleman cenotaph, celebrates one of Sligo's most popular traditional music exponents and a widely acclaimed musician. More recent monuments, however, open up new spaces in which to retrieve both musicians and styles from beneath Coleman's musical shadow. The commemoration of individuals services a diverse range of micro-narratives, which, as Kevin Whelan suggests, act as a defence mechanism against the totalising claims of historical meta-narratives, producing a sense of place and "shared historical experiences, [which] is a necessary component of a sense of community" (Kevin Whelan 46). As such, these monuments counter the sonic national hijacking of Sligo style, by geographically reinstating the music, albeit in stone, into its original location. These grass-roots movements, led by local branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and local amateurs, create social memory in local contexts and demonstrate local efforts in the creation of a cultural economy. According to Rowlands and Tilley, "monuments are powerful because they appear to be permanent markers of memory and history and because they do so both iconically and indexically, that is, they can evoke feeling through their materiality and form as well as symbolize social narratives of events and sacrifices retold in public rituals" (Rowlands & Tilley 500). They reflect, therefore, not just the commercial success of emigrant musicians like Coleman, a success that would have been unachievable had they remained in Ireland, but also the desire, still extant, to 'make it' in America for contemporary traditional and indeed popular music bands. The raising of a monument speaks as much, if not more, to the present moment as it enacts a celebration of the past, and statues have the potential to elevate the status of their geographical proximity as much as the status of the actual people named on them.

The next county with considerable monumental wealth (in Irish music terms) is County Clare. Readily endorsed as 'the home of traditional music' much of this narrative stems from the extensive collecting activity that developed, in particular, from the 1940s onwards when music collectors like Séamus Ennis, Ciarán Mac Mathúna, and, later, Tom Munnely began to collect, record and broadcast musicians from County Clare.¹⁷ The evidence assembled by these collectors was subsequently broadcast, bringing musicians from County Clare to prominence and national attention. Paradoxically, these broadcasts re-inscribed the ideal of the musical west into the national consciousness, often at the expense of other regional performance styles. According to Connell and Gibson, "regions of dynamism and creativity, places perceived to be the origins of novel sounds, become credible as sites of innovation, and subsequently become authentic, as they are increasingly depicted in media and imaginations in relation to music" (Connell & Gibson 44). The popular success and renowned rivalry be-

17 Séamus Ennis collected in County Clare in 1945 for the Irish Folklore Commission and in 1949 for RTÉ. Ciarán Mac Mathúna began his collecting in Clare in 1955 for RTÉ radio and television. Tom Munnely began collecting in County Clare from 1971 and relocated there in 1978. The attendant broadcasting of collected materials contributed to the legacy of County Clare as a site for Irish traditional music.

tween the two Clare Bands, the Tulla and the Kilfenora, further augmented the status of County Clare as a bastion for Irish traditional music-making (Ní Fhuartháin, “Comhaltas”). Méabh Ní Fhuartháin also considers the high rate of participation and exceptional success of Clare musicians at Fleadh Cheoil competitions from 1953 onwards to be a contributing factor to County Clare obtaining the musical metonym ‘home of Irish traditional music’ (Ní Fhuartháin, “Comhaltas”) 293). This represents an entirely different route to that travelled by their Sligo cousins. Clare musicians were not captured in the recording boom of the ‘20s and ‘30s in the United States.¹⁸ Indeed it was 1961 before the first solo commercial recording of a Clare-born musician took place.¹⁹

In County Clare on a wet Sunday afternoon in November 2013, Liam Óg O’Flynn unveiled another representation of Willie Clancy, this time a statue sculpted by Shane Gilmore, on the main street in the centre of Miltown Malbay. This statue now brings to five the number of life-size uilleann piper statues unveiled in Ireland,²⁰ consolidating the recuperation of the uilleann pipes within the Irish music tradition since the late nineteenth century. The legacy of Willie Clancy, augmented by the summer school instituted in his name, lies rooted in his own revivalist tendencies and dedicated recourse to the past, in which he attempted to recover and resound the notes and techniques of pipers from previous centuries. It mirrors the actions of Éamonn Ceannt, who brought pre-famine pipers such as Tarlach Mac Suibhne to the attention of revivalists through his involvement with the Dublin Pipers’ Club and the Feis Ceoil. Ceannt also foresaw the importance of recording these musicians and bears some responsibility for the existence of cylinder recordings of older pipers such as Micí Cumbá Ó Suilleabháin, who inspired, influenced, and profoundly affected future musicians, notably Willie Clancy.²¹ Almost half of the eleven monuments in County Clare are to uilleann pipers, and the monumentalisation of pipers, not least the monument to the nineteenth-century piper Garret Barry in Inagh, represents a continuity and re-

18 In the 1930s, tracks by “Pat Roche’s Harp and Shamrock Orchestra” were released by Decca. However, while Roche himself was (a dance teacher) from County Clare, none of the other band members were of Clare origin (Taylor).

19 In 1961, *Memories of Clare: Irish Accordion Magic* by button accordion player Bobby Gardiner and *Irish Dance Music* by concertina player Chris Dronney were both recorded (on Gael) in the United States (Ní Fhuartháin, “Copley Records”). A significant group recording of County Clare musicians predates this: *All Ireland Champions – Violin*, featuring Paddy Canny, P.J. Hayes, Peadar O’Loughlin, and Bridie Lafferty (Dublin Records), was made in 1959.

20 The other four are: Edward Keating Hyland, 1999, Cahir, County Tipperary; Séamus Ennis, 2001, the Naul, Dublin; Loughrea Uilleann Piper, c. 2001, Loughrea, County Galway; and Canon James Goodman, 2006, Skibereen, County Cork.

21 Minutes of the Dublin Pipers’ Club (2 May 1902) demonstrate that Ceannt proposed the purchasing of a phonograph at several Dublin Pipers’ club meetings (though there is no certainty that it was bought) (Breandán Breathnach, “The First Pipers Club”). Clearly an early adopter, Ceannt was also responsible for the acquisition of a printing press on which to print the journal *An Piobaire* (Henry).

course to a distant past reflected in Clare's commemorative trajectory. The raising of statues and monuments to Irish traditional musicians offers a new space in which to orient and ground Irish traditional music. It consolidates a sonic, traditional legacy into something more tangible and marks a new territorial imperative in claiming the places and spaces that are sonically referenced. This is a new departure in the acquisition of status at county level for Irish traditional music.

Monuments to heroes and heroic acts dominate the town squares and greens of Ireland. Irish traditional musicians, however, do not constitute heroes in the traditional, fighting for your country, sense of the word. The developing role of Irish traditional music as an integral part of an Irish identity enables an increasingly institutionalised and organised Irish traditional music constituency to proclaim and label its own giants and heroes.²² Monuments empower locally-centred interpretations of the past, and this more recent impulse to commemorate traditional musicians reflects a "cultural maturing of the State," illustrating a groundswell of confidence in the Irish music community to proclaim the importance of musical heroes beyond their own constituency (Yvonne Whelan, "Symbolising" 155). The growth of monuments dedicated to Irish musicians since 1974 is ideologically commensurate with the growth in the heritage industry and shares a similar chronological expansion. The rural, indigenous, and old-fashioned qualities associated with Irish music, which led to its marginalisation in the first place, now inscribe an authenticity which forms an integral basis for its international attention and acceptability. As this attention garners confidence and pride, it is mirrored through the appropriation of public spaces with monuments to Irish traditional music. John Morrissey suggests that "the iconography of public space represents what any given society exalts as its heritage" (Morrissey 109), and this growth in monuments dedicated to Irish traditional musicians since 1974 reflects the increasingly significant role now being played by Irish traditional music within contemporary perceptions of Irish heritage and identity.

The first two monuments, those raised to Clancy and Coleman, mark a turning away from earlier monuments to cultural figures by representing an indigenous Irish national identity as opposed to an Anglo-Irish one. Building on the commemorative impetus inherent in the successful American post-1916 recording output, commemoration through monumentalisation presents a tangible way in which local communities can proclaim and reclaim local Irish traditional music narratives. Weaving these into county histories contributes to the re-territorialisation of the local from nationalising narratives of Irish traditional music. While Ceannt's own piping legacy is as mute as the five statues dedicated to uilleann pipers, these considerable works of art are in themselves monuments to Ceannt's efforts. Changes in the Irish monumental landscape since 1974 present a new basis on which interpretations of Irish culture and

22 This resonates with the semantic development of the Irish term *gaisce* (hero) which gradually changes in meaning from "combat" to "a value highly prized in [...] communities" (Williams & Ó Laoire 158).

heritage can be both proclaimed and understood. In the discourse of remembering and commemoration prompted by the forthcoming 2016 centenary, monuments to Irish traditional musicians offer a different tangible manifestation of the cultural aspirations of the movement that culminated in the Rising.

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“OUR DEAD SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN”: THE WAR POETRY OF HARRY MIDGLEY

Terry Phillips

The approaching centenary year of the Easter Rising is also the year which marks the centenary of a very different event, the Battle of the Somme, in which two Irish regiments took part. During the last few years, in which the western world in particular has prepared for the marking of the centenary of the First World War, there has been an accompanying interest in the changing ways in which the war has been remembered, both individually and collectively, beginning with the decade immediately following the war (see Winter and Williams). The Battle of the Somme attained a particular significance for Unionists in the newly created jurisdiction of Northern Ireland. As George Boyce comments, “remembering that heroic charge, and that war, became an integral part of Ulster unionist thinking and mythology” (Boyce 200). A consequence of the political situation, in the years immediately following partition, was the appropriation of the memory of the war, and in particular the Battle of the Somme in 1916, as an exclusively Unionist experience, contributing to the construction of a Unionist identity. Amidst the proliferation of personal accounts of the international conflict, both literary and in the form of memoirs, as well as debates about the proper form of public remembrance of so many deaths, one little known publication of this era, Harry Midgley’s collection of poetry *Thoughts from Flanders* (1924), challenged the Unionist appropriation of memory and suggested a more inclusive form of remembering.

Midgley is remembered in Northern Ireland, not as a poet, but as a controversial politician, a former member of the Northern Irish Labour Party, who eventually became a Unionist Minister of Education. The only full-length study of his life is Graham Walker’s *The Politics of Frustration* (1985), which devotes three pages to his army service during the First World War, reflecting the fact that it is considered an insignificant element in his colourful career. His collection of poetry, *Thoughts from Flanders*, has received even less attention and, though it is briefly discussed in Walker’s study, is not even included in Jim Haughey’s comprehensive survey of Irish First World War poetry, *The First World War in Irish Poetry* (2002).

Ten years elapsed between Midgley’s enlistment and the publication of *Thoughts from Flanders*, which apparently includes poems written both during and after the war, yet surprisingly, the text bears marks of haste in its preparation.¹ The haste to

1 The contents page of the 47-page volume shows “A Morning Thanksgiving” as occurring 20 pages earlier, and “Love is Immortal” and “Thy Kingdom Come” as occurring respectively 5 and 15 pages later, than is actually the case, which suggests speed of preparation and is evidence of some indecision about sequence, suggesting that the

publish suggests an immediate political motive, related to Midgley's candidature for the newly formed Northern Ireland Labour Party in the election of October 1924. Graham Walker comments that "the war still prayed [sic] on Midgley's mind and, perhaps with Protestant voters also in mind, he emphasised his own service and the sacrifices of those who gave their lives" (Walker 30).

Walker's comment draws attention to a twofold element in the work. At one level, it is, as the first part of the comment suggests, a significant testament to one man's remembered experience of war, an expression of his own emotions and changing feelings as the war progressed, inevitably mediated by the effects of time, but more importantly by his own values, both religious and political. These values, a strong Christian belief allied with a socialist perspective, not only colour his necessarily subjective interpretations but provide the underlying motive for the publication of the volume. This goes beyond the immediate issue of the 1924 election (although that may have been the cause of the haste to publish) to his concern both for peace and for the just treatment of workers. *Thoughts from Flanders* is more than just a collection of poems. It is a literary text with evidence of design in its structure which introduces a conscious element of selection and emphasis. As Kevin Whelan, drawing on the ideas of Ricœur, points out, "the availability of testimony always enables choice. We can decide how we want to tell our story" (Whelan 4). Hence there is an element of deliberate selection, both in the choice of previously written poems, and the themes of more recent poems, and in the arrangement of the poems within the volume, which is not always chronological.

It is therefore inevitable that the volume will address the issue of how to remember the dead, which was emerging as an important issue in many countries. The instinct to remember is of course a human response to loss and the scale of losses in the First World War made it imperative to address it publicly. The phrase "they shall not die in vain," which occurs more than once in Midgley's poetry, is both an expression of this imperative and a response to apparent futility. It is frequently used in official ceremonies of remembrance, but what is often unacknowledged is that the phrase is capable of multiple interpretations: the resolve to take up arms again in defence of perceived right or justice; the obligation to preserve the supposed ideals of those who died; the determination never to take up arms again, because the futility of war has been demonstrated; the need to protect the ex-comrades and relatives of the dead from poverty and deprivation. A careful perusal of *Thoughts from Flanders* suggests that for Midgley the latter two considerations were of supreme importance.

Midgley (who was born in 1892) was raised by an impoverished widowed mother, in a poor district of North Belfast, near the shipyards where his father had been employed. His mother ensured that he stayed on at school, as a full-time student, until the age of twelve. Walker, drawing on the memories of those who knew her, asserts

arrangement is not chronological. Further evidence of haste in the contents page is the misspelling of "Reconciliation," although the title is correctly spelt above the poem.

that “her influence on his early life was unmatched by anyone else” (Walker 2), and awareness of the sorrow of mothers is a recurring element in the poems of *Thoughts From Flanders*. Midgley became active in politics at an early age and spoke at meetings of the Independent Labour Party from the age of fourteen (Walker 3). Along with his two brothers, he joined the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, a regiment of the Ulster Division, on the outbreak of war. While there are a number of reasons why a young man might have joined up, not least being a sense of adventure, it is reasonable to speculate that as a person with an interest in politics Midgley would have given the matter careful thought and that, at least initially, he was convinced of the rightness of the allied cause, a view borne out by the opening poem of *Thoughts from Flanders*, “Joy Cometh with the Morn,” which is subtitled “(My Early Illusion)” (Midgley 7).²

The short volume comprises a collection of 26 poems of varying length. Keith Jeffery, in *Ireland and The Great War*, uses its front cover as an illustration to his chapter on creative work, commenting that “this volume of sentimental Christian socialist verse draws in part on Midgley’s service with the Ulster division” (Jeffery 103). Midgley’s writing cannot be claimed as great or innovative poetry and is reliant on late Victorian forms, usually with regular alternate rhymes and couplets. It is true that elements of his work can appear sentimental, for example these lines from the opening stanza of “Remember the Fallen”:

They played their part and went their way,
Some died at night, and some by day,
But all have proved their faith in life,
Who found their rest and peace in strife. (34)

Like much poetry written about the war, these lines pose an easy consolation for the terrible losses occurred, and the superficiality of the sentiment is compounded by the way in which the second line of the quotation is constructed in the service of the rhyme scheme. Nevertheless, the poems in the volume as a whole offer much more than this. They are informed by the trench experience, and some give a view of war which is so dark as to almost put their author in the category of the protest poets. There is indeed a strain of hope in a better future, mainly inspired by religious faith, and there are some suggestions that at least initially Midgley believed in the idea of the war as ‘a war to end war.’ However, the arrangement of the volume suggests that he wishes to tell his story as one of increasing but not entire disillusion, beginning with a poem “Joy Cometh with the Morn” with its subtitle “(My Early Illusion)” and ending with, arguably the bleakest of all the poems in the volume, “Shot at Dawn.” The collection includes poems written in memory of dead comrades, as well as a small number on other themes, including a few love poems and three poems whose theme is purely religious. Three key poems towards the end explicitly mark the Armi-

2 Walker points out that his decision to enlist marks a difference with the anti-imperialist syndicalism of Connolly, whose Independent Labour Party of Ireland he had supported (Walker 9).

stice Days of 1921, 1922, and 1923. His own views on the war made the manner of its commemoration a subject of some importance to Midgley.

Two factors influence his choice, using Whelan's phrasing, of how to tell his story. He was a committed socialist and a deeply religious man. It is primarily his religious insight which leads him, in all his poetry, to look forward to a world in which all nations will live together in peace. Indeed the concluding two lines of the short eight-line introduction to the volume state emphatically, in relation to the poems, "But the purpose of all is to glorify peace, / And help towards the day when warfare shall cease" (Midgley 4). There is thus no hint of hostility to the enemy, and although love of the land of Ireland is occasionally mentioned, patriotism is never asserted as a motive.

The opening poem, "Joy Cometh with the Morn," one of the longest poems, its 83 lines extending over ten stanzas of varying length, introduces some of the key themes. Its opening suggests the twin inspirations of nature and religion:

List to the song the birds are singing,
 Their wailing cry on the evening air.
 List to the bells so solemnly ringing
 Their message of human despair. (7)

The poem goes on to emphasise the plight of mothers who mourn, "the flower of the grief stricken mothers" (8). The grief of mothers, doubtless reflecting Midgley's affection and admiration for his own mother, is a recurring theme. However, it is important to note that it is all mothers whose voices are heard, not just those from his own country: "And the song that they sing is heard the world o'er."

The poem is expressive of the poet's personal memories but also his concern with the purpose of remembering, as can be seen from the lines which follow:

Our mighty dead have died not in vain,
 Though bitter the pain, 'tis not loss,
 They gave, that in giving freedom might reign (8)

At this point in the poem, the assertion that the dead have not died in vain may be read as suggesting a purpose in war and a willingness to fight again, if necessary, to ensure that the spoils of victory are not lost and indeed may well represent the poet's view in the early days of the war. Nevertheless, as the poem continues and the title of the poem is invoked, there is the strong suggestion that the greatest freedom for which these men have died is freedom from war:

Then joy shall truly come with the morn,
 And war shall forever cease,
 And man cleansed from hate, in love reborn,
 Shall dwell in eternal peace. (9)

The implication that the way of ensuring purpose in the deaths of so many can only be by the abandonment of hatred and war, and that the deaths should be remembered in a way which works towards this end, is a theme that continues throughout the volume.

The religious inspiration for this faith in a world without war is expressed in the structure of "The Two Hills – Kimmel and Another," which reflects that of the lamentation psalms, a movement from near-despair to joy. Towards the end of "The First Hill," the poet wonders "why some people think; this is the will of God" (13), thus countering a view widespread among Christian commentators on the war that in some way those fighting were carrying out the will of God, that their sacrifice was in some way to be equated with the sacrifice of Christ.³ The Second Hill is in fact a vision of God's kingdom on earth, an idea later taken up in "Reconciliation." The ensuing description of an idyllic pastoral landscape culminates in a vision: "Of every nation on the earth in love and joy entwined: / No more to reap the harvest of hatred's bitter seed" (14).

The title refers to Mount Kimmel, a hill in the Ypres Salient, eventually taken by the Germans in the Spring Offensive of 1918, which is the subject of the first part of the poem. "The First Hill" suggests Midgley's own remembered experience of the reality of life in the battlefields of the Western Front, with the accompanying destruction of a once pleasant landscape:

Lit by the gun flash, soaked with blood and tears,
 [...]
 A hill once green and fertile, and pleasant to the
 view,
 [...]
 Now mangled and distorted, in ruin and decay, (12)

Once again the grief of mothers is evoked, as the poet describes the battle scene:

And all along the hillside lie figures cold and still,
 Each representing empty lives which nought on
 earth can fill ;
 The broken-hearted mothers who weep, and sigh,
 and pray,
 For end of war's foul night, and dawn of peace-
 ful day ; (12)

Nevertheless, the final despairing lines of "The First Hill" with the Biblical phrasing of "How long, O Lord, how long?" are answered at the opening of "The Second Hill" with its vision of the Kingdom of God:

Kissed by the sun, watered with dew,
 Wrapt in divine repose by nature kind and true,
 Smiling and peaceful, in majesty serene,
 And o'er the green clad hilltop reigned loveliness
 supreme. (13)

The Christian's hope for a better world emerging from the present darkness, so well expressed by the structure of the lamentation psalms, inspires several other poems in the early part of the volume, such as "The Bells," a response to hearing "bells ring-

3 For example, the English poet Alice Meynell, after making exactly this parallel to the sacrifice of Christ, claimed, 'The soldier dying dies upon a kiss, / The very kiss of Christ.' Alice Meynell, "Summer in England," 1914 (Reilly 73-74).

ing in a little French village behind the firing line, on Christmas morning" (17-18), which, in the movement from lamentation to hope, is structured similarly to "The Two Hills." A darker poem which still makes use of the antithesis of suffering and joy is "In Prison." Its religious inspiration is clear from the opening of the second stanza, with its echo of the Epistle to the Corinthians:

Oh force, where is thy victory? O prison, where
thy sting?
Far beyond thy bounds and ramparts my spirit
taketh wing.
And I dwell in lands of happiness, of joy, and
love divine, (15)

There is an indication, from a close reading of this poem, that the assertion in "Joy Cometh with the Morn" that the dead gave their lives that freedom might reign, which could be read as implying that this better world might come about as a consequence of the allied war effort, has been abandoned as "an early illusion." Towards the end of the first stanza, the speaker reflects that "Force may order all my movements, which from me by *lies* [my italics] it bought, / But it cannot order or destroy sweet liberty of thought," (15). The implied disillusion with the war is emphasised by the final line of the poem, "But my spirit hath found freedom in this man created hell" (16).

In spite of the disillusion expressed in this poem, the constantly recurring theme is the hope that a better world can be built and that this is the sense in which the dead shall not have died in vain. A foregrounding of the theme of building a better world, in memory of the dead, begins just after "In Prison" and "The Bells," with two poems in memory of dead comrades, "Lest We Forget" and "In Memoriam." These mark the beginning of a sequence of poems which focus explicitly on memory. "First Xmas after Armistice, 1918" records, in its title, the beginning of the process of remembering, which now becomes not personal memory but the collective remembering of a group. The opening reflects a tension between rejoicing that the war was over and mourning those who were dead. The concluding stanza states clearly one of Midgley's major preoccupations:

We must resolve that come what may,
Our dead shall not have died in vain,
But life and love shall with us stay,
And universal peace shall reign. (24)

Of the multiple interpretations of the phrase "they shall not have died in vain," referred to above, "Life and love" and "universal peace" are declared as Midgley's priorities.

This is confirmed by "In Flanders Fields." There is in the title an obvious reminder of John McCrae's poem of that name, described by Paul Fussell as the most popular poem of the war (Fussell 248), which has subsequently become a byword for propagandist poetry. The final four lines of Midgley's poem recall the opening of McCrae's:

In rows the crosses, neat and clean,
 In Flanders Fields can now be seen,
 They bid us keep the memory green,
 Of those who Fell in Flanders Fields (27)

The language, particularly the phrase “neat and clean,” is markedly different from that of most of the preceding lines of the poem, which vividly describe the horrors of the battlefield, and these final lines serve as an ironic comment on McCrae’s “crosses row on row” at the end of the latter’s poem, which makes no mention of the horrors (Walter 155). There is no suggestion in Midgley’s poem of continuing to fight, as McCrae puts it, of holding high the torch. All that Midgley’s poem presents the dead as asking is to “keep the memory green, / Of those who Fell in Flanders Fields.” Once more the reader is reminded of the fundamental ambiguity of keeping the memory of those who died, which can be used in the cause of war or the cause of peace. For six of the poem’s seven stanzas there is an unremitting account of the effects of battle:

The shell-holes mark the war-worn way,
 [...]
 How sickly is the smell to-night,
 In Flanders Fields ;
 [...]
 How loud to-night the guns are booming,
 In Flanders Fields ;
 [...]
 The shrapnel screams, the star-shell’s flare,
 Flings forth its lurid angry glare, (26)

The poem evokes the reality of warfare on the Western Front, suggesting the terror induced by the sights and sounds of battle, as well as the destruction of the land, and thus is in marked contrast to the poem to which it may be seen as an answer.

One poem, placed immediately after, evokes personal remembrance, in a very significant way. “A Message from Flanders” tells the moving story of the death of a young Irish soldier whose dying message, for his mother, is to be conveyed by “his comrades, men of Anglo-Saxon Race,” and the poem tells us, “He was all the son of Erin that their ranks had ever known, / Yet in common understanding had the seed of love been sown” (28). In the context of the subsequent War of Independence it carries its own pathos, but suggests something of all that the poet sees of any value in the war, the sowing of the seed which will establish “universal peace.”

The increasing focus on collective remembering culminates in the three poems which mark the successive Armistice Days of 1921, 1922, and 1923. While the proper way to remember the war, the balance between celebration and sorrow, was an issue in many countries,⁴ it became a particular issue in Belfast, which was plunged into an immediate post-war political crisis by the Sinn Féin election victory of 1918, the War

4 See, for example, Dan Todman’s discussion of Armistice Day in mainland Britain (Todman 49-58).

of Independence, and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty at the end of 1921. James Loughlin has charted the process by which, through Armistice Day commemorations in 1919 and 1921 and the opening of the Thiepval Memorial in 1921, the contribution of all Ulstermen to the First World War, and to the Somme in particular, was reduced to the contribution of the more or less exclusively Protestant Ulster Division of 1916 (before the reorganizations of 1917 and 1918 altered its exclusivity). The 1921 Armistice Day commemorations were particularly politically charged, occurring as they did in the midst of the Treaty negotiations. The commemorations were described as “one of the most impressive spectacles ever” by the *Belfast Newsletter*, which went on to argue that the sacrifice of gallant men “has not been forgotten [...] at the present time, when the security of Ulster is even more seriously threatened than it was in the momentous years preceding the outbreak of war” (Loughlin 144). Catherine Switzer comments on the Unionist character of Armistice Day parades in Belfast, with the presence of union jacks and the singing of “God Our Help in Ages Past” strongly associated with Carson, and points out that they were often attended by people in Orange regalia and representatives of the RUC and Ulster Special Constabulary (Switzer 106-107). However, she also points out that while prevailing academic literature suggests that commemorations were “aggressively Orange and Unionist,” some commemorations were markedly conciliatory in tone, and there were those who wanted to use memory to forge cross-community friendship (Switzer 108, 113-115). Richard Grayson suggests that “there is some debate over how far unionists consciously appropriated remembrance of the war,” citing nationalist reticence about remembrance (Grayson 171, 173).

Midgley, for his part, in his own words quoted in the *Northern Whig* of 27 May 1921, “did not believe that the partition of the working classes of Ireland would ever solve the problems of the country” (Walker 22), and it is reasonable to suppose that such commemorations, which inevitably became politicised by a combination of chance and design, not only added to his broader disillusion with the treatment of the classes he sought to represent, but grieved him by their tendency to divide, and to exacerbate the potential for conflict.

The 1921 Armistice Day poem “Remember the Fallen” opens with a focus on the poppy, with its associations of blood and with a simple plea to remember, but then the old question reasserts itself – remembrance for what end? The second stanza answers this question:

In mourning those who bled,
We join with every nation
[...]
Death scatters all elation,
And free's [sic] the mind from hate. (34)

It is a clear assertion that mourning is not a matter of triumph or the preserve of one nation, but that grief for the dead should bring all nations together and mean that war is less, not more likely, if as a consequence the world is freed from hate. The senti-

ment carries a special, and indeed an ironic, resonance in a political context where the very act of remembering the dead was creating even further division. The last stanza unequivocally states the purpose and rationale of remembering the dead:

They died that war might perish,
 For ever and for aye,
 That freedom all might cherish,
 And truth and right hold sway ;
 Their sacrifice is ended,
 For us the task is here,
 To bring the vision splendid,
 For which they paid so dear. (34)

This concluding stanza, to some degree, runs counter to the tone of disillusion expressed elsewhere, notably in "In Prison," but arguably this simply expresses a political awareness of the need to concede something of the rhetorical justification for the war, in order to add weight to the advocacy of the values of peace and reconciliation.

The exclusive focus on the Ulster Division continued through succeeding commemorations, and the political imperative, while not quite so urgent after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, remained important through the years of the Boundary Commission. Peace seemed far away from a Belfast which saw 498 deaths between 1922 and 1924, including a number of ex-soldiers; and detention without trial, again including some former soldiers (Grayson 156-160). It is unsurprising therefore that Midgley's second Armistice Day poem is entitled "Reconciliation." In its opening stanza it draws on the idea which inspires "The Second Hill," the belief that the Kingdom of God is to be built, not in another world, but on earth:

Sleeping, ever sleeping, in the fields across the sea
 There are those who wait the coming of the
 great world peace to be,
 When we turn our swords to ploughshares, and
 transform our hate to love,
 And on earth we build the Kingdom, that we
 picture up above. (35)

The poem portrays the dead as united by their fate and explicitly calls for forgiveness and reconciliation amongst the living: "Let us bury all divisions in remembrance of this day, / So that peace amongst the nations shall forever with us stay." It is a clear statement of the purpose of remembrance, eschewing all elements of military celebration. The relationship of the poem to commemoration is made explicit by its concluding words, "O'er all the graves in Flanders, the poppies red, now grow, / And nature has ordained it, that they cover friend and foe." It is a warning against the appropriation of the symbol for one side in the recent war and, by implication, in the newly created jurisdiction of Northern Ireland.

The final Armistice Day poem, significantly entitled "To All Mothers," is based on the idea that the love of a mother for her children is the nearest thing human beings can know to the love of God. The mother's grief is described in biblical terms, as "a love

which passeth understanding," and her grief is compared to the suffering of Christ, "Through life's Gesthemane thy heart is ever yearn-/ing, / Bowed 'neath the weight of war's most cruel / cross." (37). Consistently the cross is used to suggest a Christ figure who shares in human suffering, rather than one who makes a sacrifice to atone for human misconduct.

The poem concludes with the by now familiar plea for unity across national boundaries, a longing

[...] for the day when war shall be no more,
The dead of every nation form the Union,
Which binds the suffering hearts of every land, (37)

The Armistice Day poems reflect something of Midgley's opposition to sectarianism,⁵ a part of his general disillusion with post-war Belfast, but the emphasis on universal peace and references such as "every nation" and "every land" suggest that his primary concern was with the militarisation of remembrance, which was an inevitable consequence of such division. As Switzer comments, "a discourse which placed emphasis on ideas of glory, valour and patriotism was often voiced in Northern Ireland, particularly during the 1920s" (Switzer 109).

The Armistice Day poems are a direct address to the nature of official collective remembrance and as such focus on the meaning of war, which for Midgley can only be that it demonstrates the need for peace. However the need to ensure that "they shall not have died in vain" extends to the obligation to preserve the ideals of those who died and significantly to the need to protect their ex-comrades and relatives from poverty and deprivation. For Midgley, deeply committed to the Labour movement, this was his primary concern.

Almost immediately after he was demobilised he became a Trade Union organizer and fought hard on behalf of ex-servicemen who were unemployed after the war. Belfast saw an increase in unemployment, as production in shipbuilding, linen, and engineering, staple industries of the city, fell. After the failure of a strike in the shipyards, the May Day parade of 1919 was the largest ever seen in Belfast. At the 1920 May Day parade, Midgley congratulated German and Russian workers on their recent struggles, as well as speaking for social measures and against the uncaring treatment of ex-servicemen (Walker 18), thus demonstrating what, for him, was the message of the war, the necessity for people of all nations to work together for justice, national affiliation being irrelevant. It is therefore unsurprising to find that the theme of building a better world for those who fought, and indeed for all people, continues in the final poems of the volume. Some disillusion is suggested in "The Onward Way" that

5 Midgley in his later career became considerably more sectarian, opposing the influence of the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland, initially over the Church's hostility to his stance on the Spanish Civil War (Walker, Bairner & Walker).

The hope for which they struggled, toiled and
bled,
A world controlled by justice, truth and right,
has not, as yet unfolded to our sight ; (Midgley, 38)

Although the line which follows declares, "Yet still we hope," the words express dissatisfaction with the treatment of ex-soldiers and with the post-war world in general. A particularly significant poem is "A Workers Te Deum," in one sense a traditional prayer of thanks, each of the fourteen line stanzas ending with a prayer, "our thanks / To Thee O Lord" and "thanks to Thee / Most Holy Lord." In another sense it is almost a prayer of thanks to the workers. The prayer of thanks in the second stanza opens:

For tired suffering hearts in every land,
Who toil in sorrow, sunshine, gloom, and pain,
The symbol of their strength, the strong right hand
Of Labour, which toils that we may gain
Our Daily Bread ;
For all collective strength of hand and brain,
The fruits of which result in common gain,
Producers of our food, our clothes, our all, (42)

It is an emphatic assertion of the role of the working classes and their right to fair and dignified treatment and a testimony to Midgley's lifelong commitment to their interests. The poem is of uncertain date, but presumably written around the same time as the final armistice poem, its final lines repeating once again that belief in peace rather than war, "A peace not based on force or strength of arms, / Nor ushered in amid war's wild alarms ;" (43).

Most of the poems, for all their acknowledgement of suffering and the high price of war, retain a certain optimism, derived from religious faith and socialist ideas, which suggest a route to the improvement of the human lot. Events in Ireland after the war, both political and economic, although they must have depressed and frustrated him, seem not, from a reading of the poems, to have deterred Midgley from his faith in a better future until the final two poems in the volume, which suggest a more despairing frame of mind. The penultimate poem, "The Mighty Dead," takes up the theme of the preceding half dozen poems, that in the name of the dead a better world must be created, but the tone at the opening suggests for the first time a lack of confidence in a better future, "Our mighty dead, shall they have died in vain? / Shall this old earth learn nothing by our loss" (46). For Midgley, the meaning of the deaths of so many can only be that the suffering of the war should have ensured that war was never resorted to again, and that the human lot should be improved.

Most significantly however, the poem ends with a striking plea:

O people of our well loved native land,
Unite in this most promising of years
Unite and work as comrades hand in hand.
[...]
Work for a peace that knows not tyrants might,
That seeks not added power, nor pride of place, (46)

It is a rare expression of love for Ireland and direct address to people in Ireland. It suggests anxiety about continuing conflict in Northern Ireland, and the reference to tyrants suggests Midgley's concern to express the fact that the workers have a common foe in those who misuse power, not in those who give their allegiance to any particular flag. It expresses his frustration at the sectarianism which saw members of his own Protestant community seeking to protect their historic occupations in the skilled sector at the expense of Catholics seeking work, as the post-war employment situation in Belfast deteriorated and reached its height in the massive expulsion of Catholics from the shipyards in July 1920.⁶

The final poem, "Shot at Dawn," comes as something of a shock to the reader of the whole volume. Its content, unlike that of the immediately preceding few poems, takes us back to wartime conditions and suggests that it was probably written during the war years. It is in many ways the bleakest of all the poems, and it must be significant that it is placed last in the volume. It is an account of a young boy, shot as a deserter. The description evokes the naivety with which he, in common with the poet himself, and many others first joined up, as he remembers, "those he had left in boyish glee / When caught in war's flowing tide."

Then comes a description of the horrors this young lad experienced,

The guns played havoc with nerves and brain,
His senses were dazed and blind,
He had stood in the trench in mud and rain,
Till the agony swamped his mind. (47)

The story has become familiar to subsequent generations, although at the time deserters received little understanding and their end was considered shameful.⁷ However, the standard response is subtly questioned. The penultimate stanza ends, "And "Shot at Dawn" is remembered still, / By those who gazed on his face." The phrase is glib and obliterates the individuality of the unnamed soldier, but the final stanza reveals that those of his own land and race who shot him do not forget so easily, "I know the men who served out there, / "His Murder" will not forget." The word is a shocking challenge to the majority of Midgley's contemporaries who would not have considered the act to be one of murder. This is the final line of *Thoughts from Flanders*.

Nevertheless, the volume is a collection predominantly of hope, inspired by the writer's Christian and socialist beliefs, but, as the final poem suggests, with an increasing element of disillusion. It bears witness to suffering, but falls short of a state-

6 Grayson quotes Marie Toner Moore, speaking of Daniel McKeown her grandfather: "My grandmother believed that it was because of his Catholicism that he was denied work and I understood from her that he believed this too. She often remarked that he was wont to say 'so much for the land fit for heroes'" (Grayson 153).

7 One example of changed attitudes is the unveiling in 2001 of the Shot At Dawn Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, England.

ment that the deaths were futile, choosing instead to invest value in their sacrifice because it taught humanity the ultimate futility of war. The religious inspiration does not fall back on the easy equating of the soldier's death with the death of Christ, as an act of atonement. Where Christ is alluded to, it is as fellow-sufferer. Remembering at an individual level and at the level of collective remembrance plays a key part in the rhetoric of the poems, but always the point of remembering is to create a better world and avoid a recurrence of conflict. The disillusion with the post-war world, felt in Ireland and elsewhere, is given added impetus by Midgley's dislike of sectarianism, primarily because of its contribution to class division. The volume is the only literary work Midgley ever produced. It is not great poetry but provides a powerful personal witness to one man's experience of the war on the Western Front and the post-war events in his native city of Belfast. It is testimony to his belief in an alternative future of collaboration in creating a just society, which a hundred years later remains to some extent an aspiration.

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TRANS/ATLANTIC MOBILITIES: TRANSLATING NARRATIVES OF IRISH RESISTANCE¹

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Revolution really requires a transformation of human nature so that people are capable of democracy. It's a process that not only destroys habits of servitude and develops capacities for self-rule but also inspires political imagination and expands their desires, which can press far beyond the present political situation.

– Michael Hardt (138)

In Ireland, a country which has seen revolutions in every generation, there is properly speaking no national tradition. Nothing is stable in the country; nothing is stable in the minds of the people. When the Irish writer begins to write, he has to create his moral world from chaos by himself, for himself.

– Stanislaus Joyce (185)

Joyce and Yeats are the prose and poetry respectively of the Ireland that culminated in the Rebellion.

– Wyndham Lewis (75)

In the past few years, the conceptual framework of Atlantic studies has sought to expand the geographical boundaries and trajectories of Irish migration and diaspora research through an interdisciplinary focus which looks at mutual influences between Ireland and other Atlantic communities thus contemplating, in a larger and more fruitful context, how ideas and experiences have travelled and developed as a result of trade, military operations, colonization schemes, migration, and exile. Out of this web of multilayered connections, a new geography has emerged revealing a transatlantic space which transcends chronological and national boundaries in favour of a fluid map where the Atlantic shores become sites of productive confluences and meaningful intersections between different territories and peoples.²

Drawing precisely on how contemporary transatlantic scholarship has contextualized its objects of study in relation to exchanges, interactions, and negotiations between and across the Atlantic regions,³ this essay attempts to explore the intricacies of certain literary and cultural links between Ireland and Cuba. The aim is to move beyond the traditional framework of 'national' literatures and cultures in order to map out,

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2 For transnational and comparative views of the Irish historical and cultural experiences in the Atlantic world as phenomena transcending traditional chronological, topical, and ethnic paradigms, see Gleeson; see also Byrne, Coleman & King.

3 A number of recent studies address the circulation of ideas in an international Atlantic context, the so called "Green Atlantic"; see, for example, O'Neill & Lloyd and Whelan.

through the often neglected lens of translation, an alternative transnational literary geography, an uncharted cultural space of significant transatlantic 'geotextualities' and 'geopolitics.' Thus, by concentrating on the reception and circulation of James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, first published in 1916 and subsequently translated in post-revolutionary Cuba, I will explore the existence of a shared discursive space, a 'contact zone,' established through the back-and-forth exchange of ideas and imaginaries about 'resistance' between the two islands. Unsurprisingly, the concern with the discourse of Irish resistance which had been present in the Cuban imaginary since the mid-nineteenth century, underlies the urge to reprint the 1926 Spanish translation of Joyce's novel in the Havana of the 1960s. As I will discuss, the new translation incorporates a revolutionary discourse which foregrounds the notion that both nations share forms of resistance before a common history of oppression and, likewise, encourages readers to discover a number of relevant analogies between the Cuba of the 1960s and the Ireland that witnessed the rebellion of 1916.

The above-mentioned transatlantic connections have been explored and discussed mainly in relation to the physical mobility of the migratory populations which, in the case of the Irish, traversed the Atlantic as labourers, migrants, exiles, political organizers and cultural workers. Thus, for the most part, the study of transatlantic mobilities has been concerned with the way in which social and individual practices have shaped the Atlantic world through the transatlantic exchange of ideas as a result of the actual migration of people. Yet, beyond these historically documented forms of material mobility is the less well-known, yet no less important form of circulation and migration embodied in, and represented by, translation. Translation is an essential form of transnational communication, representation, negotiation, transmission, appropriation, and adaptation between cultures which can never be understood in isolation, but always in relation to a social, political, or intellectual framework. The evolution and dissemination of fundamental concepts and assumptions always take place through translational exchanges.

Although the long-accepted notion of translation as a subsidiary discipline, a peripheral activity on the margins of other relevant cultural practices, has been debunked, among others, by a large number of studies which explicitly resituate the discipline of translation in the trans-cultural context of postcolonial studies,⁴ the implications of translation for transnational and transatlantic cultural studies remain, for the most part, underexplored. As has been remarked, translation, in itself an intensely relational act, is one of the principal means by which texts circulate in the world republic of letters (Casanova) with different literatures and cultures often entering into cooperative negotiations through translation practices. Yet, this cooperation has traditionally been neglected by those national literary histories which have focused on

4 See, for example, Niranjana; Cheyfitz; Bassnett & Trivedi; Robinson; Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context*; Simon & St-Pierre.

production attached to a particular territory and in one single language, because, as has been noted, “processes of translation and transnational migration and their effects remain insufficiently studied outside of local specializations” (Huysen 45).

It is my contention that, in order to effectively discuss the relevance of the transnational dialogue which underlies the study of mobility across the Atlantic, translation should not be underestimated. Translation always reveals a particular agency, a certain way of knowing and representing experience, thus joining in with other forms of epistemology and other discourses and practices concerned with intercultural contact, representation and re-enactment which become extremely relevant in order to appropriately approach the examination of transatlantic forms of cultural recollection.

As I will discuss in relation to the context of Irish and Cuban reciprocities, attention must be paid to the way in which these two forms of mobility, *translational* and *transatlantic*, interact. Translation, as a cross-disciplinary practice, must reach beyond regional and national frameworks, thus allowing for a perspective situated between different shores, languages, and historical periods, in a conceptual space constructed between shifting discourses in which new scenarios provide new meanings. In this respect, the fruitful interaction of Translation and Transatlantic Studies may cast new light on the discussion of the cultural and political discourses which are embroiled in representations of the Atlantic worlds as well as on the investigation of the so called forms of Atlantic solidarity (see Malouf): “the moments of cooperation and commonality – as presentiments of another conceivable world forged not in domination and mutual antagonism, but in solidarity” (O’Neill & Lloyd xx).

The invocation of solidarity between formerly oppressed Atlantic nations was indeed one of the major reasons that accounted for the publication of the translation of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in Havana in 1964, by the *Editora Nacional de Cuba*, the ‘State Press,’ which, apart from promoting Cuban books, was also committed to popularizing universal literature in translation. Symptomatically enough, although a canonical translation in the Spanish language by the acclaimed writer Dámaso Alonso already existed, the Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes⁵ chose to translate Joyce’s *Portrait* into Spanish again. Alonso’s translation, which had circulated widely in the Hispanic world, had not only become an emblematic text since its publication in Madrid in 1926 as *El Retrato del artista adolescente*, but, more importantly, this canonical translation was to exert a great influence on the work of acclaimed Cuban writers (Salgado 79).

5 At the time he translated *Portrait*, the writer Edmundo Desnoes was one of the most active intellectuals of the revolution. He was editor of the *Editora Nacional*, a member of the editorial board of *Casa de las Américas*, and editor of the emblematic journal *Lunes de Revolución*, a major forum for the publication and discussion of writers, artists, and intellectuals not only from Cuba but also from Latin America and many other countries.

Admittedly, the new version printed in Havana is presented as a *revised* translation, a gesture which, only five years after the triumph of the revolution of 1959, symbolically expresses the Cubans' right to contest impositions through the re-writing of their own versions of the literary canon, thus reaffirming Cuba's political and cultural independence. It is, thus, how Desnoes not only reinterprets the Spanish text through the insertion of a new prologue which functions as a revolutionary manifesto for readers on the island, but also modifies Alonso's choice of words in order to intentionally diverge from the version published in the former imperial metropolis. Unsurprisingly, the Cuban translation opts for a more ideologically charged vocabulary which encourages readers to discover analogies between the Cuba of the 1960s and the Ireland of 1916, the emphasis being on the existence of shared forms of resistance before a common history of oppression.

Until relatively late in the history of Joyce criticism, when attention to the writer's ideological perspectives finally helped to debunk the myth of his withdrawal from Irish politics, most commentators neglected to notice the specific colonial tensions represented in this early novel which, interestingly enough, Desnoes chooses to highlight in his translation.⁶ The lost opportunity for Home Rule and the shame on Ireland of Parnell's downfall (which the Cuban translator invokes in his introduction) were relevant issues in Joyce's Triestine journalism during the years of his struggle to re-write the novel, when he also lectured on Irish political and cultural themes. In a series of newspaper articles published between 1904 and 1907 ("Fenianism," "Home Rule Comes of Age," "Ireland at the Bar"), Joyce analyzed the Irish political situation and wrote about the evils of British imperial rule in Ireland, thus offering a lesson for the imperial ruler of Trieste.⁷

Conceived in "Dublin 1904" and completed in "Trieste 1914," *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was finally published in 1916 after several chapters had been released in installments in *The Egoist*. By then, Joyce had provided a new ending to replace that of the partly destroyed *Stephen Hero* manuscripts. Thus, the 1916 *Portrait* ends with young Stephen Dedalus's jottings in his diary, from 20 March to 27 April. The echo of his enigmatic pronouncement in the 26 April entry – "So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (Joyce, *Portrait* 252-253)

6 Manganiello's *Joyce's Politics* is often referred to as the pioneer study on Joyce and politics. Nolan's groundbreaking study, *James Joyce and Nationalism*, is a provocative revision of Joyce's writing, which reconsiders the relationship between modernism and Irish Nationalism through post-colonial and feminist theories. *Joyce, Race and Empire* by Vincent J. Cheng specifically looks at Joyce as writing from the perspective of a colonial subject and provides the first-full length study of Joyce's works from the perspective of post-colonial theory.

7 In their edition of *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, Mason and Ellmann remark that the three articles "surveyed the Irish political situation finding fault with the Irish as well as with the British, but supporting Sinn Féin and the independence movement" (187).

– does indeed resonate with a peculiar irony when read in the light of the events of the Easter Rising (which began on 24 April, Easter Monday).

As mentioned before, compared to the earlier Spanish translation, the Cuban version deliberately incorporates ideologically charged vocabulary which encourages readers to be attentive to Joyce's 'revolutionary' politics and simultaneously hints at analogies between Cuba in the 1960s and Ireland in 1916. Perhaps one of the most striking examples can be found in the translation of the passage from Chapter V when, just before his talk with Cranly on his Easter duty, Stephen stands waiting for his friend and "stares angrily" at a hotel "in which he imagined the sleek lives of the patricians of Ireland housed in calm" (Joyce, *Portrait* 238). In line with what will be his proud boast at the end of the novel, "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race," Stephen wonders how he might be able to liberate the conscience of the Irish race: "How could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before the squires begat upon them, that they may breed a race less ignoble than their own?" (Joyce, *Portrait* 238).

The noun "squires," which Alonso, the first Spanish translator, renders as "*galanes*" (Joyce, *Retrato* [1926] 270), thus, literally referring in the plural form to "a man who escorts a woman," is translated in the Cuban version as "*hacendados*" (Joyce, *Retrato* [1964] 253), i.e. the owners of "*haciendas*," vast landed states. This shift is extremely relevant since "*hacienda*" and "*hacendado*" are very popular terms in the Spanish-American cultural imaginary, particularly in relation to the social revolutions and the agrarian movements. In Cuba the term "*hacendados*" specifically refers to the sugar planters, export-oriented landowners whose pursuit of profit through free trade reinforced the dominance of foreign (colonial) power. With this significant new lexical choice the translation automatically brings to mind a form of landed oligarchy and a system of agrarian (capitalist) exploitation which the revolutionaries sought to abolish.⁸ Interestingly, in the case of this specific semantic deviation from the earlier Spanish text, the Cuban translator explicitly connects the Cuban revolution with the struggle of Land League agrarianism in Ireland, a question which had come to occupy a central position during Joyce's childhood and had left its mark on the parliamentary career of Charles Stewart Parnell, "who agitated for the Land Act of 1881 and the unsuccessful Home Rule bill of 1886 and who plays a central role in the political mythology of Joyce's fiction" (Ford 752). Desnoes's version, which clearly invokes the vocabulary of the revolution and its struggle against class inequality in the predominantly agrarian Cuban society, ultimately stands as a reminder of the circumstances underlying Stephen's complaint in Joyce's text: the (British) colonial exploitation which the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation consciously opposed asserting "the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland."

8 For a thorough discussion of the relevant and "singular" role of the Cuban *hacendados* against the background of the revolution, see Winocur.

As we will see, what emerges from a close examination of the fourteen-page Prologue to the Cuban translation of Joyce's early novel, significantly titled "Al lector" ("To the Reader"), is an effort to pair Cuba's and Ireland's anti-colonial struggles and, likewise, to connect the two nation's histories of fighting for freedom and emancipation with the revolutionary present of the 1960s. Primary among Desnoes's objectives in the Prologue is to revisit Joyce's *Portrait* through a solidary contextualization of the transatlantic encounter between Cuba and Ireland, which the translation is called to enact. This contextualization takes place through a careful combination of paratexts, mainly the Prologue and also the editorial comments on the back cover, the main function of which is to turn Joyce into a role model for aspiring revolutionary writers.

Throughout the Prologue, Desnoes's 'revolutionary' portrait of Joyce (curiously echoing Joyce's own portrait of the character of Stephen⁹) is repeatedly emphasized with the establishment of similarities between Joyce's having to forge the uncreated conscience for colonial Ireland and the situation of the "Spanish-American writer." Desnoes insists that Joyce's Ireland "does remind us, to a certain extent, of our situation during the Republic" (Desnoes xv)¹⁰ and quotes from his own translation of the passage in which Stephen Dedalus bitterly reflects on the power of the Irish "squires," which, as we saw, Desnoes decides to transform into (Cuban) "*hacendados*." In this respect, through his use of meaningful words with a specifically political significance in the context of Cuba's own history Desnoes makes Irish history mobile. Ironically, by foregrounding the relevance of agrarian movements in relation to the revolutionary processes in Latin American and particularly to the Cuban revolution, the translation simultaneously re-inscribes Joyce's novel from 1916 within the context of the land question in Ireland, one of the most important issues around which Irish politics revolved in Joyce's time. The Cuban translation thus functions as a form of transatlantic mobility with Joyce's colonial Ireland serving as a touchstone for a critique of colonialism in the larger context of Spanish-America.

The identification of Joyce with contemporary Spanish-American writers expressed eloquently in one of the blurbs of the back cover – "Joyce, furthermore, has so much in common with the social circumstances of Latin-American writers since in Ireland he experienced the fight against backwardness and the English colonial exploitation" – strategically brings together the Irish and the Cubans' struggles to overcome imperialism while simultaneously introducing the idea put forward by Fidel Castro in his "Second Declaration of Havana," in February 1962, that the writer's duty was to write against colonial oppression: "now, history will have to take the poor of America into account, the exploited and spurned of Latin America, who have decided to start writing histories for themselves for all time" (Young 216).

9 Cheng interestingly refers to Stephen's artistic calling as having "its first roots in the politics of national liberation" and explains that Joyce provided his fictional character "with a personal lineage of Irish patriots very much like Joyce's own" (72).

10 Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are mine.

The National Union of Writers and Artists, in which Desnoes participated actively, had enthusiastically endorsed this declaration which chose to place Cuba at the heart of the alliance of formerly colonized countries as the leading force against imperialism. “Joyce’s experience has so many points of contact with the social circumstances of Spanish-American writers. In his time, Ireland was an underdeveloped English colony. Even the language was imposed by the conqueror” (Desnoes xiv), writes Desnoes, thus establishing a parallelism between the two countries’ common colonial past, which is further emphasized in his decisions as a translator.

Symptomatically, in the case of the translation of the often-quoted passage in Chapter V reproduced below (when Stephen argues with the English Dean of studies over the right word for the utensil ‘through which you pour the oil into your lamp’):

- That said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is it not a tundish?
- What is a tundish?
- That. The ... the funnel. (Joyce, *Portrait* 188)

Desnoes encourages Cuban readers to approach the translation in the context of their own situation as colonial subjects. He significantly bypasses the Spanish translator’s previous decision to provide synonyms in Spanish for each term, “funnel” and “tundish,” and preserves the Hiberno-English “tundish” untranslated as if alerting his readers towards linguistic tensions and, simultaneously, gesturing towards the way in which a language may speak of unequal colonial encounters and forms of imperial domination. Ultimately, Desnoes’s translation functions as a form of instrumentalization which Lawrence Venuti has appropriately described in the following terms:

In creating stereotypes, translation may attach esteem or stigma to specific ethnic, racial, and national groupings [...] In the long run, translation figures in geopolitical relations by establishing the cultural grounds of diplomacy, reinforcing alliances, antagonisms and hegemonies between nations. (Venuti 67-68)

As mentioned before, the Prologue repeatedly invokes Ireland’s history of the fight for independence in a clear attempt to produce an image of the social and historical context of Joyce’s 1916 novel that can be relevant for Cuba’s contemporary moment. In the six-page timeline “Joyce and his Time,” which follows Desnoes’s Prologue, 1916 appears as the year of the publication of *Portrait*, a biographical event which is significantly paralleled on the historical front with “the Rising of the Irish Volunteers” and is briefly explained in meaningful terms as an act of resistance and martyrdom: “Capitulation after a week of fierce struggles; executions.”

On several occasions Desnoes suggests that the “alliance” (between Irish and Cubans) that the translation of *Portrait* in Cuba represents is far from accidental and he even seems to imply that, since there are so many common elements in the history of both oppressed nations, it is just natural that Joyce’s novel echoes the history of Cuba in the Cuban idiom (Desnoes xiv). His shaping of Joyce as the only great European writer concerned with “national sovereignty” (Desnoes xv) forms part of a larger discourse of transatlantic solidarity which links Irish and Cuban nationalism: “Joyce ex-

perienced himself in his own home¹¹ the failure of the subsequent fights for independence [...] it should not be forgotten that those fights *almost* overlap with our last war of independence" (Desnoes xv, emphasis mine). Thus, the translator seems to invoke here the very same demands of the 1916 Proclamation which declared the right of the people of Ireland "to be sovereign and indefeasible" while simultaneously speaking to the persistence of the question of Cuba's own sovereignty among the ideologues of the revolution.

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting examples of Desnoes's efforts to produce meaningful convergences which Cuban readers can easily recognize and identify with, is present in his reference to James J. O'Kelly (1845-1916), described as "one of Parnell's most faithful lieutenants," author of "a passionate defence of our fight: *La tierra del mambí*," and advocate of "Cuba libre" (Desnoes xv-xvi). The translator remarks that "O'Kelly, who had been to Cuba, was the only personal friend [of Parnell's] who did not take part in the betrayal which made young Stephen disappointed in Irish politics" (Desnoes xvi). The historical reference to O'Kelly and his faithfulness to Parnell, "the uncrowned king of Ireland" (Desnoes xvi), in connection with Joyce's protagonist and (indirectly) with Joyce's own disappointment in Irish politics (since Desnoes chooses to read *Portrait* as an autobiographical novel) invokes the relevance of Irish patriotism as a model for Cuba's own struggle for independence (first from Spain and later from the U.S.). It is at this point that the translator more obviously relocates Joyce's *Portrait* through a map of "transatlantic solidarities." As has been suggested, he conjures up the Irish tradition of resistance through his revisitation of Joyce's novel, presented as a source of inspiration for writers in post-revolutionary Cuba. Furthermore, by referring to O'Kelly's *The Mambi-Land* (*La tierra del Mambí*) he manages to recover an Irish narrative about Cuban resistance in the nineteenth century which is conveniently projected onto the present moment.

In 1872, the *New York Herald* sent James J. O'Kelly to Cuba to cover the insurgency against Spanish colonial domination later known as the 'Ten Years' War' (1868-1878). He was commissioned to find Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, President of the insurgent Cuban republic, which had proclaimed its independence from Spain in 1868. After a series of dangerous adventures while travelling beyond Spanish lines O'Kelly finally succeeded in locating Céspedes and in sending reports back to the *Herald*. However, he was captured on his return to Spanish-controlled Cuba and narrowly avoided execution. His case became a global *cause célèbre* attracting widespread international attention and great public interest. In 1874, he published a travel book based on his adventures on the island titled *The Mambi-Land or Adventures of a Herald Correspondent in Cuba*. His sympathetic portrayal of Cuban insurgency,

11 Curiously enough, Desnoes refers here to the famous political discussion at the Christmas dinner scene in *Portrait* as one of the bitterest arguments "in the literature of the time" which happened at "his [Joyce's] parents' dinner table," thus confusing the writer with his character.

part a war reportage and part an imperial travelogue, translated into Spanish in 1930 as *La Tierra del Mambí*, with a prologue by Cuban author Fernando Ortiz, eventually led to enduring popularity among Cubans. As Jennifer Brittan explains in her thorough discussion of O’Kelly’s *The Mambi-Land* and Ortiz’s translation:

Taken up by nationalist insurgents in Cuba, the term [*mambí*] was an early harbinger of the nationalist rhetoric of raceless fraternity that would emerge in the 1880s in the first wave of historiography on the Ten Years’ War. This makes *Mambi* a genealogical rather than a territorial designation, linking Cuba to a history of anti-colonial struggle in the larger hispanophone Caribbean. (Brittan 379)

At the same time, given that, as Brittan appropriately remarks, “O’Kelly’s Cuban assignment borrowed against the success of Henry Morton’s Stanley, the New York *Herald* correspondent sent into the African interior to find the ‘missing’ British missionary David Livingstone” (Brittan 380), the Cuban (and Irish) Question is mapped onto still other more distant geographies which include “the transatlantic routes of a mobile anti-colonialism” (Brittan 389).

Since Desnoes invokes O’Kelly’s *mambí* narrative of Cuba’s fight for self-government through Ortiz’s prologue, in the context of the revolutionary present of the 1960s, a number of relevant connections emerge. In the Prologue to the 1930 translation of *The Mambi-Land*, Ortiz emphasizes O’Kelly’s long career as an Irish nationalist, an active Fenian committed to Irish independence, a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and later the Irish Parliamentary Party, and a close ally of Charles Stewart Parnell (Ortiz 11-13). In Ortiz’s Prologue O’Kelly is ultimately tied to Cuba through the bonds of a sympathetic nationalism, which gains him the title of transatlantic patriot:

The adventures of this spirited Irishman in the land of the Mambí represented far more than the stimulation of the professional journalist in him. Among Cuban separatists he could reflect on the parallels between Cuba and Ireland and on the wretched political state of both countries [...] Today, when Ireland, his homeland, is also a free state, we Cubans, might well consider consecrating a statue to the memory of James J. O’Kelly, as both a ceremonial thanksgiving and a spiritual bonding with the Irish people.¹²

Read in this context, Desnoes’s translation of *Portrait*, strategically re-incorporated within the Cuban literary system, continues the dialogue with previous discourses which also hinted at the existence of a “spiritual bonding with the Irish people” ultimately functioning as a form of commemoration of the Irish legacy in Cuba. In a recent article, significantly entitled “The Irish Presence in the History and Place Names of Cuba,” Rafael Fernández Moya, chronicler at the ‘Historian’s Office of Havana,’ presents a catalogue of Cuban place names memorializing a host of Irish immigrants who, over the centuries, he suggests, made significant contributions to the economic, cultural, and political evolution of the island, from Spanish colonial times to the early republican era. Fernández Moya explains that the Irish were particularly noticeable

12 O’Riordan (136-137), translation of Ortiz’s Prologue (53-54). Although to date there is no complete translation of Ortiz’s Prologue, the extract mentioned is part of a selection of fragments translated by O’Riordan and included in the “Appendices” section of his book.

during the construction of the island's first railroad and specifically notes their involvement in the first workers' strike recorded in Cuba:

After some weeks putting up with mistreatment and hunger, the "Irish"¹³ workers and Canary Islanders decided to demand their rights from the administration of the railway works and when these were not adequately met, they launched the first workers' strike recorded in the history of the island. The repression was bloody; the Spanish governors ordered the troops to act against the disgruntled workers, resulting in injury and death. (Fernández Moya 193)

As has been noted, archival records of Irish migration to Cuba indicate that there was a group of the so-called *irlandeses* contracted in New York in 1835 for the Cuban Railway Commission to lay the tracks of the first stretch of railroad on the island. These Irish bonded labourers, forced into a brutal work regime under Spanish colonial rule, developed forms of struggle against the use of coercive labour practices which far from being merely violent individual upsurges must well be interpreted as forms of resistance "by Irish migrants in the intersecting British and Iberian systems of colonial labor" (Brehony 70-71). Likewise, the transnational implications of anti-colonial Irish nationalism, which the Cuban translation of *Portrait* appeals to, prefigured and inspired other Third World liberation movements since, as has been noted, "[t]he Irish drive for independence was watched and emulated by nationalist movements in India, Egypt and elsewhere, with tokens of solidarity being exchanged and advice sought of the Irish by other colonized countries" (Tymoczko, "Translation and Political Engagement" 28).

This climate of complicity in post-revolutionary Cuba fosters the publication of the book *La Resistencia Irlandesa (The Irish Resistance)* by writer Roberto Yepe, which came out in Havana in 1969. The work, which attempts to revise 'The Irish Question' from its origins to the present, i.e. the troubles of 1968, is announced in the preliminary pages as a study of the tragedy of a country in which "generations of revolutionaries have shed their blood for freedom." As expected, the bibliographical list of works cited consists entirely of history books and essays with the remarkable exception of Desnoes's translation of Joyce's *Portrait*, doubtless a symptomatic gesture which speaks for itself. In his search for prototypes which can help legitimate the cultural and political projects of the new Cuba, Desnoes succeeds in shaping Joyce's narrative as representative of the above-mentioned Irish legacy of resistance, to the extent that his particular version of *Portrait* trespasses generic boundaries and is significantly listed with relevant titles on Irish history.

It is precisely in the context of this legacy of solidarities and complicities between Cuba and Ireland – which the new readers are encouraged to remember – where Joyce's novel is resituated. As has been discussed, the 1964 translation is introduced by a politically motivated Prologue, which relies on the use of ideologically

13 Fernández Moya explains that among the workers under contract were English, Irish, Scottish, North Americans, Dutch, and German labourers yet, since the majority of immigrants came from Ireland, they were all identified as "*irlandeses*."

charged vocabulary, while paying tribute to common struggles against colonial oppression, thereby linking Castro's Cuba,¹⁴ James J. O'Kelly's *Mambi-Land*, and James Joyce's Ireland within a larger map of Atlantic sister nations united by common experiences of political resistance. Since the translation repeatedly invokes the similarities between the social and political conditions of pre-revolutionary Cuba and the Ireland of Joyce's *Portrait*, which the men and women of 1916 were attempting to transform, the (failed) dream of the welfare state promised by the Proclamation, one which would "cherish all the children of the nation equally," is ironically re-inscribed in the early years of enthusiasm which welcomed the (imagined) Cuba of the Castro revolution.

In the introduction to this essay I reflected on how recent publications in the field of Atlantic Studies have re-conceptualized the original framework of the discipline by beginning to move beyond the specificity of national literatures and cultures and by dismantling former hierarchies, thus postulating a rich variety of forms of (trans)atlantic solidarity. As I have argued, in the years following the Cuban Revolution, when the country was immersed in a radical process of self-definition and Cubans were asked to participate in the reformulation of their identity, the dialogue between Irish and Cuban cultural and political discourses was strongly determined by the forces of translation. Likewise, as discussed in relation to the 1964 Cuban version of *Portrait*, a rich network of meaningful convergences emerges when the linguistic and cultural exchanges between the two Atlantic nations are analyzed against the background of Translation Studies. Specifically, the translation of Joyce's *Portrait* in Cuba remains paradigmatic of translation as an essential form of negotiation between cultures which can never be understood in isolation, but always in relation to a social, political, or intellectual framework.

Transatlantic Studies, which are transdisciplinary by nature, cannot ignore the way in which translation and translational practices play a crucial role in debates about mobility in the transatlantic world. Whether in the rich intersections and overlaps of transnational affiliations and Atlantic cultural histories or in recent attention to issues of reciprocities between marginal Atlantic territories,¹⁵ much more remains to be said on the role of translation in processes of identity formation across the Atlantic.

14 Fidel Castro, who has been known to display a great admiration for Ireland's struggle for independence, sanctioned the publication of a new edition of *The Mambi-Land* in 1968, on the centenary of the War of Independence; see O'Riordan 11.

15 For a study of the intersections between the margins of the "Atlantic Archipelago," see Norquay & Smyth. For a specific case study of complicities between peripheral Atlantic identities within the framework of Translation Studies, see Palacios and O'Donnell & Palacios.

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THE CHANGING SYMBOLISM OF GREYHOUND SPORTS IN THE WORK OF BRYAN MACMAHON

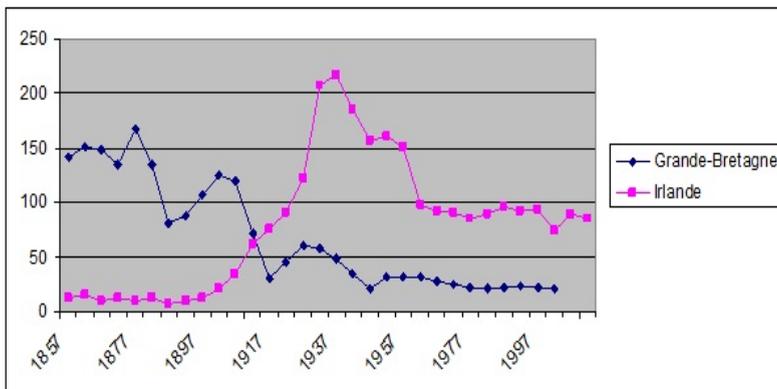
Laurent Daniel

In the period spanning from the codification and spread of organized sports from nineteenth-century Great Britain to today's globalization of the phenomenon, notions of Irish identity have been strongly influenced by the branch of nationalism which was to wrench a Republic away from the British Empire. The two main forces which have been identified as central to any understanding of such nationalism are political struggle and literature. However, according to academic research on the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), mainly, sport has also played a part in defining what it means to be Irish (Bairner; Cronin; Cronin, Murphy & Rouse). Indeed, in addition to hurling and Gaelic football, the first part of this chapter will show that greyhound coursing was also instrumental in shaping a very similar aspect of Irish identity, at least among its followers, as the sport became popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wrenched its independence from the British controlling body for coursing in August 1916, and eventually achieved full independence seven years later. It will then be shown that the only significant use of coursing in Irish literature, in *Children of the Rainbow*, a novel written by Bryan MacMahon in 1952, serves a similar purpose, travelling some way towards reconciling sport with literature as well as politics. However, another piece of writing by the same author a short time before the advent of the new century yields a totally different picture: "My Love Has a Long Tail". Therefore, the third part will show how both literature and the historical development of greyhound sports can bear witness to the changing nature of Irish politics and identity.

Contrary to what some enthusiastic followers of the leash have claimed, coursing is not the oldest Irish national sport and was not born either in the cradle of the Olympic Games, as quite every historian of the sport assumes. Indeed, even though in the second century, Arrianus recommended that not more than two dogs should be let loose at any one time on a single hare and that true sportsmen are glad if the hare escapes, he makes no mention whatsoever of any competition between the dogs (Arrianus; Brown xxvii). A study of the origin of the greyhound and original rules of the sport as well as a consideration of these findings within the hunting, social, and economic context of the time makes it possible to trace the origin of the sport back to sixteenth-century Britain (Daniel, "Birth of Coursing"; Daniel, *Des lévriers*). Yet, nowadays, coursing is hardly indulged in except in Ireland, where it was far more popular than in Great Britain for most of the twentieth century, which is paradoxical, given the traditional antagonism between the two islands.

The parallel with the GAA may appear far-fetched. However, while initially codified in opposition to rugby football, association football, and the ideology they were supposed to be serving as vehicles for, none of today’s emblematically Irish sports were originally specifically so. Moreover, so-called national sports were not immune from British influence either, as they are part of the codification process which originated across the Irish Sea. Similarly, even though it originated in Great Britain, coursing was on the wane there when it picked up in Ireland, and the popularization of this sport coincides with the period leading up to eventual Irish independence from Great Britain (fig. 1).

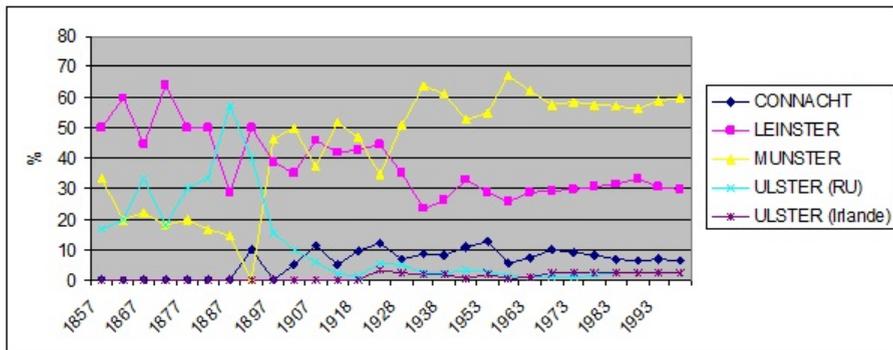
Figure 1:
Number of Coursing Clubs in Great Britain and in Ireland
(Source: Daniel, *Des lévriers* 139)



While Ulster is unanimously recognized as “the cradle of coursing” in Ireland (Magee), before declaring a moratorium on this sport in 2002 and eventually banning it in 2010, Northern Ireland had only two coursing clubs by this time, one which, according to famous greyhound man John Martin, “has been the scene of some hot protests from the Rev. Ian Paisley’s DUP” and another which did “well to survive in a hostile terrain” (Martin, “Irish Clubs”).¹ On Ulster’s fall into insignificance on the Irish coursing scene, see fig. 2.

1 Martin also authored *Tales of the Dogs: A Celebration of the Irish and their Greyhounds*.

Figure 2:
Relative Number of Coursing Clubs per Province, 1857-2011
 (Source: Daniel, *Des lévriers* 142)



The history of the creation of the Irish Coursing Club (ICC) shares significant parallels with that of the GAA (and there is further evidence of a continuing relationship between the two organizations as apparent in fig. 3, where a coursing meeting is held on a GAA ground). Indeed, the number of Irishmen on the lists of suspended owners published by the National Coursing Club (NCC), the British controlling authority, was so high that in 1906 it became necessary to set up a subcommittee in charge of settling conflicts in Ireland (“Minutes of the Meeting ... 1906”). But on 13 July 1916 (“Special Meeting”) the executive committee decided to take full control of Irish affairs again, barring those who did not comply from competing, reminiscent of the famous GAA bans on players competing in English sports such as soccer, rugby and cricket. It appears that the subcommittee’s secretary deliberately hampered its workings to trigger off such a crisis. So much so that on 14 August, 1916, like the GAA thirty-two years earlier, and at the very same place (Thurles, County Tipperary) – even though the decision had actually been arrived at in Clonmel (“Irish Coursing Government”; “Coursing Crux”) – delegates supported a resolution that enjoined the NCC to place Irish coursing within the jurisdiction of an autonomous Irish body or else face the possibility of Irish coursers setting up their own stud-book and pocketing the registration fees (“National Coursing Club Meetings”). As coursing in Ireland was as popular as in Great-Britain, the NCC was left with little choice but to comply or face bankruptcy. Therefore, three days before the expiry of the ultimatum, an extraordinary general meeting of the NCC ratified the creation of the ICC (“Minutes of the Special Meeting ... 1916”).

Figure 3:
Race to the Hare: Millstreet: Coursing Season 2010²



Symbolically started shortly after the 1916 rising, the process came to a logical end after the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty and subsequent Civil War, with the publication of the first *Irish Greyhound Stud-Book* in 1923 (Morris), severing the last bonds still uniting that nationalist, if not “national,” sport with Great Britain, if not the UK, since the ICC, very much like the GAA again, has responsibility for coursing and racing in the thirty-two counties of Ireland. Even though such a setting is not typical of all coursing meetings held in Ireland, the GAA goal posts in the background of the above picture (fig. 3) are symbolic of some community of spirit. What is interesting in the context of the construction of a nationalist Irish identity through sport and the concentration of the historians of Irish nationalism on literature is that the use of coursing by MacMahon tells quite a similar story.

Bryan MacMahon was born and worked all his life in Listowel, Co. Kerry, as a schoolmaster (Fitzmaurice; MacMahon, *The Master*). He wrote numerous plays and short stories as well as a handful of novels and is the only writer of fiction making significant use of coursing in Irish literature, to my knowledge. This is probably because he lived in one of the strongholds of this competition, but also because it serves a significant literary purpose. In *Children of the Rainbow*, a novel narrating everyday life in a fictionalized Listowel called Cloone in the early years of the Free State, coursing is only referred to in the first chapter. However, the sport provides the key thanks to which the reader can make sense of the handful of occasions on which violence or bloodshed is construed as love,³ culminating in the closing paragraphs when

2 Photograph © Yvonne Harrington.

3 At least two other instances are worth mentioning: when Metal Belly tries to recover the watch Trouble-o'-the-world has stolen from him, just before they both disappear (eventually happening to have fled together): “His right hand made a cream-and-black rope

the main character/narrator eventually kisses Madcap O'Neill, the girl he has secretly been in love with all along:

"Strike me, Ches!" she said, in a low voice.

At first I failed to understand her. She lifted her face slightly. Her lips - how red! Her breasts - how braced by nature and the moment's compulsion! Her face - how drained of colour except where the points of anger or pride or what-I-could-not-name glowed on each of her cheekbones! Her lashes - how long, hiding her eyes!

Suddenly I understood.

My right hand came up: open it was and eager with anger. I struck her fully on the side of the face. The head went sickeningly sideways. I felt a strange exhilaration take me. Slowly she shook her head free of megrim. Slowly, drifting, a wing of her dark hair came down over her face. For a moment she allowed me to see her eyes where they were hiding in the thicket of her hair.

"Again!" she said, quietly.

Again I struck. The head jerked. The mouth that had already been twisted now turned to a full wryness. After the second blow her dry lips again framed the word that I eagerly awaited. The third time I struck with all my force. For a time the head hung limply: when it had lifted I saw the pencilled line of blood come vertically down from the mouth corner. I saw that her eyes were alight with triumph and that her soul was out of its hiding-place. I was unutterably churned.

My fingers became officers of iron, eager to take command. I saw the woman's hair beside the autumn land. It was as if all the walls of the world were breaking.

As we came together, we were breathing strangely. For a moment our bodies trembled: then they were bound.

First I tasted the saliva, then the blood. The blood was better. (*Children* 340-341; my emphasis)

This weird, cannibalistic anticlimax may stem from the fact that in *Children of the Rainbow* "the young men of the South told themselves that the history of their country had invariably justified those who were extreme" (*Children* 277), and because, in the words of Pádraic Pearse, "bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more terrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them" (Pearse 99). Indeed,

of the woman's hair. The bellman twisted the rope on his finger then shifted his arm suddenly so that the rope coiled around the back of his hand. [...] As yet *her dilated eyes indicated that she accepted the punishment as a type of inverted caress, the sort of hurt a woman loves [...]* As she moved away, she laughed again, inciting the bellman to further sweet violence [...] *The throat gladly accepted the hands, as though expecting to find in them a strange delight"* (*Children* 175-177; my emphasis). On the same night, when Chestnut (the narrator) fights the group of tinkers she belongs to: "It was the first time I had fought with the lust to kill on me. On my entry into the mêlée I feared for my eyes, my nose, my front teeth, my navel and my genitals. But when a blow from an ash-crop slurred across my cheekbone, I readily sloughed my terror. *A strange glory took possession of me [...]* Into the fight I went, side by side with Finn Dillon and the others, clubbing, kicking, biting, swearing, shouting, *until at last I felt the salt of my own blood on my tongue and the silk lightness of foam on the corners of my mouth. Here was a lust such as I had never known before!*" (*Children* 178-179; my emphasis).

as stated by the narrator at the very beginning of the novel: "In the year 1925, after the bitter centuries, Southern Ireland had decided to take stock of the measure of freedom she had gained" (*Children* 1). However, the inhabitants of the village of Cloone are not so much slaves to some foreign occupying forces as to forces within: estrangement from their original culture and civilization, on the one hand, and the weight of Christian morals on the other hand. Indeed, this pooling of blood is very reminiscent of the experience the young villagers go through – "[We] felt – oh, the magic of it! – that our bloods were pooling" (*Children* 268) – when they assemble around the eldest man in the village, Old Font, who holds a finely chiselled gold necklace which has just been dug up, marvels at the craftsmanship of his ancestors and takes pride in his line of descent, before criticizing the young people for abandoning the customs and language of their forefathers and urging them to reclaim their glorious heritage:

Implicit in [his] trembling fingers was the brag that so long ago we had been glorious. That we had not been a painted people living in burrows! That our scribes had had miraculous inks in the dawn of scribing! That our artificers had the skill to cut such beauty! (*Children* 268)

This is because there is a close dialectical relationship between the story of Chestnut, the narrator hovering between childhood and manhood, and that of the Cloonies, as the story of Chestnut is also that of a quest for "beauty" in some authentic pre-colonization, pre-Christian Ireland set against the history of Ireland's fight for freedom.

This is illustrated by Metal Belly, the bellman of Cloone, "who had modelled himself on Charles Parnell" (*Children* 28). Indeed, a model of integrity, Metal Belly had secretly left the village some time before to follow a beggar woman – ironically called Trouble-o'-the-World – after he had let her come into his kitchen and have something to eat, sinful though it might appear to God and the country's patriots: "From the upper murk of the wall, the dead patriots looked down upon him. Charles Stewart Parnell was there: he, too, had been a moral man until he had succumbed to such a voice" (*Children* 145). However, contrary to Parnell, who did not achieve any independence for Ireland and whose political career was ruined by the Church after it was revealed that he had been having an affair with a married woman for some years, Metal Belly is to save the village for the very opposite reason, on account of his liaison with Trouble-o'-the-World, and free the villagers, not so much from the oppressor without, however, as from the oppressor within, i.e. Catholic morals. This is evident on his coming back to the village after it had been burnt down to ashes by a "cleansing" (*Children* 306) fire, at the exact moment when the Cloonies were about to scatter away:

And then, O neighbours of creation! it seemed as if the Almighty God had abruptly deserted His business of mating the magnificent animals of Africa, of arranging the wheeling of sky-balls and the superintending of the twisting of the myriad elvers in the slime of Saragossa. And had turned His eye on scabby scalded Cloone ! [...] Swaying on the

hill-road was what seemed to be a bright green flame with a horseshoe of red-yellow beneath it. (*Children* 318-319)

Indeed, just as God might, Metal Belly enjoins Chestnut to guide his people, much as Daniel O’Connell, the second main charismatic nationalist leader in nineteenth-century Irish history, mustered hundreds of thousands of people in his 1820s campaign for Catholic Emancipation. Yet, however Biblical the metaphor, Metal Belly is a Pagan God superseding the Christian one, as shown by the bell:

The chapel bell had ceased its ringing. [...] When the bell’s [Metal Belly’s] tongue hit the metal everyone halted [...] The people of Cloone respected the sound of the bell: it had called their fathers together to hear the uncrowned King of Ireland state that no man had a right to set a boundary to the onward march of a nation. Almost it could be said that this bell had given Ireland what measure of freedom was hers. (*Children* 330)

Parallel to this counter-chronological revisiting of the political history of Ireland’s fight for independence against the backdrop of Christian mythology, and just after Metal-Belly-Parnell-God has instructed Chestnut-O’Connell-Moses to guide his people, the metaphor moves forward, and in very much the same way as Parnell “fell” and Metal Belly “rose,” the village is redeemed thanks to the (birth and) apparition of Metal Belly’s mulatto rather than the death of Christ. Indeed, just as Metal Belly is opposed to Parnell, O’Connell, who achieved emancipation for Catholics, is opposed to Chestnut, who is to achieve emancipation *from* Catholicism:

Then [...] the women heard the cry of a child from the wagon. From lip to lip of the women the light ran. They started to laugh. Not to laugh so much as to cry out. It was hunger in the form of a laugh. The western woman came forward out of the ranks of the women: throwing her shawl wildly from off her shoulders she laughed out full and free thus sponsoring all the women’s hunger. (*Children* 321)

Indeed, ever since Patrick Kavanagh’s *Great Hunger*, “hunger” has been associated with the spiritual and sexual hunger of the Irish peasant, and it is very clear – as the bell of “Mary-without-Stain” makes way for Metal Belly’s – that the villagers awaken back to their senses thanks to the appearance of a redeeming Christ. What holds for men holds for women:

On the crowd’s edge, a man cupped his hand around his mouth. “*Is it takin’ after the sire or the dam?*” he shouted.

“*The sire, begod!*” Metal Belly said proudly. Everybody was cheering and stamping and laughing. Men threw one another aside with the dint of an *earthen glee*. (*Children* 322; my emphasis)

If Metal Belly is asked whether the child takes after the sire or the dam, this is because the novel seems to be merrily combining the male and the female, the human and the animal, the greyhound in particular: “Trouble-o’-the World went deep into the interior of the wagon and brought the child to the door. It was a black-haired boy, the drawn stamp of his father and as healthy as a hound” (*Children* 321-323).⁴ Indeed,

4 See also MacMahon’s *The Lion Tamer and Other Stories*: “Country boys are like greyhounds: they get all their courage when they are in the pack, especially if the pack happens to meet in darkness” (“The Lion Tamer” 6); and “Either that or (absurdity of

far from being accidental, the metaphor takes the reader back to the first chapter of *Children of the Rainbow*, when Madcap O'Neill first aroused Chestnut's sexual desires, on the coursing field, across the river which stopped the (cleansing) fire, where the "Cloonies" or "clones" reproduce asexually under the aegis of Mary "Without Stain," she who conceived without the stain of the original sin, the immaculate conception.

On the coursing field, the atmosphere is highly sexualised, and the first coursing match is unequivocally constructed as a sexual act, Chestnut's greyhound being an extension of his manhood, a phallic weapon literally penetrating the hare as it digs its teeth into her:

The hare was unslotted and the hounds slipped. Tidy pulled away from her brindled rival with facility. Nearing the hare she gathered herself low. I found myself crouching in sympathy with her. She seemed to be sending all the muscled venom of her body into her head and urgent mouth. My dark little lady went into the hare in a long harsh thrust. Her throat tightened on her game. She held her grip, then rolled over and over in a flurry of black legs. (*Children* 6)

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the hare should be a metaphor for women, as suggested by an old lady bending over the dying bed of a girl who died when giving birth on returning from the town: "The limed bird! The meshed salmon! The mangled leveret [sic]!" (*Children* 227). However, this is not peculiar to the novel, as the hare is a traditional allegory of women in many societies including Celtic Ireland. Indeed, the Folklore Commission recovered many versions of a tale featuring greyhounds set on a hare caught in the act of sucking milk from a cow, ending up with the dogs biting her, and the hare turning out to be a woman, as in County Clare, for example:

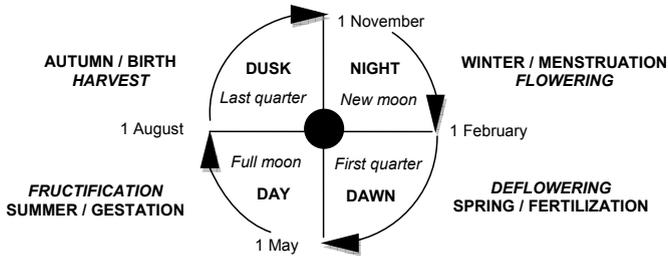
One man was walking his greyhounds early in the morning. They started a hare and chased her. When the man caught up with them, he came up with a young woman leaning against a wooden gate. He asked what she was doing here. She said she was looking after the turkeys. But the man saw blood running down her leg. This was evidence that she was the hare (Guibert de La Vaissière 333; my translation).

This is because in Celtic mythology there is a metaphorical equivalence and relationship between woman and nature as givers of life. So much so that the Celtic calendar (fig. 4) was fashioned on the moon, which undergoes in one month (seven dark nights, seven dark/clear nights, seven clear nights, seven clear/dark nights) what nature (winter, spring, summer, autumn) and women (bleeding, impregnated, pregnant, delivering) go through in one year. And as the yielding of fruit was logically seen as the end of the natural cycle, the year began on 1 November, which marked the beginning of winter. The second quarter began on 1 February which marked the beginning of the agricultural year. The third one began on 1 May which marked the passage from flower to fruit. And the fourth quarter spanned from 1 August to 31 October. Therefore, nature was thought to reproduce life thanks to the rotting process

absurdities) the greyhound is present in everyone, together with the bittern, the plaice and the elephant" ("Ballintiernain the Morning" 37).

vegetation went through in winter. And given the metaphorical equivalence between nature and women, women were thought to reproduce life thanks to the blood they no longer shed when pregnant (see fig. 4).

Figure 4:
The Wheel of Life and Death in Celtic Mythology
 (Source: Muller 277)



Men and Nature entertained an exchange relationship. Nature fed Men in their lifetime then the decaying bodies of dead Men fed Nature. Similarly, the blood of Women fed Nature during menstruation and babies-to-be-born during pregnancy. Life and the alternation of seasons were made possible thanks to blood, and such a clear parallel was drawn between the fertility of women and that of nature that it was necessary that land take a blood bath in winter in order to be fertile. This is why the Chieftain (as the representative of mankind) in Pre-Christian Celtic Ireland was ritualistically put to death, as a sacrifice to nature, for nature to be able to feed his people in turn. Later on, on 26 December,⁵ the Chieftain was to be replaced by a wren, chased, killed, and paraded by young men on a bush decorated with ribbons as a symbol of nature and menstruation, that is a symbol of the wheel of the year that needs blood to turn. While no similar traditional festival has ever been uncovered, the hunting or coursing of hares with dogs could be interpreted in the similar fashion.

5 As one lunar month lasts 29.5 days, it was necessary to add 11.25 day or 12 days (hence the leap year) for months not to run ahead of seasons, since 132×29.5 is 354 days. As a period nowhere to be found on the wheel of the year, those twelve days were both outside and at the centre of time and life, that is the hub of the wheel which is made to turn thanks to the death of life as well as the womb of the year to come. It seems to have been believed that these twelve days embodied the twelve months to come, that it was possible to forecast the weather of the twelve months ahead out of each of these twelve days. Therefore, it was tempting to try and influence the future. So much so that 26 December became a favourite for rituals aiming at impregnating nature with human blood. Human blood was replaced by animal blood, and 26 December has remained a favourite with sportspeople up to this day. Those twelve days span from 25 December to 6 January in the Christian calendar and used to span from 31 October to 11 November in the Celtic calendar (for further on this see Muller).

Figure 5:
Hare Festooned with Ribbon: North Kilkenny: Coursing Season 2010⁶



This is the path Bryan MacMahon encourages us to follow as a “white-marked hare festooned with ribbons” (*Children* 17), a distant ancestor of the one depicted above (fig. 5), eighty-five years on, is released on the coursing field. Indeed, Sylvie Muller explains that just as with the Chieftain – made “menstrual” through sacrifice – both the wren and the hare are androgynous creatures. Indeed, the hare depicted in traditional Irish tales is very similar to those snakes that emerge from the sex of women, take hold of their bodies and dry up their breast, and in popular belief as well as in actual life, both are known to steal milk from cows. Therefore, as symbolic representations of menstruation, they are beneficial when earth is in need of blood, as shown by the Easter hare, but can prevent conception and lactation, that is to say spread infertility. So that for winter to turn into summer and for blood to turn into milk, that is for nature to yield fruit and for women to deliver babies, it was considered necessary that they should be sent underground in order to feed earth with their own blood and make way for summer. This is what a farmer in one tale whose greyhounds had killed a hare that had been sucking milk from his cows can bear witness to, as on coming back to his farm, the churn was full of the long-awaited milk. This is also why in a further legend from Cloone, county Leitrim, the hole which a priest dug to bury the hare his horse had kicked dead is known as “Butter Hollow,” as the hole was later found to be full of butter (Guibert de La Vaissière 334; my translation). After the beginning of summer, 1 May, the spilling of blood was likely to trigger a counter clockwise reaction, from milk to blood or summer to winter, and spread fruitlessness:

6 Photograph © Yvonne Harrington.

Men from the town beyond gibed us:
 "Murderin' rogues, the Cloonies!"
 "Don't fall into the river goin' home Sonny Macnamara!"
 "Kissin' an' bleedin' like the Cloonies!" (*Children* 6)

Therefore, if the *Cloonies* are said to be "kissin' and bleedin'" by the *townies*, just like Chestnut and Madcap O'Neill, this is because both Chestnut and the whole village take a journey back into a pre-colonization, pre-Christian, pantheistic Ireland in which life springs from death, when the fertility of man and nature were dependent upon one another, in which bloodshed is necessary for life to be reborn, as exemplified by the killing of hares by greyhounds.

However, a little more than thirty years later, the second and last time that Bryan MacMahon was to use greyhound sports in his works of fiction in any substantial way, the story was quite a different one. In his 1985 short story "My Love Has a Long Tail," the Listowel writer tells the story of an old man of very little means tricking the local taxi driver into driving him to and from the Cork greyhound race track to have his one greyhound auctioned there. However, far from using the greyhound as an allegory for some ideal authentic Ireland, the greyhound stands for small backward Ireland and small Irish people left behind by the accelerating pace of modernization. This is made explicit by the "toothless" ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 55) retired smallholder with a small face dominated by: "askew steel-rimmed spectacles, one of the lenses of which, by the vice of being vertically cracked, made it sometimes appear that its owner had three eyes" ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 50). Indeed, for the taxi driver whom he managed to trick into driving him and his greyhound to the auction sales in Cork, Mike definitely belongs to the past, and for the better: "narrowing his eyes, Tom noticed that the old fellow was in the company of town and city handlers and not among the well-dressed owners. The smallholder owner was a thing of the past, he told himself with some satisfaction" ("My Love has a Long Tail" 56). Even though the short story deals with racing rather than coursing, greyhounds still stand for rural Ireland, as shown by Mike, whom Tom advises to get out of greyhounds:

I will not forget my hounds! you're a townie, so what do you know about the countryside at break o' day? The line of light in the east. The first stirrings of the bird. We steppin' together, him and me. Muscle forming on his hindquarters as his body sheds fat. His motions those of a healthy hound. Then, when the time comes, there's the brace of hounds in slips. The hare goin' up the field. The hounds pullin' the slipper after them. Yeh, yeh, yeh! Who can whack that? Eh? Before I die I hope to own a hound that will make the whole of Ireland ring with my name. ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 60)

Yet if the dialectic of town and country has been retained by the author, it now works the other way around. Indeed, the pathetic smallholder with his greyhound wearing an "obviously homemade (cover) crudely cut out from white cloth, still more crudely affixed to its right flank" ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 55) is depicted as completely out of touch with modern life, triggering "incredulous(ness)" ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 57) and even "disdain" ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 58) on the part of the auctioneers.

And it comes as no surprise that no bid is made for *Parsley Sauce* and that Mike has to take him back home.

Mike and his likes are shown as totally out-of-place left-behinds, and Bryan MacMahon seems to feel no compassion for the helplessness of such a fast-disappearing old Ireland:

'Peter, you bastard of a spy,' he jerked aloud as if the other could hear him, 'I'll best you yet.' Then turning to address others at an imaginary audience, 'You too, Hogan, bastard of a big farmer up there on the hill ready to gobble up my few acres. And you, bastard of a driver, Tom, that bled me white. Ye bastards at the track who put me last on the list. You bastard of an auctioneer and your penciller with the eyes of a fox. Ye bastards standin' around that gave no bid or that puffed when it suited. Ye bastards from Amsterdam that never turned up. You bastard at the traps with your long slip. You bastard at the store pressing me to pay. Ye bastards in Brussels who won't let us live! Ye're nothing but a pack of bastards, the lot of ye. But before the face o' Christ I'll beat ye all yet!' ("My Love Has a Long Tail" 63-64)

As explained in the first part of this paper, most of the symbolism of greyhound coursing derives from the killing of the hare, the spilling of blood in winter, which was deemed necessary for life to be reborn in the summer. Interestingly enough, once it was made compulsory for greyhounds coursing in enclosed areas to wear muzzles, Tommy Conlon, in the *Sunday Independent*, could write of greyhounds as: "Eunuchs in a harem of hares" (Conlon). This seems to have been the view taken by Bryan MacMahon in a novel set in north Kerry in 1925. However, in 1985, thirty-three years after publishing *Children of the Rainbow*, the Listowel writer apparently took a totally different view, using the greyhound as a symbol for backward, rural Ireland losing pace with modernization. This may be because the greyhound sport taking place in the novel is slightly different from that referred to in the short story. Indeed, races between six greyhounds running after a dummy hare on an oval circuit have little to do with coursing. But this may also be because Ireland was in the process of turning away from the isolationism that characterized the middle decades of the twentieth century and had joined the European Economic Community, a development that would eventually set her on the road to the Celtic Tiger years. Indeed, whatever his literary taste for Gaelic Ireland and Irish (he is the translator of the classic Irish-language text *Peig: The Autobiography of Peig Sayers of the Great Blasket Island* [1973]), folklore and travellers' lore (*The Honey Spike*, 1967), local customs, ancient traditions, and rural life, Bryan MacMahon was a modern man with a modern outlook. While his reputation as a writer is said to have suffered for never having being banned by the Censorship of Publications Act (O'Donoghue 40), he was not averse to criticizing rigid enforcement of Catholic teaching, as shown in John O'Brien's *The Vanishing Irish*. What is more, his own teaching and educational outlook were most progressive, as one can gather from his 1992 autobiography, *The Master*, among other sources. Lastly, even though the sport of coursing is said to also exist in Portugal, the United States of America, and Pakistan, Ireland is, to my knowledge, the only country in the world where it is carried out under the aegis of a recognized national

association. And even though it is backed by the Irish State, the average Western European citizen is more and more critical of such blood sports. So, Bryan MacMahon may also have come to endorse the new mood.

Finally, the use of greyhound sports in *Children of the Rainbow* and “My Love Has a Long Tail” might also be seen as a perfect illustration of the dilemma confronting the so-called ‘patriots’ or ‘separatists’ as well as some leaders of the 1916 Rising who, possibly contrary to the Church, craved for a culturally authentic but also industrialised Ireland: “Rural society was to retain all its traditional values, but was to be modern at the same time in some unspecified way” (Garvin 80). Greyhound sports as used in the fictional world of Bryan MacMahon are also illustrative of two distinct Irish contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While *Children of the Rainbow* extols some glorious, pantheistic, Gaelic past glorified by the fight for freedom and exacerbated by the cult of sacrifice and martyrdom, “My Love Has a Long Tail” depicts a more forward-looking society.

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**REWRITING IRISH HISTORY (1916-1921) IN POPULAR CULTURE:
BLOOD UPON THE ROSE AND AT WAR WITH THE EMPIRE
BY GERRY HUNT**

Valérie Morisson

Blood Upon the Rose: Easter 1916: The Rebellion That Set Ireland Free (2009) and its sequel, *At War With the Empire: Ireland's Fight for Independence* (2012), written and drawn by Gerry Hunt, have been identified as something new in the cultural landscape of Ireland (McCann). Hunt, an architect turned cartoonist who had authored two previous volumes set in Dublin, *In Dublin City* and *Streets of Dublin*, has been acclaimed as the standard-bearer of Irish comics. Over the last decade, sequential art has proved successful in Ireland: Cló Mhaigh Eo edits comic strips and graphic novels in Irish; Moccu Press and O'Brien Press publish comic books on Irish subjects, mostly Celtic sagas. Throughout its long history, sequential art has often tapped into and popularised national history and culture (see Porret 11-41). *Blood Upon the Rose*, which focuses on a major national event and primarily addresses Irish readers, proved a great commercial success,¹ showing that "sequential art can be successfully employed to transmit Irish history to a wider demographic" (Poyntz). As young readers are no longer receptive to war stories, popular culture plays a new role in the transmission of social memory (Keren 3). However, the relations between sequential art, popular culture, and memory need to be probed deeper.

Hunt's retellings of Irish history are difficult to situate. Their conventional graphic style is reminiscent of the American periodical war comics that the author used to read from a very early age, but the detailed settings betray his concern for historical accuracy. Though the two volumes have been analysed as children's literature (Cahill 42), their protagonists are adults, and history is revealed with all its intricacies. If the two books are endowed with a strong commemorative dimension and can be dismissed as partisan (Cahill 41), their author has delved into the archives of the National Library to render the complexity of history. For all that, his aesthetic and discursive choices do not coherently evidence an anti-nationalist interpretation. Eventually, Hunt's graphic novels fall into the realm of popular culture without eschewing some of the controversies over the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence.

Though comic strips have often been thought of as conservative and reductive, their relation to history, memory, and commemoration has changed. In the 1960s, war comics targeted readers interested in military paraphernalia and extolled virtues such as courage and patriotism. In historical graphic novels, which since the 1980s have

1 "The appeal of the book has been enormous and to the widest audience possible," a spokesman for O'Brien Press told the *Irish Independent* (Sweeney).

enjoyed ever-increasing success (Porret 31), history has often been subservient to the plot or used as a mere exotic backdrop (Groensteen, *La bande* 91). However, sequential art has recently turned more critical of mainstream narratives and has acquired a new role in the popularization and commemoration of history. Alan Moore (*V for Vendetta*) and Howard Zinn (*A People's History of The United States*) provide dystopian or critical interpretations of history. One may also observe a growing tendency to divest war comics of heroic fantasies and to foreground anti-heroes.² Once overlooked as mere illustrators (Groensteen, *La bande* 91), the authors of historical graphic novels (such as Art Spiegelman, Jacques Tardi, or Joe Sacco, to name just a few) have meanwhile been acclaimed for their understanding of history. The graphic reportages of Sacco, conveyed through a personal graphic style, the documentary minuteness of Tardi's panels, or the evidential status of John Stuart Clark and Jonathan Clode's *To End All Wars* evidence the new status of historical graphic novels. Some volumes are edited with a collection of primary documents and encyclopaedic articles written by established historians.³ *To End All Wars*, an anthology commemorating WWI, is based on real facts and offers the soldiers' points of view. Clode asserts that "graphic novels are a great way of encouraging young people in subjects which may be alien to them. [...] They are no different to film as a serious medium to convey ideas" (Sherwin). Compared with other historical graphic novels, Hunt's critical voice sounds slightly muted. Are *Blood* and *At War* historical comics or comics interpreting history (*la bande dessinée historique*) (Pierre 94)?

Gerry Hunt tackles a much contested period of Irish history, as the years 1916-1920 lend themselves to interpretative divergences: "few events in Irish history have been so remembered, re-enacted, and re-imagined" (McGarry 4). A mythologised event, the Easter Rising, "has become the touchstone and lightning rod in the Irish popular imagination" (Higgins 5). For some it constitutes an example and "a standard against which to judge all subsequent events," while for others it epitomises an excessive sentimental nationalism vindicating violence (Higgins 5). Since the 1966 fiftieth anniversary state commemoration, which was "an opportunity through which to galvanise nationalist opinion" (Higgins 15), revisionist interpretations have gained ground (Boyce 166), with Conor Cruise O'Brien and Fr. Francis Shaw criticizing the myth-making around the Rising and its importance in Irish history. As the Rising "legitimized the physical force tradition" (Higgins 7), the violence plaguing Ireland during the Troubles affected its interpretation. In 2006, eight years after the Good Friday Agreement, as commemorative parades were restored,⁴ new debates flared over its democratic legitimacy, the personality of Pádraic Pearse, or the motives and political agendas of the leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The most recent com-

2 Emmanuel Guibert's *La Guerre d'Alan*, for example, is an intimate narrative of WWII seen through the eyes of a soldier.

3 *Normandie Juin 44; Le Mur de l'Atlantique; Putain de Guerre!*.

4 Parades commemorating the Rising had been suppressed in 1972 by the Irish government due to the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland (McCarthy, "Introduction").

memorations were held in memory of all victims regardless of religion, status, or nationality⁵ and were followed by ceremonies commemorating those who died on the Somme.⁶ However, the Rising and the War of Independence remain moot events. Can such interpretative intricacies be echoed in sequential art? Though graphic novels may popularise history without endorsing nationalist canons, one may wonder whether Hunt's appropriation of a genre new to Irish readers entails a revised interpretation of the events. Gramsci's hegemony theory, which views popular culture as an arena for the struggle between the dominant class and subordinate groups, may provide a theoretical framework in which to consider Hunt's historical volumes as the manifestation of a "compromise equilibrium" (Storey 10), an area of negotiation between nationalist history and individual or alternative memories, in other words, a terrain of resistance and incorporation (Storey 8) where diverging viewpoints are articulated through a popular visual idiom.

Historical Effect and Dramatization

Gerry Hunt and his editors' choices of covers seemingly situate the two novels in a pro-Irish perspective. The subtitle for *Blood, The Rebellion that Set Ireland Free*, celebrates the 1916 Rising as a foundational moment in Irish history. In fact, historical comic strips, often based on the exemplary stories of great heroes or pivotal moments in national history, have often been vehicles for nationalist propaganda (Louwagie & Weysow 11; see also Strömberg). Though they dramatise national history, Hunt's volumes nonetheless offer a multi-faceted account of the events.

5 Liz McManus, the Labour party Dáil member on the cross-party committee organising the ceremony said: "we should commemorate the civilians who died and people who were doing their duty in the police and the British army as well" (Bowcott).

6 "There should be symmetry in recognising the sacrifice made by 50,000 Irishmen who died in the first world war," commented Fine Gael's Ciaran Conlon (Bowcott).

Figure 1

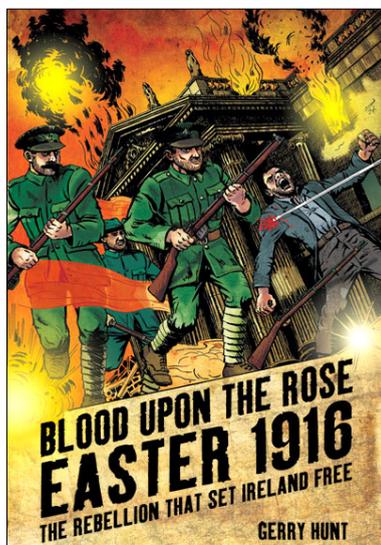
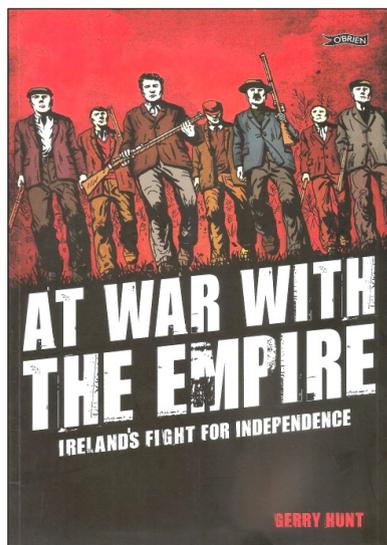


Figure 2



The cover for *Blood* (fig. 1) displays all the ingredients of 1960s popular war comics (such as *War at Sea* or *Fightin' Marines*). Commandant Michael Mallin and his officers are shown in military gear, rifle in hand, racing to battle while a member of the Irish Citizen Army, in civilian clothes, is shot. The scene is set in front of the iconic Dublin General Post Office, set ablaze by the British. The numerous diagonals, the conventional graphic signs representing explosions, rifle shots, and flames, as well as the fiery colours emphasise war-related violence. Hunt adopts the visual grammar and distinct graphic language of war comics, while other authors (Joe Sacco, *The Great War: July 1, 1916*, or Jacques Tardi, *It Was the War of the Trenches*) opted for subdued colours or black and white to evidence their documentary approach and disjoin their personal narrative from reality. The cover for *At War* (fig. 2), equally constructed on a dynamic aslant line, shows an army of volunteers in civilian outfits, holding guns. In *At War*, the red background of the cover conjures up images of bloodshed and revolution. In the two covers, the low-angle point-of-view heightens the impression of danger. It is noteworthy that the typography for the two titles, the parchment-like brown background of *Blood* or the large white letters imitating old printed pages of *At War*, gives an impression of authenticity. Similarly, the detailed drawing of the GPO creates “*un effet d'histoire*” (Fresnault Desruelle 98) or an historical effect.

The two covers, which enable the readers to identify the genre of the books, dramatise history and attempt to elicit an emotional response. Will Eisner defines sequential art as “the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea” (*Comics* 6). Similarly, Michel Thiébaud argues that graphic novels give

life to history by providing much implicit information on distant time periods and involving readers emotionally (447-464). Thierry Groensteen also claims that comics enable the readers to live the events vicariously ("Why are Comics" 39-41). This distinctive dramatization, which recurs throughout Hunt's volumes, may be compared to cinematic reconstitutions of history. If, as Martine Robert holds, memory is constructed through visual representations and transmitted through narratives, graphic novels are ideal vehicles for historical memory (Robert 217). Requiring from the reader an active deciphering of text and image, comics transform memory into images and, simultaneously, images into memory (Robert 217). They stress action while showing, in the background, the mores, behaviour, and mentalities of a given period. This is amply exemplified in Hunt's books. Merleau-Ponty's emphasis regarding the cinema on its direct and compelling representation of man's behaviour and attitude to the world through gestures, gazes, poses, and facial expressions, can be applied to graphic novels (Robert 231): "because it confers a form to human experience through a complex network of signification endowed with a distinctive rhetoric, sequential art makes it known" (Robert 231; my translation). American historian Alison Landsberg, who explores the issue of historical remembrance through television and films, argues that new popular artefacts and technologies generate "prosthetic memory" (2-3) conveying stories of the past to large and heterogeneous audiences who can identify with the experience of war. Popular works are, she argues, "powerful," "experiential" and "interpellative" (19). Prosthetic memory, which is neither inherently progressive nor inherently reactionary, is transgenerational. It emerges as an interface between collective and individual memory and blurs the distinction between history (maintaining some distance with the past) and memory (a subjective affective relationship to the past) (19). Arguably, historical comics are 'transferential spaces' transmitting the experience of war through embodied narratives endowed with affective power. Blending text and images, emphasizing colours, atmosphere, and bodily gestures, they propel the readers onto the battlefield. Hunt's mixture of conventional comic style and historical realism reinforces the experiential power of his volumes.

None of the episodes narrated by Hunt are fictionalised: *Blood* and *At War* are based on archival material. The external focalization and the concise disembodied narrative texts give an impression of neutrality and distance. In some of the speech balloons, the transcriptions of the Irish accent add to the impression of authenticity. However, the impression of historical realism is more efficiently conveyed through visual elements. The inside back cover of *Blood* features two primary documents: a 1916 map of Dublin published by *The Irish Times* and the original poster of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence. A former architect, Hunt paints the settings and backgrounds faithfully in a style reminiscent of the documentary realism of Alain Paillou (*Normandie Juin* 44). Hunt's depictions of Liberty Hall (*Blood* 28), the barricades (*Blood* 29), and the Royal College of Surgeons (*Blood* 28), are in all respects similar to archival photographs (fig. 3).

Figure 3



Figure 4



The streets of Dublin and its slums are minutely reproduced and much attention is lavished on the architectural features of Dublin Castle (*Blood 44*) and Kilmainham (*Blood 45*). In *At War*, the same minuteness can be observed. The background is never neglected, even when shootings are depicted in the foreground (*At War 41*; fig. 4). These visual details are crucial to the sense of place and time. Through a few large framings, Hunt creates a convincing atmosphere and documents people's living conditions. However, as Michel Pierre warns, the masterful depiction of historical details and the placing of accurate minutiae should not be mistaken for historical truth (Pierre 90). Even if they play a documentary role, Hunt's visual choices influence the readers' understanding of the events.

Visual Segmentation and the Interpretation of History

To understand the discursive impact of the visual organization of the panels, one must consider the two volumes separately, though there is much historical continuity between them. In sequential art, the segmentation of the story – i.e. the organization and assemblage of frames on the double page – is of paramount importance (Peeters 39). While the succession of frames in a film is linear, in sequential art, the frames are inter-related and perceived simultaneously (Peeters 23-24). Their variable sizes, numbers, and relations (of continuity or contrast) affect our reading.

Hunt's graphic style is mostly rhetorical: the expressivity of the drawings complements the story and creates a congruent atmosphere (Peeters 48-49). The fact that Hunt wrote the scenario and drew the panels accounts for the solidarity between text and image. *Blood* is composed in a dynamic, irregular, and expressionist way which contributes to the impression that the 1916 Rising was a reckless, ill-prepared undertaking (fig. 5). The time frame is very narrow, as in about fifty pages Hunt narrates

events taking place between 23 April and 3 May 1916. The swift and staccato rhythm of the narration as well as the numerous ellipses reinforce the impression of unpreparedness. Hunt juxtaposes events taking place in different areas and at different times on a single page, thereby disrupting classical homogeneity. Some frames overlap, thereby accelerating the rhythm of the narration (Peeters 116). Many people are portrayed on a double page and there are few continuous dialogues or sequences. The impression of disorganization is at times heightened by the thin diagonal lines separating frames of different sizes or shapes. The chromatic richness adds to the atmosphere of utter agitation. The narrative texts, printed on a yellow background and replete with temporal adverbs, bridge the temporal or spatial gap between frames. The overall disruption of visual unity is both expressive and relevant to the author's perception of events (Groensteen, *Système* 59).

Figure 5



Figure 6



At War shows a much more coherent composition (and the author's greater mastery of sequential art) which reflects the more organised guerilla war waged against the British. A sense of calm pervades the first pages. The panels are regular and straight, the gutters – i.e. the white stripes separating the frames – are preserved, and there are fewer boxes on each page (fig. 6). Though the points of view or angles are varied, the emphasis is on clarity and continuity. Each page narrates events taking place in the same place and at the same moment so that the eye can track elements repeated in several frames and follow the plot easily. The texts and the speech balloons are often redundant, which strengthens the pedagogical assets of the book. The events unfold at a more sedate rhythm with anecdotes being recounted (10) to increase suspense. Colours are used sparsely and in a coherent way with red as a background for violent scenes. As violence escalates, leading to passages of extreme ferociousness opposing the Black and Tans to the Volunteers (44-46), red and yellow hues dominate, and the layout becomes irregular and expressive.

The visual devices thereby serve to convey an understanding of the conflict as a succession of attacks and reprisals culminating with the reckless attacks of the Black and Tans, eventually leading to the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Heroes of History: Framing, Focus, and National History

In comic books, some devices borrowed from the cinema – framing, changing distance or scale in travellings or close-ups, montage (Eisner, *Le récit* 76) – may be used to enhance the main protagonists. Influenced by illustrated magazines and press photography (Porret 168), historical comics display many close-ups of heroes which construct collective memory but reduce history to a single chain of events. The heroes of graphic biographies⁷ commonly are “charismatic leaders, presented as saviors able to embody the nation and whose ideal portraits compound all sorts of qualities” (Amalvi 1). The narratives of the 1916 Rising have placed national heroes on a pedestal and emphasised their heroic deeds. Besides, many historians agree that the leaders of the Rising “prioritized heroic gestures over practical objectives” (McGarry 3). Blood sacrifice was what was aimed at (Githens-Mazer 113). Nationalist history transformed the rebels into venerated martyrs⁸ embodying patriotism and independence (Stevens 343; Githens-Mazer 95). In Irish schools, the 1916 Rising was taught as “a standardized tale of do-gooders and Catholic martyrs” (Higgins 17). Avoiding the pitfalls of nationalist history, Hunt refrains from eulogizing the participants and relies on research:

My father took part in the Rising but he died when I was 11 years old so I too had to rely on research and therefore I did not set out to make heroes of any of the Irish involved, just to present the facts with regards to the action and to let the readers decide for themselves.⁹

In comics, the author’s view at times filters through the speech balloons, the captions, the panels, and the lay-out. Hunt uses speech balloons and captions to distance his narrative from that of nationalist history. The dialogues and the texts are used differently. Some famous statements made by historical figures featured in the novels are quoted to highlight the anti-colonial scope of the Rising. In *Blood*, Connolly says “our sacrifice today will sound an alarm bell ringing throughout the British Empire that won’t stop until our people are free” (9). In *At War*, De Valera’s Boston speech is quoted: “Our struggle for independence is just the same as America’s gallant war with the British one hundred and fifty years ago. Britain’s occupation of Ireland is comparable to that of Germany in Belgium.” The success of this speech is

7 The series entitled *Grands Capitaines*, dedicated to the great heroes of history and edited by Dargaud from 1981 to 1984, includes a volume dedicated to the Easter Rising: *De Valera. Les Pâques sanglantes*.

8 Representations of Catholic martyrdom have played a role in the perceptions of the Rising (Githens-Mazer 96; Higgins 15; Centlivres & Losonczy 7).

9 Hunt interviewed by the present author, 15 May 2010.

indicated by the huge crowd of listeners (23). Anti-colonialism, which is hinted at in the two titles, is not expounded in the narrative text however, nor is it at the core of the two volumes.

The speech balloons merely individualise the narrative; which is conducted by the omniscient narrator more clearly identified with the author's voice. Several balloons evidence the protagonists' readiness to shed blood for the nation and blend religious and nationalist forms of martyrdom. Connolly says, "there will be losses. We are all making a huge sacrifice" (*Blood* 8, 9). As they lie in ambush near South Dublin Union, Cathal Brugha's men,¹⁰ ready to die, sing: "God Save Ireland cried we all, whether the gallows high or battlefield we die" (*Blood* 37). The Proclamation read by Pearse asserts: "we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the causes of its freedom" (*Blood* 12). The narrative texts do not echo these values but recount the events factually, identify the characters and places to help the reader follow the plot or give indications of its duration. The theme of sacrifice, which recurs in the dialogues, is visually enhanced in the last page of *Blood* showing the execution of the jailed insurgents. Red hues prevail, and the vignette in the middle, which first catches the reader's eye, stages four soldiers firing at a leader's throat (fig. 7).

Figure 7



10 Cathal Brugha was Vice-Commandant, 4th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers at South Dublin Union under Eamonn Ceannt during the 1916 Rising.

Hunt's expressionist emphasis on the execution matches many historians' analyses of the fifteen executions as a trigger for widespread radicalism (Githens-Mazer; Boyce 172-173). A text on the inside back cover explains how the population's mood began to change after the executions of the leaders: the latter, as Githens-Mazer writes, "were now starting to be reinvented and rehabilitated as 'misguided' but brave and selfless" (142). Hunt's declaration of neutrality is contradicted by the text printed on the back cover of *Blood* ("an unlikely band of freedom fighters – teachers, poets, writers, patriots, trade unionists – declare an Irish Republic. From this dramatic gesture, a nation is born"). Similarly, in *At War*, the back cover reads: "A guerilla war for independence, fought against the might of the British Army on the streets of the towns and cities and in the fields and lanes of the Irish countryside." The word 'might' and the repetition of 'and' bestow an epic dimension on the book and betray a tendency to memorialisation. The protagonists of *Blood* and "The Irish" fighting in *At War*, 24 men, are portrayed in bust on the inside front covers. In the latter volume, "The British," reduced to five leaders, are portrayed on the inside back cover. This opposition enables the readers to identify the 'goodies' and the 'villains.'

Hunt represents history as a collective impetus rather than the result of individual leadership. Both the covers and the framings focus on groups of combatants. Some recently published historical graphic novels tell history through the eyes of ordinary citizens, thereby echoing the growing importance of social history.¹¹ Tardi explains that, in *The War of the Trenches*, "there is no 'hero,' no 'main character' in the deplorable collective adventure of the war" (Porret 33). Hunt does not privilege the voice of the oppressed but highlights the collective dimension of history. In the two volumes, the leaders and protagonists are individualised through distinctive visual signs but never glorified. In *Blood*, even though the first two pages focus on Joseph Plunkett's marriage to Grace Clifford before his execution, Hunt refrains from telling more about the rebel's private life (O'Leary). Plunkett, Connolly, and Pearse are featured amidst the other combatants. Whenever larger boxes are devoted to key moments in which Connolly or Pearse are involved, the leaders are not seen in close-up (36, 12). The opening *in media res* is written in the present in internal focalization, but the rest of the story, told in flashback, is narrated by an omniscient narrator. Visual internal focalization – showing things as if they were seen by the character to facilitate identification – is used only once when the horror of a scene is reflected on Pearse's appalled face (42).

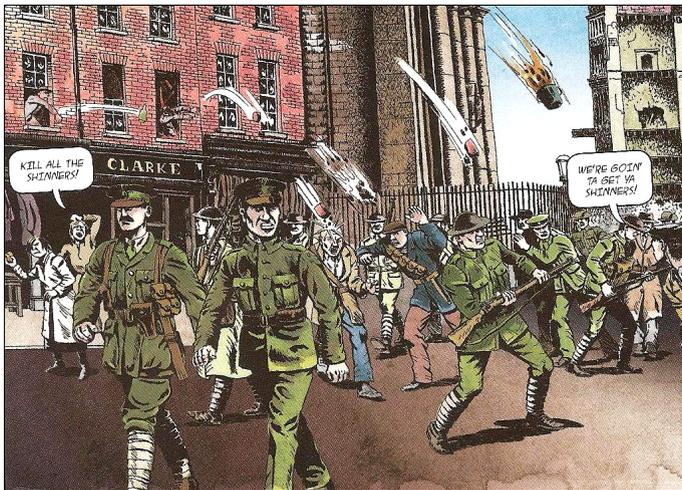
Because the War of Independence was more organised than the Rising, its leaders are more prominently represented in *At War*. The sequences are organised around key figures, whether they are Collins, De Valera, or Seán Hogan. The framing is tighter than in *Blood*; the distance and scale within each box are more varied with

11 As Merino observes, "comics, as a cultural space, incorporate both testimonial and documentary forms offering the possibility of representing subaltern subjects who in and of themselves form a part of the construction of the text" (Merino 2).

light often enhancing one given character. Though the detailed narrative texts give no indication as to the life or temperament of the protagonists, many fighters or victims are named and thereby given importance. However, what is stressed throughout the book is the existence of various networks of volunteers taking part in the guerrilla warfare.

Rather than privileging one viewpoint, in *Blood* and *At War*, Hunt creates a social fresco including women fighters, children, and the local population. Female combatants are featured in the GPO or in the streets and hospitals as they convey key information and look after the wounded. Hunt leaves room for criticism: after Pearse tells women fighters to leave the GPO, one of the female soldiers blames him for failing to respect equal rights (38). The local population’s hostility to the Rising is also made clear.

Figure 8



The People

In the mid-1910s, the Irish people were far from being united under the Republican banner: though attempts to achieve Home Rule seemed to stall, radical republicanism was not commonly viewed as an alternative. Indeed, in Easter 1916, 150,183 Irishmen were serving with the British forces on the Continent, another 1,121 were members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, and 9,501 were members of the RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) (Boyce 165). Consequently, the Rising was not a unified national uprising: “the bulk of Irish opinion was concerned that these ‘crazy and criminal characters’ [i.e. Sinn Féin] would jeopardise the political victory of Home Rule” (Githens-Mazer 59). Only after the realities of war became clearer (conscription, taxation, etc.) did radicalism grow more popular.

In *Blood*, the lack of national cohesion is unmistakable. Aware of archival materials evidencing the attitude of Dubliners left speechless by the unexpected spectacle of the 1916 Rising, Hunt's framings include crowds of onlookers. His undramatic depiction of the reading of the proclamation echoes many historians' claim that this event perplexed those who witnessed it (Githens-Mazer 130).¹² The dimly-coloured crowds of people in the background shout "clear off" or "Go Home shiners" (10; fig. 8). The proclamation is nonetheless reproduced on the inside back cover and restored to its central place. Throughout the story, some citizens are shown helping either the insurgents (*Blood* 19) or the British (*Blood* 37). Historians have indeed noted that many Dubliners offered British soldiers tea, chocolate, and cigarettes (McGarry 169), and that many Dublin poor benefited from the war (Githens-Mazer 112). Hunt was eager to present divergent stances:

There was great poverty in Dublin at that time and a large number of families relied totally, for their survival, on the money they received from the British Government on behalf of their husbands and sons who were then fighting in World War 1 for the British. When the General Post Office was taken over by the rebels those people could not get their cheques and, to me it was an important part of the Rising.¹³

Hunt communicates this aspect in images: on page 15, a woman fears she may not be given her pension. In several frames, a hostile crowd calls the Volunteers *shiners* (*Blood* 10, 12, 18). Dubliners' hostility reaches a peak when the insurgents are walked to Kilmainham Gaol. Sticking to historical records of the scene (Githens-Mazer 124), Hunt writes: "On Sunday morning, they were marched to Richmond Barracks and were jeered and pelted by crowds in the slums" (*Blood* 45). However, Hunt also pictures poor Dubliners rejoicing in the looting of Sackville Street (*Blood* 15, 18) in a fit of lawlessness, as the text indicates. Again, he is faithful to historical records insisting on people's concern with food supplies (Githens-Mazer 124). The looters are threatened by a Volunteer into bringing the stolen objects back, which shows the Volunteers' eagerness to behave morally so as to rally people to their cause. The local people are portrayed, almost caricatured, as extremely poor, but imagery in comics often relies on stereotypes (Eisner, *Le récit* 21). Ordinary citizens are also represented in scenes of shooting. The panels depicting the killing of civilians are particularly expressive, and the back cover of *Blood* notes that 254 civilians were killed.

In *At War*, the lesser visibility of the population is in keeping with the atmosphere of secrecy surrounding the various battles: as in espionage comics, night scenes, unforeseen attacks, and secret encounters abound. Those witnessing shootings are not directly involved and remain in the background, mere grey figures. Throughout the volume, Hunt uses colour and light to introduce a hierarchy among the characters: the fighters in the foreground are brightly-lit while the crowds are pictured in grey and often reduced to extras observing the scenes or expressing their bafflement. When

12 Though in reality, the reading of the proclamation did not draw crowds, soon after the Rising there were dramatic tales of its reading in front of an approving crowd (Higgins 9).

13 Hunt interviewed by the present author, 15 May 2010.

Police Inspector Hunt is killed in the context of the campaign against the RIC, the people do not help him: the author writes that the inspector's cries for help went unheeded by the passersby (24). The horror of the Black and Tans attacks is often reflected on people's faces (25, 31, 49; fig. 9). Civilian victims are also brought to the fore in a large frame illustrating the killings which took place in Belfast (32); women and children are seen fleeing their homes (32, 42). As is the case in *Blood*, the scenes of violence are an opportunity to paint the British as excessively brutal.

Figure 9



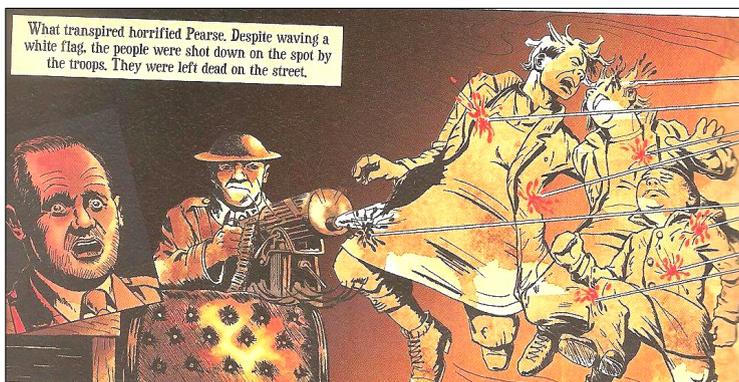
An Anti-British Visual Grammar of Violence

During the 1916 Rising, the lines dividing the British and the Irish were at times blurred. Some Irish soldiers fought in the Battle of the Somme next to their British counterparts. Some British soldiers sent to Dublin are known to have sympathised with the Irish population. In *Blood*, Hunt hints at the British soldiers' unpreparedness and inexperience (31). In *At War*, he depicts a British soldier helping volunteers carry the body of an injured republican fighter and implicitly supporting their cause (20). Many contradictory testimonies evidence savagery from both sides so that people were equally outraged by the killing of civilians, the shelling of the city, the behaviour of the Volunteers, and the reaction of the British (Githens-Mazer 126). Though he is cautious not to eulogise the rebels Hunt fails to portray violence in a balanced way.

One of the most deadly episodes of the Rising was the Battle for Mount Street, to which Hunt devotes three pages. Two narrative texts explain that "the young British were slaughtered" (32) and that "the Volunteers left two hundred and thirty troops dead or wounded behind them" (33). Hunt uses red as a background in three frames to evoke the bloodshed and notes that "corpses were piled up." The episode ends with a full page showing British Colonel MacOnchy being acclaimed by the people as he leaves the battleground (34). The Volunteers were thrilled by the carnage until the triumphant British were acclaimed, as Hunt shows, by local residents. Compared to other accounts and narratives mentioning the "appalling spectacle" that the "devasta-

tion” and “decimation” of British soldiers offered (McGarry 171), Hunt’s depiction does not give the episode its full strength. The depictions of the British attacks are much more expressive. In *Blood*, the brutality of the British soldiers is stressed in several frames through graphic signs of bomb explosions, through the distorted positions of the characters, the expressionist facial features of the wounded, and the blood they shed (fig. 10).

Figure 10



The portrait of Colonel MacOnchy amidst the ruins of Mount Street, occupying one full page, recalls equestrian statues of emperors while the low-angle viewpoint reinforces the impression of disproportionate mightiness (34). In another frame, General Maxwell towers above Pearse as the latter is signing surrender notes (43). Some narrative texts accuse the British explicitly: “innocent men were condemned just for being there”; the words ‘slaughter’ and ‘massacre’ are used. The faces of the civilians executed by the soldiers give an impression of horror, while those wounded by the insurgents are said to have been killed accidentally: “A child hiding behind the door was accidentally killed” (39). However committed to neutrality Hunt may declare himself to be, *Blood* nonetheless offers a pro-Irish view. What is more, there is little attempt at denouncing violence.

Conversely, on the first pages of *At War*, the legitimacy of violence is brought to the fore. During the Soloheadbeg attack,¹⁴ a volunteer says, “now we don’t kill unless we have to”; his companion retorts, “we won’t start a war without killing” (6). The killing of two Irish RIC members stirs a debate, and a priest is seen condemning this murder (8). Similarly, De Valera’s political strategy is opposed to Collins’s advocacy of an armed struggle. The violence of British reprisals for IRA attacks is visually empha-

14 On 21 January 1919, some Irish Volunteers, acting on their own behalf, killed two RIC constables in Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary: James McDonnell and Patrick O’Connell, both Irish-born Catholics (McGarry 39).

sised through the use of red and the brutal gestures of the soldiers (25). The British are “caricatured as brutal, aggressive, and cartoonish” (Cahill 42). The killings by the RIC and the Black and Tans are depicted as moments of uncontrolled brutality and lawlessness. Hunt shows terrorised Catholic families fleeing their homes in Belfast (33, 35). Compared with the representation of IRA killings, resulting from cold-blooded strategic decisions, the reprisals of the Black and Tans are drawn as impulsive acts of barbarianism (31-32). Conversely, the IRA’s attacks on civilians refusing to collaborate with them or collaborating with the British are mentioned in a factual way (28). After the death of Kevin Barry, while 26 policemen were shot, only a small frame is dedicated to this campaign, while a large frame with six inset pictures the Tans’ reprisals and a text explains “the Tans again reacted with fury” (46) or “in Tralee, their reign of terror lasted a week” (47). When narrating the Croke Park shootings (known as ‘Bloody Sunday’), the narrator explains that “the Tans began shooting at random, completely out of control.” While the lettering is generally neutral, here, capital letters (‘BAM BAM’) mimicking the sounds of bullets emphasise the violence of the attack. The Tans are said to fight viciously and their gestures systematically evidence their bloody rage (44). The depiction of physical movement in graphic novels enables the readers to live the experience of war by proxy (Venayre 10). Will Eisner stresses the role of body language in comics, comparing the author to a theatre director choreographing the action (*Comics* xi). Therefore, the difference between the controlled positions of the IRA and the ample, aggressive gestures of the British is significant. Hunt may not exaggerate the ferocity of the indiscriminate shootings and wanton destruction perpetrated by the Tans (Ainsworth 3-6). He nonetheless consistently understates the violence of the Irish fighters.

Conclusion

A close scrutiny of Gerry Hunt’s two volumes, *Blood Upon the Rose: Easter 1916: The Rebellion That Set Ireland Free* and *At War With the Empire: Ireland’s Fight for Independence*, reveals that they articulate the social memory of Irish history tinged with nationalist undertones and alternative voices. Hunt’s documentary approach and his commemorative intentions are interwoven in the fabric of his popular retelling, which proves a place of resistance and incorporation. Both form and genre are opportunities to popularise history and to create prosthetic memory, as well as limitations for thorough historical scrutiny. Many aspects of the Rising which may not be easily pictured in a graphic novel are overlooked, whether they are the role of the Home Rule movement, the history of the trade-union movement and the Irish Citizen Army, the impact of the anti-conscription campaign, the role of the Aud,¹⁵ the interna-

15 The German ship Aud, which was to supply the Volunteers with arms, was intercepted by the Royal Navy on 21 April 1916. The shipment of arms had been negotiated by Roger Casement, who had met the German ambassador in New York (see Foy & Barton 58-71).

tional context or the ideological divergences between the leaders. Like Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (1996), Hunt's graphic novels embrace the style of gangster movies or war and spy comics which privileges violence to the detriment of thorough analysis. Unlike underground historical graphic novels or investigative comics, their inscription within a popular genre explains both their commercial success and their compromised equilibrium: the memory of the 1916 Rising is activated without being transformed deeply. Neither history, as a narrative practice, nor the construction of memory through images, is directly addressed. The rhetorical function of the graphics and the visual emphasis on violence in Hunt's volumes perpetuate the iconisation of memory that some more self-reflexive comics address (Morisson). The remembrance of the past remains mediated by national imagery and the visual repertoire of comics.

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A TERRIBLE BEAUTY WAS BORN? MEMORY, HISTORY, AND FORGETTING IN COLM TÓIBÍN'S *THE HEATHER BLAZING* AND JOHN MCGAHERN'S *AMONGST WOMEN*

Claudia Luppino

As we approach the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising, it appears apposite to attempt a critical reconsideration of the works of fiction that concentrate on that crucial chapter of Irish history and on its legacies on the later generations: the different perspectives that those narratives offer, in fact, allow and foster a reflection on the social and cultural outlook of contemporary Ireland, ultimately testing, as it were, the validity and the prophetic nature of W.B. Yeats's account that "a terrible beauty was born" in 1916.

Many Irish novels and short stories of the last few years are characterized by, and sometimes reproached for, their backward look. Yet, this interest in the past, "be it personal biography, national history or literary tradition" (Kenneally 4), should not be misunderstood as an exclusive preference for that dimension, and therefore a rejection of the present: quite the contrary, the compelling mixture of individual memories, historical references and fictional details that they provide is precisely what makes them worthy of critical attention, not just as works of art, but also for their value as sociological and anthropological documents. Fictions dealing with the War of Independence and its aftermath, for example, tackle issues of paramount relevance in the current cultural debate, such as the political manipulation of the past in public commemoration, the ideological structures underlying historiography, the commodification of historical events. Through a comparative reading of John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990) and Colm Tóibín's *The Heather Blazing* (1992),¹ this article will focus on the fictional rendering of the ways in which Ireland's struggle for freedom from Britain affected the lives of both the fighters and their children. The theories of French philosopher Paul Ricœur concerning the mechanisms, the uses and the abuses of memory and of forgetting, as well as their relationship with history and historiography, will be applied to the investigation of the two novels and of the old and new images of Ireland that their patriarchs and their children embody.

The early 1990s, when both *Amongst Women* and *The Heather Blazing* were published, were a challenging period for the Irish Republic. The avalanche of cases of sexual abuse of children by priests, as well as the Catholic hierarchies' apparent inability to apologise, were paralleled, in the lay sphere, by the government tribunals established to investigate political corruption. As a result, the authority of the two tra-

1 All following references to the two novels will be abbreviated as *AW* and *HB*, respectively.

ditional pillars of Irish society *par excellence*, the Church and the State, was radically questioned. The 1990s were also a period of important anniversaries for Ireland, including, for example, the bicentenary of the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798, the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine, and the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising (see Brewster 24). Looking back on that decade, and on the need to examine the legacy of the crucial occurrences in Irish history, Roy Foster has observed that “[m]uch of the 1990s were, in fact, [...] spent coming to terms with cultural memory” (Foster 63). The fictional works of those years similarly address the import and the relevance of collective and individual memory with respect to the rapidly changing belief systems and lifestyles of the nation.

In *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004, originally published in French in 2000 as *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*),² Paul Ricœur explores the ways in which memory, in all its forms and functions, works and fails, is exercised or manipulated. The comparative analysis proposed by this article follows Ricœur's theorization because his approach, and this is my claim, proves particularly relevant and useful not only for a study of the two novels under scrutiny here and their authors, but more in general, for a deeper understanding of contemporary Irish fiction, which so frequently confronts us with a clever and subtle combination of invented plots and characters, autobiographical details, and historical events and figures. Both *Amongst Women* and *The Heather Blazing* draw extensively on their authors' experiences and focus on young children growing up in motherless families between the 1940s and 50s, as well as on their experiences as adults in more recent years. In both instances, the father is a veteran of the War of Independence and exerts a crucial influence on the life of his offspring. What distinguishes the two narratives in a substantial manner, however, is the alternative look that each of them casts on the recent history of the Irish Republic and, more generally, the complementary conceptions of the relationship between past and present and of the role of memory and commemoration embodied by their characters, a feature which, as we will see, emerges primarily from the characterisation of the two father-figures.

For Ricœur, memory, the imagination and history all function in similar ways and through similar strategies: they work through images and confront us with “the enigma of [...] the presence of an absent thing” (*MHF* xvi).³ Because of this entanglement and of the consequent, “constant danger of confusing remembering and imagining” (*MHF* 7), memory is unreliable. Forgetting, that “shadowy underside of the bright region of memory” (*MHF* 21) is another reason of the unreliability of memory; yet, Ricœur concludes, “we have nothing better than memory to guarantee that some-

2 All following references to Ricœur's text will be abbreviated as *MHF*.

3 For the McGahern reader and critic, these observations cannot but call the artistic manifesto, “The Image,” in which, as early as 1968, McGahern outlined the principles he would be faithful to throughout his whole career, in particular, the crucial importance of the image as the starting point of all artistic creation (see McGahern, “The Image”).

thing has taken place” (*MHF* 7). Memory, therefore, is the primary and decisive tool through which we connect to the past, appreciate the present and construct our individual and collective identity. Moving a step further, Ricœur then points out that what each individual does through memory in the private sphere corresponds to what the historian does in the collective and public domain: “[t]he historian undertakes to ‘do history’ [...] just as each of us attempts to ‘remember’” (*MHF* 57). In both cases, a selection and a combination of materials occurs in the search for truth, and “two, inseparably cognitive and practical operations” intertwine (*MHF* 57). As a matter of fact, ‘to remember’ means both ‘to have a memory, to keep something in mind’ (cognitive operation, memory as an object), and also ‘to set off in search of memories, to make the effort to recall’ (pragmatic operation, memory as an activity).

The different perspectives provided by the two novels are already evident in their titles: *The Heather Blazing* is a phrase borrowed from a rebel song called “Boolevogue,” whose first stanza features in the narrative body:

‘Come on, Tom, your song,’ his grandmother said.
 ‘I’ll do Boolevogue,’ he said.
 ‘Oh, that’s lovely, that’s lovely, now,’ his grandmother said.
 He started gently in a quavering tenor voice, looking down at the floor, but after the first two lines he sang with feeling.
 ‘At Boolevogue as the sun was setting
 O’er the bright May meadows of Shelmalier,
 A rebel hand set the heather blazing
 And brought the neighbours from far and near.’
 By the last verses he was singing with great passion, the voice no longer quivered. They all watched him, listening intently to the story of the song as though they had never heard it before. (*HB* 72-73; original emphasis)

Far from such a politically dense atmosphere, the title of McGahern’s novel, for its part, alludes to the Hail Mary: ‘*Hail Mary, full of grace. [...] Blessed art Thou amongst women.*’ If it is a fact that Moran is surrounded and ‘blessed’ by women – his second wife and his daughters – who attend to his needs with care and devotion, and who constantly confirm his supremacy and charisma, at the same time, it is also significant and somewhat ironic that McGahern should have placed Moran in the position of the Virgin Mary, not of God the Father. Critics have interpreted such a positioning as a demonstration of Moran’s loss of power (Smyth 172) or as an act of emasculation (Quinn 86). Similarly, it appears that the very name of his farm, Great Meadow, reinforces the ironic deconstruction of Moran’s supposed grandeur implicit in the novel’s title, symbolically pointing to his diminished role, from skilled and respected military leader to head of a modest farm surrounded by women and children.

As far as the setting of the two novels is concerned, again, a substantial difference is indirectly but powerfully signified: while the patriarch’s farmhouse in *Amongst Women* is situated in an unspecified spot of north-eastern, rural Ireland – with numerous references to small towns and rivers between counties Leitrim and Roscommon identifying the area as unmistakably McGahern-land – his counterpart in *The Heather Blaz-*

ing lives in Enniscorthy, one of the very few other places outside Dublin which participated in the Easter Rising of 1916 as well as the theatre of the 1798 rebellion. The topography of the two novels, then, mirrors Moran's peripheral, as opposed to Redmond's central, place in the political life of the nation.

As anticipated, however, it is primarily in the characterisation of the patriarchs and their relationship with private memories and collective history that McGahern's novel diverges most conspicuously from Tóibín's. Old Moran, in *Amongst Women*, uses his army gratuity after the end of the war to buy a farm; disillusioned and embittered by the political outlook of the newborn Republic, he retires to a very private existence and consigns his glorious past as the head of a flying column to the secluded chambers of his own memory.

As if he suddenly wanted to return the girls' favour on this Monaghan Day, he spoke to them openly about the war for the first time in their lives. [...]

'Don't let anybody fool you. It was a bad business. We didn't shoot at women and children like the Tans but we were a bunch of killers. [...] Of the twenty-two men in the original column only seven were alive at the Truce. We were never sure we'd be alive from one day to the next. Don't let them pull wool over your eyes. The war was the cold, the wet, standing to your neck in a drain for a whole night with bloodhounds on your trail, not knowing how you could manage the next step toward the end of a long march. That was the war: not when the band played and a bloody politician stepped forward to put flowers on the ground.

'What did we get for it? A country, if you'd believe them. Some of our own 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.' (AW 5)

[...] 'Many of them who had pensions and medals and jobs later couldn't tell one end of a gun from the other. Many of the men who had actually fought got nothing. An early grave or the emigrant ship. Sometimes I get sick when I see what I fought for,' Moran said. (AW 15)

Far from such bitterness, Old Redmond, in *The Heather Blazing*, devotes all his energies to the proud commemoration of the fight for freedom of his nation, in which he and most of his family members took part as young men, and his active commitment in the transmission of the nationalist ideals that underpinned that fight is passionate and lifelong. As a grown-up man, his son Eamon is so familiar with the war stories heard in his father's family that:

At times he felt that he had been there, close by, when his grandfather was evicted, and that he had known his father's Uncle Michael, the old Fenian, who was too sick to be interned after 1916. Or that he had been in that bedroom, the room above where they were now, when his grandfather came back to the house on Easter Monday 1916 and had sat watching him as he pulled up the floorboards under which he had hidden a number of rifles. Or that he had witnessed his grandfather being taken from the house at the end of the Easter Rising. These were the things which lived with him, but he could only imagine them. [...] Some of these events were so close, they had been recounted and gone over so much. (HB 61)

A crucial section of Ricœur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* is devoted to the analysis of what he calls the "uses" and the "abuses" of memory. As he sets out to examine

the various manifestations and implications of that evocation of facts and events that is the exercise of memory (its uses) and, more importantly, its exploitation, instrumental employment, or ideological manipulation (the abuses of memory), Ricœur follows “a path [...] from *blocked* memory to *forced* memory, passing through *manipulated* memory” (*MHF* 69; original emphasis). In doing so, he identifies three types or levels of abuse, which he calls “pathological,” “practical,” and “ethico-political.” The first two types of abused memory are the most relevant for the purposes of this study, inasmuch as the approach to the past of the two father figures in *Amongst Women* and *The Heather Blazing*, as will be illustrated, appears to correspond precisely to these categories. For the first type of abused memory, Ricœur draws extensively on Freud’s essays “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through” (1914) and “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) to explain that “blocked memory” results from the “compulsion to repeat” a traumatic event that occurred in the past: the patient believes he or she is remembering that event, but in fact they are imprisoned in that dimension, unable to work through the trauma or to move on in the present and in a relationship with other people. The second type of abused memory identified by Ricœur is the “manipulated memory” that derives from the ideological instrumentalisation of memory operated, typically, by those who hold power (*MHF* 69-82).

As we have seen, while Old Moran reacts to the loss of prestige that follows the end of the war by retreating from a position of command in the army to the private sphere of his modest farm and dismembered family, Old Redmond dedicates himself for his entire life to the preservation and transmission of a nationalist interpretation of the past. For Moran, his dangerous but glorious youth days as a guerrilla fighter were “the best part of [his] [life]” (*AW* 6), and he desperately clings to the memory of those days to counterbalance a disappointing present. Yet, he is also a prisoner of that past, and like a typical trauma victim (Garratt 31), he is unable to work through the past and unwilling to accept change and the inexorable flow of time. Moran’s way of remembering can be classified, in Ricœur’s terms, as an abused memory, more precisely as a blocked memory resulting from traumatic events. His reticence to talk about the past with his family members reinforces this view, and in fact on only one occasion does he break “his embargo on the past” (*AW* 177), namely, in the opening scene of the novel quoted earlier. As if confirming, after his death, the reasons for Moran’s bitter disillusionment with his country, the faded character of the tricolour that covers his coffin, as well as the subdued military honours offered to him at the end of the novel, tellingly indicate that his sacrifice in youth for the nation has largely been forgotten:

All through High Mass and the slow funeral a faded tricolour covered the coffin; and as the casket stood on the edge of the grave a little man in a brown felt hat, old and stiff enough to have fought with Fionn and Oisín came out of the crowd. With deep respect he removed his hat before folding the worn flag and with it he stepped back into the crowd. There was no firing party. (*AW* 182-183)

Far from the *impasse* of Moran's crystallisation of an idealised past and thorough rejection of change, the Redmond men in *The Heather Blazing* took part in Fenian activities, served time in the Welsh prison of Frongoch as political prisoners, hid rifles in their house during the Easter Rising and burnt Protestant big houses during the Civil War (*HB* 61, 69, 70, 75, 165, 169, 170, 178). After the end of the war, Old Redmond is involved in manifold ways in the commemoration of the revolutionary history of the nation: he teaches History and Irish, he writes articles for the local newspaper, he is an active member of Fianna Fáil, he opens and curates a museum of local history in Enniscorthy Castle.⁴ Following Ricœur's theorization of memory, his relationship to the private and collective past can also be read as an abuse of memory; but while Old Moran is the victim of such an abuse, imprisoned in the cul-de-sac of a solipsistic recollection of the past and unable to accept the present, Old Redmond is actually an active agent or a perpetrator of that abuse, manipulating as he does the past so as to make it fit to the nationalist celebration of the rebels' fight for independence. Liam Harte has convincingly read this character's active and multifaceted involvement in the life of his community as "a strategic attempt to memorialize the past by fixing its meaning to accord with a triumphalist contemporary nationalist agenda and, by implication, to elide those interpretations which do not fit with this agenda" (Harte, "History, Text" 58).

Ricœur's analysis of forgetting – and of the related problematics of forgiving, guilt and reconciliation with the past – can also be fruitfully employed for a reading of McGahern's and Tóibín's novels. Forgetting, Ricœur warns, should be seen and welcomed as a necessary ingredient of recollection: "forgetting is experienced as an attack on the reliability of memory [...], a weakness, a lacuna. In this regard memory defines itself, at least in the first instance, as a struggle against forgetting. [...] But at the same time [...], we shun the spectre of a memory that would never forget anything. We even consider it to be monstrous" (*MHF* 413). So therefore forgetting is not an enemy of memory but, rather, an important counterpart and an indispensable ally to balance and to negotiate memory's right measure. Like memory, forgetting is also subjected to abuses. Historiography, for example, can sometimes be characterised by distortions or manipulations, namely, by the omission of certain details, so as to serve an ideological agenda; the work of memory, then, is essential to avoid this forced forgetting or silencing and to preserve the integrity of the past in its narration (see *MHF* 456). Unable, or unwilling, to remember openly and constructively, the protagonist of McGahern's novel is also, and more importantly, incapable of forgetting and moving on. Yeats's allegory of the "terrible beauty" that was born out of Ireland's fight for freedom is strikingly poignant here to convey this incongruous balance between dream and reality, between the war and the expectations that accompanied it,

4 Enniscorthy Castle still hosts a museum of local history, and Tóibín's father, Micheál, on whom the character of Old Redmond in *The Heather Blazing* is largely based, founded the museum in 1962 (Tóibín referred to these details in several interviews; see also Harte, "Uncertain Terms").

on the one hand, and the high cost of the battle and the anti-climax that followed it, on the other. As for Old Redmond, the selection he operates in recollection leaves out all that does not serve his purposes: private events that are not related to the political fight for freedom, for instance, are major casualties in his selective operation or, to put it differently, they are strategically 'forgotten.' In this respect, it is particularly telling that his son, Eamon, would learn from him all the names, dates and events of local and national history, but almost nothing about his mother, who died in childbirth, and thus remains emotionally maimed, eager and unable to find out more, for the rest of his life (*HB* 39-40). Tóibín's interest in silence and silencing, both as a private experience and as a collective phenomenon, is something that his novels and short stories have in common with his non-fictional writings – as a journalist, a historian, a literary critic, and a travel writer. With respect to historiography, for example, his concern for episodes and details that are intentionally erased from the narration of history, because they do not serve or fit the ideology underpinning that narration, emerges clearly in a famous 1993 article titled "New Ways of Killing Your Father," in which he observes how the cruel killing of Protestant families by Catholic rebels was omitted in the narration of the 1798 rebellion because "[i]t was a complication in our glorious past" (Tóibín, "New Ways" 3).

One last aspect of *Amongst Women* and *The Heather Blazing* that is worthy of critical attention is their different representation of the descendants of the freedom fighters and, through them, of the long-term legacies of Ireland's struggle for independence on the contemporary Irish social and cultural texture. The lives and patterns of behaviour of Moran's children are indelibly and inescapably marked by their bitter, moody, violent, and only occasionally charming father; in fact they never fully manage to overcome his influence, even after leaving Great Meadow. Yet, Moran embodies the type of masculinity which was once dominant and which was made official by the patriarchal assumptions of the 1937 Constitution (see Hughes 124). In other words, McGahern's characterisation does not aim at presenting him as a unique or a pathological case, but, in fact, it gives his behavior, if not a justification, at the very least a historical contextualization. Moran's behaviour is explained as the result of his "intimacy with violent death during the guerrilla war" (Sampson 225-226) and he is depicted as, ultimately, "no better or worse than other Irish fathers of the time" (Maher 114). *Amongst Women*, thus, traces the genealogy, or the roots, of the younger generation's insecurities and stubbornness back to their fathers' authoritarianism and disillusion and to the historical and cultural conditions that produced those features. While Old Moran appears imprisoned in an idealised version of the past, frozen, as it were, in his own cherished memories, and unable to confront change, in *The Heather Blazing* it is, on the contrary, the veteran's son, Eamon, who, following in his father's footsteps of conservative political beliefs and active commitment, is forced to come to terms with the rapid and radical changes of culture and society and finds himself at a loss facing the clash between the old and the new. As a Supreme Court Judge, he is unsettled by the "divergence of contemporary Irish culture from its foundational

ethos" (Patten 262), and by the "realization that [...] his duty is not simply to uphold the constitution and its laws, but to *interpret* them for a 'changing world' (HB 89)" (Harte, "History, Text" 63; original emphasis). Within his family, his children's opinions and lifestyles similarly diverge from his own, and the references to the erosion of the Wexford coast, which insistently punctuate the narrative, provide a powerful metaphor of the rapid wearing of ideals and beliefs (see Corcoran 98) that he, thus, witnesses both in the private and in the public spheres of his life. So, in this case, it is the younger generation, that is, the descendants of the freedom fighters, who are depicted as having great difficulties at accepting and dealing with the changing world around them. The fact that in *Amongst Women* the offspring of the freedom fighters are observed as children and adolescents, whereas *The Heather Blazing* looks at an elderly representative of this younger generation, can be interpreted, I propose, as a sign of the diverging diagnoses of the repercussions of the fathers' experiences on the children's lives offered by McGahern and Tóibín.

A consideration of the characters of these two novels proves Ricœur's analysis to be pertinent and instrumental because, for both the patriarchs and their offspring, memory as well as that collective or public counterpart of memory which is history play a decisive role in their perception of reality and in the construction of their identity. Ricœur conceives of memory precisely as an essential tool in our perception of reality and in the construction of our fragile identity:

The heart of the problem is the mobilisation of memory in the service of the quest, the appeal, the demand for identity. [...] As the primary cause of the fragility of identity we must cite its difficult relation to time, [...] [which] justifies the recourse to memory as the temporal component of identity, in conjunction with the evaluation of the present and the projection of the future. [...] The second cause of fragility lies in the confrontation with others, felt to be a threat. [...] Third cause of fragility: the heritage of founding violence. It is a fact that there is no historical community that has not arisen out of what can be termed an original relation to war. What we celebrate under the heading of founding events are, essentially, violent acts legitimated after the fact by a precarious state of right [...]. (MHF 81-82).

McGahern's and Tóibín's fictions are heavily autobiographical and rely consistently on memory as an overarching and structuring component. For the characters that populate their narratives – and Moran and Redmond are no exceptions – the search for a balance and a harmony between past and present, the troubled relationships with other human beings, and the heavy legacies of history, are frequent 'causes of fragility' and discomfort, and memory is the fundamental instrument through which they perceive and construct their identity and the reality around them.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis of *Amongst Women* and *The Heather Blazing* has shown how recent Irish fiction provides various perspectives on that crucial watershed of Ireland's history that was its fight for independence, ranging from the enthusiastic celebration of the Easter Rising to a disillusioned critique of the society that emerged from the Civil War, and from the political manipulation of the past in public commemoration to the deconstruction of its ideological structures in private recol-

lection or in revisionist historiography. Overall, the nation's complicated path is portrayed from the protectionist, isolated and provincial character of its early postcolonial period to the gradual incorporation of European and global lifestyles and belief systems of more recent years. Introducing the *Penguin Book of Irish Fiction*, Colm Tóibín observed that "[t]he treatment of nationalism in Irish fiction is not celebratory [...]: violence may have led to what seemed for one illusory moment like political liberation, but the legacy of what happened in the struggle has maimed those who took part and those around them" (xxvi). Both *Amongst Women* and *The Heather Blazing* can be read in this light and as metaphorical representations of post-independence Ireland: by focusing on one of the many "independent republics" that the country was made up of in the 1940s and 50s (see McGahern's 1990 interview with Fintan O'Toole), *Amongst Women* provides a metaphor of the young Irish state and of its prevailing ideology, and in particular of the cult of the family sanctioned by Article 41 of the 1937 Constitution as the ideal cornerstone of society and a bedrock of morality. At the same time, McGahern's novel offers a critique of the ills implicit in the Irish state's complex mixture of patriarchy, nationalism and Catholicism. *The Heather Blazing*, for its part, composes an affectionate picture of Tóibín's forefathers' lifelong commitment to the rebel cause, but also unmasks pathological aspects of the late-twentieth-century Southern state, such as its imprisonment in an idealized past, its silences, the inability of its laws to keep pace with cultural change. In his poetic account of the Easter Rising, Yeats employed the image of the birth of "a terrible beauty" to assess the sacrifice of brave and idealist individuals who fought for the independence of their nation and the uncertainty that followed. The portraits of the freedom fighters and of the younger generations offered by Irish fiction in more recent times suggest that Yeats's powerful oxymoron is still a valid one to express and to gauge the simultaneously empowering and paralyzing effects of that fundamental chapter of Irish history and the contradictions and complexities of the society that it produced.

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NEIL JORDAN'S *THE PAST*: A JOURNEY IN TIME AND MEMORY

Elena Cotta Ramusino

... history [...] is not the arrangement of what happens, in sequence and in truth, but a fabulous arrangement of surmises and guesses ... (Barry 56)

This chapter will explore Neil Jordan's handling of history, memory, and time in his first novel *The Past*, published in 1980 and re-issued in December 2012. It will also investigate the role of the visual imagination in the unravelling of the narrative. This analysis provides the opportunity to shed light on Jordan's debut novel in retrospect, especially in view of his later development as a filmmaker, whose visual imagination as a maker of images is often intertwined with history. Indeed, history haunts and underlies many of Jordan's films, from the backdrop of the Troubles in *The Crying Game*, to the 1960s in *The Butcher Boy*, to the Easter Rising in *Michael Collins*, in which Jordan's concern with history becomes image-making eighty years after the 1916 Rising, thus highlighting the complementary continuity of historical memory and historical construction or reconstruction.

The Past highlights the process of reconstruction of the past: here personal history is intertwined with the history of the nation. In 1914 actress Una O'Shaughnessy leaves Ireland pregnant with her baby. She returns nine months later with her little girl, Rene, and with her husband, Michael, who will become a leading figure in the years after the Rising. *The Past* is the story of Rene as reconstructed and imagined by her own child, the nameless protagonist, as he looks for the truth about his parents' history and the circumstances of his own birth. The protagonist of the novel is in search of origins, of his own and his family's past, in the form of further knowledge about his parents, first of all about his mother – he is emotionally eager to glean information, news and images, fragments of his mother's life: "I would petition her for memories like these" (12). The narrative interweaves the protagonist's present quest with the past of his mother's conception, family, upbringing as well as the mystery of his father's identity and it ends with the protagonist's birth. The personal history he pieces together – by means of visual aids such as postcards or photographs, personal recollections of friends of his parents' and work of imagination – is intertwined with the past covering the early years of the twentieth century, with events set within the historical and cultural context that brought about the birth of the Irish nation. Both Marguerite Pernot-Deschamps and Christina Hunt Mahony have pointed out that this is one of the favoured historical periods in Neil Jordan's productions,¹ so much so that De Valera as well as "Michael Collins, [as] opposing figures in the founding of the

1 "Four periods in particular are used figuratively: the years of the Big House decline, the Great War, the Irish Civil War and Irish involvement in the Spanish Civil War, and finally the early years of the Free State and the Emergency" (Pernot-Deschamps 6).

Irish State, loom large in Jordan's imagination, as [...] in that of many living Irish writers" (Mahony 241).

Highlighting the novel's obsession with visual perception, *The Past* opens with two postcards showing the same image of an English seaside resort. They have survived the past and they bear the marks of time: "Both are yellow and with serrated edges, yellowest at the edges as if singed by a match. But the flame is time and the smell, far from the smell of burning, is the smell of years" (9). The first one is dated June 1914, the second some months later. They reveal elements relevant both to the unravelling of the story and to the portrayal of the characters: they announce the birth of Rene, the protagonist's mother, and the fact that Una, her mother, was a "compulsive liar" (10). They also disclose the "perhaps subsidiary" (11) information that in the interval "between the first card and the second the Archduke Ferdinand was shot in Sarajevo" (11), thus obliquely introducing the historical framework of the outbreak of the First World War which, as Roy Foster claims, was an "extraneous event" which "almost entirely" created "the scenario for 1916" (Foster 461). The details of historical contextualisation contrast with the uncertainty of the information to be filled in regarding the protagonist's past. As a matter of fact, these postcards are the first clues in the mystery concerning the protagonist which will not be completely solved. From the very beginning the narrating voice fills what is outside the postcards, it recreates what is not there, it builds the town around and behind the esplanade featured in the postcards, it imagines palms facing the sea. Starting from the postcard, it imagines objects, but also thoughts, desires, attitudes, alternatives, and by doing so it is engaged in a process of imaginative construction or reconstruction.

In her critical study of Neil Jordan's fiction, Marguerite Pernot-Deschamps argues that in *The Past*, "the country's history [...] provides a very tangible time framework" (Pernot-Deschamps 3), in that "history is well and truly there but very much as a *background* to individual stories and, furthermore, as a source of imagery reflecting the smaller events [...] History, the 'big picture'," she continues, "is *accidental* to his fiction. [...] It is a *repository of images* against which, and through which, to explore the 'minute details' that appear 'behind the scenes'" (Pernot-Deschamps 5, emphasis added). I would rather claim, however, that the role of Irish history in the novel contributes to the making of the plot, which involves both individual and national narratives. Interestingly, Keith Hopper has defined *The Past* not only as a "retelling of the Irish national narrative" (Hopper 76), but also as "'historiographic metafiction'," borrowing the definition from Linda Hutcheon,² who "coined the term [...] to describe novels possessing a 'theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs'" (Hopper 76). In fact, *The Past* revolves around the awareness of history and of fiction; as in his historiographic metafiction, according to Hopper, Jordan is "less concerned with history *per se*, and more with the way that the past is remembered and

2 As Linda Hutcheon writes, "historiographic metafiction [...] represents a challenging of the (related) conventional forms of fiction and history through its acknowledgment of their inescapable textuality" (11).

represented in a variety of cultural and narrative forms" (Hopper 83). Almost a decade before Hopper this perspective was anticipated by Neil Murphy, who claimed that "with *The Past*, Jordan [...] embraces the formal metafictional properties of the Postmodern novel and attempts to construct a stylised artificial universe composed via the narrator's imagined reconstruction of his parents' past" (Murphy 194).

Indeed, throughout the novel the textuality of narratives and of historical narratives is metafictionally insisted upon with a resulting emphasis on the fictive nature of writing History – a "culturally produced version of the past" (Pine 5), often "reflecting the needs of the present" (Pine 5) – and a related emphasis on the role of imagination in the (re)construction of characters and events. The narrator often intersperses his narrative with remarks which either reveal the imaginative nature of his reconstruction, or metafictionally question the picture he is creating, so that the abundance of phrases containing the verb 'imagine' or 'picture' is a stylistic strategy and a structuring principle, and therefore it is charged with meaning. It is the narrator who imagines throughout the novel, thus creatively constructing the setting³ and the characters⁴ and has them, in turn, imagine fragments of landscape or physical details, and hypotheses about the past or the future.⁵ The act of imagining, both lexically – there are forty-three occurrences of the verb 'imagine' – and conceptually, constitutes the texture of the novel and is highly insisted upon; toward the end of the novel this insistence grows stronger: Chapter xxxviii opens with the words "Can you imagine," anaphorically repeated five times and in three cases introduced by "But" – "But can you imagine" (183-184). Even if to a much lesser extent, also the verb 'picture' takes part in this imaginative construction,⁶ implicitly emphasising the visual perspective privileged

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- 3 "These shrubs will grow, of course, into the palms I imagine them to be" (15); "if the town is as I imagine it" (16); "an idyllic scene as I imagine it" (104); "Stations in the small resorts on the western seaboard, so poignant to imagine, don't, regrettably, exist" (193); "and the grey blocks there, I imagine, must be weeping with the salt and water in the winds" (193).
 - 4 "How Michael became implicated is uncertain. [...] I would like to imagine it was in remembrance of that promenade" (46); "I imagine him taking a hidden pride" (77); "He had aged, of course, from when I had imagined him" (139); "if James was jealous, and jealousy I imagine is a faded, parched colour" (155); "But instead he sits there with, I imagine, a growing sense of relief" (202).
 - 5 "I can't imagine him not loving anyone" (12-13); "And you could see how marriage to Una [...] would have been natural to him, an extension of that undifferentiated love with which I imagine he first made her pregnant" (13); "He grips his overcoat tightly around him and imagines that he feels neither wind nor cold but that just what he sees is real" (25); "He imagines her slim, starved body blooming, he moves his hand over imaginary curves" (35); "Yes, although I've never seen her I've imagined her just like that" (142); "that body of water that seems to Luke to form one long wave that he imagines must surge north and south" (194).
 - 6 "if you can picture it" (17); "She would picture the landscape towards which the train always goes" (122); "For not even the best of us can picture the outside from in" (156); "I picture her wearing a bulky, shapeless fawn-coloured coat" (219); "Lisdoonvarna I pictured as a town of gazebos, white metal bandstands" (220).

in the novel. The continuous stress on the imaginative nature of the narrator's reconstruction is accompanied by an awareness of its problematic nature: the extensive use of conditional forms contributes to the narrator's questioning of the picture he is creating, which in turn he also questions frequently and directly: "paddle-boats (they had them then?)," "Was it the age of canvas?" (10), or, much later: "Did everyone feel more then?" (139).

The process of recreation of both past and characters through memory and imagination is self-consciously problematic. "Throughout the novel," Hopper claims, "the characters autocritically acknowledge the unreliability of memory and the subjectivity of interpretation" (Hopper 80). Furthermore, in Murphy's view, "the representation of reality is subservient to the analysis of the epistemological mechanisms employed in the construction of the account" (Murphy 205). Thus the novel implicitly debates the authority of historical reconstruction and of historical writing, or of writing itself at large.

When the protagonist first enters the villa in Bray where his father lived – whoever he was, either James Vance, the Protestant photographer who "exchanged his horse for a conscience" (77), or his son Luke –, he has the opportunity to verify his imaginative constructs: "knowing *each detail was right whether it happened or not*, each fact was part of him, *whether real or not*" (137, emphasis added). So strong is this experience that the size of the house increases, and time expands: "It took me years to cross from bay window to door, so huge had the room become" (139). When he gets to the villa – which he juxtaposes and overlaps with "the only home there is, that of imagination verified" – he realises that he has left out some things from his imaginative reconstruction of the place, such as the existence of the kitchen, totally removed – "But you can't put in everything, I thought" (138) – and, conversely, that he has put in things which are not there, such as the "green felt table." Notably, this table has been repeatedly evoked since the beginning of the novel and is a familiar presence for the reader by the time its absence is acknowledged: "There was no green felt-topped table" (138). Fluidity envelops memories, the narrator acknowledges that "the past can be recreated at will" (Murphy 199). Thinking of his mother, he reveals: "I meditate on her in a way and *invent her in parts* as you must know by now, for the secret must be out. And if it's out, I'm not sure whether I've failed, and if it's not out, I'm not sure whether I've succeeded" (155, emphasis added). Also the characters, in turn, express doubts in relation to their memory and their interpretation of the past: as Lily – Rene's childhood friend – claims, "But then I could be wrong, we could all be wrong" (13), thus raising uncertainty on the supposed authority of witnesses or participants in historical or personal past.

Likewise, the conscious metafictional reflection both emphasizes and queries the effort of finding a meaning: "The meaning we demand," James wonders, "is never forthcoming; or if it is, not in any form that comforts. If it comes, it comes too late" (83). Doubts surround memory and truth and the creation of meaning appears oc-

asionally marked by fragility: "The one event occurred that made a pattern of all the other events and without that event [...] all the events before it would have been random. But the event occurred and took the others, like stringless beads, pulling a sudden thread through them. So afterwards he can muse in retrospect [...] how each must have held the germ of the significance with which it was later blessed" (130).

As his mother's name had "some connection with those whose names gave names to streets" (113), her environment is not simply private, but it interweaves and at times overlaps with events and people that led to the making of modern Ireland. As so often in Irish prose, both in autobiographical writing and in fiction, the writing of the individual and/or of the fictional self, crosses and partly coincides with the writing of the nation.⁷ The protagonist's seeming loss of his mother's past sets him on his quest for eye-witnesses, whose words may give him the fabric for his imaginative piecing together of the past: "But what do I know of all those years, of Dev and the Clare election and the Custom House fire? The ashes rose over the city, she told me, of the burnt files of each birth, marriage and death. Then they fell like summer snow, for three days. Lili walked through them, maybe held out her palms, caught the down of her birth-cert on the rim of her schoolgirl bonnet" (12). The Custom House fire and the lyrical image of the snow fall of the records of the General Register Office represents, according to Hopper, "a striking image of the fragility of written history" (Hopper 80), but also of the fragility of the attempt itself to put facts, or assumed facts, into words.

In addition to that, the novel displays an array of plausible, of 'factually fictional' characters representative of the historical period and of the cultural context, by means of references to times, people and episodes or anecdotes. When trying to bring to life the character of Una, Lily reminds the protagonist that "those were the early days of the Gaelic League" (17) and Una "had the luck to be an Irish speaker" (16).⁸ The political dynamics of the time are openly referred to, such as the debate about enlisting in the Great War and the hatred of the years after the War leading to the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War. Michael, the protagonist's maternal grandfather, is "from a Redmondite family" (13) and later on becomes an officer of the Free State: "He was the best of them, by far the best of them, he was marked out for what would happen to him later" (13), that is, one could say, characteristically, being shot in the street, and turned into a national hero. Rene's mother, a bad actress whose "'Gaelic splendour' [...] was 'representative of what is best in Irish womanhood'" (42), evokes the Celtic Revival and the theatrical fervour of the early twentieth century, as "she had the luck [...] to meet Messrs Yeats and Fay and then gradually to be thought of as the Irish woman resplendent" (16). She is also involved in riots at plays: "when *The Plough* came on she shouted her guts out from the pits with the rest of them, even though Mr Yeats shouted his apotheosis from his private box" (18). After the Easter

7 For an analysis of this relationship, see Lynch and Cotta Ramusino.

8 Although this is later redefined: "'Irish [...] Una could half speak it, a ridiculous *blas* she had when I remember her, but by then maybe she had forgotten most of it'" (28).

Rising she would fast become “the *grande dame* of Irish Republicanism” (45). All the characters therefore contribute to reconstruct in some ways the political ambience of Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century with its struggles, divisions, and political strengths. The presence of fictional characters alternates with historical ones, and “Jordan’s use of historic personalities, like the Archduke Ferdinand and de Valera, has an anchoring, resonant effect on the mass of imaginings with which we are confronted” (Murphy 209), which also validates the authenticity, truth, and consistency of memories and reconstruction.

The figure of De Valera is present throughout *The Past*: he is a “Gaelic League colleague of [Una’s]” (45) and one of her admirers – “de Valera attending her opening nights” (67) – but after Michael’s murder he will increasingly ignore her, “until in the end Dev himself didn’t turn up at the opening night of *The Moon on the Yellow River*” (71). The ‘father of the nation’ is a presiding figure in this novel, which pivots on a quest for origins and uncertain fathers: the uncertain parentage of the protagonist echoes De Valera’s, which is unmentioned in the novel, though. De Valera’s presence is always there, hovering over the narrative and crossing it: at the beginning of *The Past* he is reported to have gone to see Una perform when she was at the height of her success, and towards the end he goes to see Rene when she is touring the provinces and he is on the “election trail” (Hopper 78). At the end, his election trail and her tour run parallel and intersect, until “the mysterious, open-ended denouement at a crossroads” (Hopper 84) near St Brigid’s Well in Liscannor.⁹ Moreover, “the birth of the narrator coincides with De Valera’s impending rise to power in 1934” (Hopper 78). The routes of the ‘father of the Nation’ and of the protagonist’s mother cross at the very moment when she gives birth to him, at a crossroads, symbolical, and evocative, as Keith Hopper points out, of one of De Valera’s most renowned speeches, in which he set the terms for the new nation’s moral picture. The ensuing strict moral course might also explain the erasure of the narrator’s mother from history.

As the first chapter closes on “the birth of her child” (11) – that is, Rene, the protagonist’s mother – the novel ends with the protagonist’s birth: “and now I in that standing train the steam of which was hissing towards silence through those waters and that musk of generation came” (232). In the closing paragraph, the urgency, expectation, and effort of childbirth is conveyed syntactically by an unusual distance between subject (“I”) and verb (“came”) which is the very last word of the novel. The space between subject and verb is occupied by an accumulation of embedded phrases without any punctuation. Both elements – embedding and lack of pauses – contribute to an increasing tension which reaches its climax in the verb and is finally released by it. The release brought about by the long-postponed utterance of the verb is analogous to the release following childbirth.

9 Appropriately, Rene had been born on 1 February, St Brigid’s Day, but could not be named after the Saint, as this would have given away Una’s secret, that is, that “this wonder of hers had been conceived out of wedlock” (41).

The Past is a novel which may raise interpretive doubts¹⁰ due to a number of reasons: the mix of unreliable memory, events remembered and partially removed; the shift between first, third and occasionally second-person narration, for example when the narrator mentally addresses his mother;¹¹ the polyphony of voices; the recurring shifts in verbal tenses as the narration hovers between past and present; and the narrator's ideas about the story which keep interrupting the "narrative flow" (Hopper 80). Another important factor contributing to indeterminacy is the difficulty of establishing the gender of the protagonist, who is unnamed, and whose gender is undefined almost to the end of the novel,¹² but also the identity of his father, which remains unknown.

Time – its expansion as well as its compression – is also a recurring object of reflection in the narration: from the "the death of time" (37) on which Michael muses at the beginning of the story, to James's desire to control it through his photographs, "as he tries to suppress the windmills of time, change and chaos into an ordered progression of prints, a march of moments pencilled in days, months and years" (76), to the annihilation of time in relation to Rene's pregnancy; in both cases, pregnancy is thus related to a defeat of time. This leads to a necessary observation on the epigraph to the novel, which reads: "Eternity is passion." Although the word 'eternity' does not appear in the novel, the treatment of time – its frequent expansion, as well as the repetition of moments, in order to prolong them – is consistent with the concept of eternity, as is the word 'passion,' and the insistence on love in relation to Rene: "Love is the word Michael thinks of all the time, that unique syllable that takes in tongue, lips and teeth" (33).

The epigraph is taken from Yeats's "Supernatural Songs."¹³ A. Norman Jeffares's comment on this poem could be a revealing comment on the novel as well: "This poem asks what imponderables lie behind personal love or general history" (Jeffares 431), and it is a comment which Jordan might have read, as Jeffares's, published in 1968, has been the standard annotated edition of Yeats's poems for some decades. This connection is not a mere intellectual *divertissement*, as Genette's study of the re-

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- 10 As proof of the difficulties of reading and interpreting this novel, Hopper lists some discrepancies in a note: "the blurb for the 1993 Vintage edition gets the basic plot details wrong, confusing Rene with Una. Several reviewers shared this confusion: James Simmons conflates Lili and Una, and Rüdiger Imhof calls the nameless narrator 'Michael'" (Hopper 80).
- 11 According to Elke D'hoker, Jordan has "made first-person narration almost exclusively the hallmark of [his] writing" (D'hoker 41).
- 12 The blurring of gender and/or the change of identity is a recurring feature in Neil Jordan – notable examples are *The Dream of a Beast* (1983) or *The Crying Game* (1992). As Keith Hopper writes, "Jordan has turned ontological uncertainty and epistemological doubt into something of an artistic credo" (76).
- 13 It is taken from the eighth poem of the sequence, "VIII Whence Had They Come?," probably written in 1934 (the temporal closeness to the protagonist's birth in *The Past* must be a coincidence) and added later to the sequence. It was included in *Parnell's Funeral and Other Poems* (1935), a section of the volume *A Full Moon in March*.

lation of epigraphs to texts has made clear. As a matter of fact, this is part of the author's careful orchestration of all the elements of the text: nothing is put in carelessly.

The past, as Dominick La Capra observes, "arrives in the form of texts and textualized remainders – memories, reports, published writings, archives, monuments, and so forth" (La Capra 128). In Jordan's novel, the past and the narrator's quest for origins pivot on images, conversations, and imagination: the strong relevance given to the visual imagination is a hallmark of this text. "The narrator's reliance on postcards and photographs allows Jordan to overtly discuss the nature of the visual media and in turn any medium which attempts to frieze moments of a life [...] the narrator immediately moves beyond the world of represented experience" (Murphy 205). Thus emphasis is given to images and the way they are seen or even imagined, constructed by their author – whether he is a photographer, like James, or a painter, like James's father, both makers of images – or experienced by the narrator. "The overwhelming use of images through his fiction," Marguerite Pernot-Deschamps remarks, "and the recurrent emphasis placed on what some of the characters look at, see or watch, both point to a strong interaction between [Jordan's] two means of expression or the two facets of his art": writing and film-making (Pernot-Deschamps 115), that is image-making. Images prompt the narration and the vocabulary stresses both the imaginative and the visual aspect. The novel abounds in photographs, because, the narrator reveals, "it is the spirit of that photographer that impels this book" (75). Images are also a means to give order to experience, an attempt to control it: "and so it took months and years of prints for him to even know what he was asking; that he could never hope for arrival, at the most for a judicious departure" (84). In this the narrator acknowledges a genealogy: "I see both of us trying to snatch from the chaos of this world the order of the next, which is why even now, so long from the end, I am tempted to call him 'father'" (76).

Through the narrator's imaginative recreations, Jordan manages to delve into the intellectual, cultural, and political texture of the early twentieth-century as the narrator's personal quest enlarges into a collective quest in the founding years of the nation and in the issues raised at the time, thus testifying to the "centrality of memory to contemporary views of self and nation in Ireland" (Klein 6). The outbreak of the First World War and the debates and events related to it in Ireland are central to the development of the novel: enlistment, Home Rule, independence, the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War, De Valera and the Free Staters, all are crucial issues here. Bernhard Klein argues that very often "Irish writers engage with the past only as a troublesome 'burden'," and consider history "under the exclusive rubric of a 'traumatic' memory" (Klein 1). This view is reflected, in his opinion, in the high number of quotations of Stephen Dedalus's passage in *A Portrait* in which history is seen as a nightmare from which to awake in order to free both the individual and the nation. Yet, this is not the case in *The Past*, where the recurring fading of realistic data into imaginative constructs, as well as the deferral of meaning and blurring of identity – stylistic hallmarks of Neil Jordan's work as a whole, both in fiction and in film – con-

fer a lyrical halo to the narration. In Jordan's first novel the cruxes of early twentieth-century Irish history are never seen as a burden, but are imaginatively and lyrically reconstructed, while simultaneously weighed and queried in the reconstruction itself.

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“PEOPLE MIRED IN HISTORY”: SEBASTIAN BARRY AND CULTURAL MEMORY IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Donatella Abbate Badin

As many critics have pointed out, historical legacy and national identity are still the main concerns of Irish fiction in the twenty-first century to the detriment of “individual experience and perception,” which, in the opinion of some critics, are devalued.¹ In these recent years, while Ireland is preparing to celebrate her coming of age in 2016, the obsession of many contemporary writers with history and the national myth is becoming more and more evident. The present is actually still marked by the traumas of the past and, as a foreign critic judiciously remarks, “Irish writers need to critically interrogate the hidden wounds of the nation’s past before they can move on and engage with the present” (Piatek 158).

The novelist and playwright, Sebastian Barry is one of those writers participating in the commemoration of the great historical events of the past century, which have led to the establishment of an independent Ireland. He does it, however, against the grain, through a backward look cast in the direction of the forgotten (or suppressed) aspects of past history that still impinge on the present. Instead of glorifying the 1916 Rising and what followed, Sebastian Barry has been intent on showing through his novels and plays the underside of those great events, the inglorious aspects, the truths of the other faction, the distortions due to the passing of time and defective memory. His is, indeed, a celebration, *sui generis*, but in its way it also fulfils the celebratory purpose, commemorating those “people in the past who are not spoken about because the truth about them cannot be admitted [...] A silence grew up around them. So we have a censored past, censored individuals, and a country whose history is erased” (Sebastian Barry; qtd. in Kenny 10).

It is the purpose of this paper to show how Barry, in order to reconstruct history, used the half-forgotten, distorted, or misunderstood stories of those members of his own family who went through the events of the past aligned on the wrong front or without taking position. The interest and compassion shown for these obscure and pathetic figures of the past has often been mistaken for revisionism, but is, instead, as I argue, a facet of the author’s conception of history and a clue to his scepticism about the possibility of historical truth and objective history. Moreover, this attitude of his puts him in line with the episteme of postmodernity, which questions the grand narra-

1 Desmond Traynor in “Fictionalizing Ireland,” for instance, deprecates the expectations of critics that fiction should deal with “the state of the nation” to the exclusion of more personal matters (125).

tives of history to favour minimalist versions of it, attentive to individual events and to the common man.

Born in Dublin in 1955, Sebastian Barry inherited from his mother, actress Joan O'Hara, a love for the stage and for family stories, which he combined to produce several plays that constructed, together with the novels, the saga of his family. The innovative *Prayers of Sherkin* (1989), based on the story of his own great-grandmother of whom he knew little more than that she had left her island, inhabited by a Protestant sect, to marry his great-grandfather in Cork, inaugurated a series of theatrical and non-theatrical works focusing on different members of his own family from two or three generations back. "It's as if these hidden people sometimes demand that their stories are told," confided Barry to Nicholas Wroe (Wroe). Since the family events elaborated in plays such as the award-winning *The Steward of Christendom* (1995) and most of his novels – *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (1998), *Annie Dunne* (2002), *A Long Long Way* (2005), *The Secret Scripture* (2008), and *On Canaan's Side* (2011) – coincided with the political upheavals of the beginning of the twentieth century, history ends up playing a major role in Barry's literary universe.

Alex Clark, reviewing Barry's *On Canaan Side*, corroborates the idea that the author has chosen to scrutinize the "less travelled byways of history" and "to give a voice to their buffeted, battered but nonetheless enduring victims" (Clark). By bringing them back to life and giving them their narrative due, Barry feels he is redressing history, even though this action makes him a suspect of revisionism. As Bruce Stewart writes, he is "a writer who has been more than once aspersed for failing to participate wholeheartedly in the Irish nationalist project" (Stewart 50). Because of his staying clear of the all-pervasive influence of Irish nationalist history and his refusing to make nationalists his heroes (yet neither does he make heroes of its victims as we can see with his negative hero Eneas McNulty), he has attracted the criticism of the likes of Declan Kiberd, who, reviewing *Annie Dunne*, censures him and "that herd of independent minds which believes that it is a holy and wholesome thing to dismantle the narrative of nationalism" (Kiberd 10). Terry Eagleton, too, although expressing admiration for Barry's work, sees it as an example of an Ireland "desperate to bury its revolutionary history" (Eagleton 15-16). But there are also more mitigated views of his revisionism, such as Fintan O'Toole's, who finds that by "challeng[ing] the classic narrative," his vision of history appears as "a very useful corrective to monolithic ideals that have existed in Ireland" (qtd. in Adetunji), while O'Hagan in *The Observer* notes that Barry "writes against the absolute certainties of Irish history" and puts into question the tendency to consider the republican nationalist version of events as the only viable one (O'Hagan). Christina Hunt Mahony, who edited a book dedicated to Sebastian Barry's work, *Out of History*, concludes her essay denying revisionism and highlighting the humanism that underlies Barry's unpopular approach: "Barry's reclamation of minority figures in the Irish historical landscape [...] could be described perhaps more accurately in [a post-Catholic liberal view of the world] than as a revisionist historical undertaking" (Mahony 98).

In the eyes of a foreign reader, not as touchy as the Irish regarding their national myths, the significance of Barry's novels lies not in what is revealed and what is disregarded about the past, nor about his sympathies, but in the sense of history that emerges from them. The fact that he writes about personal stories "integrated into the wide canvas of Irish history" (Foster 183) gives a hint as to his historiographical interests and orientation that follow the episteme of the last few decades of the twentieth century. The narrative turn history has taken is well exemplified by Barry's historical or, rather, historiographic metafiction (as Linda Hutcheon² calls such works), indicating a kind of self-reflexive fiction that harbours also a self-conscious dimension of history, written in the awareness that history no longer gives the certainties implied in the traditional historical novel. History to him is as much a fictive reality as literature, being essentially 'discourse' and, unlike classical history, it does not seek (nor can it achieve) truth.

Barry's five family novels dealing with the critical years of Irish history (1912-1922) and their aftermath illustrate some of the historiographical tenets of the last few decades such as the fictionality and the unreliability of history and its lack of objectivity due both to ideological bias and to the multiplicity of versions that converge in it. Unlike historical novels that refer to incontrovertible facts, Barry and many other European writers who deal with the past in the same spirit consider history an illusory human construct. Barry's history, moreover, as in postmodern historiography or in historiography inspired by the School of Annales, does not deal with the great events or the great figures of the past but with the common man and with how he or she is caught unawares in the eddies of history.

Barry's practice of illustrating history through 'localized' narratives about small groups of common people (indeed about his forebears) belonging to the margins rather than to the mainstream of society is akin to the concerns of the Italian school of 'micro-history'³ or to Lyotard's theorizing about his "petits récits,"⁴ little narratives about iso-

2 Linda Hutcheon gives the name of "historiographic metafiction" to the kind of postmodernist fiction "that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past" and where "the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the "world" and literature" (3).

3 The school of microhistory, which started in Italy in the 1970s and gravitated around the journal *Quaderni storici*, was founded by Carlo Ginzburg (*Il formaggio e i vermi*, 1976; English title: *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*) and Giovanni Levi (*L'eredità immateriale*, 1985; English title: *Inheriting Power: Story of an Exorcist*, 1988). Ginzburg and Levi directed the collection *Microstorie* for the Turin-based publisher Einaudi. Those studies were derived from oral traditions or local and parochial archives and they recreated the lives of small groups of people emphasizing blood ties, property changes, and the life-styles of small communities normally excluded from historical analysis.

4 Jean-François Lyotard elaborated the concept of *petits récits*, that is, mostly fictional small narratives, which he opposes to the grand narratives of modernity (Marxism,

lated individuals – the only tenable way to contrast the great constructs of history, the master narratives of the past. Barry's stories about modest, naïve, unaligned characters, often victims of a purge (Eneas McNulty, Lilly Bere, indirectly also Annie Dunne and Roseanne Clear) or otherwise defeated, are also part of history and, as Roy Foster points out, they, too, "reflect the fractures and losses of Irish experience" (Foster 183). Like Foucault, whose masterworks deal with lunatics, prisoners, deviants and, more generally, marginalized people,⁵ Barry writes historically about the people forgotten by history. The sagas of two fictional families, the Dunes from Dublin and the McNulties from Sligo, loosely inspired by his own family stories, deal with the dramatic events of the past, seen from the side of the losers or, better, in Bruce Stewart's words, "the pariahs and underdogs and untouchables of Irish society" (Stewart 42).

A Long Long Way (2005) is fully set in the past, during WWI, and could be termed a traditional historical novel. It deals with the sufferings of Willie Dunne (the son of Superintendent of the Police Thomas Dunne of *The Steward of Christendom*, *Annie Dunne* and *On Canaan's Side*) on the front of Flanders, torn between loyalty to his regiment and sympathy for the 1916 Rising. At home on furlough, he witnesses the action which he as one of the Dublin Royal Fusiliers is expected to repress. For Willie as for some of his friends this will open up a profound crisis of identity with dire consequences. The intensely lyrical novel tells effectively the 'silenced story' of those quintessential losers, the Irish soldiers of the British army, who were despised, as Barry says, by nationalists as traitors and denounced by the English as mutineers. Given its suppression in official history, it was important, Barry felt, to tell the story of Irish participation in WWI.

Barry's other novels, instead, deal with the long-term consequences of the revolutionary decade embodied in the vicissitudes of marginalized protagonists. Eneas McNulty (of *The Wanderings of Eneas McNulty*), who was briefly in the British Merchant Navy and then in the police, is condemned because of this sin to be a perennially persecuted wanderer. Lilly Bere (née Dunne), the protagonist of *On Canaan's Side*, is an exile hounded by men and fate – "some great agency, some CIA of the heavens" (*Canaan* 4) – because of her husband's belonging to the Blacks and Tans. Even the flight to America will not save her: her husband will be murdered as a punishment for his role, she will be followed and threatened, although she hides under a fictitious name, and her son and grandson, veterans, respectively, of Vietnam and Iraq, will suffer the psychological consequences of violence that keeps recurring in history. Annie Dunne, of the eponymous novel, is consigned to a marginal role in society and

Freudianism, the Enlightenment, the progress of science) that have lost their credibility, as he maintains in *The Postmodern Condition* (xxv).

5 The lesson of Foucault about those excluded from society by the discourses of power is chiefly to be found in his *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and *The History of Sexuality* (3 vols., 1976-1984).

to the torment of the memory of her father's madness. The madness of Thomas Dunne, due to his demise from the role of chief Superintendent of the Police and due to the conflicts of loyalty and fatherhood opened up by this event, is also the subject of the play *The Steward of Christendom* (1995), in which the ghost of Thomas's son Willie repeatedly appears, bringing finally about the resolution of the break between the two over the Rising.

Finally, there is Roseanne Clear (the protagonist of *The Secret Scripture*), incarcerated in a lunatic asylum for connections doubtful even (or, rather, especially) to herself. The Presbyterian Clear family have been hit by the enmity of the powerful Father Gaunt, apparently for giving a Christian burial to a member of the IRA with whose brother, later on, Roseanne will have contacts misunderstood as sexual by the bourgeois society of Sligo. Accused of adultery and even of nymphomania, she is punished by total isolation in a hut. Eventually after a fling with the fugitive Eneas McNulty (her brother-in-law), she has a baby and consequently is sent to the asylum where fifty years later her case will be re-examined by Dr Grene. Thus, her tragedy, too (as well as Dr Grene's, who, as it turns out, is the long-lost son), has its remote origins in the power games of the Civil War, which lead to Roseanne being crushed by the hostility of the Catholic Church, which connived with the winners of the conflict and a conformist new bourgeoisie.

All four novels, thus (with the exception of *A Long Long Way*), deal with the lingering presence of the past in contemporary Ireland and with the influence that past historical events have had on marginalizing their protagonists in later life. In a postmodernist mood, they focus on the fact that, as Lilly Bere muses as she writes her memoir, "there is nothing called long-ago after all. When things are summoned up, it is all present time, pure and simple" (*Canaan* 217). The same thought is also voiced by Roseanne Clear: "I am old enough to know that time passing is just a trick, a convenience. Everything is always there, still unfolding, still happening. The past, the present, and the future, in the noggin eternally, like brushes, combs and ribbons in a handbag" (*Scripture* 210).

In such a synchronic vision of past and present, the consequences in the present interrogate the past. The leitmotif of Barry's novels, indeed, is the presence of the past⁶ in the present, which defeats those critics who bemoan that Irish novelists, deprived of a sense of place by globalization, are unable to write about contemporary Ireland. The intuition of the synchronicity of past and present, together with the concept of the fictionality of history, are actually central to postmodernism and its conception of fiction. According to Hutcheon, fiction is "at once metafictional and historical" (Hutcheon 3) with past and present confused and synchronical. Barry's views on history and fiction converge indeed with the theory and practice of post-modernity.

6 "The Presence of the Past" was the title of the 1980 Venice Biennale of Architecture that became a landmark of postmodernism.

As contemporary historiography argues, history is a form of narrative. Foucault himself admits in *Knowledge/Power*: "I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth" (Foucault 193). The concept of the fictional nature of history, first upheld by Nietzsche and strongly developed by Hayden White, is behind the notion of history that inspired Barry's novels. "[H]istory, as far as I can see," writes Roseanne, "is not the arrangement of what happens in sequence and in truth, but a fabulous arrangement of surmises and guesses held up as a banner against the assault of withering truth" (*Scripture* 56). This, admittedly, is not a new concept, since Napoleon himself was supposed to have said: "What is history but a fable agreed upon." It has, however, taken a new cogency in our days.

The strategy of having two very old women take up the pen to tentatively construct and (re)construct the past through their dwindling recollections, in Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* and *On Cannan's Side*, are illustrations of the desire rampant in recent Irish fiction (but also in recent theory) to transform history into narrative and interpretation and to reaffirm the significance of the private over the public. It also foregrounds, however, the unreliability of their accounts – and emblematically of all accounts. The ageing protagonists of these two novels wrestle with their inability to recount the events of past times, being aware of the impossibility to disentangle the private from the public and interrogating themselves as to the truthfulness of what they are telling. As in all postmodern historiography that argues for the existence of a 'multiplicity of standpoints' rather than a 'grand narrative,' Barry's texts are constructions of the past pieced together from fragments, which have no pretence of being all-encompassing and explanatory. For instance, several versions of the same events coexist in *The Secret Scripture* in a mosaic of truths where each narrator brings grist to his or her own mill offering a biased story open to the interpretation of the reader. Roseanne Clear's 'testimony' of her pre-confinement life and of the confused events leading to her imprisonment is flanked by other attempts (Dr Grene's, Father Gaunt's) to piece out the truth about her reclusion and the events that preceded it.

The multiplicity of accounts, Roseanne's failing memory, and Father Gaunt's probable bad faith leave the reader with many questions as to what had really happened to her and to her father in the past, which would have such dire consequences on their lives. Was her father in the Royal Irish Constabulary, was he an informer, was he executed (and by whom) or did he commit suicide? Was Roseanne's encounter on the hilltop of Knocknarea with John Lavelle, the brother of the IRA fighter her father had buried, really innocent or was it adultery as Father Gaunt surmises? Neither Roseanne's testimony nor Dr Grene's commonplace book nor Father Gaunt's report nor the other documents brought forward can tell us her real story and explain why she had been incarcerated in a mental hospital.

History, like the truth about Roseanne, is made of many stories, none of which – nor the sum of them all – can lead to a faithful reconstruction of the past. This also ap-

plies to national history which is composed of many different narratives besides the one most people like to hear about their own nation, some of them little known, others unpalatable. "There is no one writable 'truth' about history and experience, only a series of versions: it always comes to us 'stencillized'," writes Tony Tanner (Tanner 172).

Historical facts being inaccessible and unreliable, one must abandon the notion of a neutral, scientific objectivity as well as reject a single monolithic history. This tenet of postmodern historiography pervades Barry's narrative world. The truth in most of novels and plays is pieced together with difficulty, especially when the author adopts the stratagem of unreliable narrators that cannot be trusted because of failing memory or bad faith; their many contradictions mimic the musings about the reliability of facts characterizing historical metafiction and historiography.

Roseanne Clear and Dr Grene in *The Secret Scripture* and Lilly in *On Canaan's Side* repeatedly express their belief that history is unreliable both for the way it is transmitted through memory, hear-say, and writing and because it is multiple:

Memory [...] if it is neglected becomes like a box room or a lumber room in an old house, the contents jumbled about, maybe not only from neglect but also from too much haphazard searching in them, and things to boot thrown in that don't belong there. [...] It makes me a little dizzy to contemplate the possibility that everything I remember may not be – may not be real. There was so much turmoil at that time that – that what? I took refuge in other impossible histories, in dreams, in fantasies? I don't know. (*Scripture* 208-209)

Lilly, too, clothes the past in fantasies and remembers in a bitter-sweet and ironical tone her faulty understanding of her father's role in the Dublin lockout:

When I first was told this story as a child [...] I misunderstood and thought my father had done something heroic. I added in my imagination a white horse, upon which he rode with ceremonial sword drawn. I saw him rush forward like in a proper cavalry charge. I gasped at his chivalry and courage. It was only years later I understood that he had advanced on foot, and that three of the working men had been killed. (*Canaan* 6)

Dr Grene, trying to find out Roseanne Clear's real story, complains that he is unable to ask the right questions and report the right things: "Now yet again I discover I do not have the language, the lingo, to talk to her about this, or about anything. We have neglected the tiny sentences of life and now the big ones are beyond our reach" (*Scripture* 73). There are no 'big sentences' for Dr Grene, nor grand narratives for the postmodern historian, but only constructions of the past and these tend to be distorted by imagination and by ideology.

Given the inaccessibility of facts, fictional or would-be historical reconstructions of the past are used as weapons in the imposition of power. Historicization is necessarily a political process selecting and excluding, centralizing the self and peripheralizing the other in accordance with the ideology ruling at the time the official history of a country is crystallized. "One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true," says Foucault (193), and history is "the propaganda of the victors," in the words of the German playwright Ernest Toller. This is exemplified by Father Gaunt's com-

placent and politically correct version of past events in *The Secret Scripture*, which is so arranged as to justify his institutionalizing Roseanne for her diversity.

With his novels and plays, Barry implies that post-colonial history (or, rather, post-independence history in the case of Ireland) is as biased as colonial history since it, too, excludes many realities and tells a string of half-truths. The grand narrative of Irish history, “a long tale of colonisation and resistance” (O’Toole xi), demonizes or, at least, leaves out people who were neither colonialists nor revolutionaries, but trudged along doing what they thought was their duty – Mahony’s “innocents.”⁷ The naïve and deceptive ideals of those mistaken young Irish volunteers who joined the British Army in WWI are given voice by Jesse Kirvan, a soldier who was more aware than the others of the tragic quandary in which the Irish found themselves in the British Army:

I thought it would be a good thing to follow John Redmond’s words. I thought for my mother’s sake, her gentle soul, for the sake of my own children, I might go out and fight for to save Europe so that we might have the Home Rule in Ireland in the upshot. I came out to fight for a country that doesn’t exist, and now, Willie, mark my words, it never will. (*Long Way* 157).

In the key historical scenes of his plays and novels, Barry recreates an early-twentieth-century environment where “despite the increasingly urgent political conflict [...] most people were not bothered by politics one way or the other,” as Keith Jeffery remarks in his review of *A Long Long Way* (Jeffery). Although Barry refuses a manicheistic vision of history, noting [in our society] “a game is played with our history and our society, of cops and robbers, goodies and baddies. But there is no such thing” (qtd. in Kenny 10), he too ends up sinning and writing stories (or history) that are biased in favour of those who mistakenly or unthinkingly made the wrong choices or were dragged into situations that history would later decree as wrong. Roseanne thus is justified in wondering: “How does good history become bad history by and by?” (*Scripture* 119).

This sort of revisionism has appeared more or less in the same years in other cultures as well and is the fruit of a postmodernist questioning of history and of the refusal of the rhetoric and claim to coherence of historical narratives, along the lines I have briefly indicated. In Italian culture much debate was aroused by the case of Antonio Pennacchi’s *Canale Mussolini* (a tell-tale title) which, like Barry’s *The Secret Scripture*, was awarded a prestigious prize (Costa 2008 for Barry, Strega 2010 for Pennacchi). *Canale Mussolini*, like Barry’s ambitious narrative project articulated in several novels and plays, also deals with a family saga, modelled on the author’s own people, through which many salient events of the past emerge. The story of one

7 Mahony aims at demonstrating how most of Barry’s protagonists are endowed “with a degree of sustained innocence and a purity of soul and spirit which seems to defy any negative experience life might have dealt them” (83). These characters do not always understand what is going on but whether they are soldiers or policemen or occupy other institutional roles, they feel they are there “to serve and to protect” (91) and rarely recriminate.

large family of migrant peasants, arching over almost one century, covers the tragic evolution of history from WWI to the rise of Socialist workers' movements, the growth and affirmation of Fascism and the disaster of WWII. All these events are experienced without much understanding by Pennacchi's disadvantaged protagonists, who were relocated from their miserable existence in the East of the country to participate in Mussolini's reclamation of the marshes south-west of Rome (hence the title of the book) in the years 1926-1937. Being thus benefitted, the family become staunch and uncomprehending supporters of Fascism and, finally, suffer the consequences of their loyalty still in an uncomprehending fashion.

Both the Irish and the Italian author concentrate on the underdogs (in society as well as in historical memory) emphasizing the collective nature of mentalities. Through their work, Barry and Pennacchi try to overcome a phenomenon, shared by both countries, of cultural ostracisms and of the suppression from collective memory of those who are not in the mainstream. We realize that this new sensibility is the reflection of a particular moment and need in our society, that of looking at histories rather than at history. Neither Ireland nor Italy are "desperate," as Eagleton said, to bury their more glorious past (the 1916 Rising for the Irish, the Resistance movement for Italy), but there is a desire in the air to look at some other aspects of history, at those aspects that have been buried or hidden as shameful. Interviewed by Nicholas Wroe, Barry said "the way we think about ourselves in Ireland means there is no longer a necessity for those secrets. We can now marvel at them. It's as if the signal has been given that we can drop the purely nationalistic, De Valera history" (Wroe). Pennacchi, too, defends his right to give the victims of exclusion their due:

In the novel I make no concessions to Fascism, there is absolutely no kind of revisionism. Yet I believe that it is still uncomfortable to say some things, it is as if people did not want to listen to them. I never questioned the negative aspect of the regime but it is undeniable that in those years an incredible feat of reclamation was achieved. And we made it happen it with our own hands.⁸

In French, German and Spanish literatures, too, we have examples of fiction and drama regarding the repercussions of the painful historical events of the last century on the lives of normal people who are not part of history but passively accept the world. History is not only made by its actors. There have been many attempts to deal with an embarrassing past in a non-censorial way in all of these countries, and the shadows of Francoism or of collaborationism haunt their recent literatures. Understandably, German literature is more severe on its recent past. The figure of the uninformed Nazi, the *Mitläufer*, who does not share the ideology but opportunistically follows along, never plays a central role and is described with disapproval. But increas-

8 "Nel romanzo non faccio nessuno sconto al fascismo [...] non c'è assolutamente alcun tipo di revisionismo. Credo invece che certe cose siano ancora scomode da dire, sembra che qualcuno non le voglia ascoltare. Il lato negativo del regime nessuno lo ha mai messo in discussione, ma è innegabile che in quegli anni fu realizzata un'opera di bonifica straordinaria. E la facemmo noi con le nostre mani." (Pennacchi; qtd. in Bursi; the translation above is my own)

ingly stories of naïve young people going through a Nazi education without resistance or criticism have appeared in literature. The most important book on the subject is Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* (1972), in which a young girl of the bourgeoisie (possibly a self-portrait) absorbs uncritically the indoctrination of the Thirties. Franz Fühmann, too, a former Nazi and a soldier in Greece, in the collection of short stories entitled *Das Judenauto*, traces a personal trajectory that begins with childhood anti-Semitism, continues with a youthful acceptance of Nazism, and finally moves to the rejection of the deadly ideology and the adoption of Socialism. In Uwe Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (2003) the narrator wonders about what made his elder brother volunteer for the SS and tries to understand his motivation and role through the dead man's diaries and letters home.⁹

As in Barry's case, in these examples of German semi-fictional literature, great history is filtered through individual history, indeed history experienced by children and teenagers. However, unlike Barry's youthful protagonists, Willie Dunne or Eneas McNulty, the German protagonists emerge enlightened from the experience and earn their audience's forgiveness. On the Irish side, Willie and Eneas, but also Thomas Dunne and, maybe, Roseanne Clear's father, who were serving in British institutions in a spirit of duty and loyalty, never understand why they are being marginalised and berated by their contemporaries (and by many of the readers to whom their stories are told). Repeatedly, through his characters' words, Barry insists on the idea that the only fault that weighs on his protagonists' shoulders is that of being an uncritical part of the old establishment trying to do the right thing in a spirit of humanism rather than in the pursuit of an ideology or religious belief. In the words of one Barry's spokesmen, Dr Grene:

The world is not full of betrayers, it is full of people with decent motives and a full desire to do right by those who know them and love them. This is a little-known truth, but I think it is a truth nonetheless. Empirically, from all the years of my work, I would attest to that. I know it is a miraculous conclusion, but there it is. We like to make strangers of everyone. We are not wolves, but lambs astonished in the margins of the fields by sunlight and summer. (*Scripture* 186)

Barry's world is full of such lambs that also need to be remembered. The rhetoric of memory has a healing power especially in dealing with national traumas and their influences on personal lives. Barry's heroes are well aware of the bitter-sweet power of memory, so different from a celebratory commemoration: "To remember sometimes is a great sorrow, but when the remembering has been done, there comes afterwards a very curious peacefulness. Because you have planted your flag on the summit of the sorrow. You have climbed it" (*Canaan* 217). In the rest of Europe, too, we find this urge to remember and heal. Barry and his foreign colleagues re-articulate and (re)cover the past, questioning, often in a non-celebratory mood, World War I, the Easter Rising, the Civil War and forced emigration in the case of Ireland; World Wars I and II, totalitarianisms, civil wars, resistance or collaboration in the other countries.

9 I owe the information about German literature to conversations with my Germanist colleague, Prof. Anna Chiarloni of the University of Turin.

Often this attempt to heal means that the authors adopt the unpopular viewpoint of lending a voice to the forgotten and the marginalized who ranged themselves on what history proved later on to be the wrong side of the barricade.

Looking with disenchantment at the ambivalent transformations of Irish society throughout the past century, Barry has steered clear from a mythologizing and hagiographic approach to the past which he wants to re-appropriate in its entirety, in order to achieve and communicate Lilly's "curious peacefulness." To do that he has had to look at history from a different angle inspired by the Eurocentric vision of a post-nationalist, post-colonial and less insular Ireland. He remains, however, convinced of the inescapable role of historical memory, evident in the statement he made when he was interviewed by Nicholas Wroe: "By the accident of being born in Ireland, everywhere I looked I found people mired in history" (Wroe).

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TOM PAULIN AND ULSTER: SUBVERSION OR SABOTAGE?

Joanna Kruczowska

In one of the poems in his recent collection *Love's Bonfire* (2012) Tom Paulin makes an attempt at juxtaposing Irish subversive narratives, one of which he has been a staunch supporter of ever since his *Liberty Tree* of 1983. "A Spruce New Colour" (*Love's Bonfire* 6) depicts two options of Irish republicanism/nationalism: the 1798 uprising of the United Irishmen, to which the Easter Rising was indebted, and the 1981 hunger strikes, whose participants took inspiration from the 1916 tradition. Between these options, physically and metaphorically, lie two bridges: the old one in the village and the newly erected suspension bridge in the bypass. When compared with Seamus Heaney's "At Toomebridge" (*Electric Light* 3), Paulin's poem seems to put an emphasis on co-existence rather than division. In this way, it marks an evolution of themes oscillating between subversion and sabotage in subsequent volumes of Paulin's poetry and prose.

Addressing the major subject of Paulin's engagement with his Ulster Protestant community of origin, this article confronts a number of issues preoccupying the Irish writer in the context of state policy for more than a century: identity, struggle, home, language, tradition, politics, myth. Some of these themes are evoked by Elmer Andrews in his Introduction to his collection *Contemporary Irish Poetry*:

To be an Irish poet means something peculiar, infuriating, crippling and exhilarating all at once: to subvert language through an extravagant regard for it, to define oneself constantly through opposition, to display a profound impatience with the real world, to confuse poetry with politics, and politics with race, tribe and *mythos*. Most of all it is to inherit. (3)

Andrews's concluding remark encapsulates the spirit of Yeats's poetry, with which Paulin interacts when commemorating the Irish republican tradition. His dialogues with Yeats and Heaney, together with his activity in the Field Day Company (regarded by critics such as Edna Longley or Gerald Dawe as a bastion of nationalism), come into the orbit of his wrestling with the unionist heritage, a wrestling which is partly concerned with the United Irishmen radicalism as an alternative to 1916 and other versions of Irish republicanism also examined by Yeats, Heaney, and other Irish poets. Paulin's struggle as an admirer of the 'Irish revolution' with the stagnation and mythology of Northern Ireland attests to his private and public quest aimed at reintroducing the past in order to transform the present, an attempt ventured – not always successfully – by many contemporary Irish poets.

Despite subtle differences in meaning – sabotage appears to be defined in more concrete terms than subversion – both terms are concerned with undermining an entity representing or belonging to the enemy. While subversion *can* imply an action carried out from within, the agent of sabotage *must* be located on the target territory

and is often subject to the conditions of warfare. I will use the differentiation between these two terms according to the position of the agent as the basic category to describe the position which Paulin assumes in his writings. Subversion will thus denote actions carried out mainly from the outside, the 'territory' with a more comprehensive scope than the one of sabotage. Hopefully, the following analysis will further elucidate this distinction, yet we must keep in mind that the specifics of Paulin's "fluid identity" ("Q&A" 31) may mean that these two terms may sometimes overlap or even swap places with regard to his work.

Bred by the "ahistorical one-party state with a skewed and uncertain culture" ("Q&A" 31), Paulin's lack of certainty about individual and communal identity is not an isolated phenomenon among Northern Irish poets, coming closest, perhaps, to his fellow poet from a Protestant background, Michael Longley, and his predecessor in this respect, Louis MacNeice. Paulin's English birthplace and current address does not preclude the fact that Northern Ireland, where he spent his formative years, functions as his lifelong point of reference. This relation between the poet and space is not only an outcome of his biography, but also a matter of personal choice. While factors such as passing time and the Northern Irish peace process, about which Paulin was "cautiously optimistic" (Wroe), may have helped to alleviate these anxieties to some extent, the identity issue remains one of the fundamental drives behind Paulin's revolutionary spirit.

Paulin's writings have been classified by some critics as rebellious: titles of articles on the poet such as "The Writer as Revolutionary" (Heawood), "Tom Paulin: Underground Resistance Fighter" (Andrews), or "Poems of a Northern Protest-ant" (Dawe) are not unusual. It might be tempting to align his work with his controversial media presence as a hailed or condemned partisan of hot political issues. However, whereas in his public pronouncements he firmly stands by revolution, his writings are marked by ambivalence when it comes to defining both the enemy and the goal of this revolt.

It would appear that Paulin's oeuvre abounds with acts of subversion: his work tends to be perceived as such by critics and by the author himself. His criticism of power and hegemony involves political, linguistic, historical, and social phenomena on a micro- and a macro-scale, ranging from the cosmic view, through the institution of empire (including the British one), and further narrowing down to Britain, Northern Ireland, to end up with the Protestant community with its political options of historical republicanism and contemporary unionism. The majority of these *loci* are further linked to language with its subcategories of orality, rhetoric, and linguistic varieties such as Standard English or Ulster dialect. Below and above this tangled network one encounters the notion of home. Paulin challenges some of these ideas from the outside as a subversive, but the further he circumscribes his perspective, the more he engages in sabotage from within. It is not only an inherited or acquired background which enables him to endorse both of these positions, but also his personal choice.

The same power of choice is responsible for his quest for artistic liberation. One of the exemplary techniques which he applies to divulge subversive tendencies towards authoritarian systems is a focus on the periphery, not the centre, of the empire (British, German, Soviet, etc.). Simultaneously, he seeks a positive alternative to these systems by widening his lens to the panoramic view of the international Protestant experience, multiculturalism, community of writers, etc.

One of the enemies confronted on a macroscale is the United Kingdom, the former British Empire, and Standard English. The poet occupies an ideal position from which to launch a subversive attack: not only does he live in England but he also works at the smithy of the British soul: Oxford University. In fact, Oxford in this case can act as a correlative of his public and personal involvement in other symbols of Britishness such as the BBC or his publisher Faber and Faber.¹ From these headquarters, he both admires British literary and cultural heritage and criticises it. His essays devote much space to celebration of values such as a republican spirit or the use of the English vernacular in literature and to a critique of others, such as the perceived poetic shallowness of contemporary Britain, revealing hesitations in the judgement of his host country.

In his collection of essays *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* the poet expresses appreciation of the Protestant imagination with its supremacy of individual conscience and dismay at its “single-minded, driven violence and ferocity” expressed, for instance, in “a characteristically Protestant wish to break with the past and destroy the aesthetic” (12-13), although this approach seems to perfectly embody the revolutionary flair of that imagination which he openly advocates. His concept of fluid identity may be partly responsible for this inconsistent attitude: “I am a protestant with lapses and uncertainties about the nature of that imagination” (“Hiding” 253). Paulin seems to channel his cultural and political heritage into two categories: a wide spectre of international Protestantism, on the one hand, and an underground tunnel of radical Presbyterianism, on the other, thus providing an alternative for the official parochialism of unionist Protestantism. This is one of the points in Paulin’s work where the past (represented, for instance, by the history of seventeenth-century Europe and of 1798 in Ireland) negotiates the present. Just as historical publications on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Easter Rising related 1916 to a wider net of political events preceding it, moving “the historiography of the event [...] from the narrow (though of course important) focus on conspiracy and martyrdom to the more general question of the Rising as an episode in the history of all Ireland and indeed of the British Isles” (Boyce & O’Day 165), Paulin also extends the context of the radical Protestant tradition onto an all-Irish and international plane, though at the same time celebrating the Ulster locality of 1798.

1 On this occasion, one cannot fail to observe analogies between Paulin’s path into British media and the literary establishment and that of W.B. Yeats, Louis MacNeice, or the group of Irish poets published by Faber and Faber since the 1960s.

This subversive dichotomy in Paulin's writings connects to a further one concerned with contrasting the periphery of the empire (Ireland, Central Europe)² with the panoramic sweep of world wars and the history of Protestantism on the other. These issues receive the most profound treatment in his long poem "The Caravans on Lüneberg Heath" (*Fivemiletown* 55-66) and in the collection *The Invasion Handbook*, where authoritarian power is embodied not only in the institution of the empire but also in mainstream history. By reviving geographically and historically marginal events, Paulin tries to restore the history of the protest of 'minor' communities and individuals (*vide* his 'Everyman' persona Simplex) to its proper place; this includes restoring the history of the United Irishmen uprising to the history of the British Empire, of all empires, of republicanism, and the history of the world.

The issue of Protestantism represents one of the points where Paulin trespasses from the firm ground of subversion into the shaky ground of sabotage. While the authority he stands up against as a subversive can be broadly defined as Britain, monarchy, empire, and their manifestations in literature and language, the power he confronts as a saboteur already verges on his own territory, namely Ulster Protestantism. It is at this point where Oxford becomes his vantage point. It situates itself somewhere between the outside (of the poet's physical bearings) and the inside (of his psychological bearings). In other words, instead of looking around he looks across the Irish Sea following his sense of identity, however elusive it may be.

Looking at Ulster unionism from Oxford, he takes on the air of an external observer: "Middle-class [Ulster] Protestants are still clinging to a British identity, but nobody over here wants them. There is no fellow feeling" (Wroe). The seemingly innocuous qualifier "over here" clearly defines the opposition between Britain (here) and Northern Ireland (there) or, in fact, between Britain and nowhere, for Ulster Protestants are depicted as homeless. The sides of the conflict have swapped their positions in the trenches: Britain is identified with an ally, while Paulin's community of origin becomes a target.

In the same interview (Wroe), Paulin uses the expression "Glorious Revolution" in the positive sense of the term. Although he quotes it in the context of unionism, by using this term together with its controversial epithet he affiliates himself with English Protestantism which fostered it. His esteem for the notion of rebellion as such prevails over his silence about the central figure of that particular revolution, responsible for the completion of the conquest of Ireland. Paulin's support for this historical event places him with Ulster unionists ("certain civic and secular values" of this community) and against the rest of Ireland, although generally he "supports the SDLP's constitutional route to a united Ireland" (Wroe). This step from subversion into sabotage again creates much confusion about where he eventually stands. "United Ireland"

2 Other subversive spheres of his writing, from his interest in Central Europe to censorship, literature as cipher and the reader as accomplice, are also directed against systems controlling human thought and speech, including totalitarianism.

(and “SDLP,” to a certain extent) situates him as a supporter of nationalism,³ “constitutional route” implies opposition to violence. These paradigms remind one of the long history of Home Rule projects (“constitutional route”) undermined by Ulster unionists’ military preparations in 1912-14. The conundrum reflects the complex, not to say paranoid, reality of Northern Ireland and its history of violence. In some of his poems, Paulin refers to the appropriation, by contemporary unionist paramilitaries (UDA), of both the Irish republican tradition of 1798 and the Ulster crisis of 1912 as a continuum of violent protest; the poet himself, especially in *Liberty Tree*, denies this appropriation by depicting 1798 as the opposite of 1912 in the UDA’s separatist claims. Paradoxically, the unionist ‘theory’ of continuous violence corresponds to Irish republicanism appropriating the tradition of the largely Protestant 1798 as a precursor of the largely Catholic 1916, or, as in Steward Parker’s *Northern Star*, a precursor of the Romantic nationalist cycle of vengeance. The history of these appropriations dates back to at least the nineteenth century: as D.G. Boyce observes, Ulster Protestant ideology

accommodated the home rule movement as comfortably as more radical nationalism: the men of ‘98 were as much the property of Redmond and his followers (especially his followers) as they had been of Parnell and his, and the new Sinn Féin party and its. The Irish party did not, in principle, rule out the use of force to achieve freedom. (50)

A part of the problem with interpreting 1798 seems to reside in its assessment as a unifying or separatist event, in the shifting emphasis put on either its Protestant initiation, its fairly unified development, or on later sectarian fights. A similar, perhaps more famous case of appropriation of Irish history is the endorsement of the 1916 Easter Rising as the heritage of the Provisional IRA. On the commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of the Rising, Gabriel Doherty recognised “an opportunity and a determination to re-assess the Rising more thoroughly in its own right and with less regard to the identification of the event with the Provisional movement,” the process “championed by revisionist historians from the 1970s onwards and, ironically, embraced by that movement as part of its rhetorical and ideological arsenal” (378). In addition and also ironically, this opinion is shared by some of their unionist opponents, who can see “‘no valid distinction’ between killings of the two periods [of 1916 and the Northern Irish conflict]” (Lord Laird; qtd in Doherty 390).⁴ Paulin has been aspiring to reas-

3 Doherty observes that “the SDLP was the only party with elected representatives in Northern Ireland to send a full delegation, including its party leader, to the parade” marking the ninetieth anniversary of the Easter Rising (464n.).

4 Further ironies observed by Doherty include the absence of Gerry Adams at the ninetieth anniversary parade, and Ulster unionists’ vehement reaction to that commemoration: 1916 was judged “an act of terrorism directed against the British state” (DUP) and “the end of the long and honourable tradition of constitutional Irish nationalism [replaced by] the blood-sacrifice ethos of armed republicanism which led directly to the partition of this island and the Irish civil war” (UUP). “The irony of such a comment,” Doherty continues, “bearing in mind the vituperative contemporary criticism of the Irish party by northern unionists, the formation of the UVF from within their ranks, and their support for partition during the debate over home rule, was apparent to many south of

sess the United Irishmen Rebellion in its own right, by focusing on Ulster Presbyterianism as opposed to official and paramilitary unionism.

Paulin's move from subversion to sabotage seems a double one if we take into account his perception of his own situation as an *entryiste* writer, which he expounds in the Introduction to *Ireland and the English Crisis* (1984). Contributing to the general reflection of some Irish writers on their role in Britain as "entertainers" or "media clowns" (Yeats,⁵ Joyce, MacNeice, Deane, etc.), Paulin indicates otherness as the crucial feature of an immigrant or *entryiste* writer and calls for the recognition of such authors' neo-colonial identity. The *entryiste* writer, he argues, does not really belong; his social role "involves being unconsciously stateless and nationless" (18-19). Paulin would seem to be withdrawing from subversion and sabotage altogether here, were it not, again, for the inconspicuous qualifier "unconsciously."

Disparaging oppressive systems worldwide including the unionist statelet, Paulin has nonetheless never got "entirely detribalized" from his Ulster Protestant background (*Minotaur* 13). While longing for self-definition – "It must be great to be really Irish – or really English" ("Q&A" 31) – he opposes the idea of ancestor worship. His portrayal of the Ulster Protestant community as homeless is not a coincidence in this context. The poet has devoted some of his essays to Ulster Protestants' self-perception as the Chosen People or Hebrew Children (*Minotaur, Ireland and the English Crisis*) evident in the mythology of the 'roots' invented by Ian Paisley after the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement which the unionists regarded as Britain's betrayal (*Minotaur* 14). Interestingly, Paulin deemed this agreement Ireland's betrayal: "the successor to the treaty which partitioned Ireland in 1921," the agreement "gave the Irish government influence over the administration of the Northern Irish state" (*Minotaur* 14-15). Paulin's recognition of the enemy loses clarity: while the unionist mythology becomes a target of his scorn as a substitute for logical reasoning, the drive behind it arouses his sympathy: "I'm concerned with the unionist experience. I hope I understand the feelings of agony and displacement and not belonging which are part of that imagination, and I think that the historical experience of the culture needs to be treated sympathetically" ("QA" 32). A pronounced subversive anti-Zionist when commenting on international politics, he performs sabotage on the unionist Biblical Hebrew mythology and a sort of self-sabotage when using it ironically to frame the concept of home in poems such as "Priming the Pump" (*Walking a Line* 56).

the border" (463n.). "Martin Mansergh also pointed out the hypocrisy of contemporary unionist criticism of the republicans' association with imperial Germany in 1916, bearing in mind their own willingness to do likewise two years earlier" (402).

- 5 Yeats advised Katharine Tynan: "remember by being as Irish as you can you will be the more original and true to yourself and in the long run more interesting even to English readers," which can be achieved by promoting "that wild Celtic blood, the most un-English of all things under heaven." Paulin calls this statement "another version of expatriate contradiction – inhabiting two places at one time" ("Salid Oil and Alexindrines: Yeats's Letters," *Minotaur* 155 [sic]).

This perplexing stance is partly connected again with the feeling of homelessness which Paulin shares with his community of origin, though he circumscribes it to his personal trajectory in poems such as “Fortogiveness” expressing penitence about leaving Belfast:

so forgive me Lord that I caught the Liverpool boat
all those years back
and then took a train to Hull. (*The Wind Dog* 56)

Navigating between homelessness and Irishness which Paulin associates with expatriation, in “Chuckling It Away” (*Fivemiletown* 53) he adds socialism to this amalgam embodied in the figure of James Larkin. The marriage of republican and socialist ideas with exile in Larkin’s biography continues Paulin’s reflections on Irishness started in the preceding volume, *Liberty Tree*.

Another factor which should be considered in the context of Paulin’s subversive/saboteur position is the concept of tribe, used extensively in the Northern Irish context. Paulin applies it to his personal situation (not entirely ‘detrribalised,’ ‘married out of his tribe’) and to his socio-historical meditations. In the poem “The Unholy One?” dark “gods of family tribe the subconscious” fight the gods of “social and political life” (*The Wind Dog* 65). Anticipating the fall of the unionist state in the poem “Loyal as Ever,” its community appears as the “long lost tribe / a tribe that mightn’t exist” desperately clutching to their waste land (*Walking a Line* 75). On the other hand, in “Matins” (*Walking a Line* 10) tribe is associated with recollections of childhood.

Subversion and sabotage blend again when Paulin applies his notion of tribe also to the underground, which in his writings offers shelter to a whole series of figures: from the “tribal gods” (*The Riot Act*, the play written for the Field Day Company); to unionists and Paisley representing tribal “subterranean energy” inspired by “anonymous historical experience” (“Paisley’s Progress,” *Ireland and the English Crisis* 162, 171); to 1798 insurgents; to Paulin himself as a subversive; and to the subconscious of the writer hesitating, just as Heaney does in “Punishment” (*North* 37-38), whether to take part in the “civilized outrage” or in “tribal, intimate revenge.” In his most recent collection (“The Choice,” *Love’s Bonfire* 51), he leaves the gods of socio-political life with their “tribal chant” – probably unionists preoccupied with the ‘democratic’ foundations of their “desert prison” state, hence the identification of the former opposites of society vs. tribe – and “crosses over” again, like in the Liverpool boat years ago. This time, however, he “discovered not the side itself / but the other in that phrase *the other side*.” Whether this discovery of otherness could be interpreted as tolerance remains disputable; “breaking from the bonds of kin” costs him exclusion from community and a sense of guilt. Haunted by his “spineless” identity, feeling bad “like a criminal or an agent,” an outsider at home and abroad, he nonetheless accepts his eponymous and seemingly long overdue choice: the life of the *entrystiel inner emigré*. He claims to discover the middle ground, the territory of “sifting shadows” against tribal monoliths; instead of marking evolution of his position, however, this move arguably proves to continue his previous preoccupations.

Another area which illustrates Paulin's position in between subversion and sabotage is the sphere of language. He recognises the power of print as a form of tyranny opposed to the freedom of speech. *A New Look at the Language Question*, his pamphlet written for the Field Day Company, argues against the English Standard for a Hiberno-English dictionary to house the homeless accents of Ireland. In this way, Paulin moves from the macro-scale of the dominant language (English) to the micro-scale of its dialectal (Hiberno-English) forms. In a saboteur spirit, Paulin ingeniously sketches the historical, political, and linguistic levels of the Ulster vernacular in two poems devoted to the Drumcree standoff (1995), an important event in the ongoing conflicts over Orange parades.

In "Drumcree Four" (*The Wind Dog* 72-73) the speech of the Paisley-like orator is probably characterised by the deep articulation characteristic of the local accent "that strains like Ulster" (73), the simile obviously indicating political and religious oppressiveness and zest. The oration is reduced to auditory properties reflecting the emotional charge and the rhetorical value of the speech and acutely matches the image of an obese and asthmatic Paisley, whose declaration of war resides in verbs implying violence and civil war. The epithet "archaic," orchestrated with "tribal," sends the reader to the historical sources of the conflict and would exquisitely sum up the situation: a group of people in antique uniforms, members of a sectarian Masonic organisation established in the eighteenth century, celebrating a seventeenth-century battle, and on this occasion violating social rules which constitute the norm of twentieth-century European democracies. But it does not sum it up, Paulin seems to suggest. It is not that the past eclipses the present; rather, the past serves as a pretext to justify the here and now. In a former "tribal huff" similar to Paisley's, the unionist community largely refused participation under Irish Home Rule and an all-Irish state, choosing exclusion. Analogously, it can be argued that the 1916 Easter Week insurgents did not realistically include that same community with all its difference in their declaration for the new Ireland; as Boyce argues, "they completely ignored the implications of the Ulster crisis" (60).

The Orangemen in Paulin's "Drumcree Three" use a local accent – "intil the which it had bin drapped" (*The Wind Dog* 18) – in the context of yet another myth of origins claimed by Ulster unionism: the story of Cadmus and the dragon. The same occurs with respect to members of the UDA: "ye cannae sit in this coul chamber / wi a bare head [...] put you a hood on" ("Cadmus and the Dragon," *Walking a Line* 93-101). The loyalist paramilitary organizations appropriate Greek and Celtic traditions and history to create their own mythology:

we're no Piltown Planters
but the real autochthonous thing
– we're the Cruthin aye
a remnant of the ancient British people. (95)

The Cruthin mythology and approach to Gaelic tradition differentiates the UDA from Official unionism, defining its hostility towards Britain. The UDA, who define them-

selves as progressive, appropriate the history of republicanism (“who rose again in 98”), but also take pride in the unionist legacy (who rose “in 1912”), blending it all with the story of Cadmus and the dragon in a convoluted slip of the tongue: “*Dadmus and the Cragon / or With the ‘DA in Craigavon*” (96). The opposing objectives of the two events (Ireland’s independence versus opposition to Home Rule and the subsequent division of Ireland) were grotesquely arrayed into one history of violence. By presenting the UDA’s views, Paulin stresses the mythology of the ‘continued’ resorting to force (1798 insurgents and 1912 Ulster Volunteers) used to justify terror in the North. An even more evident case of this mythology in operation is the current UVF claims to have descended from the UVF of 1913. Curiously, 1798 is appropriated by Ulster unionist paramilitaries as a predecessor of 1912, and by Irish republican paramilitaries as a predecessor to 1916. Historians have proposed 1912 as a possible prelude to 1916 in its recourse to violence while the Easter Rising has been viewed as partly a reaction to 1912; each moment is marked by very different aims but with similar separatist tendencies (Boyce). Historian Tim Pat Coogan considers 1912 a precondition for the Easter Rising, particularly through the formation of the Irish Volunteers in response to the founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) (Tim Pat Coogan; qtd. in Doherty 401). Violence seems the key to the recurrence of events from the Irish past. Trying to revive the forgotten 1798 ideals of unification against such an interpretation of the cycles of Irish history, Paulin in his poetry searches for a nobler tradition within his community than the one presented from various saboteur perspectives. Presbyterianism of 1798 “chooses the free way, not the formal,” being the religion of “a people who share / A dream of grace and reason” (“Presbyterian Study,” *Liberty Tree* 49-50). Though applying religious identification, this ‘dream of reason’ in *Liberty Tree* precedes the vision of the ‘secular *République*’ (68) which Paulin envisages for Ireland.

Quoting samples of Ulster speech from saboteur standpoints in different poems, i.e. referring it to Orange parades or the UDA, Paulin determines the internal enemy as narrow-minded political and military unionism. In other poems, however, such as “Martello” (*Liberty Tree* 54-58), where a civil servant’s Ulster accent becomes a target of ridicule for the British, he expounds the fragility of the unionist community. In *A New Look at the Language Question* he further observes that the Protestant minority consciousness makes them believe that their dialect is threatened both by British and Ulster English, “the provincial language of Official unionism” (14-15). On the other hand, from the perspective of his own “linguistic biography,” Paulin remains a linguistic outcast, neither a subversive, nor a saboteur. In “Same Ould Strop” (*Love’s Bonfire* 45), an Irish-Scots-English *dinnseanchas* set in Ulster,⁶ the poet declares “no rights of knowledge / no rights of property / on [...] these placenames,” opting for the name “Eglish” as the “more familiar” to his identity which is “hard to place.” Paradoxically, the *dinnseanchas* Paulin makes out of “Eglish” (“softer greener / and more fa-

6 “Benburb Eglish Caledon / – add Drumbo / [...] that clanky sound *dinnseanchas*.”

miliar / it's a milkygreen / nut on a hazel") is set against the "clanky" placenames resounding with the metal acoustics of Paisley's oratory, and rather than Ulster dialects it reminds the reader, if only by coincidence, of the rural imagery and mythology of the Irish language and tradition in Heaney's "Anahorish" (*Wintering Out* 16).

Generally, Paulin's militancy does not contradict his fascination with the oratory skills which he admires in the Protestant tradition and with sound in general, all of which open a way to artistic liberation. In an interview Paulin remarked: "Ulster Protestant is a culture which could have dignity, and it had it once – I mean that strain of radical Presbyterianism, free-thinking Presbyterianism, which more or less went underground after 1798" (McDonald, *Mistaken* 100). In a series of poems on the United Irishmen, Paulin takes up the task of 'unearthing' the memory of the heroic tradition, associating the vernacular with the republican ideal. In *Liberty Tree* he again acts as a saboteur: "I searched out gaps / in that imperial shrub: a free voice sang / dissenting green" ("Under Creon" 13). Setting the "northern starlight" of 1798 against the "usual dusk" of the modern North, the poem attempts to elegise the 1798 heroes, McCracken and Hope: "I had pressed beyond my usual dusk / to find a cadence for the dead" (13). In "Father of History" (*Liberty Tree* 32) Paulin again lists the names of dead heroes, just as Yeats did in "Easter 1916":

Munro, Hope, Porter and McCracken;
like sweet yams buried deep, these rebel minds
endure posterity without a monument,
their names a covered sheugh, remnants, some brackish signs.

Knowledgeable about the failure of the 1798 rising and the subsequent amnesia,⁷ Paulin is unable to reproduce the spirit of the rising:

like an epic arming in an olive grove
this was a stringent grief and a form of love.
Maybe one day I'll get the hang of it
and find joy, not justice, in a snapped connection,
that Jacobin oath on the black mountain. ("Under Creon" *Liberty Tree* 13)

This sense of hesitation and failure accompanies both Paulin's and Yeats's writing on these crucial moments in the history of Irish republicanism (1798 in "Under Creon" and 1916 in "Easter 1916" respectively). Both of them believe in the role of the poet

7 Paulin investigating the amnesia around 1798 is not unusual among Irish poets. Among the 'ancestral voices' in his play *Northern Star*, Stewart Parker summons Henry Joy McCracken convinced about *misremembering*. Derek Mahon, in his poem "Northern Star" *in memoriam Parker*, commemorates "weaver and printer, ideologue" (Hope, Neilson, McCracken) whose deeds gradually dissolve in "a world transfigured by starlight / – till all fade *oblivionwards*" (153-154; emphasis added). Mahon observes that the failure of the 1798 Rising left the souls of the Irish "still incomplete," alluding to Parker's ghosts as uncompleted souls caught in the cycle of retributions. Parker, in turn, strikes a dialogue with Yeats's *Cathleen* in the image of the Phantom Bride and the exploration of memory. The comparison between Paulin's and Mahon's poems and Parker's play reveals interesting aspects such as the living tradition, the continuous past, the sound of the ideal, the position of the victim and the perpetrator, etc.

as a vessel of memory. Paulin's diagnosis of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, the play devoted to the same 1798 Rising he eulogises in his poems, refers the reader to "Easter 1916." Paulin observes that at the end of the play "the news of the French landing at Killala Bay in 1798 charges the play with a strict and dedicated passion, that 'curious astringent joy' which both terrifies and inspires" ("The French Are On the Sea," *Ireland and the English Crisis* 101). In this phrase, Paulin relates Yeats's comment on Nietzsche ("curious astringent joy") to his texts on the resurrections of 1798 and 1916: the formulation "both terrifies and inspires" attributed to *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* finds its continuation in Yeats's "terrible beauty" of "Easter 1916." The author of "Under Creon," in turn, is filled with the Yeatsian mixture of 'reluctant' inspiration; "naming it out in a verse" entails the sense of necessity and effort ("I had pressed beyond my usual dusk / to find a cadence for the dead"). Despite the lack of joy in commemorating 1798, this poem opens the volume suffused with the spirit of celebrating this republican tradition, which tunes *Liberty Tree* with *Cathleen's* energising ending. Patricia Craig remarked that Paulin's 1798 ideal, "this distinctively Northern, democratic drive," can be considered "in tandem with the Ascendancy ethic envisaged by Yeats, since both postulate a kind of Irishness in keeping with the Yeatsian view of the eighteenth century as 'the one Irish century that escaped from darkness and confusion'" (119). Paulin's commemorative urge may be also compared to Yeats's "images of heroic individualism based on a mythologisation of Anglo-Irish tradition, as the source of courage, grace, action and culture" (Andrews, "Introduction" 4).

Just as with Yeats and many other writers, Paulin also searches for a definition of Irishness and the Irish nation. In "The Book of Juniper" (*Liberty Tree* 21-27), the poem attempting to describe "something not fully formed: the sense of Irish identity" (*Faber Poetry Cassette*), the author bases his search for that identity on a dream vision of the United Irishmen ideal, symbolised at the end by "the only / tree of freedom" on the Irish coast (27). The poem joins in the Irish tradition of the political *aisling*, although written in English and expressed in the form of a lament of an Irish wanderer and the wind. In "Martello" (*Liberty Tree* 54-58) Paulin extends the definition of the Irish nation with various versions of republicanism, epitomised in their heroes: alongside Napper Tandy, the United Irishman who sailed to Ireland in a French warship, appears Barney McLoone, the IRA member who "rowed a German spy / across the Gweebarra," and Robert Emmet ("We're nearly a nation now, before the year's out / they'll maybe write Emmet's epitaph"). Reading Yeats's letters, Paulin concludes that Yeats also "identified with the radical nationalist tradition – Tone, Emmet, Mitchel" (*Minotaur* 156). Indeed, the myth-making qualities of Emmet's rebellion "were to be even more pervasive in Irish history than those of 1798 itself" (Kee 69), although to a certain extent Paulin has been trying to compensate for it: instead of writing about sectarian fights which ensued from 1798, he sets it against contemporary violence.

"A Nation, Yet Again" (*Liberty Tree* 45), written after Chekhov but alluding to one of the unofficial anthems of Irish nationalism, is another attempt to link the republican

traditions originating from the North (1798) and the South (1916): “these hands stir / to bind the *northern* to the *southern* stars” (emphasis added), he says about the role of the poet, “the half-sure legislator” striving “to better, raise, build up, refine / whatever gabbles without discipline” by means of the “classic form / that’s in the blood.” Boldly acting as a representative of his generation activated by “new reasons for a secular / mode of voicing the word *nation*,” Paulin ardently believes in his ‘rage for order’ like a Romantic poet taking the world in his hands; otherwise, he deeply believes in the spirit of the Enlightenment. When defending the Field Day Theatre Company, he says: “I certainly am not a romantic Irish nationalist; I can’t be and I don’t think Field Day affirms that type of romantic position” (“Q&A” 32). Field Day’s practices are not out of the context of Paulin’s poem: his poetic mission to introduce the “classic form” of the secular republic in Ireland by starting with the language and its form (to “refine / whatever gabbles without discipline”) complies with the attitude of Brian Friel, one of Field Day’s founders: “the political problem of this island is going to be solved by language.” Out of Field Day’s cultural state (the ‘fifth province’) emerges a possibility of the political one (McGrath 147).

Paulin’s practice hinges on such a linguistic solution, associating the radical ideal with sensuous, mainly auditory imagery, “a limber voice, a spiky burr” of “the eager accent of a free sept.” The dialect becomes “secret code,” “a new song for a new constitution,” the “resurrection” Paulin dreams of in contemporary Ireland, “a form that’s classic and secular, / the risen *République*” alternative to being “loose, baggy and British” (“And Where Do You Stand on the National Question?” (*Liberty Tree* 68)). Again from a saboteur’s position in the underground, he creates a kind of poetic ‘secret society’ of local historians for the promotion of the republican tradition in “Presbyterian Study,” performing “a brief act of mnemonic rescue” (*Ireland and the English Crisis* 92) and drawing attention to the fact that school curricula in the North are also to blame for the lack of awareness of 1798, either because they teach history of international rather than local Protestantism or because they virtually limit the history of Ulster Protestantism to two dates: 1690 and 1912.

In *Love’s Bonfire* Paulin’s programme of linguistic and political liberation already becomes a part of the reconciled mosaic composed of the three options co-existing in Northern Ireland, two of them subversive. “A Spruce New Colour” (6) enters a dialogue with Heaney’s “At Toomebridge” (*Electric Light* 3) and paints the grim Toome landscape: the police station (a reminder of the RUC), the hunger-striker poster (Kevin Lynch of the INLA), and the monument of “a Presbyterian,” the massacred United Irishman. Characteristically for his 1798 nomenclature, Paulin defines the insurgent (Roddy McCorley) by his religious denomination, while Heaney uses simply “the rebel boy.” Despite the inclusiveness of Paulin’s term, who understands, under Presbyterianism, the Protestant republican ideals of 1798, it sounds more restricted than Heaney’s. Heaney however, in this part of his poem, concentrates on the “negative ions” of sectarianism and division: the hanging of the boy and the checkpoint at Toomebridge, the name of which resounds with McCorley’s story (the Irish *tuaim*:

mound, burial place). As a matter of fact, both poets try to break free from the oppressive character of the place by making music out of it; moreover, that same oppressiveness becomes the driving force of their poetry. Heaney's poem is begotten in the infinite "continuous present of the Bann," passes through the 'airy phase' of "Where negative ions in the open air / Are poetry to me," and descends on the river again, trespassing the narrow point of older and newer history ("where the rebel boy was hanged in '98" and the Troubles). Close to his birthplace, the "invisible, untoppled omphalos" ("The Toome Road," *Field Work* 15), Toome has become one of the recognisable symbols of Heaney's poetic world. In an earlier poem written at the height of the Northern Irish conflict, "Toome" (*Wintering Out* 26), he descends underground to dig in, as he often does, the archaeological cavern under the mythical bog. As Floyd Collins argues, in this poem Heaney "recovers a vibrant cultural identity common to all factions in the North" (64). In a similar attempt at uniting divergent factions, Paulin in "A Spruce New Colour" continues his previous "new song for a new constitution" by imaginatively replacing death and defeat with the song and triumph of ideals:

the young man
 – a Presbyterian –
 who – I don't want to say *hangs* –
 who walks in the song. (*Love's Bonfire* 6)

Although the 'action' of the poster of the hunger striker is also to hang ("tied high on a lamppost") and the police station is "built [characteristically for Northern Ireland] like a barracks behind high walls and screens," the coda of 'walking in the song' has the functional power of a volta, suddenly opening the image of the coexistence of Ireland's different stories into a new perspective, just as the new bridge at Toome at the beginning of the poem puts the town in a new perspective.⁸ This new spirit is all the more visible after the preceding poem in the volume, "A Noticed Thing" (5), where the orange windsock becomes "a symbol [...] drained of its usual orange colour [...] all used up" of the exhausted unionism. The music made by the republican boy and Paulin himself in "A Spruce" continues his earlier deliverance-by-sound poems, especially in *The Wind Dog*.

The theme of hunger strikes and its strange coexistence with contending options of Irish republicanism (1798 in "A Spruce") has already been raised by Paulin in his excellent essay on Yeats's "1916" as a "hunger strike poem" (*Minotaur* 133-150). Paulin traces the fate of the text from its creation when it "looks less like an urn in a national museum and more like a pamphlet or a piece of journalism," through its first publica-

8 The disruptive element of Paulin's image of the new bridge is the comparison of its structure to "Jacob's ladder / which in a way is where it all began." Used by the Orange Lodge as one of its symbols, and by Paulin in the same context ("Drumcree Four"), one could assume that it is a negative, dividing motif, close to Heaney's checkpoint. On the other hand, its frame of reference – the new bridge and new perspective – would suggest its Biblical dimension of hope and success, or even its affinity with republican ideals "where it all began."

tion in 1917, when it came out “as a kind of underground, dissident or *samizdat* text,” to its official publication in 1920, three days before Terence MacSwiney’s death in consequence of a long hunger strike. This publication placed MacSwiney, a poet and playwright, in the line with other poet-heroes of 1916, MacDonagh and Pearse. Although Paulin clearly brings Yeats’s poem into the circle of his own subversive preoccupations, objectively speaking Yeats’s move “to publish these poems in this context” can be considered “a political act, and a bold one: probably the boldest of Yeats’s career” (Conor Cruise O’Brien; qtd. in *Writing to the Moment* 106). Strangely enough, indicating the frequent use (and abuse) of Yeats’s poem, “ALL IS CHANGED” provided a headline in *The Irish Times* for the news about the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 and caused a reaction of “a member of a local unionist Association somewhere in Co. Armagh.” The man “formulated his opposition to the agreement by saying that the headline had been taken from a poem by Yeats and that this poem was pro-Sinn Féin” (“Yeats’s Hunger-Strike Poem,” *Minotaur* 135). Beside Paulin’s belief that Yeats was “a naked politician disguised as an aesthete” (*Writing to the Moment* 107), the example quoted not only indicates that poetry can act as socio-political reference, but also that republican history filtered through Irish history can indeed be handled and mishandled to eventually evolve in astonishing directions.

Paradoxically, as one can conclude from this analysis of Paulin’s positions on the two sides of the unionist barricade, the instruments of liberation lie close to the instruments of oppression. Most of the former are concerned with the republican ideal and the qualities of the vernacular. The poet’s exploration of the Protestant radical tradition not only offers an alternative to militant unionism and ‘green’ nationalism but also completes the picture of the Irish republican movement as a whole. Conversing with Yeats, Heaney, and other fellow poets on the subject of 1798, 1916, and hunger strikes, Paulin’s attempts at unearthing the memory of the United Irishmen and restoring it to its proper place in the national heritage challenges his Ulster unionist background and community, together with the all-Irish amnesia surrounding 1798. Just as with Yeats, Heaney, or Longley, Paulin believes in the possibility of ‘mnemonic rescue’ by poetry, in the poet’s public role, in poetry revealing the workings of national memory. His search for a self-definition has simultaneously become a search for the definition of the Irish nation, while his ‘writing to the moment’ and historical perspective disclose the perplexing use of history by the republican and unionist traditions. His poetry has been progressing towards a greater freedom of expression and a more inclusive view of history and politics. It seems thus justifiable to say that, instead of being “enchanted to a stone” by his revolutionary views, be it subversion or sabotage, Paulin’s political and poetic choices enabled by his position of an (inner) outsider, however psychologically unsettling it proves to be, has permitted him to significantly contribute to the discussion on the republican tradition and its evolution in Irish history.

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CLEACHTAS NA SCÉALAÍOCHTA I GCORCA DHUIBHNE: CUMADH AGUS LÁITHRIÚ NA STAIRE SHÓISIALTA I MEASC PHOBAL TRADISIÚNTA GAEILGE

Eilís Ní Dhúill

Summary¹

For the leaders of the 1916 insurrection and their Commandant General Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), the Easter Rising was a “blood sacrifice” which brought with it the promise to free Ireland from modernity and the age of reason that England represented. This symbolic act could, they believed, ultimately liberate the Irish people to restore those qualities, institutions and customs which were most Irish. As D.P. Moran, following Patrick O’Farrell, has indicated, it was Pearse who came to articulate the Irish rejection of the modern spirit and to promote the restoration of an ideal truly Irish Ireland through revolutionary action at a critical moment in history (D.P. Moran 174-202). Fantasizing and romanticizing about the Irish past, Pearse presents in his writings his understanding of the noble nature of traditionally Irish speaking Gaeltacht communities (Edwards 89-100). Implied is the belief that these truly Irish people, despite persecution and oppression, possessed a nobler and more humane set of values upon which an Independent Republic could and should be founded. There is little to indicate, however, that Pearse ever had any true sense of the lived experience or the challenges faced by communities he glorified. In the face of erasure of indigenous culture as presented by Pearse and influenced by the socio-linguistic theories of Fichte, Humboldt and Herder, Irish nationalists in the aftermath of 1916 proclaimed a commitment to Gaelic Irish culture (Ó Conchubhair 13-50). To this end, linguistic and ethnographic studies were carried out among the remaining Irish speaking communities along the Western sea-board. In 1927 *The Folklore of Ireland Society* (An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann) was established with the primary aim of recording and classifying the oral narratives of the people. This process of gathering and examining led to the commodification of traditionally Irish speaking communities, of their language, and of their cultural practices.

Early understanding of the transmission of cultural product in oral traditionally Irish speaking communities, such as that of the Great Blasket, one of the most venerated Gaeltacht communities, promoted the assumption that narratives consisted of recol-

1 An early version of this paper was presented in English at the Inter-Disciplinary.net Storytelling conference in Prague, 21-24 May 2013. For English language readers wishing to engage with some of the issues raised in this paper, please see Ní Dhúill.

lections recited verbatim, by rote learning, passed from person to person, from generation to generation.² As Ruth Finnegan explains:

The earlier model was often a somewhat passive one; stories pictured as coming down automatically irrespective of human agency. Insofar as the 'traditor' had a role, it was that of recalling items lodged in the memory through a generalized and non-culture-specific process (Finnegan 115).

Such incomplete understandings historically led to the belief that oral cultures and traditions were static rather than dynamic and consisted of a group of passive informants rather than active individual authors. As Linda Dégh has pointed out, however, narratives are living entities, an inveterate component of human communication:

Narration is ageless. The impulse to tell a story and the need to listen to it have made narrative the natural companion of man throughout the history of civilization. Stories are able to adapt themselves to any local and social climate. They are old and venerable, but they are also new and up to date. (53)

Narratives offer a glimpse into different worldviews and experiences, but also, as Kroskirty highlights, they are "critical resources" for constructing identity and for maintaining community (151). In studying the testimonies of members of the Great Blasket Island (GBi) community as presented in film form, I am arguing for a new understanding of the tradition of storytelling as a cultural practice. This new understanding will offer a glimpse into the lived experience of the storytellers and their understanding of that experience.

Deireadh an Áil (The Last of the Blasket People) is a 40-minute television documentary capturing memories of surviving members of the GBi community.³ It was initially broadcast on Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), Ireland's national public service television and radio broadcaster, in April 1996 and rebroadcast on TG4, a national Irish-language public service television broadcaster in 2012. Examining the testimony of one individual in detail as recorded by a member of her extended community provides access to the intricacies of this culture and tradition and their visual representation in Irish-language documentary film. By invoking disparate transgenerational texts, oral and written, Niamh Uí Laoithe, granddaughter of the writer Tomás Ó Criomhthain, offers an insight into how she draws on a variety of perspectives and sources. Further investigation of individual aspects of testimonials she draws upon, in particular her mother's letter, reveals how Uí Laoithe allows certain memories to influence each other and to merge into one coherent narrative uniquely her own. This allows her to

2 The Great Blasket Island, the largest and most famous of the archipelago of seven islands off the south west coast of Kerry, was inhabited until the mid 1950s. The small fishing community, whose native language was Irish, left an indelible mark on the literary history of Ireland with books such as *The Islandman (An tOileánach)*, 1928) by Tomás Ó Criomhthain, *Twenty Years A-Growing (Fiche Blián ag Fás)*, 1933) by Muiris Ó Súilleabháin and *Peig: An Autobiography (Peig: A Scéal Féin)*, 1936) by Peig Sayers.

3 The last of the Great Blasket island residents relocated to mainland Kerry in the mid 1950s citing a declining population and a lack of health and educational facilities as their primary motivation.

interpret them and to come to her own new understanding, as an individual who had strong physical ties with GBi in childhood but who lived much of her life at a distance from it. Through her unique performance Uí Laoithe constructs her own unique narrative. As the filmmaker Breandán Feiritéar, in his directorial choices, supports and augments Uí Laoithe's account through the use of archival visual, oral and written material, he reveals his unique understanding of the intricacies of the culture and tradition of storytelling of GBi community. His unique position allows him, and thus the viewer, access to layers of understanding only available to someone with an intimate understanding of the community. The collaboration between Feiritéar and Uí Laoithe as presented in *DÁ* and broadcast on TG4 offers a unique insight into how individual members of a traditionally Irish-speaking community in West Kerry construct and author their unique narratives. Together these narratives allow for a greater understanding of this traditionally Irish speaking community, their experiences, and their unique storytelling tradition than that offered by Pearse and cultural nationalists of early-twentieth-century Ireland.

Réamhrá

Ag cur i gcoinne na nua-aoiseachta agus na hEagnaíochta, ar samhlaíodh dóibh An Bhreatain bheith ina hionadaí di, a bhí ceannairí Éirí Amach 1916 faoi stiúir Phádraig Mac Piarais (1879-1916). Gné thábhachtach den fhealsúnacht a bhí á chraobhscaoileadh ag Mac Piarais, agus ag na náisiúnaithe a lean, ab ea an dílseacht do chultúr na nGael. Samhlaíodh do Mhac Piarais agus dá lucht leanta, in ainneoin an cos ar bolg a imríodh orthu, go raibh uaisleacht agus daonnacht ar leith ag roinnt le muintir na hÉireann riamh. Tuigeadh dóibh go gceadódh an gníomh siombalach fuilteach i mí Aibreán 1916 d'Éireannaigh tréithe, institiúidí agus nósanna traidisiúnta a sinsir a athmhúscailt (D.P. Moran 174-202).

Ina chuid scríbhneoireachta, déanann Mac Piarais cur síos rómánsúil ar phobail Ghaeltachta. Chreid sé go raibh cultúr agus meon eisceachtúil na nGael beo i gcónaí i measc phobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge ar imeallbhoird iarthar na hÉireann. Ní léir, áfach, go raibh aon fhíorthuisicint aige ar chás na bpobal seo ná ar na deacrachtaí laethúla lena ndeachaigh siad i ngleic (Edwards 89-100).

Spriag an tuiscint go raibh deireadh ag teacht leis agus go gcaithfí é a chosaint agus a chaomhnú, dílseacht do chultúr traidisiúnta na nGael i measc náisiúnaithe. Tosaíodh ag déanamh staidéir teangeolaíoch agus eitneagrafaíoch ar insintí fhaisnéiseoirí, agus á rangú. San obair seo, rinneadh tráchtearrú ar theanga, ar thirdhreach, ar charachtair agus ar chleachtais chultúrtha phobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge. Maireann rian an chur chuige seo go fóill ar léann an bhéaloidis Ghaeilge. Le teacht na nuamheán cumarsáide, tá deis níos fearr ná riamh ag pobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge iad féin a chur i láthair ina dtéarmaí tagartha féin. Ceist a ritheadh le duine mar sin, cén chaoi a gcuireann pobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge na hÉireann iad féin i láthair go poiblí agus sinn ag druidim i dtreo 2016? Níl fúmsa an cheist a fhreagairt go hiomlán

ina bhfuil i mo dhiaidh anseo. Mar sin féin, is féidir léargas éigin a thabhairt ar an gceist. Mar sin de, cuirim romham sa pháipéar seo mionstaidéar a dhéanamh ar an scéalaíocht mar a fheictear í ag feidhmiú i measc phobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge Chorca Dhuibhne. Tabharfar mionléiriú ar an leagan amach córasach atá ar chumadh agus ar láithriú na scéalaíochta mar a léirítear ar an scannán *Deireadh an Áil* (Feirtéar) iad. Is cuid de staidéar níos leithne é an staidéar seo agus is í an aidhm atá leis ná tábhacht na scéalaíochta mar chuid dhílis de shaol agus de chleachtas cultúrtha phobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge a léiriú. Tarraingeofar sa staidéar seo ar an bhforbairt atá déanta ag Hans-Georg Gadamer agus ag Paul Ricœur ar theoiric na hinsinte agus ar theoiric na heirméineotaice mar atá sé nochta ag Lillis Ó Laoire sa saothar *Ar Chreag i Lár na Farraige* (2002). Léifear an scannán mar théacs cultúrtha a eascraíonn as saol sóisialta laethúil phobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge Chorca Dhuibhne faoi sholas an chur chuige seo. Déanfar iarracht a léiriú sa pháipéar seo gur cleachtas iltoiseach, sofaisticiúil é cleachtas na scéalaíochta mar atá forbairt déanta uirthi i measc an phobail áirithe seo.

1. Comhthéacs stairiúil

De réir thuiscint Mhic Phiarais agus na náisiúnaithe a lean, ní raibh aon cheist ann ach gur náisiún lán de lucht léinn, de laochra, d'fhilí agus de cheardaithe iad na hÉireannaigh de bharr ar bhain a sinsir amach. Mar a mhíníonn de hÍde: “The Irish...were people with a past, and had a great past behind them” (luaite in Ó Conchubhair 21). Faoi thionchar tuairimí a shamhlaítear le Fichte, Humboldt agus Herder i dtaobh nádúr teanga, chreid náisiúnaithe cultúrtha nach raibh le déanamh acu ach teanga a athbheochan agus d'aimseofaí mianach na sinsear a d'imigh rompu. Creideadh gur iompair gach teanga a cló féin agus gur sa chló sin a lonnigh saoldearcadh sainiúil an náisiúin sin. De réir na tuisceana seo, níorbh fholáir don dream ar theastaigh uathu stádas mar náisiún neamhspleách a bhaint amach teanga dá gcuid féin a bheith acu. Creideadh nach bhféadfadh aon dream tabhairt faoi fheachtas náisiúntachta gan an teanga a bheith ina chroílár (Ó Conchubhair 13-50). Seo mar a mhíníonn Thomas Davis an scéal:

The language, which grows up with a people, is conformed to their organs, descriptive of the climate, constitution, and manners, mingles inseparably with their history and their soil, fitted beyond any other language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way. To impose another language on such a people is to send their history adrift among the accidents of translation – 'tis to tear their identity from all places – 'tis to cut off the entail of feeling, and to separate the people from their forefathers by a deep gulf – 'tis to corrupt their very organs, and abridge their power of expression. (Ó Conchubhair 14)

Ba í an phríomhchúis leis an ndúghafacht le teanga, le traidisiún agus le cultúr phobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge, dar le Duddy, ná chun féiniúlacht mhuintir na hÉireann mar Ghaeil a athmhúscailt:

The main reason for the revivalist's predominant preoccupation with language, literature, sport, and the arts is easily determined. These are the chief media through which, from a revivalist point of view, a national consciousness or personality could be made to discover and celebrate itself [...]. Language, for one thing, is always originally national [...] not at all something abstractly universal, and therefore has to be prioritized for restoration to any people struggling to regain its distinctive identity and independence. (Duddy 14-15)

Trí staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge agus ar chleachtais chultúrtha na nGael mar a raibh siad á gcleachtadh go fóill ag pobail thraidisúnta Ghaeilge in iarthar na hÉireann, bhraith athbheochanóirí náisiúnacha go bhféadfaí cás a dhéanamh ar son náisiún neamhspleách. Chuige sin, rinneadh staidéir eitneolaíochta a leag béim ar ábhar a bhailiú ó phobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge agus é a rangú.

Ar cheann de na pobail Ghaeltachta is mó ar tugadh urraim dóibh mar chuid de ghluaiseacht an náisiúnachais chultúrtha in Éirinn tá pobal an Bhlascaoid Mhóir.⁴ “Daoine eisceachtúla ar leith” (“peculiarly interesting”) ab ea muintir an Oileáin, de réir an scríbhneora J.M. Synge (1871-1909) a thug cuair orthu sa bhliain 1907 (283). “Laochra scéalta na nGael” (“heroes of Irish story”), a thugann an scoláire agus an file Sasanach Robert Flower (1881-1946) orthu (60).⁵ I measc na gcuairteoirí luath eile a mholann saibhreas teanga agus cumas scéalaíochta na n-oileánach tá Carl Marstrander, Brian Ó Ceallaigh, George Chambers, George Thomson, Máire Ní Chinnéide agus Kenneth Jackson.⁶ Mheall na cuairteoirí seo na hoidí teanga agus scéalaíochta a bhí acu ar an mBlascaod Mór lena gcuid scéalta a insint agus a aithris. Ar mhaithe le hábhar scríofa i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil dóibh siúd a bhí ag foghlaim Gaeilge, agus chun léargas a thabhairt ar thaithí saoil an phobail ar de iad, spreagadh na hoileánaigh chun cuimhní cinn agus dírbheathaisnéisí a scríobh. Idir 1928 agus 1939 tháinig trí scríbhneoir chun tosaigh – Tomás Ó Criomhthain, Peig Sayers agus Muiris

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- 4 Bhí pobal cónaithe ar an mBlascaod Mór, an t-oileán is mó den oileánra amach ó chósta theas Chorca Dhuibhne, go dtí lár na 1950í. Iascairí a bhí sa phobal beag arbh í an Ghaeilge a dteanga laethúil. Ní raibh riamh níos mó ná dhá chéad duine ina gcónaí ar an oileán, iad ag braith ar a chéile le haghaidh comhludair agus comhair. I bhfocail an scoláire agus chuairteora chun an oileán George Thomson: “Each member of the crew knew that the others held his life in their hands. Solidarity was a condition of survival” (19).
 - 5 Déanann Máirín Nic Eoin plé cuimsitheach ar idéalú an chainteora dúchais mar ghné lárnach den náisiúnachas cultúrtha (15-20). Le haghaidh plé níos leithne ar an gceist seo agus ar an bhfealsúnacht a nocht D.P. Moran i leith na ceiste seo féach D.P. Moran (xix-xxxi).
 - 6 Tá cur síos cuimsitheach ag George Thomson ina leabhar *Island Home: The Blasket Heritage* (1988) ar an litríocht a scríobh muintir an Bhlascaoid. Tá tuairisc ag Muiris Mac Conghail ar an gcaidreamh a bhí idir na cuairteoirí agus scríbhneoirí an Bhlascaoid (*The Blaskets: A Kerry Island Library*, 1987). Le haghaidh plé níos cuimsithí ar ról na scoláirí ar shaothar Uí Chriomhthain féach Eastlake. Tá cuntas agus plé ar shaothar Uí Shuilleabháin le fáil in *Muiris Ó Súilleabháin: Saol agus Saothar* (Ní Aimhirgín, 1983). Leagann Micheál De Mórdha a thuiscint féin ar charachtair na n-oileánach amach sa leabhar *Scéal agus Dán Oileáin* (2012). Pléann Máire Ní Chéilleachair ceisteanna a bhaineann le ‘tréigean’ an oileáin.

Ó Súilleabháin.⁷ Is mar shaothair eitneagrafaíochta nó antraipeolaíochta thar saothair litríochta is mó a moladh dírbheathaisnéisí na n-oileánach (féach Ó Tuama, Nic Eoin). Mar a aithníonn John Eastlake, is mar fhaisnéiseoirí in áit mar údair a tugadh aitheantas do scríbhneoirí an Bhlascaoid go traidisiúnta: “the author-subjects of the Basket texts have been read as passive informants rather than as active authors” (Eastlake 125). Is as easpa tuisceana ar phróiseas seachadtha an bhéaloidis a eascraíonn an léamh seo, dar le Eastlake: “this type of reading has been buttressed by a view that sees oral tradition as static rather than dynamic” (Eastlake 125).

Ag tarraingt ar idé-eolaíochtaí an eisintiúlachais, chreid scoláirí luath léinn an bhéaloidis gur cuireadh scéalta ar aghaidh ó ghlúin go glúin trí iad a aithris agus a fhoghlaim de ghlan mheabhair gan aon ról gníomhach a bheith ag an duine aonair. Mar a mhíníonn Ruth Finnegan:

The earlier model was often a somewhat passive one; stories pictured as coming down automatically irrespective of human agency. Insofar as the ‘traditor’ had a role, it was that of recalling items lodged in the memory through a generalized and non-culture-specific process. (115)

Is í an tuiscint a léiríonn Mícheál Ó Dúbhshláine i leith chleachtas scéalaíochta an Bhlascaoid Mhóir ná gur leis an bpobal i gcoitinne na scéalta: “Of course, there were stories. The long winter nights were shortened by stories, many which went back in the communal mind for generations” (68). Go stairiúil, mar sin, i gcás léann an bhéaloidis Ghaeilge is mar bhailiúchán iarsmaí phobail a bhain le ré réamh-nua-aimseartha, réamhthionsclaíoch a bhí ag cur fúthu i gceantair tuaithe ar leith, is mó a tuigeadh cleachtas chultúrtha na nGael.

Áitíonn Stiofán Ó Cadhla gur míthuiscint í seo ar an gcleachtas scéalaíochta agus go ndearna an mhí-thuiscint dochar don bhrí a bhain daoine as a dtaithe saoil féin in Éirinn:

Deineadh amach gurbh é a bhí ann ná cuimhní cinn a aithrisítear focal ar fhocal, de mheabhair ghlan, ó dhuine go duine ó thús go ceann cine... Ní hamháin nach bhfuil tuiscintí dá leithéid seo fíor ach is cúngú díobhálach ar fhéiniúlacht agus ar chultúr na Gaeilge iad. (26)

Níorbh é Ó Cadhla an chéad duine a nocht a thuairim i dtaobh na míthuisceana seo. In alt a foilsíodh ar *Feasta* 1950, léiríonn Máirtín Ó Cadhain a dhímheas i leith na míthreorach:

Is de bharr baladh na n-aiséadaigh agus na bhfeart uaibhéalta é: de bharr ‘an bás,’ ‘an bás ar sliobarna,’ ‘an bás sa spéir,’ a mothaítear i ngach áit dá mbíonn béaloideas agus léann Gaeilge ar siúl. (18)

7 Ba é Maidhc (File) Ó Guithín, a bhreac síos scéal a máthar, *Peig: A Scéal Féin* (1936), nó leagan de, óna hinsint bhéil. “It is difficult to decipher from the text who ‘wrote’ what,” a deir Muiris Mac Conghail (159). ‘Tá lámh Mhaidhc go trom ar an leabhar’, dar le Pádraig Ó Fiannachta.

Ontaíonn Anne O'Connor, a bhfuil taighde déanta aici ar staidéir eitneolaíochta a leagann béim ar bhailiú ábhair, go gcuireann an cineál sin taighde léirithe ar leith de phobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge chun cinn (81). Is éard atá i dtraidisiún ar bith, de réir O'Connor, ná catagóirí ar an struchtúr a chuireann daoine ar a dtaithe saoil: "all traditions are socially constructed categories within which people structure their experience" (97). Le blianta beaga anuas, d'fhone mionmhíniú a thabhairt ar an struchtúrú a dhéanann pobal ar a dtaithe saoil, agus tábhacht an phróisis don phobal a mheas, táthar ag tarraingt ar theoiricí ón antraipeolaíocht. Ar dhuine des na scoláire comhaimseartha a bhfuil staidéar á dhéanamh aige ar chleachtais phobail thraidisiúnta Gaeilge tá Lillis Ó Laoire. Ina shaothar *Ar Chreag i Lár na Farraige* díríonn Ó Laoire ar chleachtas beo na hamhránaíochta i measc phobal Oileán Thoraí amach ó chósta Dhún na nGall. In áit téacsanna a phlé mar earraí cultúrtha, mar a rinneadh i gcuid mhór den phlé ar an mbéaloideas go stairiúil, is ar an amhránaíocht mar phróiseas nó mar chleachtas cultúrtha a leagann Ó Laoire an bhéim. Ag glacadh taighde Uí Laoire mar phointe tagartha, bainfead úsáid as gnéithe den fhráma teoiriciúil céanna anseo. Tabharfar mionmhíniú ar an bpróiseas trína gcruthaíonn agus trína láithríonn daoine aonair i bpobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge an Bhlascaoid Mhóir gnéithe ar leith dá stair shóisialta. Déanfar soiléiríú ar an bhfráma teoiriciúil thíos. Ceadáíonn an taifead a rinne Breandán Feiritéar sa scannán faisnéise teilifíse *Deireadh an Áil: Na Blascaodaí Deireanacha, Fómhar 1995* (1996) [DÁ] ar theistiméireachtaí na ndaoine deireanacha a mhair ar an mBlascaod Mór dom an anailís seo a dhéanamh. Déanfar anailís anseo ar theistiméireacht oide amháin, Niamh Uí Laoithe. Tabharfar léargas ar an ról gníomhach a ghlacann sí i gcumadh, i gcaomhnú agus i láithriú cuimhní a bhaineann le haistriú a muintire ón mBlascaod Mór go dtí míntír Chorca Dhuibhne. Féachfaidh mé freisin le léargas a thabhairt ar conas mar a thacaíonn léiritheoir agus stiúrthóir an scannáin, Breandán Feiritéar, le teistiméireacht Uí Laoithe trí úsáid a bhaint as ábhar cartlainne físe agus fuaimne. Léireofar gur comhoibriú idir dhaoine agus ghrúpaí éagsúla atá in DÁ, mar is gnách le saothar scannánaíochta. Tarraingeofar aird ar leith anseo ar ról na bpáirtithe éagsúla i ndéanamh an scannáin agus léireofar dá réir údarás an scéalaí, nó an duine aonair, i dtraidisiún scéalaíochta phobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge amháin.

2. Cur chuige teoiriciúil

Is bunaithe ar fhealsúnacht Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) atá heirméineotaic an chultúir mar a mhíníonn Hans-Georg Gadamer agus Paul Ricœur í. De réir fhealsúnacht Heidegger ní athléiriú oibiachtúil ar an domhan ná ar an taithe saoil atá in aon shaothar cruthaitheach ach léiriú suibiachtúil ar iarracht an duine a thaithe saoil a mhíniú:

[...] the artistic structure is created out of the "intellectual struggle" of the artist. The presentation is *his* competent achievement. This becomes the "expression" of his "personality," which "lives itself out" in the presentation and "frees itself from its storm of emotion" (131). [Is le Heidegger an cló iodálach agus na comharthaí athfhriotail.]

Múineann Bourdieu dúinn gur scaradh bréagach atá san idirdhealú a shamhlaítear idir léirithe “oibiachtúla” agus léirithe “suibiachtúla” (Jenkins 27-31). Áitíonn Dilthey gur in urlabhra dhuine a fhaightear an láithriú is iomláine ar a shaol inmheánach agus ar na tuiscintí a bhíonn aige ar a thaithí saoil: “Language is the most complete expression of another’s inner life” (luaite in Schmidt 11). Nochtann Gadamer an tuiscint chéanna nuair a deir sé: “Being can be understood i[n] language” (luaite in Schmidt 8). Anuas ar an léiriú suibiachtúil ar a thaithí saoil a nochtann duine, áitíonn Blommaert agus Verschueren go léirítear sa teanga a labhraíonn sé na tréithe ar leith atá ag an bpobal ar de an duine chun dul i ngleic leis an saol. De réir na tuisceana seo, is féidir pobal a aithint ar an teanga a labhraíonn siad: “Language assumes the character of a clear identity marker” (192). I gcásanna ar leith, a deir Blommaert agus Verschueren creidtear nach gá aon tréith eile thairis an teanga chun grúpa a aithint, “In some cases, language is offered as the only distinctive trait of a “group”; others are not really needed, since a distinctive language is predictive of a distinct group identity” (193).

Aithníonn Kroskity in *Telling Stories in the Face of Danger* (2012), áfach, go bhfuil tábhacht, ní amháin le teanga pobail ach, leis na cleachtais a bhaineann leis an bpobal. Tuigtear dó gur i gcleachtais shiombalacha phobail bhundúchasacha Mheiriceá, mar shampla, agus ina dtraidisiúin chruthaitheacha bhéil is fearr a fhaightear léargas ar na pobail sin:

In the context of many Native American societies, some of the most important forms of cultural reproduction occur in acts of tribal, ethnic, and clan identity making ... symbolic guides to members of these distinctive cultures and their preferred medium of verbal artistic expression. (4-5) [Is liomsa an cló iodálach]

Ag eascairt as seo, d’fhéadfá a áiteamh go gcruthaíonn, agus go hathchruthaíonn, an duine atá beo in áit ar leith ag am ar leith struchtúir, siombailí agus frámaí tagartha dó féin. Tagann an tuiscint seo le fealsúnacht Heidegger a thugann, mar a mhíníonn Ó Laoire

tús áite don ointeolaíocht (*ways of being*) thar an eipistéimeolaíocht (*ways of knowing*), agus dá thoradh sin, a chuireas an fheiniméaneolaíocht (scrúdú ar an dóigh a gcuireann an duine a thaithí ar an saol in iúl) chun tosaigh mar sheasamh i leith an léinn (43).

Tarraingíonn Ó Laoire aird ar na focail Ghaeilge “bheith ann” a nochtann an tuiscint chéanna ar bhealach chun tuiscint a fháil ar thaithí saoil (58). Tugann Gadamer “ciorcal bíseach na heirméineotaice” ar phróiseas leanúnach an *Dasein* bheith sa tóir ar bhrí na beatha, teacht ar thuiscint, an tuiscint a láithriú agus tosú arís ar an tóraíocht (luaite in Ó Laoire 43). Míníonn Bakhtin, áfach, nach i bhfolús a chruthaíonn nó a chuireann duine a thuiscintí ar a thaithí saoil i láthair. Tá gach léiriú ag brath, a deir sé, ar na léirithe atá tugtha aige féin, agus ag daoine eile ina thimpeall, roimhe sin:

[any verbal performance] inevitably orients itself with respect to previous performances in the same sphere, both those by the same author and those by other authors, originating and functioning as part of a social dialogue. (luaite in Woods 3)

D'fhonn teacht ar léargais nua ar a thaithí saoil, tarraingíonn an *Dasein*, nó an t-ealaíontóir, ar dtús ar scéalta, ar insintí agus ar léirithe cruthaitheacha *Dasein* eile atá curtha in iúl trí theanga, trí struchtúir, trí shombailí, trí fhrámaí tagartha, trí láithriú de chineál ar bith a dhéanann an *Dasein*. Is iad na taibhléirithe seo a chabhraíonn leis an duine dul i ngleic le dúshláin laethúla an tsaoil agus tuiscint a fháil ar an taithí sin. Cabhraíonn siad leis freisin na léargais sin a chur in iúl do dhaoine mórtimpeall air agus iad a chur ar aghaidh chuig an gcéad ghlúin eile. De réir thuiscint Bakhtin, gníomh sóisialta idirghníomhach, nó dialóg, is ea an láithriú béil a dhéanann duine. Is mar chuid de dhialóg sóisialta a chruthaítear insint agus is mar chuid de dhíológ sóisialta a fheidhmíonn sí, "its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view, and value judgements" (Bakhtin luaite in Lemke 23).

De réir na tuisceana seo mar sin, is é an suíomh sóisialta – an cultúr, an comhthéacs sochstairiúil agus an comhthéacs polaitíochta ina fheidhmíonn teanga – a mhúnlaíonn urlabhra duine: "the immediated social situation and the broader social milieu wholly determine-and determine from within, so to speak-the structure of an utterance (luaite in Clark agus Holquist 215)." Tugann Bourdieu *páirc* nó *páirc shóisialta* ("field," "social field") ar an suíomh sóisialta ina dtiteann dialóga amach. Ar an bpáirc seo, tarlaíonn coimhlint agus idirbheartaíocht a eascraíonn as rochtain a fháil ar acmhainní cultúrtha, sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta. Baineann rialacha agus struchtúir ar leith le gach páirc ag braith ar na hacmhainní atá ar fáil. Tarlaíonn idirbheartaíocht laistigh d'aon pháirc ar leith agus déantar idirghníomhaíocht idir páirceanna éagsúla.⁸ Múnlaítear nó déantar sóisialú ar dhuine de réir na páirce nó an shuíomh shóisialta ina maireann sé. Braitheann urlabhra, agus mar a thuigtear urlabhra, ar an áit ina fheidhmíonn duine agus ar na saintréithe agus ar an gcruinneshamhail a ndéanann sé ionchollú orthu mar chuid den phróiseas sóisialaithe. De réir na tuisceana seo:

we are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, ensuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life. (Jenkins 271)

Sa staidéar a dhéanann sé ar an nGaeilge i gcomhthéacs cheisteanna idé-eolaíochta agus cumhachta an fhichiú aois, aithníonn Caoimhghin Ó Croidhéain an hibrideacht seo a bhaineann le coincheap na teanga:

It [language] is the vehicle and medium through which we organise thought and communication. Yet, language is also a social phenomenon. We are all socialised through

8 Seo mar a mhíníonn Bourdieu atá i gceist aige le coincheap na páirce: "I define a field as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation [...] in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions" (luaite in Jenkins 85).

language [...]. Language can be used as an instrument of control in a society with unequal distribution of scarce resources. Language can be manipulated and its meaning distorted. (Ó Croidheáin 17)

Mar a mhíníonn Ó Croidheáin anseo é, is uirlis í an teanga, uirlis a ligeann don duine eagar a chur ar a thuairimí ar an gcéad dul síos agus na tuairimí sin a roinnt le duine nó le daoine eile. D'áiteoinn gur féidir páirc shóisialta a thabhairt ar TG4, áit a ndéantar idirbheartaíocht ar thuiscintí i leith na Gaeilge, i leith chultúir na Gaeilge agus i leith phobail na Gaeilge. Ar lámh amháin, cuireann scannánóirí tuiscintí a bhíonn acu ar a dtaithí saoil, bunaithe ar chruinneshamhail agus ar idé-eolaíochtaí atá sealbhaithe acu, i láthair. Ar an lámh eile, tagann daoine ar thuiscintí nua ar a dtaithí saoil féin trí teagmháil le léirithe dhaoine eile ar a dtuiscintí nua, tuiscintí a ndéantar a láithriú trí mheán na scannánaíochta sa chás seo. Dialóg nó cumarsáid leanúnach atá sa phróiseas seo.

Mar a mheabhraíonn Ricœur dúinn, is í an chuimhne an t-aon bhealach atá againn chun taifead a choinneáil ar an gcumarsáid, agus ar an idirbheartaíocht atá mar ghné lárnach de, a tharla san aimsir chaite: “we have no other resource, concerning our reference to the past, except memory itself [...]” (21). Ach, mar a mhíníonn Harold Pinter, tá níos mó i gceist ná cuimhne a choinneáil ar fhíricí. Tá tuiscintí an duine aonair óna thaobh féin den eachtra le cur san áireamh freisin: “The past is what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember, or pretend to remember” (Adler 462, athluaite in Lowenthal 193). Ar an ábhar sin, ní hí an insint chéanna a bheadh ag aon bheirt ar an eachtra céanna. Go deimhin, is iad na hinsintí éagsúla seo a spreagann daoine chun a dtuiscintí ar a dtaithí saoil a mhalartú. Is mar thoradh ar an gcumarsáid seo, a mhíníonn Gadamer, a thagaimid ar thuiscintí nua, “a conversation does not simply carry one person’s opinion through against another’s, or even simply add one opinion to another. Conversation transforms the viewpoint of both” (Gadamer 96).

Is iad na hinsintí suibichtúla seo, an malartú a dhéantar orthu agus an comhthuiscint ar a dtagann daoine de thairbhe na gcumarsáide seo a cheadaíonn do dhaoine oibriú le chéile mar phobal. Trí ghrinnstaidéar a dhéanamh ar theistiméireacht ball amháin de phobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge Chorca Dhuibhne, Niamh Uí Laoithe, mar a léirítear sa scannán faisnéise teilifíse *DÁ* é, tá súil agam teacht ar thuiscint nua ar an bpróiseas sealbhaithe, seachadta agus taibhléirithe a chleachtann pobal traidisiúnta Gaeilge Chorca Dhuibhne trí mheán na scéalaíochta. D’fhonn teacht ar an tuiscint seo, tabharfaidh mé mionmhíniú i dtosach ar an léargas a thugann Uí Laoithe agus Feiritéar dúinn ar conas mar ar shealbhaigh Uí Laoithe tuiscintí a muintire ar a dtaithí saoil. Ina dhiaidh sin, trí ghrinnstaidéar a dhéanamh ar thaibhléiriú Uí Laoithe, déanfaidh mé iarracht teacht ar thuiscint ar an machnamh a dhéanann Uí Laoithe ar a taithí saoil féin i bhfianaise thaibhléirithe a muintire. Ar deireadh, tabharfaidh mé tuairisc ar an tuiscint nua a léiríonn Uí Laoithe, nó ar an gcuid di atá sí sásta cur in iúl sa spás poiblí a sholáthraíonn Breandán Feiritéar agus TG4 di.

3. Cás staidéir

Scannán faisnéise teilifíse 40 nóiméad is ea *DÁ*. Is é Breandán Feiritéar, as Corca Dhuibhne, “duine de na léiritheoirí faisnéise is dílse don traidisiún dúchais Gaeltachta le daichead bliain” de réir ábhar poiblíochta TG4 (2012), a léirigh an scannán. Déantar taifead ann ar chuimhní na ndaoine deireanacha a chónaigh ar an mBlascaod Mór, a d’aistrigh amach go dtí Corca Dhuibhne agus a bhí fós ar marthain i 1995. D’aistrigh na háitritheoirí deireanacha ón oileán go dtí an mhíntír i lár na 1950í. Is é an dearcadh oifigiúil ná go raibh muintir an Bhlascaoid míshuaimhneach agus gur theastaigh uathu aistriú amach: “By the 1940’s the islanders were anxious to leave the island and go to live on the mainland” (Ní Chéilleachair 96). Is ar Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) i mí Aibreán 1996 a craoladh an scannán *DÁ* ar dtús. I bhFómhar 2012, mar cheiliúradh ar shaothar saoil Feiritéir, rinne TG4 athchraoladh ar rogha scannán dá chuid, *DÁ* ina measc. Is éard atá sna hagallaimh a chuireann Feiritéar i láthair ná teistiméireachtaí tríúr fear agus beirt bhan a chaith tréimhse dá saoil ar an oileán. Tá siad anois ag cuimhneamh siar ar an am sin agus ar na cúiseanna ar fhág siad agus a muintir an t-oileán. Tarraingíonn Feiritéar ar ábhar físe, ar ábhar fuaime agus ar ghrianghraif ó chartlanna profisiúnta agus amaitéara chun tacú leis na teistiméireachtaí agus chun cur leo. Díreofar sa staidéar seo ar theistiméireacht Niamh Uí Laoithe mar is di a thugann Feiritéar tús áite sa scannán.

Is í Uí Laoithe (1937-) an chéad duine de na faisnéiseoirí a labhraíonn ar *DÁ*. Ní bhaineann Feiritéar úsáid as fortheideal ach ligeann sé di í féin a chur i láthair. Sa ghearragallamh a cuirtear i láthair roimh chraoladh TG4 den scannán, míníonn Feiritéar go bhfuil sé ag iarraidh údarás a thabhairt do mhuintir an Bhlascaoid ar a scéal féin, “go labharaidís siúd, na daoine deireanacha ar an stocán mara so, deireadh an áil más maith leat, go gcloisimís an scéal deireanach uathu” (*DÁ*). Is ábhar spéise an mhír d’agallamh Uí Laoithe a roghnaíonn Feiritéar le cur amach chun tosaigh sa scannán:

Rugadh mise in Aibreán 1937. Ba é Tomás Ó Criomhthain m’athair críonna. Cailleadh é i dtosach an Mháirta. Is dóigh liom gurb é an seachtú lá de Mháirta 1937. A mhac Seán m’athair. Mo mháthair, beanchéile sin, Lís Ní Shúilleabháin. Agus iníon de Sheán Mhicil. Ach, cuimhin liom go ndúirt mo mháthair liom go dtugas cúpla lá ar scoil sara ndún sí, ar scoil an oileáin. (00:07:20-00:07:38)

Is léir ón gcinneadh a ghlacann sé Uí Laoithe a chur i láthair den chéad uair agus í ag aithris a ginealaigh, go bhfuil Feiritéar ag iarraidh údarás Uí Laoithe, mar scéalaí a chinntiú.⁹ Níos tábhachtaí ná a hainm baiste (is sna creidiúntaí ag deireadh an scannáin a fhaighimid ainm baiste agus ainm pósta Uí Laoithe), tá an gaol fola. Fógraíonn Uí Laoithe a gaol gairid le Tomás Ó Criomhthain (1856-1937), údar *An tOileánach* (1929). Leis na focail neamhurchóideacha i gcosúlacht atá luaite anseo,

9 Is ábhar spéise freisin go leagann Feiritéar a cheangal féin le Gaeil thábhachta an oileáin amach sa ghearragallamh a craoladh roimh an scannán ar TG4: “is dream é a rabhas ana mhór leo agus mé ag fás aníos mar a deir siad, dul ar scoil le cuid acu agus mar sin do” (*DÁ*).

éiríonn le Uí Laoithe a stádás agus a tábhacht mar oileánach a raibh gaol aici le duine de “scríbhneoirí móra”¹⁰ an oileáin a chur chun tosaigh. Leis na focail seo cinntíonn Uí Laoithe a húdarás chun labhairt ar an ábhar. Gné an-traidisiúnta de chleachtas cultúrtha na nGael is ea aithris na ngeinealach. Tugann R.V. Comerford le fios gur ionann ginealaigh duine a aithris agus a rá nach duine den chosmhuintir é, is é sin, go mbaineann sé/sí leis an uasaicme, “to have any kind of genealogical tree was to belong to the aristocracy and to be set apart from the common people” (4).

Anuas ar eolas i dtaobh an stádais a bhí ag sinsir duine, tugtar eolas mar gheall ar a stádás reatha, “Genealogy expresses present status as much as past kinship” (Charles-Edwards 124). Tugtar le fios go mbaineann an té a ndéantar a ghinealaigh a aithris le fine ar leith, le grúpa eitneach ar leith, le haicme shocheachnamaíoch ar leith nó le grúpa saoránach ar leith. Trí oidhreacht phearsanta duine a ríomh tugtar leanúnachas do threabh nó do theaghlach áirithe:

[...] a personal heritage normally includes one's family and sense of continuity through ancestry, via one's birthright as a member of a kinship network, ethnic group, socio-economic class, and citizenry. Ancestral pasts thus live very much in the present for individuals. (Timothy agus Guelke 1)

Baineadh úsáid as aithris na ngeinealach, mar sin, chun cuimhne a choinneáil ar conas mar ar cuireadh eagar ar ghabháltais ar leith de réir theaghlach. Baineadh úsáid as an gcleachtas seo freisin chun teacht ar chomhaontú i dtaobh comharbais laistigh de fhinte ar leith:

The tradition of genealogical knowledge, or *seanchas*, that was so important to the organization of landholding and succession within the kin group was joined to a narrative of descent that stretched back from Míl Espaine, or Milesius of Spain, to Noah and to Adam. (Nash 4)

Mar a mhínítear i gcuntas An Choimisiúin Eorpach ar *Chinn Scríbe Barr Feabhais na hEorpa*, dearbhaíonn an gné traidisiúnta seo den oidhreacht dholáimsithe cearta éagsúla, cineál seilbhe atá i gceist:

Cabhraíonn an oidhreacht bheo nó an oidhreacht ‘dholáimhsithe’ seo le daoine a thabhairt níos cóngaraí don chomhphobal ina bhfuil cónaí orthu chun go mbrathfadh siad go bhfuil féiniúlacht agus leanúnachais áirithe acu. (An Coimisiún Eorpach 2008)

Trí a seanathair, Thomás Ó Criomhthain, a thabhairt chun cuimhne anseo, tá Uí Laoithe ag glacadh seilbhe ar a hoidhreacht liteartha agus ar an stádás a bhronnann an oidhreacht sin uirthi. Aithnítear go forleathan gur chuir scoláirí a thug cuairt ar an mBlascaod Mór, go háirithe Carl Marstrander agus Brian Ó Ceallaigh, an comhthéacs

10 Tugtar “na scríbhneoirí móra” ar Thomás Ó Criomhthain, ar Mhuiris Ó Súilleabháin agus ar Pheig Sayers de bharr a gcuid dírbheathaisnéisí liteartha. Cé gurbh é an leabhrán beag *Mí dem’ shaol* (1918) le Bríghid Stac an chéad saothar ag cur síos ar shaol mhuintir an Bhlascaoid, dár le Nic Eoin (63), ba é Tomás Ó Criomhthain “an ceannródaí i ndáiríre agus lean Muiris Ó Súilleabháin agus Peig Sayers a shampla” (Nic Eoin 63). Tugann Nic Eoin “na tosaitheoirí” ar na scríbhneoirí seo a bhí ina gcónaí go fóill ar an mBlascaod Mór nuair a scríobh siad faoin a dtaití saoil ann (Nic Eoin 94).

agus an spreagadh ar fáil a lig don Criomhthaineach a leabhar a scríobh. Ach, léiríonn John Eastlake na hiarrachtaí a dhéanann Ó Criomhthain an ról gníomhach a bhí aige féin i gcumadh, i gcaomhnú agus i seachadh thraidisiún a mhuintire a chur chun tosaigh, “[Ó Criomhthain] has written himself as a writer, asserted his agency in the text, and laid claim to both the inheritance of the oral tradition and to a new tradition of written literature” (138).

Is amhlaidh atá á dhéanamh ag Uí Laoithe anseo. Tuigeann sí go bhfuil meas forleathan ar leabhar a seanathar. Tuigeann sí freisin, de bharr é a bheith ar churaclam na hArdeistiméireachta in Éirinn agus toisc é a bheith aistrithe go Béarla agus go teangacha eile nach é, gur tríd an leabhar sin a chuireann go leor “strainséirí” aithne ar an mBlascaod Mór agus ar mhuintir an Bhlascaoid. Tá Uí Laoithe ag iarraidh teacht i dtír ar an muinín a gcuirfí inti de bharr an ghaoil atá aici le húdar leabhar mór an Bhlascaoid.

Ní leor do Uí Laoithe stádas a seanathar chun a stádas mar údáir ar sheanchas an Bhlascaoid a chruthú. Tugann sí a hathair Seán Ó Criomhthain chun cuimhne freisin. Áirítear Sean Ó Criomhthain mar dhuine de scríbhneoirí an Bhlascaoid den dara glúin¹¹ agus tá stádas aige i measc a mhuintire féin de thairbhe a scileanna. Ansin, luann Uí Laoithe a máthair Lís Ní Shúilleabháin. Sna ginealaigh a scríobhadh síos, ba iad ainmneacha na bhfear amháin a coinníodh cuntas orthu go hiondúil. Go deimhin, is ábhar iontais do Simms é nuair a luaitear ainmneacha máithreacha prionsaí ar leith: “Certain versions *even* include information about the mothers of the various princes” (43) (Is liomsa an cló iodálach). Tugann Kenneth Nicholls le fios freisin nár scríobhadh síos cuntas na mban agus na ginealaigh á n-aithris. Ach, a deir sé, tá roinnt fianaise ann go ndéantaí eolas i dtaobh ginealach na mban a aithris os ard:

If the names of mothers, however, were seldom entered in the written genealogies, this does not necessarily mean that they were forgotten or ignored. There is evidence that in some cases they may have been present in oral tradition, and this raises an interesting point as to the extent to which the bare line of the written patrilineal genealogy operated as a framework to be fleshed out by oral tradition, for which it would provide a series of fixed points of reference. (156)

Déanann Uí Laoithe aithris ar a fine máthartha anseo, ag insint gur iníon Sheán Mhicil, scéalaí aitheanta eile sa cheantar í a máthair Lís. Thacódh sé seo le tuairim Nicholls ach theastódh staidéar níos leithne chun fáil amach cé chomh coitianta is a bhí an nós seo. Is í an tábhacht atá le haithris a fine máthartha i dtéarmaí an staidéir seo ná go bhfuil Uí Laoithe ag meabhrú dúinn údarás a máthar mar scéalaí. Cé gur

11 Ar na príomhscríbhneoirí a tháinig “i ndiaidh na dtosaitheoirí,” an chéad ghlúin de scríbhneoirí Chorca Dhuibhne, áiríonn Nic Eoin Seán Ó Criomhthain, Mícheál Ó Guithín, Seán Sheáin Í Chearnaigh, Pádraig Ua Maoileoin agus Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin (Nic Eoin 94). Is é leabhar Sheáin Uí Chriomhthain, *Lá dár saol* (1969), “an chéad saothar dírbheathaisnéise a bhaineann go dlúth leis an saol nua-aimseartha,” dár le Nic Eoin (94).

ar a fine athartha a leagann Feiritéar an bhéim, mar a léireofar thíos, tá a insint féin ag Uí Laoithe ar a taithí saoil mar iníon oileánaigh.

Chun tacú le cur i láthair Uí Laoithe, taispeánann Feiritéar grianghraif chartlainne dhubha agus bhána de Thomás Ó Criomhthain agus a mhac Seán (1898-1975), athair Uí Laoithe. Freisin, seineann sé mír fuaime de Sheán Ó Criomhthain ag insint mar ar fhoghlaim a athair léamh agus scríobh na Gaeilge:

... níor dh'fhoghlaim sé litreacha na Gaolainne ariamh ar scoil. Béarla ar fad a bhí aige. Bhí daoine muinteartha i nDún Chaoin aige ... Ansan a dh'fhanadh Tomás nuair a bheireadh amuigh air, dh'fhanadh sé sa tigh sin. Bhí fear ansan agus ana scoláire Gaolainne ab ea é, Seán Ó Muircheartaigh ... Agus is uaidh sin a fuair m'athair an chéad tosnú. (00:10:53-00:11:24)

Is éard atá sna grianghraif agus sa mhír fuaime seo ná léirithe cruthaitheacha, nó samplaí de thaibhléirithe ar thaithí saoil, atá ar fáil do Uí Laoithe. Trí bhlaiseadh den scéal seo mar ar insíodh é, ligeann Feiritéar don lucht féachana blaiseadh den chleachtas scéalaíochta a bheadh cloiste ag Uí Laoithe. Leanann Uí Laoithe uirthi ag tabhairt sinsearachta a máthar: “Mo mháthair, bean chéile [Shéain Uí Chriomhthain] Lís Ní Shúilleabháin. Iníon do Sheán Mhicil ...” (00:07:39 – 00:07:47). D'fhág Lís Ní Shúilleabháin a hoidhreacht liteartha féin sna litreacha a scríobh sí chuig an scoláire George Chambers (1928-1997) a thug cuairt ar an mBlascaod Mór i 1931 agus arís i 1938, “Bhí mo mháthair féin tosnaithe ag scríobh go dtí George Chambers. Ó 1931 anuas bhí sí ag scríobh chuige, suas go dtí's na seascaid!” (00:07:39-00:10:09).

Chun tacú leis an gcuntas seo, cuireann Uí Laoithe i láthair sliocht as litir a scríobh a máthair chuig Chambers. Sa litir cuireann Ní Shúilleabháin síos ar an uair dheireanach a tháinig a muintir ar fad le chéile ar an oileán:

Bhí sé cuibhseach déanach sa tráthnóna tar éis a dó nuair a dh'fhágamar Cuan an Daingin i naibí,* mar a ghlaoidimid air. Ba thruamhéileach an radharc a bhí le feiscint romhainn. Chuamar suas cruinn díreach go dtí na Súilleabhánaigh, na “*light keepers*”** a thugaimid orthu anois mar is iad na daoine déanacha ar an gcarraig iad. Bhí gol agus gáirí agus tae againn le chéile ach laistigh de uair a chloig bhí orainn imeacht. Dh'fhágamar slán acu go brónach. An uair dheireanach ar an oileán againn le chéile. (00:33:52-00:34:27) [*Bád beag le caibín, inneal agus roth stiúrtha. **I mBéarla ag Uí Laoithe].

I litir Ní Shúilleabháin faightear léargas ar an mbrón agus ar an mbriseadh croí a bhraith sí nuair a thuig sí nach mbeadh an chlann ar fad le chéile riamh arís ar an oileán. Is í teachtaireacht lárnach Ní Shúilleabháin sa sliocht a roghnaíonn Uí Laoithe le haithris anseo ná gur daoine buanseasmhacha cróga iad a sinsear, daoine a d'fhan ar an oileán ag tabhairt treorach dá bpobal in ainneoin sceirdiúlacht na háite agus na himeachta dhosheachanta a bhí rompu. Tarraingíonn Ní Shúilleabháin ar mheafar an teach solais chun a teachtaireacht a chur i láthair. Cé gur i mBéarla a scríobh Ní Shúilleabháin an litir chuig Chambers, is i nGaeilge a chuireann Uí Laoithe i láthair anseo í, ach go gcoinníonn sí na focail “*light keepers*.” Trí úsáid an chódmhalartaithe, agus na focail “*light keepers*” a fhágáil i mBéarla, tá Uí Laoithe ag

tarraingt airde ar mheafar an teach solais a bhí in úsáid ag a máthair.¹² Is é an rud is tábhachtaí i dtaobh an stáidéir seo ná cinneadh Uí Laoithe an sliocht as an litir a aithris i nGaeilge in áit í a léamh sa Bhéarla inar scríobhadh í. Is mar cheantar eiseamláireach idéalach a cuireadh Corca Dhuibhne, go háirithe na Blascaoidí, i láthair ó aimsir na hathbheochana i leith. Ba í an chúis a bhí leis seo ná mar ba leo fós teanga agus oidhreacht na nGael, dar le náisiúnaigh ar nós Phádraig Mhic Phiarias agus Eoin Mhic Néill.¹³ Is léir ón gcinneadh a dhéanann sí an litir a aithris i nGaeilge go dtuigeann Uí Laoithe an luach cultúrtha agus eacnamaíochta a bhaineann leis an íomhá de Chorca Dhuibhne mar cheantar íonghlaineacht teanga agus cultúir. Ag tarraingt ar choincheap Bourdieu (1973), d'fhéadfá caipiteal cultúrtha ("cultural capital") a thabhairt ar theanga sa chomhthéacs seo.¹⁴ D'áiteoinn gur mar iarracht ar an íomhá seo a chaomhnú a aistríonn Uí Laoithe an litir go Gaeilge.

Le linn a teistiméireachta, tagraíonn Uí Laoithe do chuimhní agus do theistiméireachtaí scríofa agus béil a máthar, a hathar, a seanathar agus dhaoine muinteartha eile. Tagraíonn sí do na cuimhní seo le focail ar nós "... cuimhin go ndúirt mo mháthair liom ..." (00:07:47-00:07:52) nó "Bhíodh sé ag caint linn i gcónaí ar an oileán agus ar an saol istigh" (00:10:43-00:10:48). Cuireann Feiritéar scannán dubh agus bán ó chartlanna proifisiúnta agus amaitéaracha le cuntas Uí Laoithe. Leis seo cuireann sé scannán daite nua-thaifeadtha de Uí Laoithe ag spaisteoireacht i measc fhothracha an oileáin. Tugann an meascán seo de scannán cartlainne agus scannán comhaimseartha dhá phointe chun chuimhne. Ar an gcéad dul síos, chomh maith le taifid scríofa agus bhéil de shaol na n-oileánach, meabhraíonn Feiritéar dúinn go raibh taifid fhíseacha ar fáil do Uí Laoithe. Tharraing Uí Laoithe ar na taifid seo chun múnla a dhéanamh ar a cuid tuiscintí féin ar shaol an oileáin. Anuas ar sin, tá Feiritéar ag tarraingt airde ar thaithí pearsanta Uí Laoithe, ar na cuairteanna a thugann Uí Laoithe ar an mBlascaod Mór anois agus í ina duine fásta agus an t-oileán tréigthe.

4. Conclúid

Gné lárnach den fhealsúnacht a chraobhscaoil Mac Piarais, agus a spreag ceannairí 1916 chun gnímh, ab ea an tuiscint go bhféadfaí Éire agus a pobal a fhuascailt ón nua-aoiseacht, ó aois an réasúin, agus, dá réir, ón mBreatain, ach, a bheith sásta bás a fháil ar a son. Ina chuid scríbhneoireachta, léirigh Mac Piarais pobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge ar imeall-bhoird iarthar na hÉireann mar mhúnla bharántúil ghlan d'Éirinn fhíorGhaelach. Sna blianta a lean 1916, rinneadh staidéar agus rangú ar theanga

12 Ceal spáis ní dhéanfar ceisteanna a bhaineann leis an gcódmhalartú a chíoradh anseo. Le haghaidh tuilleadh plé ar chódmhalartú féach Ní Laoire.

13 Ba iad Eoin Mac Néill agus Dubhghlás de híde a bhunaigh Conradh na Gaeilge ar an 31 Iúil 1893. Is í príomhaidhm an Chonartha ná "an Ghaeilge a athréimniú mar ghnáththeanga na hÉireann" (Conradh na Gaeilge).

14 Chun tuiscint níos iomláine a fháil ar an gcoincheap seo féach Jenkins.

agus ar insintí pobail thraidisiúnta Ghaeilge. Cuireadh tuiscint shamhlaíochta dá gcultúr, go háirithe dá gcleachtas scéalaíochta, chun cinn.

Trí staidéar a dhéanamh ar theistiméireachtaí mhuintir an Bhlascaoid mar a chuirtear in iúl ar scannán iad agus sinn ag druidim i dtreo 2016, áitím gur féidir teacht ar thuiscint nua ar an scéalaíocht mar chleachtas cultúrtha. Trí mhionmhíniú a thabhairt ar theistiméireacht Blascaodach amháin is féidir léargas a fháil ar chastachtaí chleachtais an chultúir agus an traidisiúin agus ar an léiriú físiúil a dhéantar orthu ar scannáin fhaisnéise theilifíse Ghaeilge. Trí tharraingt ar insintí ó ghluín éagsúla, insintí béil agus scríofa, tugann Uí Laoithe léargas dúinn ar an úsáid a bhaineann sí féin as an scéalaíocht mar chleachtas chun cabhrú léi tuiscint a fháil ar a taithí saoil. Tarraingíonn sí ar pheirspeictíochtaí éagsúla ó fhoinsí éagsúla chun teacht ar a tuiscint fhéin. Léiríonn mionmhíniú ar litir Lís Uí Shúilleabháin go lígeann Uí Laoithe do chuimhní áirithe dul i gcion ar a chéile. Anuas ar sin, léiríonn sé an tuiscint atá aici ar an idirbheartaíocht atá mar chuid dlí de láithriú cultúir i spás poiblí. De thairbhe an chleachtais seo, agus mar dhuine a raibh ceangal láidir aice leis an oileán ach a chaith formhór a saoil taobh amuigh dó, tagann Uí Laoithe ar a tuiscint shuibhachtúil féin ar “thréigean” an oileáin. Tacaíonn na cinní eagarthóireachta a dhéanann Feiritéar le hinsint Uí Laoithe agus cuireann sé léi. Trí tharraingt ar ábhar cartlainne físe agus fuaimne, scríofa agus béil, léiríonn Feiritéar ar lámh amháin go bhfuil tuiscint an duine muinteartha aige ar chultúr agus ar thraidisiún scéalaíochta mhuintir an Bhlascaoid ach ar an lámh eile go bhfuil teacht aige ar insintí eile a cruthaíodh taobh amuigh den oileán. Is léargas ar leith é *DÁ* ar chleachtas cultúrtha na scéalaíochta i gCorca Dhuibhne agus ar an bpobal ar de iad ag tréimhse a raibh an pobal ag scarúint óna chéile. Sílim gurb é atá léirithe ag an saothar seo, nach cuimhní cinn a aithrisítear de ghlanmheabhar atá i dtraidisiún scéalaíochta na nGael mar a samhlaíodh do Mac Piarais agus mar a cuireadh in iúl i léann an Bhéaloidis go traidisiúnta é, ach gur cleachtas iltoiseach, ilghnéitheach é a ndearcann mórán daoine air mar riachtanas bunúsach de chuid na daonnachta.

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WOMEN'S POLITICAL ROLE IN OLD AND NEW IRELAND: FROM MARGINALIZATION TO GENDER QUOTAS¹

Timothy J. White, Mack Mariani, Fiona Buckley, and Claire McGing

In historical accounts, there has been a tendency to minimize the role of women in Irish politics. The lack of attention paid to women's contributions to politics is explained somewhat by the fact that few women in Ireland have achieved elected office. The lack of women officeholders in Ireland is partly a reflection of the highly gendered nature of Irish society after independence. During that crucial period, women were allocated primary responsibility for the private sphere and marginalized from public life (Valiulis 101). The marginalization of women from public life in the post-independence period is somewhat ironic, given that the struggle for Irish freedom had temporarily blurred the boundaries between gender roles. Female support was critical to the success of the guerilla warfare efforts of republican activists. In addition, the 1916 Proclamation of Independence committed a sovereign Ireland to equal rights for "every Irishman and Irishwoman" – a step towards gender equality that was quite unusual for the time. In 1918 – the year all British and Irish women over the age of thirty were given the vote – Sinn Féin's Constance Markievicz became the first woman elected to the House of Commons, though she did not take her seat. The 1921 election also saw the election of five female Sinn Féin candidates unopposed.

Despite the success of early Irish female political leaders, and the promises of the Proclamation of Independence, women's access to public life in Ireland was tempered by cultural expectations. Gardiner (79) notes that in the years after independence, "women's domestic role was singled out as their most important contribution to the building of the new State and eventually became, via social custom and legislation, constitutionally guaranteed in the 1937 constitution." Irish political culture was shaped by the joint influences of Catholicism and nationalism and as noted by Buckley, Galligan, and McGing (3) neither of these influences "was particularly empowering of, or for, women." Nationalist men disregarded the promises they had made to women in earlier years. As expressed by Justice Minister Kevin O'Higgins in 1927: "A few words in a Constitution do not wipe out the difference between the sexes, either physical or mental or temperamental or emotional" (McAuliffe 48). Socially conservative attitudes about gender roles remained predominant until recent times, contributing to the marginalization of women from the political sphere (Buckley, Galligan & McGing).

1 We would like to recognize Molly Mariani, who served as a research assistant for this paper and who coded much of the data in our analysis of the 2009 local election.

In the new Irish state, women who joined political parties usually took on supportive background roles: "The legacy of Republican women seems to be reduced to an obscure footnote" (Keiley-Listermann xvi). The small minority of women who did manage to break away from making tea and writing minutes to enter elected political office largely did so following the death of a male relative. The fact that many women parliamentarians in the decades after Irish independence were related to a former (male) officeholder led some scholars to conclude that women candidates were more likely than men to rely on family connections to enter politics (Galligan, "Women in Politics" 264). In party cultures that were hostile to the idea of women holding power, being from a popular political family provided the means for some women to break the mould. Indeed, until the late 1970s, widows and daughters dominated the small population of female politicians in Ireland (Galligan, Knight & Nic Giolla Choille 35).

In line with broader shifts in society, and influenced by the second wave of feminist activity, political parties (moderately) sought to modernise their public image by the early 1980s (McGing, "Women's Roles" 196-204). These nascent modernisation efforts facilitated more opportunities for 'new' women candidates, and the period witnessed an increase in the number of women contesting elections. Though progress was made, Irish politics remains a highly male-dominated environment. Women's political representation in Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish Parliament, has never risen above 16.5 per cent. In the 2011 general election, a record high of 25 (15.2 per cent) women were elected to Dáil Éireann.²

Irish women have also been underrepresented in executive office in Ireland. No woman has ever served as Taoiseach while less than 6 per cent of all cabinet ministers have been women. Those women who have been appointed cabinet ministers have tended to be clustered in portfolios that follow along gendered patterns (Connolly 361). However, in July 2014 a third woman was appointed to the role of Tánaiste (deputy prime minister), and a record four women now serve in the cabinet, the highest number of women ever appointed to a single cabinet. Between 1990 and 2011, two women served as Uachtarán na hÉireann (President of Ireland), and Ireland was the first country in the world to have two consecutively elected female heads of state (Galligan, "Women in Politics" 263).

Despite the advances of recent years politics in Ireland still remains male-dominated. Research suggests that a number of factors, broadly categorised as institutional, socio-economic, and cultural explain the political underrepresentation of women in Ireland. While each of these factors is important, in isolation they tend to ignore the reality that the emergence of female candidates and women's representation in Ireland, as elsewhere, is a complex and multivariate process. At each stage of the candidate emergence and recruitment processes, a woman's prospective candidacy can be derailed. The process by which women emerge as successful candidates requires

2 Following by-elections that took place between March 2011 and May 2014, the number of women deputies increased to 27 (16.3 per cent).

them to overcome significant obstacles and deterrents which have historically suppressed their opportunity to serve as elected Teachta Dála (TDs) in the Irish Parliament. The gendered pathway to elected office in Ireland best explains why women continue to be underrepresented in elected offices.

If women are to emerge as elected representatives and challenge the traditional roles assigned to them, they must first have an interest in politics. As we demonstrate, developing political interest is a significant first step to women's representation. The second step is for women who are interested in politics to develop the ambition to seek national office. Women have tended to be less ambitious and less willing to put themselves forward due to the scrutiny associated with political campaigns and because of the "double demand" of care and work placed on them. Third, if women are interested and ambitious, they also need to develop the experience and name recognition associated with successful candidacies. Developing name recognition with the wider electorate has been especially difficult for women because they have historically been severely underrepresented in Irish local government. Women have also been less likely to work and participate in sectors which facilitate the development of a local *bailiwick*, such as local business or sporting networks. The development of a local profile sufficient to secure a position as a councillor is especially important for women (Buckley & McGing 230). A fourth potential roadblock for women is the candidate selection process. Scholars have identified the tendency for men to be disproportionately selected as candidates even though women hold relatively modest percentages of party membership, ranging between 30 and 40 per cent (Buckley 347-351). Here we observe a gendered 'iron law' – the further one moves up the party ladder from party member to elected politician, the fewer women there are (Lovenduski 7).

As we have seen, women have had to overcome numerous challenges to emerge as successful candidates in Irish national politics. The newly enacted gender quota legislation offers the potential to redress some of the problems associated with the historic underrepresentation of women. Approved in July 2012, the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act creates a legalised candidate gender quota for Irish general elections which will oblige political parties to run at least 30 per cent women candidates in the next general election due to take place in 2016. The quota legislation also requires a minimum of 30 per cent male representation in candidate selection. The threshold will rise to 40 per cent seven years thereafter. If political parties fail to meet the gender quota, they will lose half of the State funding they receive annually under the Electoral Act of 1997. The law applies to national elections only and does not extend to local or European elections.

The achievement of gender quotas in Ireland may be a sign in and of itself of how Irish society and politics is changing from an old pattern that marginalized women's role in public life to one in which women play a prominent and public role. The gender quotas will affect the entire process of how women emerge as candidates and ultimately run for and win elections. While gender quotas may be designed to alleviate

the historic underrepresentation of women, their effect is dependent on their impact on all of the conditions associated with achieving election (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 421). We devise the following model to outline the process of necessary conditions for election:

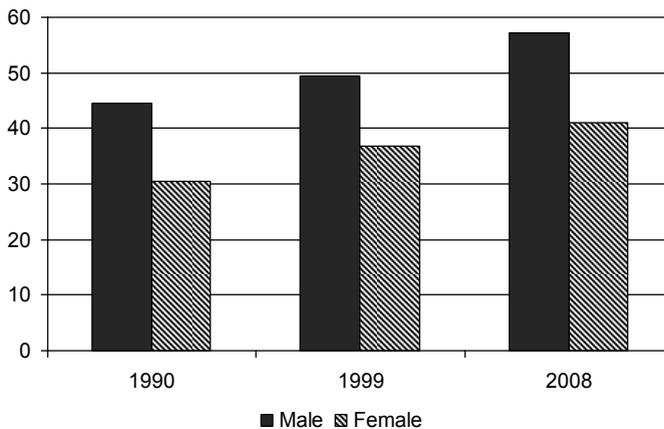
Interest → Confidence & Ambition → Local Experience → Candidate Selection → Election

In the sections that follow, we analyse each stage in the process of the development and election of candidates and assess how the recent gender quota legislation might increase the opportunity for women to emerge as viable candidates in future elections.

Interest, Ambition, and Confidence among Irish Women

Researchers have historically found that, in a variety of national contexts, women are less politically interested than men (Inglehart 299; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1051). Evidence from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey over the last three decades highlights this reality. Though Irish women have become more interested in politics in the last twenty years, so too have Irish men. As a result, Irish women continue to lag behind men with regard to expressing an interest in politics (see fig. 1). Although the gap between men's and women's interest actually widened in the most recent survey, the survey results show that women are increasingly interested in politics and, importantly, that gender-based differences are not so great as to hinder the ability of parties to find potential female candidates to run for office.

Figure 1: Percentage of Irish Respondents "Somewhat" or "Very Interested" in Politics, by Sex



Source: Authors' Analysis of World Values Survey (1990, 1999) and European Values Survey (2008).

The recent adoption of gender quotas in Ireland may increase women's interest in electoral politics and their role in the political system. Evidence from other nation states indicates that the introduction of a quota can have a significant impact on women's political attitudes and behaviour. Previous research has found that heightened women's representation is associated with more positive political attitudes among women (Karp & Banducci 112) and that female candidates and representatives boosts women's political interest, knowledge, and efficacy (Burns, Schlozman & Verba 355). These findings suggest that by increasing the number of women candidates, the new gender quota could spur greater levels of political interest among Irish women.

Presently, there are numerous national and local districts in Ireland with all-male slates of representatives. 43 per cent of Irish girls and women have no female TD in their constituency in 2015. These patterns may depress the electoral ambitions of Irish women by sending the message that politics is "not for them." Thus, the long-term impact of gender quotas could be significant if the presence of female candidates and officeholders has a role model effect on other women that leads to higher levels of political interest and involvement (Campbell & Wolbrecht 233). Because women are often said to lack the confidence needed to run for office (Shvedova 45), the presence of women in political roles is important to ensure that women – particularly young women – can envision themselves running for office (Karp & Banducci 106). In the Irish context, anecdotal evidence suggests that the election of Mary Robinson as Ireland's first woman president in 1990 had a role model effect for women. Her election symbolized changes that were taking place in Irish society regarding women's roles (Galligan, "Activist Presidents" 130). After Robinson's presidential election victory in 1990, women's candidacy in general elections increased from 55 in 1989 to 89 in 1992, a 62 per cent rise. However, despite the changes that came in the early 1990s, the number of women contesting general elections has remained relatively static over the past twenty years. Therefore one should not overplay the importance of Robinson's victory in the 1990 presidential election. In Ireland the office of president is a largely ceremonial role with few discretionary powers. As in other countries with a similar system, women have fared better in the weaker political position (Jalalzai 2).

The emergence of successful candidates is a multi-stage process that requires both the development of political ambition and the decision to act on that ambition to seek election. Previous research in the US context indicates that women, even when equally qualified, are less likely than men to see themselves as qualified for politics and less optimistic about their prospects of victory (Fox & Lawless 264). In Ireland, the lack of political ambition is a key factor inhibiting women's representation. Gender-based differences in political ambition are the result of different patterns of political socialization and the creation of different expectations with respect to political roles informed by gender. Patterns of political party activism may be a contributor here – if women are less 'visible' in internal party structures, they will have less capital available to build an initial *selection* campaign, never mind an election campaign. Caul-Kittilson's (126) cross-national study demonstrates that the more women have

achieved leadership positions in a party the more likely that women candidates will be elected from that party. According to Galligan (“Women in Politics” 271) in Ireland this “is achieved mainly through socialising prospective candidates into the norms and rules of political decision-making, providing future candidates with a profile within the party.”

Figure 2 shows that across all party structures in Ireland in 2013 women account for a much higher percentage of those in supportive roles (i.e. secretaries and treasurers) than in leadership positions (i.e. chairs and vice-chairs). This provides continuing evidence of Galligan’s (“Women in Politics” 272) assertion that in Irish party politics there is a persistent bias in favour of traditional gender roles in internal party structures that discourages the ambitions of aspiring women candidates and perpetuates the cycle of women’s exclusion from electoral politics. Even more worryingly, gender biases are also evident in the youth factions of Ireland’s main parties (McGing, “Women’s Roles” 210-211). As young members constitute potential candidates of the future, male dominance at this level could act to hinder the political progression of more young women in parties.

Figure 2: Women Constituency Officeholders in Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil in 2013

	Fine Gael (%)	Labour (%)	Fianna Fáil (%)
Chair	9.3	13.3	7.0
Vice-Chair	18.6	32.0	6.0
Secretary	18.6	35.0	46.0
Treasurer	32.5	23.0	25.0

Source: Buckley 346. Sinn Fein data was unavailable.

Quotas have the potential to encourage a societal shift that encourages political engagement and ambition among women while redefining and reimagining the role that women play in the party. Geissel & Hust (393) found that quotas allocated for women candidates helped foster the ambition necessary for women to pursue election. We expect and anticipate that Ireland’s recent gender quota legislation will help reduce this historic obstacle to achieving greater female representation in Ireland by reconfiguring expectations and roles historically biased in men’s favour.

The Importance of Local Experience

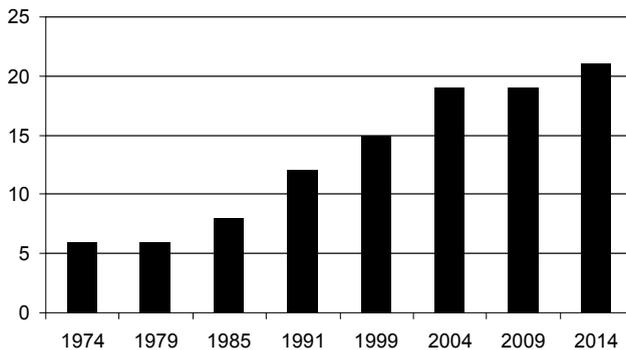
Increasing women’s representation at the national level may depend on whether women candidates can first win election to local office. Local offices provide women with the opportunity to gain the experience, name recognition, and credibility needed to become effective candidates for national office (Fox & Lawless 265; Palmer & Simon 128). In addition to providing candidates with key skills and experiences that

prepare them for electoral success at a higher level, local office-holding is a crucial factor in party recruitment efforts and voter evaluations of candidates. Pederson, Kjaer & Eliassen (160-161), for example, found that a large number of parliamentarians across Western Europe have some form of geographical connection to their elected constituencies.

Local connections are especially important to electoral success in Ireland. An analysis of the 2007 and 2011 elections showed that the vast majority of the men and women elected to the Dáil had prior experience in local politics. In both 2007 and 2011, more than three-quarters of the male candidates elected to the Dáil had previously held a local office (76 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively). Though the figures for men are high, the percentage of elected women with prior local experience was even higher. In 2007, 86 per cent of the women elected to the Dáil had prior local experience, and in 2011 the figure was 88 per cent. Thus, in recent general elections, nearly nine out of ten women elected as TDs had prior experience in local government (Buckley, Mariani, McGing & White).

Given that the pipeline of future TDs tends to be populated by male councillors, it is worrying that there has been little progress in women’s local representation over time (see Figure 3). Historically, women won 6 per cent of local government seats in 1974 and 1979 (Manning 158, 160) and 8 per cent of seats in the 1985 local election. In 1991, a year after Mary Robinson was elected as Ireland’s first woman President, women won 12 per cent of seats in local elections, and in 1999 15 per cent of the seats in the local elections were won by women. The percentage of local seats held by women rose to 19 per cent in 2004 but fell to 17 per cent in the 2009 local elections.

Figure 3: Percentage Women Elected to City and County Councils, 1974-2014



Sources: 1974 and 1979 figures from Manning 158 and 160; 1985-2004 figures courtesy of Adrian Kavanagh; 2009 and 2014 figures based on data compiled by the authors. These figures refer to seats won on county and city councils. Following the 2007 general election, councillors who won election to the Dáil had to relinquish their local seat. Some vacated seats were filled by female relatives of resigning councillors, increasing the percentage of women councillors. In 2014, town councils were eliminated.

As previously noted the new gender quota legislation does not apply at the local level. However, in the most recent local elections in May 2014 parties imposed informal gender targets ranging from 25 to 33 per cent for their candidate selections. Women's candidacies increased to just fewer than 22 per cent as a result of these targeting efforts. Sinn Féin reached their self-imposed gender target of 30 percent while Labour came close at 29 per cent women candidates. However Fine Gael and especially Fianna Fáil fell below their targets of 25 and 33 per cent respectively. Because of their failure to recruit a significant number of female candidates in the local elections, the two largest parties are likely to find it difficult to recruit an adequate number of female candidates who possess the experience and profile to run successfully in the next general election.

The passage of significant local reforms could also be an important factor that affects the ability of women to gain critically important experience in local offices. In 2014, previously separate city and county councils were consolidated in an effort to reduce costs by trimming the overall number of councillors (see fig. 4). The number of County, City, Town and Borough Councils was reduced by 73 per cent (from 114 to 31). This led to a cut in the number of local councillors by 42 per cent (from 1,627 to 949). Obviously, a decrease in the number of seats means fewer opportunities for both men and women to gain local government experience. In terms of advancement to the national legislature, the reforms are likely to hurt women more than men because local government experience has been found to be a more critical factor in the election of women to the Dáil (Buckley, Mariani, McGing & White).

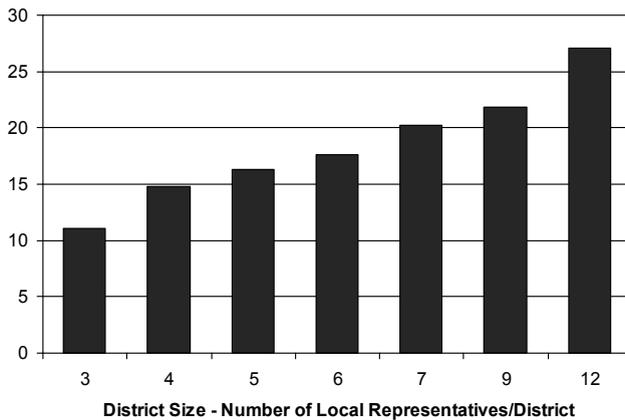
Figure 4: Number and Type of Local Authorities and Seats, Before and After Local Government Reforms

	2009 Local Authorities			2014 Local Elections		
	Number	Electoral Areas	Seats	Number	Electoral Areas	Seats
County Councils	29	145	753	26	108	765
City Councils	5	26	130	3	18	112
Borough Councils	5	8	60	---	---	---
Town Councils	75	79	684	---	---	---
City & County Councils	--	--	--	2	11	72
Total	114	258	1627	31	137	949
Electoral Area Magnitude (mean)	6.31			7.19		

Sources: 2009 Data from Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; 2014 data from Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee.

However, there are some aspects of the reforms to local elections that have the potential to facilitate the election of more women. The number of seats available in local electoral areas has increased on average from 6.31 under the old system to 7.19 in the new local authorities. The increase in district magnitude is important because previous research has established that women do better electorally when they run in districts with a larger number of seats (White 75-77). Data from the 2009 local elections in Ireland provides added support for this argument. As Figure 5 illustrates, the more seats in an electoral area the higher the percentage of women elected to local office in 2009. Moreover, larger constituencies may bring another, more subtle, advantage to women candidates as they give better electoral prospects to smaller (predominately left-orientated) parties who are more likely to run females in the first place.

Figure 5: Percentage Women Elected, by District Size, 2009 Local Elections



Source: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The Candidate Selection Process

Political parties exercise the fundamental role of selecting and presenting candidates for election. In some political systems the importance of candidate selection is recognised to the extent that rules have been incorporated into election law, as in the United States for example. In most systems, however, the processes of candidate selection are private and internal to the parties and have historically been seen to disadvantage women (Krook & Schwindt-Bayer 556-557). In Ireland, the selection of candidates is decentralised to local party units where candidates are chosen at selection conventions consisting of local party members. However, party head offices reserve the right to add candidates to the ticket in any constituency and may also apply conditions in local party selection conventions, interventions which are not always welcomed by the local party selectorate.

Because parties nominate candidates, they play a critical role in determining the level of women's political representation (Caul 80). The identification and development of candidates in Ireland – the political parties' primary function – has favoured men. Changes to the party selection process are necessary in order to allow the emergence of greater numbers of female candidates (McGing, "The Single Transferable Vote" 337). The candidate selection process is regarded as most crucial to improving gender representation. The norm in liberal democracies is for political parties to act as 'gatekeepers' in that they recruit the majority of election candidates (apart from those who decided to run as independents, though these are also predominately male), ensuring that party masculinity is mapped onto representation patterns in parliament. The key to increasing women's likelihood of being selected for meaningful candidacies has been found to be the centralization of the candidate selection process (Hinojosa 3). Efforts at achieving higher rates of women's representation through quotas could be frustrated by the ability of local party organizations to ignore or defy the purpose of the quota (Matland 276). Furthermore, Ireland suffers from a historic pattern also identified by Kenny (35) in Scotland where the localism involved in candidate selection favours the selection of male candidates (Buckley, Mariani & White). Political localism proves a highly gendered process where party men, because of their standing in the community and additional resources relative to women, are seen as the "natural" local candidate while new women can be regarded as "outsiders." Nonetheless, some party cultures and ideologies are much more receptive than others to the emergence of women candidates (McGing, "Women's Roles" 196-205). In Ireland, despite the fact they have historically run fewer multiple candidate tickets and have lower electoral prospects than Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, the political left of Labour, Sinn Féin, and the Green Party have been much more likely to promote their women members to the electoral level. Their centre-leftist political ideologies have aided this, as has the fact that these parties have historically had fewer incumbents and this gives them the space to run more female candidates.

The recent gender quota legislation in Ireland provides huge financial incentives for the major political parties to ensure that women emerge as candidates in the local constituencies. It remains to be seen whether the parties will devote the time and resources needed to develop, recruit, and support large numbers of highly qualified female candidates in national elections. In addition, party leaders may also find that the low level of female officeholders at the local level may make it difficult to recruit experienced female candidates. In that event, parties may end up selecting women to be so-called 'sacrificial lambs' on the ballot paper with little chance of winning (Stambough & O'Regan 350).

Looking Towards the Future: The Impact of Gender Quotas

The recently approved gender quota legislation in Ireland is designed to increase the number of female candidates seeking election to the Dáil. The legislation may end up

having a broad impact at every stage of the candidate development process. The increased number of women candidates in the next Dáil election – and the media coverage that accompanies it – may inspire more women to become interested in politics and to consider politics as a profession. Though Irish women as a group continue to be less interested in politics than Irish men, political interest among women has been increasing and the gap between men and women is not very large. A surge in female candidacies will provide the public with new models of female leadership and political activism that could very well result in a sizable and lasting shift in public attitudes about the role that women play in Irish politics.

The gender quota legislation clearly encouraged most political parties to seek and advance female candidates in the 2014 local elections. Sinn Féin and the Labour Party (as well as other left-leaning parties and groupings such as the Green Party, the Anti-Austerity Alliance and People Before Profit) proved most effective in increasing their number of local female candidates. Sinn Féin, which achieved a record level of support in those elections, are very well placed to reach the gender quota as they select candidates for the next general election. The Labour Party has voluntarily used gender-based targets for local election selections since 1985 (the first Irish party to do so), though local resistance, especially in rural Ireland, has meant the party does not always meet its aims. Labour did poorly in the most recent local elections but fielded a large number of female local candidates; they appear ready to meet the gender quota for the next general election. Fine Gael, while increasing its number of women candidates at the 2014 local elections, fell significantly short of having a 30 per cent threshold of female candidates. Fine Gael also has a very high number of male incumbent TDs who will want to seek re-election in the 2016 general election. Therefore the party may find it difficult to reach the gender quota requirement. Fianna Fáil, while doing well in the last local elections and re-emerging as the largest political party at the local level did not field a higher percentage of female candidates who might have developed the experience and local profile to be quality candidates for the next general election. As a result Fianna Fáil will find it difficult to meet the gender quota as they select candidates for the next general election. However, the party leadership is determined to do so and in January 2015 published an internal party document – the Markievicz Commission Report – outlining its strategy to achieve the gender quota.

In terms of candidate selection for the next general election, all political parties are likely to devote a greater amount of time and resources to recruit female candidates for the Dáil so that they will qualify for their full share of government funding under the quota legislation. In addition to gender quotas, scholars have identified equality strategies such as youth citizenship education, awareness campaigns, recruitment initiatives, training programs, and fund-raising networks (Krook & Norris) as mechanisms which political parties engage in to encourage and support female candidacy. There is evidence that party organisations are already engaged in these activities. All

political parties provide training sessions for female candidates and some host networking events to identify and mobilize potential female candidates.

Taken together, increased political interest on the part of women and heightened demand for female candidates on the part of party leaders and local selectors is likely to result in a pipeline effect in which an increasing number of qualified female candidates are available to move from local to national level offices. Thus, quotas may serve as a remedy for the history of women's lack of representation in Ireland and fulfil the goals of equality, representation, and the achievement of rights for all citizens that is at the heart of liberal democracy (Bacchi; Childs & Lovenduski 493-496; Krook & Schwindt-Bayer 557-558). As a result of quotas and their anticipated effects, the Ireland of the twenty-first century will likely see significantly higher levels of female representation than has been experienced in the past. A century after the 1916 Proclamation spoke of equality between women and men, Ireland may finally see a more equal gender distribution in politics – a marker of a healthy and inclusive democracy.

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ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY IN IRELAND: A THING OF THE PAST?

Alan Ahearne

Irish sovereignty was a central concern of the 1916 Proclamation which contended that “in every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty”. The sentiments underlining this proclamation continue to resonate in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland today, and the notion of economic sovereignty has again been prominent in the national dialogue over recent years as politicians and commentators regularly refer to the loss of sovereignty associated with the country’s EU/IMF programme that began in December 2010 and ended in December 2013 (Clifford). Early in its term, the new government elected in February 2011 set as a priority the “restoration of economic sovereignty” by 2014 (Gilmore). The political narrative was that by signing up to a programme of financial assistance, the previous government surrendered Ireland’s economic and financial independence and handed over the management of the country to the ECB, the European Commission and the IMF, collectively known as the Troika.

Beyond the political rhetoric, however, how much was Ireland’s economic independence really affected by entering and exiting a financial rescue programme? After all, the EU/IMF programme was largely designed in Dublin by Irish policymakers¹ and consists mostly of measures that are in the best long-term interest of the country’s citizens.² Moreover, the Irish government would have had to implement a multi-annual economic plan very much along the lines of the EU/IMF programme even if the State had retained access to international debt markets. Ireland’s room for manoeuvre in the policy sphere narrowed markedly as a result of the bursting of the real-estate bubble and the international financial crisis. The only question was whether financial markets would retain enough risk appetite to finance the plan or whether official funding would be needed instead.

Looking forward, policy choices for Irish policymakers will remain tightly constrained even though the State can again sell debt on private markets. As a small open trading economy, a high level of economic interdependence is an inescapable reality in a globalised world. As a member of the EU, strict fiscal rules and enhanced surveillance are part of the revised EU economic governance. As a member of the euro area,

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- 1 See Cahill. This article notes that in a written reply to questions from the European Parliament, Minister for Finance Michael Noonan said that the programme reflected the previous government’s National Recovery Plan published shortly before Ireland applied for a bailout.
 - 2 Central Bank Governor Patrick Honohan noted: “Amid turbulent market conditions, [the programme] provided a safe harbour into which Ireland was able to retreat, in order to clarify its ability and determination to deal with the severe financial problems that had so destructively erupted during the global financial crisis in September 2008” (Honohan).

Ireland has no control over monetary policy or exchange rates, and banking union in Europe is well underway. For Ireland, the largest chunks of economic sovereignty were willingly ceded when the country joined the EU and especially when it adopted the single currency.

There is no doubt that the arrival of the Troika to Ireland's shores understandably shocked the national psyche. However, I will argue in this essay that what is being referred to here is a narrow and technical definition of sovereignty – a far cry from the meaning of sovereignty in the Proclamation. As former Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan pointed out, "Pearse and those who signed the 1916 proclamation certainly had no reservations about seeking external assistance from imperial Germany at the time. I am drawing attention to the fact that our sovereign republic from 1916 on has always required external assistance" (Lenihan).

In this essay, I will address the following questions: beyond the political rhetoric, how much has Ireland's economic independence really been affected by entering a financial rescue programme and how much autonomy do we now have since the ending of the programme on 15 December 2013? And what does economic and financial independence really mean for a small open economy that uses the euro as its currency?

From Bust to Boom, to Bust Again

Before addressing the questions outlined above, it is useful as a way of background to look at developments in the Irish economy, not over the last 100 years, but over the last few decades and particularly during the past few years and the events surrounding Ireland's application for financial assistance.

The Economist published a survey of Ireland in 1988 entitled "The poorest of the rich", in which the newspaper concluded that the country was heading for catastrophe, mainly because Ireland had tried to erect a welfare state on continental European lines in an economy that was too poor to support one (Cairncross). The survey featured a beggar on the front cover – a provocative image and one which I will return to later. Inside the survey was an even more offensive picture of a horse and cart.

Yet less than a decade later, on 15 May 1997, *The Economist* had to eat humble pie. Amid rapid growth in its economy, Ireland featured on *The Economist's* cover again though this time as "Europe's shining light". The newspaper marvelled that a sleepy European backwater had been transformed into a vibrant economy ("Ireland shines"). How did this transformation happen?

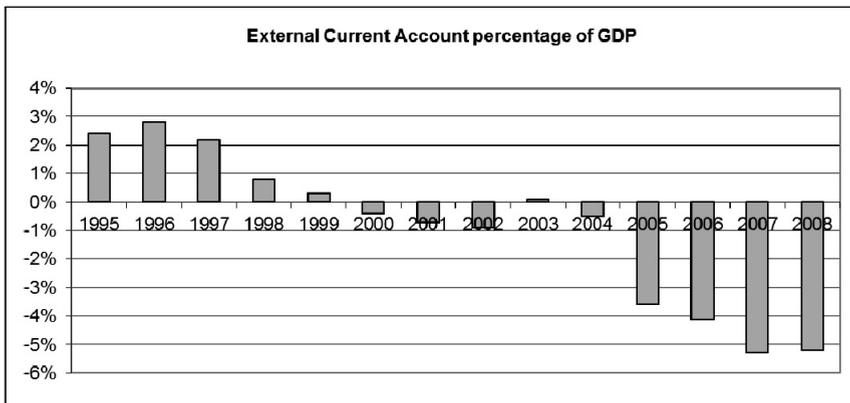
In a word: convergence. As Honohan and Walsh argue, the fundamentals of the Irish economy had been relatively strong for decades. Our convergence to rich-country levels of income per capita was delayed by the crisis in the public finances during the 1980s. When convergence came, it was telescoped in a short period of rapid growth. We began to reap the full benefits from the opening up of the economy that began in the era of Seán Lemass. Of course, the integration of the Irish economy with the glo-

bal economy from the early 1960s was accompanied by a reduction in economic independence, but this loss of sovereignty was accepted. A key driver of our economy's convergence was inflows of foreign direct investment. Ireland became an export platform for U.S. multinational corporations selling products and services into European markets. Wage moderation and solid productivity growth in Ireland translated into large competitiveness gains.

By the late 1990s, the Irish economy was, by and large, in great shape. Then things started to go wrong. Having joined the European Union in 1973, it seemed natural to go along with the next step in European integration – the adoption of a single currency, the euro. In the run-up to the introduction of the euro, economists had argued that membership of the single currency area would bring lower interest rates and therefore boost growth and employment. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), for example, argued in a 1996 report that under certain circumstances “the benefit to be obtained from EMU membership because of lower interest rates would average roughly 1.7 percentage points of GNP over the first five years of membership” (Baker, Fitzgerald & Honohan).

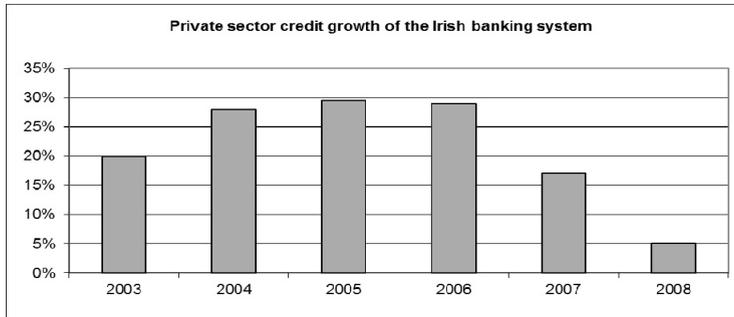
In the event, Ireland's adoption of the euro in 1999 led to a tidal wave of cheap money that flooded the Irish economy. These inflows of financial capital contributed to a dramatic swing in the external current account from a surplus of more than 2 per cent of GDP in 1997 to a deficit of 5 per cent of GDP in 2007 (fig. 1).

Figure 1: Central Statistics Office (<www.cso.ie>)



These capital inflows, mostly from European banks, were intermediated through the Irish banking system. Banking regulators around Europe relied on market signals to judge the riskiness of banking behaviour. As investors remained bullish about banks, this so-called “light touch” approach to regulation gave a green light for Irish banks to expand their loan books at a heady pace (fig. 2). Tax incentives for property investment added fuel to the property bubble.

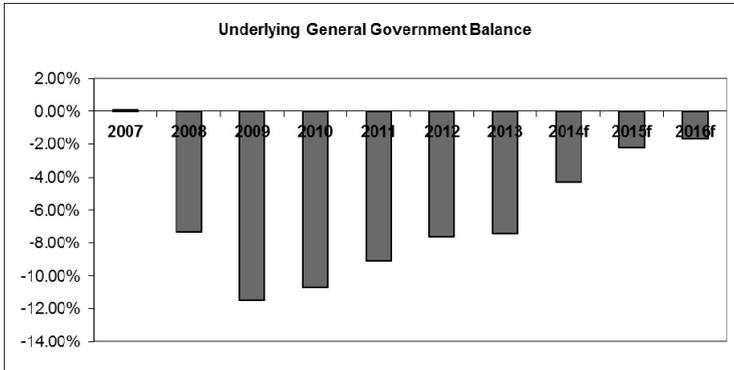
Figure 2: Central Bank of Ireland (<www.centralbank.ie>)



The property bubble was characterised by rapid increases in property prices (both for housing and commercial real estate), a huge expansion in construction activity, and a surge in purchases of houses and apartments. The bubble fuelled a jump in tax revenues for the government, including stamp duty, VAT, capital gains tax, and income tax. At the peak in 2007, about one-third of the government's tax revenues were being generated by the property bubble (Regling & Watson).

These windfall revenues from the bubble were mistakenly viewed as permanent. In reality, these receipts were more like the revenues that might accrue to the government if the State were to discover a gas field off the west coast of Ireland. These revenues are large, but time-limited; economic theory suggests that such temporary windfall revenues should be saved. Instead, the government used these receipts to increase public sector wages and welfare benefits, to expand public services as well as to reduce income tax rates and widen tax credits. The tax base shrunk alarmingly.

And then the bubble burst. The windfall tax receipts disappeared and welfare spending jumped as laid-off construction workers swelled the unemployment lines. As a result, the public finances plunged into an enormous deficit. As shown in fig. 3, the underlying budget balance (that is, the budget stripped of spending to rescue the banks) deteriorated into an eye-popping deficit of 11.2 per cent of GDP in 2009 (Department of Finance). The bulk of this balance was structural in nature and therefore the deficit would not shrink much even if the economy recovered to sustainable growth rates. The only way to restore order to the public finances was to broaden the tax base and reduce the cost of public services and social transfers.

Figure 3: Source: Department of Finance (<www.finance.gov.ie>)

The budget deficits registered over the past seven years had to be financed, as did the government debt that was scheduled to be repaid over that period. Over the course of 2008-2010, Ireland relied on stressed international money and bond markets to finance its borrowings. It should be obvious that, against a backdrop of increasingly risk-averse market investors, the set of policy options available to a government with a very wide gap between public expenditure and public receipts is extremely narrow. The reality is that the bubble had left Ireland dangerously exposed to a shift in conditions in financial markets.

From Market Financing to Official Financing

The Irish government had worked might and main to maintain access to borrowing on international markets at acceptable interest rates up until mid-2010. Conditions in government debt markets took a turn for the worse in the second half of that year. The deterioration reflected several factors:

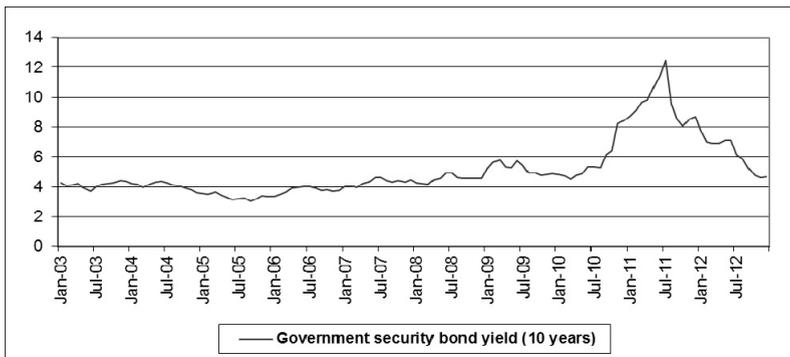
- Investors came to realise that the problems that had exploded in Greece earlier that year were not specific to that country, but rather reflected a fundamental malfunctioning of the euro area. The euro as a construct was deeply flawed.
- The global economy, which had shown some signs of recovery in the first half of 2010 following the slump in 2008/2009, began to weaken again.
- Investors became increasingly uncertain about the ultimate cost of the bank rescue, as banking losses continued to mount.
- The agreement at Deauville in October 2010 between Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel threatened potential investors in peripheral euro area sovereign debt with default.³

3 Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy agreed on 19 October 2010 that in future losses may be imposed on holders of government bonds of countries that apply for financial assistance from the European Stability Mechanism. Forelle *et al.* describe the events

- The European Central Bank gave strong signals to market investors that it was considering withdrawal of support to the Irish banking system (Ahearne). Ironically, less than two years later the ECB would introduce its Outright Monetary Transactions (OMT) programme to calm investors' fears as borrowing costs for Italy and Spain rose to unsustainable levels. Had OMT arrived in the autumn of 2010 instead, borrowing costs for the Irish government would have stayed low.

In the event, borrowing costs for Ireland on international markets hit unacceptably high levels and the Irish government was forced to apply for official financial assistance from the EU and the IMF. The cost of ten-year money for Ireland, for example, moved above 8 per cent in November (fig. 4).

Figure 4: Source: Central Bank of Ireland (<www.centralbank.ie/Pages/home.aspx>)



Having lost access to market financing, the government made the judgement that it would be better for the citizens of the country for the State to enter an official programme of assistance than the alternative. The alternative was for the government to instantly close the large budget deficit and default on its debts. Nonetheless, the application for official financing was greeted with dismay in the media.

In its editorial titled “Was it for this?” on 18 November 2010 *The Irish Times* lamented:

whether this is what the men of 1916 died for: a bailout from the German chancellor with a few shillings of sympathy from the British chancellor on the side [...] Having obtained our political independence from Britain to be the masters of our own affairs, we have now surrendered our sovereignty to the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. (“Was it for this?”).

The Irish Examiner on the same day was even more extreme:

The founding fathers of the state are turning in their graves [...] because a major erosion of Ireland’s economic sovereignty looks inevitable [...] People are right to be fearful of the punitive charges the ECB and the IMF will impose [...] the thorny issue of Ire-

leading up to the agreement at Deauville and the negative market reaction that followed. Mody offers a contrary perspective.

land's generous corporation tax regime, the envy of other EU states, could be brought into play [...] For the man and woman in the street, the worry is that whatever loan package is put on the table by the enforcers of the ECB and IMF will have to be repaid – in full and with interest. (“Founding fathers”)

The rhetoric about losing sovereignty was not confined to the media. The new government that came to power in March 2011 got in on the act also. In his national address in December that year, Taoiseach Enda Kenny declared: “I want to be a Taoiseach who retrieves Ireland’s economic sovereignty” (Kenny). In August 2012, he stated: “Here at Béal na Bláth, as Taoiseach, I give you my word that I will not rest, our Government will not rest, until Ireland has reclaimed and restored its economic sovereignty” (Roche). Enda Kenny went on to say: “We will not cease in our painstaking, quiet but persuasive endeavours until Ireland has re-established the economic independence, so precious, so hard-won, which is its right and its due” (Roche).

The rhetoric about losing sovereignty ignored the fact that the EU/IMF programme was largely designed in Dublin by Irish policymakers. Most of the measures contained in the programme had appeared in the government’s National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, which pre-dated the programme (Irish Government). The Irish government would have had to implement a multi-annual economic plan very much along the lines of the EU/IMF programme even if the State had retained access to international debt markets.

Restoring Economic Sovereignty?

When the EU/IMF programme ended in December 2013, how much more control of their own economy did Irish people regain that was not available to them during the period of the programme, 2011-2013? Three aspects of Ireland’s economy suggest that the answer is: very little.

- Firstly, as a small open trading economy, a high level of economic interdependence is an inescapable reality in a globalised world.
- Secondly, as a member of the EU, strict fiscal rules and enhanced surveillance are parts of the revised EU economic governance.
- Thirdly, as a member of the euro area, Ireland has no control over monetary policy or exchange rates, and banking union in Europe is well underway.

It is well known that the original design of the euro was deeply flawed. European leaders have been forced back to the drawing board. The original Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) failed to prevent a major ongoing crisis in the euro area. The SGP rules were disregarded by larger member states, and in any event they wrongly focused almost exclusively on budgetary issues while ignoring excessive private capital flows which were the root cause of the crisis. European leaders have responded to past failures with a new regime of obligations and enhanced surveillance. This new regime goes beyond the focus on headline budget balances in the SGP.

This regime is built on a dizzying number of new rules and regulations. We now have a Six Pack and a Two Pack, economic partnership programmes and post-programme surveillance programmes, a European Semester, a Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure, an Excessive Deficit Procedure including legal penalties and controls by the European Court of Justice, and macroeconomic scoreboards. Highly intrusive oversight of draft national budgets in the euro area by the European Commission is now a fact of life. The European Commission and Council now have significant powers in the European Semester, thanks to the Fiscal Treaty, which Ireland approved in a referendum in May 2012. What does economic independence mean in this context? These EU rules bind the Irish government to commitments towards sound fiscal policies and coordination by setting Ireland a medium-term budgetary target.

To conclude, none of this is to say that closer integration in Europe is unnecessary. I believe progress towards banking union and fiscal union is necessary if the euro is to survive. The point is that policy choices for Irish policymakers remain tightly constrained whether or not the State can sell debt on private markets. Ireland has chosen to share sovereignty and embrace globalisation with the aim of advancing economic welfare, consistent with the declaration in the 1916 Proclamation of “its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation.” The choice to share sovereignty and engage in world markets brings constraints. The idea that Irish policymakers can have full control of our economy is delusional. For Ireland, the largest chunks of economic sovereignty were willingly ceded when the country joined the EU and especially when it adopted the single currency.

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**“1916 I THINK IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK ABOUT
WITHOUT THINKING OF YEATS AND O’CASEY”:
PUBLIC INTERVIEW WITH NEIL JORDAN**

Conducted by Patrick McCabe¹

Born in 1950 in Sligo, Neil Jordan began his career as a writer. His first book of stories, Night in Tunisia (1976), won the Guardian Fiction prize. Since then he has published five novels, The Past (1979), The Dream of a Beast (1983), Sunrise with Seamonster (1994), and Shade (2005). His most recent novel, Mistaken, was published in early 2011.

Neil Jordan’s film career began with the role of creative consultant on John Boorman’s Excalibur in 1981. In 1982 Jordan wrote and directed his first feature film Angel. Since then he has written, directed, and produced more than fifteen films, including Company of Wolves (1984), Mona Lisa (1986), The Crying Game (1992), Interview With The Vampire (1994), Michael Collins (1995), The Butcher Boy (1996), The End Of The Affair (1999), The Good Thief (2002), Breakfast On Pluto (2005), and Ondine (2009). His films have been honoured with numerous awards worldwide, including an Oscar, BAFTAs, Golden Globes, A Golden Lion from The Venice Film Festival, and a Silver Bear from Berlin. He has been awarded five honorary doctorates, and in 1996 he was appointed Officer of the French Ordres des Artes et des Lettres. Neil Jordan has more recently written, directed, and produced the television series “The Borgias”, with Octagon Films and Showtime. His latest film, Byzantium, premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2012.

Neil was interviewed at EFACIS 2013 by playwright and novelist Patrick McCabe. McCabe was born in 1955 in Clones, County Monaghan, Ireland. He was educated at St Patrick’s Training College in Dublin and began teaching at Kingsbury Day Special School in London in 1980. His short story ‘The Call’ won the Irish Press Hennessy Award. He is the author of several novels, including The Butcher Boy (1992), a black comedy narrated by a disturbed young slaughterhouse worker, which won the Irish Times Irish Literature Prize for Fiction; The Dead School (1995), an account of the misfortunes that befall two Dublin teachers; and Breakfast on Pluto (1998), the disturbing tale of a transvestite prostitute who becomes involved with Republican terrorists. The Butcher Boy and Breakfast on Pluto were both shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction. He is also the author of a children’s book, The Adventures of Shay Mouse (1985), and a collection of linked short stories, Mondo Desperado, published

1 This public interview was held during the EFACIS conference at NUI Galway on 5 June 2013 and took place immediately following the screening of the opening scenes (which reenact the events of the 1916 Rising) from *Michael Collins* (dir. Neil Jordan, 1996).

in 1999. His play *Frank Pig Says Hello*, which he adapted from *The Butcher Boy*, was first performed at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1992. The play is published in *Far from the Land: Contemporary Irish Plays (1998)*, edited by John Fairleigh. A film adaptation of *The Butcher Boy*, directed by Neil Jordan, was first screened in 1996. His short stories have been published in *The Irish Times* and *The Cork Examiner* and his work has been broadcast by RTÉ in Ireland and the BBC. His novel *Emerald Germs of Ireland (2001)* is a black comedy featuring matricide Pat McNab and his attempts to fend off nosy neighbours. His novel *Winterwood* was published in 2006 and was named the 2007 *Hughes & Hughes/Irish Independent Irish Novel of the Year*. His latest novels are *The Holy City (2008)* and *The Stray Sod Country (2010)*.

Patrick McCabe (PMC): Neil, there were a number of scripts for *Michael Collins* going around during that period weren't there?

Neil Jordan (NJ): Yes there were yea.

PMC: How long did it take you before you ...

NJ: Me? Well the problem is that if you do something about a historical subject, there's no ownership of it. That's why in the world of film there are generally about, say for example somebody wants to do a television cable series about the Medici family, there's probably about 27, 227, or 2027 scripts written about the same thing, and there's no ownership of it, you know what I mean? So I was asked by David Putnam, an English producer, he was very traditional, he produced *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and you know these kind of ...

PMC: *War of the Buttons* (1994).

NJ: Yea, yea, yea, also *The Killing Fields* (1984), you know those large-scale epic, very kind of British movies in a way. And he commissioned me, he asked me to write a script about Michael Collins in about 1984. His arrangement was with Warner Brothers. So they actually hired me to write the script for *Michael Collins*, and I knew very little about him. I had studied history in UCD, but I studied early Irish history, medieval, earlier even, early Christian period stuff like that, and I never had that much interest in these stalwart kind of heroic figures and all this sort of stuff. So I began to research him and I wrote a script, and there were many other people, several other people, the main among them was Eoghan Harris, who had written a script.

PMC: Was Kevin Costner attached to that?

NJ: He wanted to play the part of Michael Collins (laughter from audience). He did actually, it's Hollywood you know. But anyway for various reasons nobody wanted to make it, and I then, I made a film called *Interview with the Vampire* (1994) for Warner Brothers, and it was quite successful, and they said what do you want to do next? I said, well I have, you have this script you bought that I wrote called *Michael Collins* and they weren't even aware of it and they said, basically, they looked at it and they

read it and they said, 'If you can make it for a certain figure you can make it.' So it was really ironic circumstances, it was the fact that I had made a film with Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt that had become a big commercial success that allowed me to make *Michael Collins*. Having announced it and with the film coming out in Ireland it became a major public event but the fact is the guys in Warner Brothers, they just saw it as a little tiny film that they were indulging me in so it was this strange anomaly, it was this big, huge thing over here, huge public comment, it was almost like designing a national monument, or being commissioned to design a national monument here. Everybody in Ireland and in England as well had a huge emotional investment in the telling of the story like this, whether it would be or reflect the revisionist kind of current, the whole revisionist thing that was in vogue in the early '90s, you know, would it be nationalist proselytizing, would it be this, would it be that, would it be accurate, would it be inaccurate, and the people in Warner Brothers didn't give a damn as long as I didn't spend more than \$31million and as long as I had Julia Roberts on board. So it's kind of as simple as that really. There were obviously other versions of the story. So I mean the equivalent would be if somebody now wanted to make ...

PMC: Was there a movie made in the '40s and '50s about Michael Collins?

NJ: I don't know, was there?

PMC: I think there was, I think there was a black and white one, but I don't know, it wasn't called *Michael Collins*.

NJ: Oh, it was called *Sweet Enemy* or something like that.

PMC: That's what it was, it was one of those kind of things, so it had being done before.

NJ: *Beloved Enemy* (1936) it was called I think.

PMC: Who was in it?

NJ: I didn't even see it.

PMC: No, I think the reaction here was a bit hysterical though.

NJ: It's a strange thing. If you make a film you've got two hours if you want it to be released in the cinemas, you've probably got two, two and a half hours to tell a story and you obviously can't in a way. It's the most, movies are in a way the most public context within which to tell a piece of history or to address a piece of history and they are also the most inappropriate context because they demand drama, and they demand compression, they demand ...

PMC: So you had to leave out the treaty?

NJ: I had written a whole section on the treaty debates and when Collins went to London and all that, but we just couldn't afford to do it with the budget we had so basically it's kind of an anomaly if you think of the historical film – has anyone seen *Lincoln* (2012)? So that's, Steven Spielberg would consider that a historical film, which it

is. I'm sure everybody has seen *Gladiator* (2000), would you consider that a historical film? Or would you consider for example *Spartacus* (1960) to be a historical movie? Seriously, I'm not cynical. *Spartacus* written by Dalton Trumbo, he did research, the slave revolt, all of that, obviously Shakespeare's history plays are history plays, plays about history, but they are as gross and entertaining and inaccurate and as far-fetched as *Spartacus* – or *Gladiator*. I mean *Henry V*? Or *Richard III*? He's like Hannibal Lector or something like that. It's an interesting question so I did this, I basically had to, so what is this thing, what is this drama going to be about? And I said it's going to be about violence pure and simple, this is what I said to myself, if you want, given that you cannot do justice to the entire span of a historical incident I said I'm going to make a film about the uses and the consequences of using violence. The form for that was a very simple generic, genre with a whole set of expectations that you can fit into which is kind of Warner Brothers gangster movies of the '30s, '40s, '50s,

PMC: James Cagney genre.

NJ: Yea, *White Heat* (1949) and *Scarface* (1932) obviously *The Godfather* (1972) and so you know I said to myself it's going to be a film about a guy who builds up this kind of illicit army gets them to use extreme violence, beyond the current, what you'd call the set of agreements that seem to exist in the '20s, and having built up this army he then tries to decommission and finds he can't, you know, that's the story I set out to tell myself, that's what I imagined I was telling and that's why the events moved in it so quickly. That's why for example I had a car bomb in it, you know, because to me it was straight out of the template of a gangster movie. Each of these things that one does is interpreted, as when the film was released in Ireland, as having huge symbolic weight.

PMC: This was perhaps because the peace negotiations were continuing at that time.

NJ: They were actually on, they kept starting, there was a story in contemporary Ireland and there was a story in the 1916-1921 period, which were kind of parallel stories. They were totally different but the issue was the same, the issue was having, whether having introduced weapons and the possibility of violence into political dialogue whether you can then just magically pull it away and obviously you can't, or obviously the attempt to do so is extremely difficult if not impossible, and that's what I wanted to tell and maybe that's why the film had such kind of relevance here though I imagine anybody who – because 1916 is such, kind of an event of national fantasy in a way, which I think it kind of has become in a way – anybody who showed the GPO being blasted to bits and people coming out with their hands up I imagine that would have become a source of great public interest, anybody, whoever did it, whether it was me or Kevin Costner or anybody ... sorry! That's my account anyway of *Michael Collins*.

PMC: In the course of your research while writing the script, and I don't know how many drafts you did but I presume it was a considerable number what kind of a man

do you think you unearthed? What intrigues me about Michael Collins more than anything else is that he was only 31 years of age (when he died), do you think we may confer on him a magnitude and a gravitas that perhaps he simply didn't merit?

NJ: I think, when I first began to do the research, I had the decided feeling that I didn't like this person you know, he was decidedly kind of a, somebody, ok it's hard – shall I try and answer the question?

PMC: Please do ...

NJ: I'll have to answer it in two stages. He seemed to be built in the mode of the kind of, of the fascist in a way to me.

PMC: I think you're right yea.

NJ: You know of a general that, the kind of figure that Mussolini became, or the kind of person Salazar became.

PMC: He nominated Eoin O'Duffy as his successor.

NJ: Yes that's what he seemed to be, that was my first impression when I read, there was the Pierce Beasley biography,² which was a piece of hagiography, and when you read that biography it's like reading a biography of Mussolini or stuff like that but I think the interesting thing about Collins is that in the end he did not become that and that's what I thought was interesting about this figure, was that ...

PMC: Was that because he didn't live long enough?

NJ: No – I think it's because, it's because actually he forced himself to accept compromise in a way, do you understand what I mean and in a strange way he did abide by the democratic process in the end. Everybody pictures this figure in the bloody green thing, with the hat, touring car and all that sort of stuff, but he did, when they did put the Treaty he brought back to a vote, he did stand by it. I know he did very underhand things too, going to the North of Ireland, but that was part of his, it seemed to me, that somebody whose essential nature was a strong man you know, a military strongman, the fact that he actually did not in the end become that I found interesting, and that's why in the end I found him an interesting figure and I thought it was worthwhile making a film about him.

PMC: We were asked to do this conference here in Galway and not really thought of Neil as a political filmmaker, more of a poet really but now reflecting on it when I think of *The Crying Game*, *Michael Collins*, *Breakfast on Pluto*, and a number of other ones, politics actually is a large feature of your work and I remembered that you had done 3 or 4 episodes of a Sean O'Casey series way back at the beginning of your career, so you presumably knew a lot about that period anyway.

NJ: I did, yea I did.

2 Piaras S. Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland* (London: G.G. Harrap, 1926).

PMC: How do you view that period in Irish history now?

NJ: The 1916 ...

PMC: Let's say from the death of Parnell to the signing of the Treaty or perhaps the end of the Civil War?

NJ: I think it's impossible to view it outside of the prism of literature and poetry and art. The death of Parnell I find impossible to think of without thinking of Joyce – absolutely. And the, 1916 I think impossible to think about without thinking of Yeats and O'Casey, and the War of Independence I find impossible to think about without thinking of Frank O'Connor, you know. And in a way it seems to me to be an oddly literary event the whole thing more than a political event.

PMC: I suppose you're right. When James Joyce was asked about it he said you know, he said, 'You know the conquerer cannot afford to be seen as amateur, what's going on in Ireland now with the British is no different than what's going on in the Belgian Congo.' Basically he was kinda saying it was just kinda bad luck to be beside an Imperialist entity and he kinda just skipped off to Paris and Trieste and viewed the whole thing as a kinda literary event like you're saying. But I mean do you think that the inheritance of 1916 is any value in real terms.

NJ: The inheritance of what? Sorry ...

PMC: The idea of insurrection shall we say.

NJ: No. It was such a tiny insurrection and it was such a tiny event and it involved so few people. If you think of it in contemporary terms, if you think of Iraq, or you think of what's going on in Syria, or you think of what's going on in Tunisia, or what did go on in Tunisia, it's like, when you think of 1916 and you think of the amount of people who were, you know members of the Citizen Army, or the IRB or the volunteers, all that such of stuff, tiny groups of people. It kind of must have taken the British government so little effort to cope with as badly as they did in a way, when you put it in those terms. When you think of the civil war, or the bits I had to research heavily for the Collins film, the groups of men were, you're talking about 6 and 7 people, hiding out in fields.

PMC: Maybe 2 or 3 rifles in Mayo.

NJ: So I think the entire of the story, particularly of Collins' effort, he was very aware of the force of bloodletting, and public opinion. It almost seems that every murder that he committed was designed for British tabloids, you know, designed to force a reaction from not only the British establishment but from the British public and British press. It seems the entire event is part of some kind of cultural dialogue, to me it does because the end result of it obviously was, the end result of the Treaty that Collins came back with was as everybody, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Roy Foster and all these people would say, was probably what would have been arrived at anyway if the Irish Parliamentary party had not been annihilated during the First World War and

had been allowed become the natural party of Irish nationalism. So that's why I think it's kind of an event that dominates, that is designed to be filtered through literature and imagination and through O'Casey and all that sort of stuff. That's my perspective and I'm sure I'm wrong.

PMC: No, no you're perfectly valid. But it does bring you to other works that kind of follow from that such as say Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* which is a story really recycling yet again Frank O'Connor.

NJ: Yea, well if you think of that. Frank O'Connor wrote "Guests of a Nation" and Frank O'Connor was ...

PMC: He was from the Republican side.

NJ: He was during the War of Independence and he did witness something like that event when the little private was taken out and shot.

PMC: I think it was Dan Breen, I'm not sure.

NJ: Dan Breen that did it?

PMC: Jeremiah Donovan character might be Dan Breen, I don't know, it's just hearsay.

NJ: Yea, yea, so that's, O'Connor wrote a magnificent story about that, that was about the '20s. *The Hostage*, Brendan Behan copied that story, he used the story for *An Giall*, an Irish-language play.

PMC: The bones of it.

NJ: Yea, but it wasn't set in the '20s his story.

PMC: No.

NJ: It was set in the '40s.

PMC: Yea.

NJ: And I copied that story again for the beginning of *The Crying Game*, which was not set in the '20s or the '40s, it was set in the '80s. It's an interesting little progression of things because the beginning of *The Crying Game*, the first 20 minutes of *The Crying Game* are basically based on O'Connor's short story. So you've got a little piece of storytelling haven't you refracted through 3 different periods and that seems to me the way that the Rising is relevant.

PMC: To bring you back to *Angel* (1982), which is a very strange animal. If you look at it now, it's a truly magnificent film I think. I really do. I think when you look at it now. Did it have a relationship I was wondering when I saw it recently with *Odd Man Out* (1947)?

NJ: Yea, absolutely.

PMC: There's another one that ...

NJ: That's another wonderful film actually.

PMC: With James Mason and ...

NJ: Carol Reed directed that, didn't he?

PMC: Carol Reed directed it, yea. It's a very strange movie but it has the same kind of existential landscape in an Irish context as *Angel* has. Could you tell us a bit about the relationship to Irish history that *Angel* has, if it has one,

NJ: It has none (laughter). It actually hasn't because it's ... when I wrote that film, when I wrote *Angel* and when I started to direct, I didn't have much of a clue about filmmaking but it was interesting because the script was just about a guy who was taken over by – Stephen Rea played the part of the Saxophone player – and he was taken over by the compulsion, the ease with which he could kill people. Because he accidentally witnessed a murder and he gets his hands on a gun through a series of accidents and it was, I remember when I was shooting it cameraman Chris Menges he comes from this, he works with Ken Loach a lot, and he came from the documentary tradition and the kind of populist Marxist background thing. Chris always wanted me to show scenes of riots and British soldiers whacking people on the head and I said 'no Chris we're not doing any of that, we're doing this film without any context, any historical background, any socio-political contemporary background to it, it's going to be set in these landscapes and it's going to be a simple thing about this guy who before he shoots everybody he asks them what their name is basically'.

PMC: Was *Point Blank* (1967) an influence on that?

NJ: A little bit, a little bit. But I think the reason why people found it powerful was because it was a story about what was happening at the time, in the border areas and in the north of Ireland, of sectarian violence and killing been enacted upon people who otherwise would have been neighbours, you know that kind of thing. And if you do something like that, if you strip everything away and tell that simple thing it kind of becomes shocking in a way because you're not explaining or you're not justifying. And the film was criticised a lot at the time when it came out, it was criticised by, mainly people on the left, you know, as I was at the time, it was criticised heavily for not providing what they call context, socio or political context.

PMC: Alan Clarke had the same criticism leveled at him, for *Elephant* (1989).

NJ: That's a brilliant film.

PMC: It removed the context as well and it leaves you with the aftershock of true existential horror, really.

NJ: In a way, yea and that's the interesting thing that movies can do and I ...

PMC: In an Irish context that's why *Angel* was so radical because ...

NJ: Is it?

PMC: Oh I think it was you know. There had being an endless procession of movies namechecking all the various atrocities and everything and this place was in a really dark universal space that ...

NJ: It's interesting when you do that, when you remove the kind of possibility of justification, of historical or political or sociological stuff, it's interesting that that very negative act can make things more arresting in a way.

PMC: And then there was something equally radical with *The Crying Game* in that you take a provisional IRA man and turn that on its head because that had become an almost cinematic/literary cliché of what an IRA man is.

NJ: Some people say he is a cliché of what a ...

PMC But anyway the fact that in the sense that he is a compassionate guy and a complex guy ...

NJ: Of course, absolutely, but *The Crying Game* is a different thing you know, a different period.

PMC: I know it is but it's still, it's political in your own peculiar poetic way and that's what I find very interesting when I look at these movies again in its context.

NJ: Well now *The Crying Game* is about how people define themselves. And how the central character, his name is Fergus, played by Stephen Rea, he starts out defining himself, he is an Irish person, he's white, he's nationalist, he's rationale, and he's male. So he's all those things. And in a way the story was designed as a series of, kind of, what would you call them, tests, or a series of ...

PMC: Like mythic kind of ...

NJ: No, just okay so let's put him close to, you have to kidnap a black British soldier.

PMC: OK.

NJ: And he regards himself as what they would call mopes, part of the Most Oppressed People Ever, that thing you know, an Irish Northern Nationalist. And he's got like this overweight huge Black Sapper. He's in a context where he has to look after this guy and feed him, and keep him alive, and probably ultimately kill him, but he has to keep him alive before he kills him. So you force the central character into that kind of encounter. And then he has to help him go to the toilet, he has to enable, he has to unzip him, he has to take out his penis, which I know is a funny scene, but actually it kind of becomes integral in the end, and then the guy dies. And then he becomes obsessed with his wife so he moves to England and he kind of falls in love with this woman. And of course he finds out that she's a man. So it goes on and on. Do you understand what I mean? But basically it's, I know it became a large success, but basically it was a series of devices to subject the central character to these self-examinations in a way. And when I was writing it, in the end you say, ok the question is, after you strip everything away from this guy, you strip away his nationalism, you

strip away his weapon, you strip away his sexuality, is there anything left? Is there any definition left? And I suppose the story in a slightly romanticized way says 'Yes there is' which is interesting.

PMC: I'm trying to figure out this Old Ireland and New Ireland³ kind of thing because I don't know if novelists really, or writers think, you know, while change is an integral part, I don't know if Ireland really in our imaginations splits up into old and new, it's kind of continuum, it is in mine anyway. But in your book *Mistaken* (2011), which is Neil's most recent book, which is a doppelganger story set in Dublin of the '60s and contemporary Dublin, it's probably worth examination in this regard because if there was such a thing as 'Old Ireland' for me, it was that the supernatural and the quotidian work hand in hand, and that people blessed themselves, there's always this acknowledgement of the supernatural and *Mistaken* is full of that.

NJ: Yea.

PMC: In that Bram Stoker's influence is there but also it's a very modern story in that one side of the protagonist designs computer games. So we have Bram Stoker in the old Ireland and you have, so is there a kind of dichotomy in your mind as regards this conference, is there such a thing as an old Ireland or a New Ireland?

NJ: There obviously is a New Ireland and there obviously was an Old Ireland.

PMC: How would you define them?

NJ: I think the problem with the Irish imagination is that you don't, that it's never defined, and you contemporary people, people our age or of our generation, and I've done it myself, writing about realities that they themselves haven't experienced but writing about them as if they were realities. I wrote a novel called *The Past* (1980), you wrote obviously, one of the things that attracted me to *The Butcher Boy* (1992) was that that world was so accurate and so accurately described my childhood and what I remember from my childhood, or of childhood in the mid-'50s, late '50s, but it had never been depicted before by anybody. I didn't experience the childhood of John McGahern, I didn't experience that rural kind of isolation and that memory of this great or weird event that kind of tarnished the present, you know there's always an old IRA funeral in John McGahern's stories. I didn't experience that world, I didn't experience the world of Roddy Doyle, I didn't experience the world that Colm Tóibín writes about, but I experienced the world of *The Butcher Boy* and when I came to write *Mistaken* I said 'Okay I'm going to describe as accurately as I can the place, the experience of growing up in Dublin, the experience of the strange little kind of class distinctions there are, not between a working class person and a middle class person but between a kind of half middle class person and really truly middle class person' (laughter).

3 The title of the EFACIS conference at which this public interview took place was "Towards 2016: Old and New Irelands".

PMC: Very subtle nuances there.

NJ: But in a way they're the most important things aren't they, like the guy whose father was a doctor and went to Gonzaga college or the guy whose father was a national teacher or a turf accountant and went to a Christian Brothers school. I mean they are huge distinctions in my memory of Ireland and I said, okay I'm actually going to try and describe as accurately as I can what it was like in the city that I grew up in and I realized when I began to write it, I realized I had never come across this before, I had never seen it in any.

PMC: I haven't come across it either.

NJ: We have hundreds of stories about Dublin, but it's true isn't it?

PMC: It's absolutely true, I couldn't agree with you more.

NJ: And nobody has ever described like Palmerston Park or that, South County Dublin, those rather beautiful squares that are so entrancing and you used to wonder, oh people live there.

PMC: There's also these very urbane teenagers who are very like London teenagers with their candy stripped jackets and their beat clubs and all the rest of it and coffee bars that was very significant in *Mistaken* and every word of it is true.

NJ: It is true, absolutely true.

PMC: So where did it go, I mean ...

NJ: It was interesting writing it and I'm saying okay so I don't remember this culture that's so oppressed by religion, so oppressed by censorship and kind of avoidance of sexuality and all that stuff. I don't remember any of it when I just try to be accurate, it just didn't enter one's consciousness and I said well maybe that was my childhood but maybe then that's a constructed thing that served the purposes of that book. But I think it's interesting that a lot of Irish writing, and I don't mean to be judgemental here, a lot of Irish writing is about writing about the way a previous generation wrote. That's a very strange thing isn't it? Do you not find that?

PMC: I think it's true.

NJ: And the urge to write a novel about, the urge to write a play or something about the response to the opening of *The Silver Tassie* seems to be irresistible or the urge to write a story in which Lady Gregory features, they just can't help doing it, do you understand what I mean? It is true though.

PMC: It is true. One after another, yea you certainly kicked that to touch with the, certainly the second half of *Mistaken* with the descriptions of New York which are extraordinary, the science fiction city of the future mixed up with the past, so that's a very very modern ...

NJ: But that's anybody's experience of New York.

PMC: I wish I could have written it. I've being to New York but I don't see any big pages about living ...

NJ: Ah but you didn't have the traumas I had in New York, I really suffered there.

PMC: Well I mean that is a very very modern section of the book that is very captivating so I mean – you couldn't film that book, could you?

NJ: No I don't think, I don't think so.

PMC: But there was interest in filming it.

NJ: Yea there was yea yea well somebody somewhere ...

PMC: Why would it be so difficult?

NJ: I think stories where, if there is a doppelganger thing, or twins or something like that people try and always use the same actor to, and it never quite works really and you just know it's going wrong. I don't know what the endless examination of the past that happens in Irish fiction is about, it's strange.

PMC: But you spend a good while doing it yourself in *Byzantium* and indeed in other places.

NJ: I didn't write that, Pat.

PMC: But you clearly have a feel for it.

NJ: I know that yea I know, I know that, but ...

PMC: Just tell us a bit about *Byzantium*. This is Neil's new movie which is starring Saoirse Ronan and it's a fabulous sumptuous feast, it really is, it's kind of like I don't know would it be wrong to say it's a sibling to *Interview with the Vampire*, it certainly has kinship with it.

NJ: A little bit.

PMC And it's just on release now, it's just a great 2 hours in the cinema I think.

NJ: OK, well it's about a vampire, it's a vampire story. And it was written by a woman called Moira Buffini. The only thing that would interest this conference would be that we tried to reconstitute the origin myth of the vampire. And we set it in the West of Ireland during the Napoleonic Wars. So if you're ever told that the way to become a vampire is you get bitten by a guy in the middle of the night from somewhere in Transylvania, it's a lie. To become a vampire you have to go to the South-West coast, you have to get on a currach with people speaking Irish and be rolled out to this misty island and you have to go into this hut which is basically like Gallarus Oratory, but the hut itself is a disguised Christian artifact. In fact it hides a much more terrifying pagan reality.

PMC: You made all this up, did ya.

NJ: Totally (laughter).

PMC: What a piece of impertinence is this man.

NJ: No it was a bit of fun. It's not that hard, you've made up better.

PMC: I don't know about that, I'd be afraid to do that Neil, even as we speak, an academic paper is being written about it (laughter).

NJ: We should talk about *Breakfast on Pluto*.

PMC: Yes, we should. That's a political movie isn't it?

NJ: Well, that's a novel that you wrote.

PMC: That's right (laughter).

NJ: No, but it's another example of, when Pat, when I read *Breakfast on Pluto*, it was another example of reading, of actually kind of experiencing directly the stuff that was right in front of your face but you never thought of it in such a bare and simple way, do you understand what I mean? It's like that character which Pat had written about, he wrote about this woman/man figure and in the novel, kind of a bit more like Quentin Crisp in – what was that movie ...

PMC: *The Naked Civil Servant* (1975).

NJ: A bit more like that strange lost gay kind of figure. In the movie we turned him into something slightly more joyous, but Pat describes in the novel, he described the experience I had when I was in London during the '70s for the first time, working there because I lived there for a period, when all of those, all of that IRA stuff was going on and the strange kind of combination of Irish kids smoking dope, and glam rock, dressing up like Mark Boland kind of stuff and this horrendously ancient thing erupting around you at the same time. And actually the only thing when I saw him in, when Daniel Day Lewis played Gerry Conlon in *In the Name of the Father* (1993), you remember that when he comes back to Belfast dressed as a hippy ...

PMC: Yea with Hendrix blasting, that was really really good.

NJ: He got those strange contrasts as well. And if you ever look at pictures of Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams in the '70s, they all have these horrible bell bottoms, horrible, they look like the Bay City Rollers don't they? And you kind of forget that.

PMC: Well the Shankill butchers would have been dressed like the Bay City Rollers.

NJ: Would they?

PMC: Yes they would because they were with the Tartan gangs

NJ: Of course they would have, yea.

PMC: (singing) Bye Bye baby (laughter) I want to talk to you about *Dream of a Beast* which again has that, I don't like the word surreal, but elevated quality, it's a middle class suburb, and it's not a middle class suburb, it's an exercise in language and it

seems to be that people either have forgotten it or it's not spoken about. Would you tell us about the writing of that book? Or why you wrote it?

NJ: I just wrote it. I lived in a place, a kinda very hot summer the way it is now, it seemed so hot it became oppressive. I lived in a house in Marino and for some reason I used to suffer from eczema and I had this, I got this enormous growth on my face.

PMC: Really – I didn't know that.

NJ: Yea, really. It was huge like and I used to try and keep it hidden from people because it was so embarrassing and I remember once meeting someone who I hadn't met for a long time and they kissed on the cheek and I could feel the instant revulsion – 'oh what has happened to me, what's become of me' – you have that kind of feeling, it was a book about that kind of feeling.

PMC: And yet that was cheeky as well, because obviously Gregor Samsa [*The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (1915)] woke up and there he was.

NJ: Yea well that wasn't, it was more of, it was more like *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954) kind of thing, it was more like *The Fly* (1958).

PMC: *The Fly* yea.

NJ: Anyway it was just a simple way of – it's just a novel I wrote a long time ago.

PMC: Speaking of those kind of movies, like you say you didn't look at these movies when you were a kid, but you seem to know, mysteriously to know a lot about them, *The Fly* and undead creatures, and *Daughters of Darkness* (1971), and all that, they do inform, particularly in *Byzantium*, this is definitely a joyous kind of B-movie in some respects.

NJ: Yea it is.

PMC: So when you were a kid in Fairview cinema you know like a lot of us you saw a bunch of art movies but you also saw those.

NJ: Oh that's the only thing you saw in Fairview cinema, yea yea.

PMC: You didn't see a few Bergman's or anything like that?

NJ: No, no, not there.

PMC: What did you see then?

NJ: Oh God I don't know, I used to, cause our family was rather strict, he knew [gesturing to Patrick McCabe], my father taught him, he used to be a national school-teacher and my father was the, what was he, The Cigire [School Inspector] was it.

PMC: He was the Professor of Mathematics.

NJ: Was he?

PMC: He was head of sums.

NJ: Was he head of sums? I thought he was Professor of Education?

PMC: Well okay it was the '70s, the auld eyesight wasn't good.

NJ: Well okay no because I was only allowed go to the cinema once a week, or once every two weeks, so it was kind of a precious thing.

PMC: Do you think that was a good idea maybe?

NJ: I don't think so, no.

PMC: Well every movie you saw you remembered it as well.

NJ: Perhaps I did, I don't know, when I was a kid all I remember seeing was Norman Wisdom movies actually.

PMC: There was a lot of those around.

NJ: There were a lot of those around, they used to come out every week and stuff, I don't remember much of cinema, my father had a great interest in cinema.

PMC: Did he.

NJ: Yea, particularly in Fritz Lang.

PMC: Really?

NJ: Yea, weird, for some reason.

PMC: That is unusual now for a man of his generation.

NJ: Particularly *Metropolis* (1927).

PMC: Really?

NJ: Yea, he talked about it constantly. It was a big event for him. I remember him saying to me once 'You shouldn't be thinking of film' – this has never occurred to me before but he said to me – 'you shouldn't be thinking of film in terms of actors, don't think you're going to see a 'John Wayne movie' or a 'Clint Eastwood movie,' you should think of who directed the film'.

PMC: Did he really say that?

NJ: Yea.

PMC: That's a very enlightened kind of thing.

NJ: It just hit me now actually.

PMC: So what was the household like then, your sister Eithne is a famous painter, your father's ...

NJ: Oh come one Pat ...

PMC: Oh come on Neil you have to tell us.

NJ: No.

PC: It's the old and new Ireland, you have to tell us.

NJ: My father, he taught education in St. Pats in Drumcondra and he was a mathematician actually. So it was a strange mixture of absolute repression, utter repression, and total freedom, it was strange. I suppose you know people who are involved in education they tend to run interesting houses sometimes, don't they?

PMC: Well some of them do but my memories of him are was that he was enlightened he kind of established the project method⁴ in the Irish school system, the new curriculum was introduced around that time and he was a leading light in that.

NJ: Oh yea.

PMC: That was a big thing in Irish education at the time.

NJ: Yea, but they were all Gaelgoirs then, they were all fierce Irish speakers, as was he and most of his friends, you know you'd be taken for holidays to the west of Ireland where you'd get into trouble, you'd get beaten up and stuff.

PMC: Beaten up?

NJ: Well you know.

PMC: Well, just before we open it to the floor because I'm sure the audience want to ask you questions about your work I want to talk to you just about the new movie you're doing and maybe a little bit about "The Borgias" as well, but also your abiding and continuing interest in the ghost story and the supernatural. Possibly your next movie will be "Traces"?

NJ: Yea, perhaps.

PMC: Could you talk a bit about it, I know it's premature.

NJ: It is a bit premature.

PMC: Let's say "The Borgias," tell us about that because it's a fabulous project.

NJ: That's the cable networks in America have given a former Irish altar boy the opportunity to tell a lurid story in the Vatican in the fifteenth century. It's kind of Ian Paisley's wet dream really (laughter), *The Red Whore of Rome*, I was asked to do a script by Dreamworks on, I was sent a script about Lucretia Borgias and I began to read about the family and I thought this is really fascinating because if you were, or did ever serve at mass or had any kind of Catholic background you can't help but find the inner workings of the Vatican fascinating. The reality and lurid imagination gives rise to those secrets, so I began researching this family and I realized this are extraordinary, this monstrous pope, Rodrigo Borgia, and I read Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532), and said 'I'd like to write a script about the whole family not just about the pope' so they commissioned me to do that and I wrote it and they read it and I said

4 This was a child-centred initiative pioneered by Neil's father in the '60s and '70s as part of the 'New Curriculum' for Irish primary schools at that time.

'what do you think would you like me to make it as a film' and I remember somebody, the head of productions saying 'interesting vermin' and I said 'what?' He says 'No we're not going to make this film because there is nothing remotely heroic about it, no character you'll sympathise with, there's nobody you can root for'. So I tried to make it independently and I couldn't. And I brought it back to them about 6 or 7 years later and Stephen Spielberg said 'why don't you try and do a cable series' which seems to be what's happening now to all challenging movie projects in the United States of America. I began to write it as a cable series and ended up doing it for three years. That's how that happened but you know it's great fun, it's a fascinating period, and actually the format of that, basically a 30- or 40-hour movie is far, far more suitable to any kind of historical subject.

PMC: Of course it is.

NJ: I mean, if I could have made *Michael Collins* as one of those events it would have being extraordinary. Anyway, a lot of it is just luck that it could happen, that they asked me to do it, that it happened that I could get the chance of it really. Initially I didn't know anything about writing serious television.

PMC: Did you find that onerous as a task? I mean, you seem to have done an extraordinary amount of ...

NJ: Well initially, for the first year everybody said it was too slow, and I suppose I was just enjoying the possibility of writing at such length. The second year I quickened it up and everybody liked it more. The third year I quickened it up again and people seemed to like it even more, so that's the story of that.

Questions from the floor:

Question 1: I believe you had plans at one point to make a film on Roger Casement. Is that a possibility still?

NJ: I think in the current climate it would be well almost impossible, the current climate of financing for films and the kind of movies that people go to see. It might be possible, it would be very possible for it to be done as a long form series for BBC television or something like that but it's also – you approach such subjects at your peril because anyone who wrote about Casement, actually Mario Vargas Llosa has just published a novel which apparently is very bad, I haven't read it – has anybody read it? It's kind of a battle zone, these fraught historical areas, you get things thrown at you by academics and stuff. You get radio programmes made about you, about how inaccurate you are – in answer to you I'd love to make a movie about Casement but I don't see how I could at present.

Q2: I love your novel *The Past*. I want to know why you dropped, or it was dropped, the epigraph.

NJ: I dropped the epigraph? What do you mean?

Q2: There was an epigraph in my edition, the 1982 edition, by Yeats and in the new kindle edition there is no epigraph, so I was wondering ...

NJ: I didn't even know that (laughter) – I wasn't even aware – so on the electronic edition they don't include it?

Q2: I thought it was, it must have been a choice,

NJ: No, no, I didn't even know there was a kindle edition, seriously there is a kindle edition of *The Past*?

Q2: Yes, there is a kindle edition.

NJ: Oh I know what's happened, they've rereleased it. They've rereleased it in the United States with a small publisher and they have it on the kindle. God bless them, that's very good. But thank you very much for that. I'll see that they put it back.

Q3: I'm just wondering, is there any nod to Yeats in the title *Byzantium*?

NJ: In the writer's, the writer was Moira Buffine, of course in her mind there was, and she had Saoirse Ronan quote from "Byzantium" yea, and it seemed to be so pretentious I just took it out. In a vampire movie, it's like quoting either of the Yeats poems would seem to be kind of absurd. I did take it out so all that was left was the name of the Boarding house, just the title.

Q3: The Coen Brothers used the "No country for old men" as the title for their film.

NJ: That's from Cormac McCarthy's novel.

Q4: You use the word 'long form,' and I know you've worked, you've done short stories, novels, movies etc. and a TV series, very much currently in fashion. Are you attracted by the possibilities that the 'long form' offers?

NJ: Yea, absolutely – it's a writer's dream, it's extraordinary – you'd love it (to Patrick McCabe), you would.

PMC: I don't know Neil.

NJ: Ah you would.

PMC: Because em ... I watched *Breaking Bad* and I watched every episode. But every other series I can't sustain my interest in them.

NJ: Yea, well what happens is this. You'd write an episode, or you'd have an idea and you'd wonder where this would go, yea, and you'd have to come up with one next week, and in normal circumstances you'd go 'Ah well, maybe it won't go anywhere, maybe it'll fizzle out.' You have to force these characters in, it's like branches of things, it's like growing vegetables in a hothouse or something.

PMC: Like *The Day of the Triffids* (1962).

NJ: Do you understand what I mean? My only experience of it is through “The Borgias”, oh what the hell am I going to write about for the next episode? Ok there’s a guy called Prince Djem, yea, yea, he was murdered, who murdered him, okay maybe – do you understand what I mean, and you begin to flesh it out that way. I would love to do it but I would have to find an interesting subject.

PMC: Well that’s a lot of pressure, how many, how long would you spend on a script for one episode?

NJ: How long would I ...?

PMC: Yea to write it?

NJ: I would have to write basically a – when it comes out in April they would commit after the first two episodes are aired, if figures are good enough they will then commission the next year. So I would have to write ten scripts between April and July, it’s a lot of work. But it’s kind of this pressure that it’s actually, you actually feel you are writing something that somebody will see, you know. The main problem with writing stuff is you feel nobody’s ever going to read this. When you’re in that context you think ‘Oh my God somebody might watch this.’ Obviously somebody will watch it because it’s been made. I enjoyed that but I don’t know if I will be able to do it again, or if I’ll get the opportunity to do it again.

Q5: From your perspective, what are the disadvantages and advantages of adapting a text by a living author to write in your own script when actually making a film?

NJ: Okay, okay – by a living author or a dead author?

Q5: A living author.

NJ: A living author, I don’t know, I mean it’s like it can be a terrible trap you know working with other people’s work. What seems to happen in the film business is that if there is a book already existing it seems to give everybody some kind of security. The books, the things I’ve adapted are Anne Rice’s novel *Interview with the Vampire*, Pat’s book *The Butcher Boy*, Graham Greene’s novel *The End of the Affair* (1951), and Angela Carter’s stories *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), in each of those cases I had a direct response, an immediate response to those pieces of work. The minute I read them I could see there was something crying out to be made there if I could just find the right form for it, do you understand what I mean? But in the absence of that kind of response to a book I wouldn’t know what to do really. I think it’s far more interesting if you can write things directly for the screen, for me, but I don’t always have enough ideas and sometimes a book cries out to be made. I was going to adapt a book called *Skippy Dies* (2010), but in the end I decided not to do that because it’s a huge novel and a movie could only probably disappoint. Somebody else is doing it now. I know Paul Murray the writer is a bit upset that I ended up not doing it. It can be

a bit of a poisoned chalice in a way, if you don't get it absolutely right, the poisoned chalice being the text that you're adapting.

Q6: How do you talk to an actor whose exceptionally well known, probably an enormous ego, if that actor is perhaps, doesn't get it for a particular moment, particular scene, as a director do you feel you have an actor's sensibility yourself or how much latitude do you give actors?

NJ: Yea I know what you mean. I think you have to like actors. I do like them, and sometimes you have to realise that people who have enormous fame have really specific problems – do you understand what I mean – which bring their own insecurities. It can be very difficult to deal with but if you're, I would not like to be Johnny Depp at this moment, I wouldn't like to be Justin Bieber (is that his name?) I would not like to have that crippling fame. A lot of people lust after it, they kind of thirst after it. I think people who have that they have specific problems, and they, actually the other night if you don't mind me talking about Michael Jackson, I was looking at with my sister, he did, have you heard the version that he did of "Smile," the Charlie Chaplin song?

PMC: No.

NJ: Oh it's beautiful. Sorry but I was looking at all of Michael Jackson's old videos, I don't know why, and I think he's the most extraordinary talent and it's the most cornballed thing in the world to say but I think he was absolutely extraordinary and when you look at the things he did from the Jackson 5 to his end, it is heartbreaking. It is like looking at, what's Lisa Minnelli's – Judy Garland, people who have that kind of fame, it's crippling kind of ...

Q6: Being in the fish bowl ...

NJ: Oh, it must be a horrible thing. I wouldn't like to experience it, but the really well known actors I have worked with, unless there are some people who are just total assholes, there are people who have, you know the fame brings them problems, the sense of an enormous ego is often a manifestation of the problems that fame brings them. Generally if you find the actor underneath the star, you can work with them

Q6: It's presumably different for every actor but do you talk to them in technical ways or do you talk to them about character psychology more?

NJ: Yes about psychology, about the part, and the emotions, finding the emotional heart of the part and stuff. It can be challenging, you know what I mean, people that are big stars they are big stars for a reason, because everybody wants to look at them, and some of them are good actors as well.

Q7: You were talking about *Mistaken* as something that tells the truth of your childhood and one of the pleasures for someone from Dublin in particular is travelling

through those places and those little local distinctions like you say between middle class, and really middle class, that mightn't kinda translate or that people mightn't be able to make sense of, so is it easier or can you do that in a way in your writing in a way you can't do in filmmaking just because of the commercial imperative?

NJ: No not really, no, no, although, well if I was to make a movie that was like *Mistaken* now?

Q7: Yea.

NJ: You couldn't express those subtleties, there are some things that movies don't do, isn't there, and one thing they don't do is take time, you know, but I'm glad you recognized it actually because it's, it seems, sometimes I think that the fictions that we write do a disservice to the kind of country that we live in, in a way, or to the reality of it, but I think movies are a different thing, they are about image making really, whereas *Mistaken* could be about, you know, language and inner realities and thoughts.

PMC: What do you mean when you think that sometimes writing does a disservice because I've often wondered about that, like in my own family my brother said that 'I don't know why you're writing that, that's not the way it was, the reason that you wrote that is because there's something wrong with you' (laughter). Like you know, the thing is, maybe he's right?

NJ: Maybe he is right.

PMC: Do you know what I'm saying? Maybe if we were to examine the history of fiction writing, not all of them were functional kind of together people (laughter).

NJ: And they are also haunted by ghosts, aren't they?

PMC: Exactly.

NJ: They are haunted by bigger ghosts than they are, ghosts of em ...

PMC: So.

NJ: In many ways if you look at the shreds of memory of the Irish landscape that you find in Samuel Beckett's work it's far more kind of plangent than anything you'd read coming out of us lot, isn't it, you know what I mean?

PMC: It kind of is really.

NJ: But it's only little scraps in Beckett you hear, you look at *Endgame* or something, you can see a bit of the Wicklow landscape or something in ...

PMC: North Dublin as well in Dante⁵ and all that stuff.

NJ: I know.

5 This is a reference to a story from Beckett's collection *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) entitled "Dante and the Lobster."

Q8: It seems to me in both of your writing, and this follows from what you were saying about there's something wrong with you, which of course there isn't, if there is then in a very good way, but both your writing seems to me in very interesting ways to be obsessed with violence. Is that because it's fun to write about or is there something in particular you find in it or...?

PMC: Well, in my case it's certainly not because it's fun to write about. I don't like writing about it and I'd rather write about tender things, and I do sometimes, but I think that maybe unlike Neil's experience not that I came from a violent household but there certainly was a great degree of repression, and I think that to me kind of suggests the violence in my books in that there is a lot of 'you can't do this, you can't do that.' I mean on an individual level, I mean on an official level, and there are a lot of things ready to burst asunder, which of course they did in many ways and in the books they do in all sorts of personal and metaphysical levels, but it's certainly not because it's fun, no.

NJ: Violence, Oh God, it's like, you're talking about the movies I've made, are you, not the novels?

Q8: Well, you did mention violence in the movies, yea, you talked about taking *Michael Collins* and making it a simple story about violence.

NJ: No, but that was because the story of *Michael Collins* is the story of a man who introduced a specific kind of violence into the political discourse here, isn't it, that's, it's hard, I don't know what to say about violence, but there is something thrilling in smashing things up (laughter), there is, seriously there is.

PMC: Ah there is and great fun to watch.

NJ: There's a great pleasure in building a set and photographing it being torn to pieces in a strange way. I'm not a violent person at all.

PMC: But also drama like, Raymond Chandler said if you're ever stuck in your book have somebody come through the door with a gun.

NJ: I had a job, the only job I ever had that I enjoyed apart from making movies was I used to work demolition, yea for a period and I used to be told, I used to be given a crowbar and a lump hammer and I'd be sent in through it seemed like a perfect Victorian house, a room, and I'd be told to have wrecked that room by lunchtime, smash the entire thing down to bare brick. You'd go in there with one of these masks and just smash things up. It was the greatest fun I'll ever have in my life. There's something about cinema that likes violence and likes it too much, I mean if you saw the last *Batman* movie, I just couldn't watch it, it was, you know, the level of noise actually more than even the violence it just seemed to me to be pornographically addicted to this series of increasingly violent events, I think it's definitely a problem in films.

PMC: It seems to have grown exponentially from the Quentin Tarantino movies of the early '90s onwards, it seems to have become more and more violent.

NJ: I know, yea, absolutely.

PMC: Casual violence.

NJ: Yea.

Q9: I was wondering you mentioned films which have influenced your work, historical films, or older films that have influenced or had an impact on your work, are there any contemporary directors or perhaps Irish directors whose work you admire at the moment?

NJ: Pat?

PMC: Ah yea there are of course, I like Lenny Abrahamson, – what else did I see recently that I really liked – I liked Kirsten Sheridan's *Dollhouse*. I think it's interesting what Neil said the last time, there doesn't seem to have developed an Irish cinema, a sort of an Irish style of filmmaking in the same way as you could suggest about Irish writing, you know.

NJ: I know, yea, yea.

PMC: Loosely, loosely obviously. I mean they're disparate, and there are different individual voices but it's kinda funny that you have a kind of a definable Irish body of work in the last 20 or 30 years in literature but you couldn't really say that about cinema, I don't think so. Maybe it's because it costs money to make movies, and it's piecemeal, but I like them individually. It's just I wouldn't feel I could list off their names the way I could Jim Sheridan, Neil Jordan previous to that, but maybe that's just getting older. I mean less and less movies come out, there was a time when an Irish movie was a big event, now it comes and goes. *Good Vibrations* (2012) came out a really great movie about music in the North of Ireland and the Troubles, only lasted a week, it seems to me very strange.

Q10: I didn't for a moment think I was going to ask this but since the subject of violence came up Neil and sitting down with children very often watching movies we watch as a family every Saturday night and kids choose the movies, and the hero movies, and you mentioned there the violence of the *Batman* movie. I was personally also horrified by it in many ways and I know lots of people like it and I wonder if I could quiz you further to talk a little bit about what, when you're making a movie, how you're thinking about how the depiction of violence works in those sort of things, how you perhaps edit yourself or think about the context when the violence takes place. I find that very interesting.

NJ: I know, I know, it's a strange one because I was going to make a movie called *Fury* this year. It was an incredible violent gang epic thing here and it was meant to be, it was designed in my mind, as a kind of metaphor for what's happened over the last 10 or 15 years, a society where nobody's ever held accountable. But in the end I

just couldn't do it, I didn't want to do it, everything about it was too unpleasant and too violent. I mean it's great to shoot that stuff, things blowing up and all that, but it's the visceral end of cinema that is becoming less and less interesting to me. What's more interesting to me is what you can get this thing to express, and to get it to express something about a character to me is more interesting than creating a blood-fest. All these superhero movies, they are not about violence per se but they are really about noise, aren't they, they are definitely about constantly disparate events that have to keep an audience kind of viscerally excited in a way.

Q11: As a novelist and a director, which do you consider the greatest challenges of adapting a novel for the big screen?

NJ: It's very difficult to adapt a novel to the screen. I think the challenge is to do something that's worth existing in a way, that's the problem that writers and artists grapple with all the time, why should there be something there that wasn't there before, and whether it comes from a novel or not, isn't that the problem you have when you sit down and you're trying to think what will I do next? Would there be any reason for those words to be on the page, or for this piece of film to be exposed. You have to be creating something that's worthwhile in some way, and to me it doesn't matter whether it's from a novel or a film, but it's a strange world that we live in. We're not talking a lot about Ireland, old and new, are we? (laughter)

PMC: We did talk a little bit about it.

NJ: A little bit, okay thank you.

PMC: We can talk a little bit about it.

Q12: I teach your novel *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (2004) every year, and every year the whole class fights about the last bit where the father comes back from the dead, whether it makes it a good novel or a bad novel, and we all have a great fight about it, and I defend you.

NJ: You do, thanks.

Q12: I think it's absolutely great the way you have essentially created a pretend realistic novel until the very end. It's a novel about Irish history and then you just smash it up and wrap it around itself and turn it into something else.

NJ: That would be a wonderful fantasy, a dead person coming back to see you, wouldn't it, hello how are you and the clothes all wet.

PMC: I was dead there for a minute.

NJ: What?

NJ: Thank you. So what's the consensus then, do you ever reach agreement?

Q12: No, no consensus so far, no I just think it's great. And I found it interesting that as far as I know, your movies are more, either one or the other,

NJ: Yea, perhaps you're right. Liam Neeson was desperate to do that, do you know that? To play that father, he wanted to play that father.

PMC: Was there any movement on it?

NJ: Ah, if you've finished a book you don't want to go back to it, do ya, it's like hard you know, but thank you for saying that.

Q13: I've got a question about the role of sound in your films actually. You just mentioned the *Batman* film which I think has an extraordinarily poor sound mix actually but when you think about voices in your films they've got a real musicality to them, they've got particular accents, there's quite a lot of space in the sound in your films, and I was wondering at what point you start thinking about it?

NJ: I don't. You know there are some people who design sequences that are, where the sound is critical, as critical as the photography or the characters.

PMC: Like *The Conversation* (1974).

NJ: Or like – something I saw the other day where sound was so critical, anyway I do find it really refreshing when the sound tells its own story, kind of thing. I have to admit I don't think about it that much. I think more about music and about dialogue, think more about the timbre of somebody's voice. I don't think of constructing things in terms of sound.

PMC: OK then will we wrap it up?

NJ: Thanks very much (applause).

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Valérie Morisson is a lecturer in English at the University of Burgundy, Dijon. She has a background in art history and has been working on Irish art for several years. Her research focuses on Irish contemporary art and visual culture, with an emphasis on its relation to post-nationalist culture. She investigates how political, social, and cultural evolutions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are reflected in visual culture (painting, sculpture, installation, performance, video, photography). Her articles focus on a wide range of subjects ranging from feminist art, the issue of memory and the commemoration of history, to post-nationalist revisionism and the Northern Irish situation as reflected in art. Several of her articles tackle photography and performance art in both an Irish and a European perspective.

Eilís Ní Dhúill is an IRCHSS and Hardiman Scholar currently studying for a PhD at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Central to her research is the exploration

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Terry Phillips is an Honorary Research Fellow of Liverpool Hope University. She was Dean of Arts and Humanities at Liverpool Hope until her retirement in 2010 and is completing a monograph on Irish Literature and the First World War. She has published a number of chapters and journal articles on twentieth-century Irish literature.

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Hannah Wood is a writer originally from Sacramento, California. She has an MFA in playwriting from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and an MA in European and Mediterranean Studies from NYU as well. In addition to her intellectual interests, which include the history of Irish theatre and nationalism, Hannah just finished a novel partially set in Dublin. Her poem "What the Trees Saw" is forthcoming. She currently lives in New York City.