Ondřej Pilný, Radvan Markus, Daniela Theinová, James Little (eds.)

IRELAND: INTERFACES AND DIALOGUES

Irish Studies in Europe

Volume

11

Irish Studies in Europe is a series of peer-reviewed publications in Irish Studies.

Ondřej Pilný, Radvan Markus, Daniela Theinová,
James Little (eds.)

IRELAND:
INTERFACES AND DIALOGUES

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Ireland: Interfaces and Dialogues /
Ondřej Pilný, Radvan Markus, Daniela Theinová, James Little (eds.). -
Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2022
(Irish Studies in Europe; vol. 11)
ISBN 978-3-86821-968-5

Cover design: Brigitta Disseldorf

Further information on the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS) is available at http://www.efacis.eu/.

ISBN 978-3-86821-968-5

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier
Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier
Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier
Tel.: (0651) 41503, Fax: 41504
Internet: http://www.wvttrier.de
E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

IRISH STUDIES IN EUROPE

Irish Studies in Europe is a series of peer-reviewed academic publications in Irish Studies. The series aims to publish new research from within the humanities and social sciences on all aspects of the history, society and culture of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the Irish diaspora. The programme of the series is a deliberate reflection of the objectives of the *European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS)*, under whose aegis it is published.

The "European" dimension suggested by the series' title is an indication of a prioritized, but by no means exclusive, concentration on European perspectives on Irish Studies. With such an "etic" approach the publications in this series contribute to the progress of Irish Studies by providing a special viewpoint on Irish history, society, literature and culture. The series also documents the vitality and wide variety of European traditions of Irish Studies as an inter-, trans- and multi-disciplinary field of research.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors would like to sincerely thank all contributors for submitting their work to the present volume, responding to all queries promptly, and meeting the tight deadlines. A debt of gratitude is owed to the numerous peer reviewers for sharing their expertise and providing the authors with invaluable suggestions, and undertaking the reviews generously at short notice. We are grateful to the series editors, Katharina Rennhak, Hedwig Schwall, and Seán Crosson, for their assistance with bringing this volume to completion, Erwin Otto of WVT for taking care of its publication, and Klára Hutková and Nathalie Lamprecht for transcribing the recordings of the plenary sessions. Thanks go to all participants and guest writers and artists at the EFACIS 2021 conference, who made it such a lively and stimulating event, despite the constraints of the online-only environment. Special gratitude is reserved for our colleagues Clare Wallace and Justin Quinn for co-organizing, and to our wonderful and ever-efficient conference team: Marie Gemrichová, Katy Trompak, Nathalie Lamprecht, and Klára Hutková. Appreciation is due to many other individuals who have helped in various ways with the conference and/or the production of this book, particularly Eleanor Melinn, Bětka Bajgartová, Nessa Cronin, Crónán Ó Doibhlin, Joachim Fischer, Martin Procházka, Kristína Lehutová, Kristína Mizeráková, Kateřina Svatoňová, and Raphaël Ingelbien. Last but certainly not least, heartfelt gratitude is extended to Ambassador Cliona Manahan and her team at the Embassy of Ireland, Prague, whose relentless support of things Irish in the Czech Republic, including EFACIS events, has been beyond exemplary.

This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (reg. no.: CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734) implemented at Charles University, Faculty of Arts. The project is carried out under the ERDF Call "Excellent Research" and its output is aimed at employees of research organizations and Ph.D. students.

The EFACIS 2021 conference and the publication of this book were supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland from the ESP–Irish Studies Programme. The roundtable on Irish documentary cinema was hosted in partnership with the Irish Film Institute.

EUROPEAN UNION
European Structural and Investment Funds
Operational Programme Research,
Development and Education

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
YOUTH AND SPORTS

Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme

INTRODUCTION

James Little

When, in March 2020, we chose the theme of "Interfaces and Dialogues" for the annual conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS), we had little expectation that our primary conference interface would be the computer screen, and that our dialogues would take place over Zoom. Over two years later, as we write the introduction to the collection arising out of that conference (which eventually took place, fully online, in September 2021), the concept of interface has undergone enormous change in our daily lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic, while the role of dialogue has become ever more important in a public sphere increasingly shaped by digital media platforms.[1]

It is in the context of such online platforms that our collection opens, as part of a section entitled "Transnational and Intercultural Interactions". Gavan Titley provides a "transnational reflection" on "the strange life of free speech" in contemporary society, with particular attention given to "the reproduction and contestation of forms of racism in Europe". Central to Titley's essay is an analysis of the incessant circulation of far-right ideas in an online media environment which is inherently unstable. In this context, Titley contends that "the mission of the university includes discriminating between ideas, and this involves closure, actively neglecting those which have been discredited or disproven". He concludes by analyzing the particularity of the Irish public sphere, where a "more sustained mobilization" of the transnational far-right "repertoire" remains a dangerous potential, but warning at the same time about the dangers of proceeding from specific case studies of free-speech controversies to abstract generalizations on "freedom of speech".

Moving from how Ireland functions within a global media interface to Irishness itself as "a favourable interface to open a dialogue about and with conflict zones", Marion Bourdeau's contribution analyzes Colum McCann's representation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in his novel *Apeirogon* (2020). The heart of Bourdeau's analysis is an ethical question about the comparison of conflicts in Ireland and the Middle East: "Is the novel facilitating or forcing intersubjectivity and transculturalism? Is it celebrating differences while underscoring points of connection or encouraging the erasure of cultural diversity by comparing different situations and concluding that they are the same?" She suggests that the ethics at work in McCann's writing are dependent on a balance of dialogues that unbalance his reader, and that his "aesthetic and ethical project revolves around connection".

1 Recordings of the roundtable discussions, poetry reading, and concert which formed part of the conference are available online on the website of the Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University; see <https://irish.ff.cuni.cz/en/2021/06/30/efacis-2021-conference-interfaces-and-dialogues/>.

For his part, Jochen Achilles treats a single performance text, J.M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* (1907), as an interface for intercultural interactions. Contending that "transnationalism and multiculturalism have come to replace the postcolonial paradigm" long seen as the dominant frame for Irish studies, Achilles views three adaptations of Synge's play as "expressions of changes in the cultural imaginary": Mustapha Matura's *The Playboy of the West Indies* (1984); Bisi Adigun and Roddy Doyle's co-authored version of *The Playboy* (2007); and an adaptation by Pan Pan Theatre and the Beijing Oriental Pioneer Theatre (2006). Drawing on Philomena Mullen's image for her lived experience of being "simultaneously Irish and not Irish", Achilles contends that such intercultural adaptations "open up opportunities for more and different experiments with postnational specificities".

As we approach the conclusions of Decades of Centenaries on both sides of the Irish border, focus naturally turns towards "Dialogues with the Past", the rubric for the second section of our collection. Vojtěch Halama sets state commemorative practices in the Republic of Ireland within an international context of "a disintegration of national metanarratives". Within this broader context, Halama homes in on 1966 and 2016, key dates for official commemoration of the 1916 Rising. Between these two commemorations, Halama argues, "the underlying message switched from promoting unity to embracing diversity". Drawing on a series of state archival records and public commemoration practices, Halama maps the specificities of state commemoration as the state changed role from "director" to "coordinator".

While Halama's focus is on official commemoration, Susan Curley Meyer examines a personal dialogue between two participants in the 1916 Rising, focusing on a brooch gifted by Winifred Carney to Grace Gifford-Plunkett. Curley Meyer contextualizes this exchange within the long history of brooch-wearing, as well as analyzing the material contexts in which the Carney-Gifford brooch was made and the symbolic resonances of its classical design. In doing so, she demonstrates "the advantages of adopting multidisciplinary methodologies when attempting to add to established historiographies which consider women, war, and national identity", thus treating disciplinary boundaries themselves as interfaces.

Also drawing on archival sources, Mary McAuliffe focuses on the intimidation of and violence towards women by the Irish Republican Army during the War of Independence. This included physical beatings, threats to their homes and families, and "bobbing" – the forced cropping of hair – on suspicion of having relationships with Royal Irish Constabulary members. McAuliffe claims that such attacks not only attempted to fix the assaulted women in places of social exclusion, but also acted as a reinforcement of the IRA's own image as protectors of their community. McAuliffe focuses on barrack servants, who were typically from the local community, and whose "low-paid, but steady and secure income" was rendered extremely precarious by such violent interventions. These stories "fit within the broader narratives of female victimization, coercion, and shaming during this revolutionary period".

As we know, discriminatory practices against women have by no means been limited to periods of revolution in Ireland, as demonstrated by the existence, island-wide, of mother and baby homes to confine unmarried mothers and their children, institutions which have recently come under sustained scrutiny (see *Final Report*; McCormick et al.). Rachel Andrews examines the social media discourse around a 2021 planning hearing for apartments on the site of one of the most notorious mother and baby homes, Bessborough, where the infant mortality rate reached 68%. Andrews analyzes the tweets of the Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance (@Lost900Bessboro), who campaigned to block construction on the remains of 900 children. Like Titley, Andrews explores the affordances of the digital public sphere, contending that "digital spaces must now be considered among those that provide the conditions for survivors of the Irish carceral state to voice their responses to past injustices".

Michael Lydon's essay examines the line between official and popular remembrance, with an analysis of how Irish popular music has reinterpreted the 1916 Rising. Regarding Irish popular musicians as "authorizing agents" whose music can act as what Sara Cohen terms "authorised heritage discourse", Lydon zooms in on the RTÉ-produced concert *Centenary*, broadcast from the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre in 2016 to widespread acclaim. Lydon's critique of *Centenary* centres on the fact that "the popular musicians fail to reflect on the nationalist and socialist ideologies of the period being commemorated". He then pivots to two examples of "remembrance activism", focusing on the songs of Damien Dempsey in his 2016 album *No Force on Earth*, and their performance at the #Reclaim1916 concert, as well as the musically eclectic duo Zrazy (Carole Nelson and Maria Walsh), and their performance of the song "Women of '16" at Dublin's historically resonant General Post Office.

Anna Falkenau too focuses on musical memory, with a richly detailed examination of folk music revivals in Galway from 1961 to 1981. Drawing on a combination of first-person testimonies, contextualizing scholarship, and a focus on key individuals in the Galway music scene, Falkenau brings to life the many networks which constituted a complex web of traditional and folk music revivals, charting their local, national, and international "flows". She concludes by showing how this unique musical ecosystem gave rise to the formation of the globally successful band De Danann. If we needed reminding of how central music has been to Irish cultural practice, she cites Fred Johnston's memorable comment on Galway pub sessions of the 1970s: "if you didn't play music, there was no other choice, culturally".

Since the 1980s, Ireland has continued to build an international reputation as a remarkable cultural ecosystem, the precarity of which was brought to light during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, we would do well to listen to those on the front-line of cultural production. Two roundtable sessions at EFACIS 2021 gave us the opportunity to do just that. Seán Crosson chaired a roundtable on Irish documentary cinema with renowned film-makers Alan Gilsenan, Gillian Marsh, and Pat Collins. All three described a circuitous career path into their profession, without formal educa-

tion in documentary-making, which contrasts with the increased professionalization of the field today. Among the many other works of the three directors, Gilsenan and Collins spoke respectively about their recent documentaries *The Great Book of Ireland* (2020) and *Henry Glassie: Field Work* (2019), while Marsh gave insight into the making of her documentary *Tomorrow Is Saturday* (2020) on artist Seán Hillen (all three films having been screened in the virtual environment of EFACIS 2021), in which he defines his current goal as being to "save my skin" after decades of not being able to make a living from his extraordinary art.

"How can a person be creative when a person is afraid, when a person is anxious?", asked Maeve Stone during her and Lian Bell's plenary conversation on "Art-making, Activism, and Collaboration", chaired by Clare Wallace. Bell developed this point by commenting on the "struggle with self-confidence" she and many other artists have. These were remarkable and valuable comments to hear from two of Ireland's most innovative performance practitioners. As Katharina Rennhak remarked in the Q+A, this struggle with self-confidence is something shared in the academic sector, and this only stands to increase as all forms of cultural work become increasingly precarious. In spite of this grim overall picture, this conversation raised the possibility of common precarity being a source of solidarity, with organisations like EFACIS playing an important role in bringing together those inside and outside the academy.[2] Bell and Stone's conversation features details of their recent work, their common involvement in #WakingTheFeminists, as well as the connection of this movement to other recent activist campaigns.

The past is not only a foreign country; it can also be terrifying, as the contributions in our closing section, "Hauntings and Traumas", demonstrate. One of the scariest acts of the twentieth century was the US detonation of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha points to the lack of engagement with the event in Anglophone war poetry, and does important work in bringing our attention to Anthony Glavin's little-read "Living in Hiroshima", which she puts into conversation with Eoghan Ó Tuairisc's Irish-language poem on the Hiroshima bombing, "Aifreann na Marbh" (translated by Colbert Kearney as "Mass of the Dead"). Echoing questions raised in Bourdeau's essay about the ethics of transcultural comparisons, Ní Choistealbha's analysis hinges on the ethics of writing about a traumatic event which the author was not present to witness first-hand. In this context, she cites Ariel Dorfman's question: "how can I tell their story / if I was not there?" Ní Choistealbha examines Glavin's research into the bombing before writing the poem, while also pointing to the fact that it remains unfinished, with further manuscript material "un-explored and unpublished to date".

2 See the EFACIS Irish Itinerary Podcast, which was launched during the pandemic and features Irish authors and artists in conversation with Irish studies scholars: <https://www.efacis.eu/podcast>.

Also focusing on the "unexplored and unpublished", Radvan Markus's essay analyzes Máirtín Ó Cadhain's unpublished 1943 play *Typhus*, based on an outbreak of the disease in the author's native area of An Spidéal in November 1942. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work on the plague, and exploring the parallels between Ó Cadhain's text and contemporary government restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid-19, Markus details aspects of the carnivalesque in *Typhus*, paying close attention to variations in speech registers and suggesting a reconsideration of the periodization of the author's work in light of the play. Ó Cadhain's piece was turned down by the Abbey Theatre because, according to Abbey director Earnán de Blaghd (Ernest Blythe), it often happened that "one of the characters speaks for too long without other people interfering with them", and because it was "too short". Given the flourishing of plays structured around monologues in postwar theatre (see Wallace), this rejection was a bad misjudgement, which could be remedied by a full staging of the play.

Cultural ghosts of a different kind feature in Alessandra Boller's essay on forms of hegemonic masculinity in post-Celtic Tiger fiction. Boller takes Gerard Donovan's *Country of the Grand* (2008) and Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (2012) as her case studies, using Jacques Derrida's concept of "hauntology" to "analyse how Ryan and Donovan engage with the spectral presence of stereotypical legacies of Irish (gender) identities in the context of Ireland's recent socio-economic history", specifically the economic crash of 2008. Boller's focus on narrative voice brings to the fore the inability of male characters in these works to voice their fears, highlighting "the need to critically examine stereotypes and expectations that relate to hegemonic masculinity in a moment of disruption and shifting paradigms".

Our concluding contribution, by Jessica Bundschuh, focuses on listicle framing in Michelle Gallen's novel *Big Girl, Small Town* (2020), narrated by Majella O'Neill, a twenty-seven-year-old diagnosed with autism. As Bundschuh points out, for Umberto Eco, the "list is the origin of culture", making "infinity comprehensible". In this context, she argues that lists help Majella make sense of life in the (hypothetical) border town of Aghybogey, where the Troubles resonate through the interactions of its twenty-first-century citizens. Bundschuh consequently considers the novel's use of the drawbridge as a metaphor for a liminal subject who might "usher in change slowly and gingerly at the margins". Significantly, having considered the metaphorical appropriateness of drawbridges in cross-community relations – since they "could serve as bridges when the need arose" – Majella does not share her insight with others. What Bundschuh terms "a *tentative* bridge" can help us "learn how to co-inhabit sites of relationality", charting a possible path towards "a dynamic and *positive* liminality" in the context of post-Brexit disputes around the Irish border.

***

Reviewing the institutional history of Irish studies, Ronan McDonald notes that the disputes between revisionist and postcolonial scholars at the end of the last century

"sucked oxygen away from vital areas and a more expansive vision of Irish Studies" (333). Be that as it may, such disputes also gave a binding force to the field, providing a magnetic pole around which scholars and their works positioned themselves. Our call for papers for EFACIS 2021 took a deliberately expansive approach, reflecting the aim of Charles University's KREAS Project to explore "contact zones with other cultures as a site of productive and mutually enriching dialogue", a call taken up in many of the contributions you will read here.[3] With area studies more broadly having undergone a "global turn" (see Reynolds), the international and European institutions in which Irish studies takes place are in need of examination and debate, not to mention further support. As McDonald points out, "Irish Studies has a national focus, but an inextricably international institutional ecology" (327). In the European context, EFACIS provides a key platform for such an "institutional ecology", which informs much of our work at the Centre for Irish Studies, Prague. Chiming with the Centre's aim to study "Irish culture in European and global contexts",[4] this volume, ranging across the fields of history, literary studies, music studies, theatre and performance studies, film studies, media studies, and the study of material culture, provides a snapshot of some of the most exciting emerging European research on Ireland.

Works Cited

Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth, 2021. 20 May 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4b3d-final-report-of-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes>.

McCormick, Leanne, Sean O'Connell, Olivia Dee, and John Privilege. *Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland: Report Prepared for the Inter-Departmental Working Group*. Belfast: Department of Health, 2021. 20 May 2022. <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/mother-and-baby-homes-and-magdalene-laundries-research-report>.

McDonald, Ronan. "Irish Studies and Its Discontents." *Irish Literature in Transition, 1980-2020*. Ed. Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020. 327-43.

Reynolds, Paige. "Introduction." *The New Irish Studies*. Ed. Paige Reynolds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020. 1-22.

Wallace, Clare, ed. *Monologues: Theatre, Performance, Subjectivity*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006.

3 See "KREAS: Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions for the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World", <https://kreas.ff.cuni.cz/en/>.

4 For details, see "Centre for Irish Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University", <https://irish.ff.cuni.cz/en/>.

TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS

THE STRANGE LIFE OF FREE SPEECH TODAY: A TRANSNATIONAL REFLECTION ON NATIONALISM, RACISM, AND NOISE

Gavan Titley

The Strange Life of Free Speech Today?

The 2021 EFACIS conference theme focused on dialogue and exchange as conditions of tolerance and interculturalism, particularly in light of what it termed the worrying "resurgence of toxic nationalist discourse" in Europe today. My research in recent years has focused on understandings of freedom of speech, an important – if not sufficient – condition for dialogue and exchange. However, this essay reflects not on insufficiency, but disruption.

The contemporary articulations in question unsettle normative relationships between free speech and democratic goods, as these dominant understandings have become bound up in articulating the resurgent and openly aggressive nationalisms in question. Freedom of speech has become symbolically incorporated into some highly exclusionist political projects, and it is this strange life that I propose to reflect on here. This strange life, it turns out, can be rendered legible by examining it, despite its relative novelty, in terms of something more enduring – the reproduction and contestation of forms of racism in Europe. This essay considers these interconnecting developments in a range of contexts. Somewhat unusually for this publication, the analysis takes quite a while to turn to developments in Ireland. It started life as a keynote for the conference, providing a wider context for considerations of these contemporary themes. In the conclusion to this essay version, it speculates on the reasons for their relative absence in Ireland.

Strange Turns

Over the past years I have been writing about understandings of freedom of speech across several European polities during a period punctuated by recurring and patterned 'free speech controversies', or declarations of free speech crisis. Curiously, for a media studies academic, this focus has not emerged directly from questions of communication, as for all its public valency, the idea of "freedom of speech" is of far more disciplinary significance in law and political philosophy (Bonotti and Seglow 2-16), where the emphasis is predominantly on the nature and limits of freedom, rather than the question of what constitutes "speech" and how it is communicatively produced, circulated and experienced. Instead, this interest has been formed by the extent to which these controversies are suffused with the politics of race and racism in a number of involved ways, which can be best introduced through some initial sketches.

My first serious engagement with these questions began in 2015, after the attacks on the office of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. I conducted a research project with colleagues examining the extraordinary political and cultural generativity of these acts of terror in France and elsewhere (Titley et al.). Unsurprisingly, given the lethal targeting of journalists and media workers, the attacks were powerfully hailed as an attack on freedom of speech, and both media organizations and ordinary people rallied in defence of a profession that, as Reporters without Borders noted, was being increasingly targeted by lethal political violence designed to silence (101 journalists were killed globally in 2015; Freedman 217). At the same time, a different politics took shape, one that did not promote solidarity but instead demanded that Muslim people in France *désolidariser,* that is, actively declare and prove their non-solidarity with the terrorists. This essentialist tethering of Muslims to communal and religious difference through pressure for proof of national loyalty centrally involved demands for declarations of fidelity to freedom of speech as a defining European or national value. Thus, one process of essentialization co-produces another, as this powerful rhetoric rendered it as a property of the nation, one that the nation's others must prove they do not refuse, or lack.

While this demand for Muslims in France to prove their non-solidarity with the killers had a particular valence in time and place, it is coherent with a broader 'integrationist' turn in the governance of lived multiculturalism in Western Europe. This shift in governance, prevalent from the mid-2000s onwards, did not demand assimilation as such, nor integration to an ethnicized national culture, but instead fidelity to liberal, republican and democratic values. The problem, as Sivamohan Valluvan lays out in his important book, *The Clamour of Nationalism*, is that "[r]acialised minorities are intuitively represented as having to learn and adopt these liberal principles that are definitive of the nation. The presupposed white citizen is instilled, by default, with a civic universalist ethos while the racialised citizen, first-generation and otherwise, acquires these qualities" (71). This is the first strange turn – what happens when a democratic value is inscribed as a cultural, even civilizationary property?

Another brief vignette serves to introduce a second dimension. In 2017-2018, I spent a year at the University of Helsinki. During this time the presidential election took place, and the candidate for the *Perussuomalaiset* – True Finns party – contested the election on a platform defending free speech against presumed assault from un-named quarters. This, to say the least, was a curious campaign headline in a country consistently ranked near the top of the World Press Freedom Index and assorted civil liberties indices, and at no point did the candidate feel the need to define more clearly the threats it was facing. Instead, and in openly strategic attempt to import this theme from politics elsewhere, the campaign sought to cultivate a sensibility often associated with what is reductively termed "right-wing populism". That is, an affective contention that ordinary people are not free to express themselves, and especially on questions of immigration, where they will be silenced by the accusation of racism. In the familiar 'playbook' of this political performance, the reluctantly political far-right

populist must speak for the people, as the people are not allowed to speak for themselves.

Strange Turns, Familiar Echoes

This notion of a censorious antiracism, while now often indexed to seemingly interminable discussions of 'woke politics' in Anglophone media cultures, has an established, mid-to-late twentieth century transnational history on the conservative and nationalist political right. In *The Fire Is Upon Us*, Nicholas Buccola provides a contextual and narrative history of the debate in Cambridge University in 1965 between James Baldwin and William Buckley Jr. In this year of violence, repression, and resistance, Buckley, founder of the conservative journal *The National Review*, published an essay "Are you Racist?" in which he argued that the word "racist" was being used "indiscriminately", its meaning diluted by making everything into a question of racism, preventing both a focus on "real racism" – that is, Hitler – and also leading to innocent people being denounced for simply trying to describe difficult realities, and tell the truth as they see it (317). Thus, three years before the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., anti-racism was already too censorious, too indiscriminate and uncompromising, it had *already gone too far*. For Buccola, this essay was indicative of the "protean nature of right-wing racial politics in response to the civil rights revolution" (318). That is, as African Americans gained political rights and the focus risked shifting to inequality and the crushing legacies of slavery and segregation, a turn to "color blindness" (192) allowed conservatives to admit to some historical injustice but to use the threshold of civil rights to declare the past over, and thus racism over, and to focus, in the decades that followed, on arguing that inequality was largely the fault of oppressed groups themselves.

The maligned innocence of the ordinary person, cowed into near-silence by the weight of official anti-racist opinion, is also what animates Enoch Powell's so-called "rivers of blood" speech in 1968 to the Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham. While his first imagined constituent, a "middle-aged quite ordinary man" who feared that "in this country in 15-20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man" (Hirsch 48) is the most readily recognized, there is a second such interlocutor in the latter half of the speech, the "only white" living in a formerly respectable street in Wolverhampton, a "woman old-age pensioner" who simply doesn't want to rent rooms to "Negroes". For this she is ostracized at every turn – "when she goes to the shop she is followed by children, charming wide-grinning picaninnies. They cannot speak English, but one word they know. 'Racialist' they chant." (Hirsch 49)

The anxious pensioner is particularly anxious about the future consequences of the 1968 Race Relations Act, the very act Powell was campaigning against when he made his speech, and which introduced initial forms of anti-discrimination legislation to the UK, forbidding the refusal of housing, employment, or services on grounds of colour, ethnicity or origin. However, Powell's underlying objection was to migration as

a process of demographic violence that threatened the basis of specifically English nationhood by not only disrupting Anglo-Saxon heredity but also the socio-cultural reproduction of inherited national characteristics and values. Thus, as Robbie Shilliam notes, for Powell the Race Relations Act made "white English" strangers in their own country, and indeed minoritized them, as the laws denied the "English man" the right to manage his own affairs in his own country (242). This historical shift could only be contrived by elites such as politicians and educationalists shutting down political debate, lecturing ordinary people who knew that their society was changing profoundly about the need not to be prejudiced or "racialist". Powell must speak for the 'silenced' ordinary man, as anti-racism is an elite imposition that artificially re-engineers the nation.

Speaking under the threat of erasure is a key imaginative fixation of nationalist resentment; the authenticity and truth of what is said are an effect of who is trying to 'silence' it. Today, this imaginary is primarily advanced through claims to be defending freedom of speech. Facing down the censorship of the elites means breaking taboos – usually the same taboos, over and over again – and anything that is said in the interests of the people is legitimate. This is the second strange turn. A notion so clearly vested in the epistemological and democratic significance of speech is now taken to mean, as the anthropologist Joan Scott argued when discussing the attempts of the white supremacist Richard Spencer to organize lecture tours on US university campuses, "the right to one's opinion, however unfounded, however ungrounded, and it extends to every venue, every institution" ("On Free Speech" 4). It is the right to make noise, and to regard any response to it as an arbitrary restriction on the freedom of the people who matter.

These are but two major aspects of this strange life, yet they suffice to illustrate a set of deeper problems. The first, as noted, is clearly political, and requires some more probing into why and how the articulation of racism is striated with appeals to freedom. The second, however, is that our traditional frameworks for understanding freedom of speech are inadequate for understanding the productivity of this political incorporation and appropriation. This requires some explanation.

Making Speech Strange Again

The paradigmatic literature on freedom of speech and racism is legal and normative. It reflects that, very often, conflicts over freedom of speech and racism predominantly focus on the limits of permissible speech (Bonotti and Seglow 5-16), such as debates over if and when racist expression comes to constitute hate speech, and what this then means for forms of regulation or redress (Bleich 1-3). It is not to diminish the manifest importance of these paradigms to suggest that the focus on defining limits does not really explain the politics of free speech and racism taking shape.

In part this is because recurrent debates about freedom of speech suffer from what John Durham Peters, in his wonderful book *Courting the Abyss: Free Speech and the*

Liberal Tradition has called their "recursivity", whereby a concrete incident or conflict is rapidly framed in terms of the normative principle and its extent and limits (12-16). These discussions are also often conducted through metaphors – "the slippery slope" most famously – all of which encourage a sense that freedom of speech is a state of achievement that we possess, and risk losing in large part or fully. However, as the linguist Nick Riemer argues,

> As real-life language-users, we never actually encounter some abstract thing called 'speech'. What we encounter is situated language-use [...]. It's a peculiarly modern idea that it could make sense to separate speech *as such* from its content, context and effects in the way that most freedom of speech discussions presuppose. To ignore the differences between different utterances, and sweep them indiscriminately up into the catch-all category 'speech' – as we do when we demand freedom for it – is to frame the debate at a level of generality and abstraction that we never actually experience. (n.pag.)

In his discussion of what he terms "modern liberal free speech theory", Anshuman A. Mondal argues that that tendency to abstraction conceives of freedom as extending across a flat homogenous plane. This landscape is flat and smooth, and, ideally, as you move across it, you should not encounter any obstacles until you hit its outer limits, which are the "legitimate restraints on liberty" enacted by law and institutions, such as tackling the incitement of violence. Any bump and disruption that you do encounter constitutes an infringement, or censorship, a slide on the slippery slope (503-508).

Mondal juxtaposes the "single homogenous plane of liberty" with a topographical model of discourse as liquid, flowing through an irregular and uneven terrain. Here, speech is blocked and diverted by topographical features – law and the state, yes, but also institutions, practices, a wider map of closures, foreclosures, and openings (509-10). But it also flows and moulds, shifting the terrain. This matrix of restriction and possibility is radically differentiated according to our social positioning. And, while it is an obvious point, it is often missed in these debates that context is formative – how speech 'flows' is regulated and enabled differently in different communicative contexts, from a current affairs debate on television, to a parliamentary speech, to a university seminar, to protest in a public place, or posting on a corporate social media platform.

Therefore, if we approach communication as a terrain of contingencies, of closure, foreclosure and exclusion, as well as openings, gaps, and flows, it becomes easier to understand the strangeness of free speech as a question of political, cultural, and media framing, whereby some issues can come to *publicly constitute a crisis of free speech, and others cannot.* The question that follows is why. While such an approach is often regarded, in smooth terrain-style arguments, as insufficient fidelity to a settled, foundational principle, the reality of speech and communication is that many people and communities globally experience repression and marginalization, including of their speech, and only some of this is recognized as part of any putative free speech crisis. That is, certain forms of speech are *rendered legible or illegible as speech that can aspire to be recognized as free speech*. Departing from Mondal's realist topographical model of free speech, we need to examine what can lay claim to recog-

nition as a “free speech issue”, and what forms of restriction, coercion, and limitation cannot, and why. This requires returning to the political dimension of strangeness, and laying out some basic coordinates for understanding the production of contemporary racisms.

Postracial Racism

The idea of postracialism is complex and contested, and freighted with varying questions and controversies across context (Goldberg 1-21). I consequently draw on a very limited understanding of it in this essay, which is to suggest that postracialism is not the straightforward denial of racism, but presumptive control over what it means. Opening this out means starting with thinking about racism as historical. Racism, as Ambalavaner Sivanandan famously put it, “does not stay still” (64). It is given shape through shifting social and economic relations, political practices and ideological inputs, national imaginaries and forms of representation. It demands that we pay attention to how particular populations are racialized in specific historical contexts, through practices and ideas that circulate across national borders. And it demands, as Sivanandan argues, being attentive to how political struggles transform its articulation (56).

The EFACIS keynote from which this essay is developed was conceived of in the wake of sustained struggle. From the summer of 2020 – responding to the extraordinary mobilization of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the United States, following the police murder of George Floyd – vigils and solidarity protests sprang up across European towns and cities. Almost immediately, they became something more than acts of solidarity – they were acts of translation. They contended that if we look here, and not just over there, there is racism to be addressed. It is not exactly the same there as here, but we can make connections. Thus, marches in Paris and elsewhere in France linked the murder of Floyd to that of Adama Traoré, killed by police in 2016. Activists in Greece linked the hyper-visible murder in the US to the invisibilized deaths at the frontier of Fortress Europe, and the implacable immiseration of the camps and grey zones of asylum-seeker containment. Refugee-led movements in Ireland made connections to the human damage inflicted by the inhumane direct provision system. In the Netherlands, campaign groups demanded whether the blackface of the traditional “Black Pete” / St Niklas celebrations could still be regarded as nothing but ‘innocent’ fun for children. Racism, they argued, does not stand still.

European governmental and official reaction to events in the United States initially chimed with the outrage and solidarity manifested by these events and protests. But the tone changed when these acts of connection and translation gathered pace. The response was defensive and prickly, but it drew on established histories of racial exceptionalism. As Sara Salem and Vanessa Thompson have argued (2-4), the twentieth-century history of images of anti-Black violence in the United States has

"served to universalise the North American experience of racism" in Europe, and thus to externalize it. Consequently, the attempt of activists to make links and forge transnational relations between experiences and processes of racism were met with predictable outbursts of political *amour propre* – in the United States there is real racism, but not here, where we all agree racism is wrong, and you cannot accuse Greece, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, of something as serious as racism.

These events capture something very important about postracialism in Europe. Following the defeat of fascism and in the aftermath of the Holocaust, both popular rejection of fascist politics, and state and institutional efforts to repudiate the concept of race, resulted in the profound marginalization of politics explicitly committed to hierarchical, scientifically-inflected ideas of racism (Camus and Lebourg). The discrediting of the idea of race, and of regimes and movements that have come to symbolize the totality of racism, has informed a prevalent sense that racism is predominantly of the past, and defined by its pasts. Barnor Hesse summarizes it in the following way:

> Since the ending of the US civil rights movement, the Cold War and the apartheid regime in South Africa, political discussion of the meaning of racism seems to be over in the West. Its sociality is overwhelmingly conceived as a problem that has largely been overcome. (10)

This historical narrative, of course, has many important contextual variations. Some nations, particularly those forced to contend with fascist and imperial pasts, are freed or have freed themselves of racism. Other nations, of course, have always been free of it. Regardless, it is very different from the historical sensibility advanced by Sivanandan, which refuses how this narrative extracts racism from political economy and social structure, locating it principally in the realm of bad ideas, such as far-right ideology and individual prejudices, which then manifest in the world as racist acts. And, this kind of postracial presumption has important political effects.

The first is a dominant investment in the 'correct' definition of racism. Alana Lentin has described this as a stance of "not racism", that is, that "calling something racist" is only legitimate if it is based on "the predominance of individualist moralism; the reliance on an overly narrow, strictly biological and hierarchical account of racism; and the universalisation of racism as equally practiced by all groups independent of status and power" (411). Further, this investment in a correct definition is not simply about shared understanding. It is a particular kind of demand that is being made in societies dominantly imagined as anti-racist and white, and it is a *demand for substantive control of what racism means*. In the tumult of conflict over what is recognized and recognizable as racism, those, like BLM-affiliated activists in Europe that refuse to restrict themselves to these agreed elements of 'what is really racist', become the ones who are restricting public discussion, and shutting down debate.

This, therefore, is where the question of free speech enters the fray, as it is held that it is antiracists that refuse closure on what racism really means. In this insistence on a reasonable definition, there is racism, and "not racism", it is a question of categorical

certainty. And, if racism is fully located in ideas and ideology, and expressed through intentional speech acts and actions, it can and should be proven to be racism or "not racism". If it is racism, then ideas can be refuted, and attitudes can be changed, ideally through open debate. This operation is conducted on the smooth surface of liberty; short of a threshold of hate speech or incitement, a refusal to engage with the free flow of ideas is regarded as a refusal of democratic values and procedure. It is through this tension that postracialism informs the strange life of free speech.

Firstly, if the *pastness of racism* requires sticking to the 'accepted meaning' of racism, it is also taken as licence to position racialized knowledge, artefacts, and discourses as innocent-once-more, valid subjects of expression because we are all over race, and racism is rejected. The afore-mentioned blackface controversies, for example, have long been framed as free speech issues, where it is not just a right to expression which is claimed, but also, as Gloria Wekker has argued in *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* in relation to *Zwart Piet* ("Black Pete") in the Netherlands, a right to innocence. Innocence means freedom from the accusation of the racism we agree is bad-but-historically-overcome, but also freedom to enjoy the pleasures of racism without inhibition (3-16). Thus the freedom in freedom of speech is interpreted, in this postracial framework, as freedom from what is always seen as arbitrary inhibition, and thus to deny our innocence is to invite not just a resentful defence of freedom, but a desire to offend in the name of freedom, to enact freedom through offence.

It is this kind of desire which permeates the endless spectacles that comprise of contemporary 'free speech crises', spectacles organized by themes of restriction and limit, yet facilitated and shaped by the dynamics of abundant communication. As an example, take the familiar transnational figure of the 'contrarian', the 'controversial' figure who speaks their mind. The idea of the contrarian, if it has any useful meaning, suggests a countervailing public presence, politically ambivalent perhaps, but dedicated above all to seeking out and probing the seams of any stifling consensus or settled orthodoxy. The contemporary contrarian, however, who seeks to recycle familiar racist ideas as heterodox insight, thrives precisely because of the churn and instability of media culture. They depend on the affinity between media circulation and postracial openness to repetitively restage the same debates and confront the same predictable taboos. It is this that explains how Thilo Sarrazin, with *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Abolishes Itself, 2010), Éric Zemmour, with *Le suicide français* (The French Suicide, 2014), and Douglas Murray, with *The Strange Death of Europe* (2017), could essentially write variations on the same 'great replacement' theme while presenting these books as fearless interventions in the unsaid and unsayable. The value of dismally familiar racialized ideas can only be laundered through circulation, through the renewal that comes with actively seeking out opportunities to be volubly 'silenced'.

This genre thrives at the intersection of postracial presumption and speech idealism, recuperating racialized knowledge as an exercise in free thinking, as 'thought experi-

ments' that increase the reasonable plurality of the public sphere. With racism repudiated and closure achieved on its meaning, everything can and should be open, and opened up, again and again. And of course, this endless opening up, again and again, is the very lifeblood of the circulation of discourse in a media economy where people are competing intensively for attention, and where social media are predicated on the ceaseless production and circulation of opinion and reaction.

This combination of discursive closure (definition) and openness (media circulation) poses a real challenge for how we think about freedom of speech and democracy, because contrary to the kind of thin, absolutist ideas that now circulate in media debate, the democratic contribution of speech also involves moments, mechanisms, processes, and mobilizations for closure as a resolution of debate. But, there is no closure in a system of circulation where the same talking points, the same stereotypes, the same mythologies, the same memes, keep constantly demanding engagement, debate, dialogue, the generation of discourse. It is perhaps possible to see, from here, how these conditions have been so generous to one of the issues mentioned in the introduction: far-right and radical nationalist capture of the value of free speech. The freedom being claimed is liberty not from regulation but from any restraint on, *or refusal of*, engagement. The appeal to freedom of speech, in this calculation, means demanding that all contentions are treated as discrete goods in the market-place of ideas; racial science, 'race realism', theories of population replacement, and revisionist histories can be presented as arbitrarily stigmatized contributions to 'diversity of thought'.

The capture of freedom of speech by the complex networks of the transnational far-right should not surprise us. It is a longstanding tactic. Engagement promises to amplify ideas that have often sought pseudo-intellectual plausibility. Refusal to engage promises the publicity of victimhood, and suggests that opponents are the real anti-democrats, resorting to refusal and restriction because they cannot defeat their arguments. It is this tension which is central to the most recent iteration of free speech crises, the putative problem of 'woke' universities.

The Transnational Attack on Academic Freedom

The relation of academic freedom to freedom of speech is often assumed to be one of degree, but it is far more vexed and contradictory. Across contexts that I am familiar with, academic colleagues have been noting a particularly acute kind of conflict between the two. They had encountered students influenced by the dense online networks of far-right ideological production – while not always realizing that this was what was happening to them – who were keen to rehearse arguments, particularly about race and gender, that they had become aware of. Talk about them in class, these YouTube personas would tell them, that's free thinking, that's what freedom of speech is for.

However, as Robert Mark Simpson and Amia Srinivasan have pointed out, academic freedom is not merely the extension of freedom of speech into the university (186ff). To put it somewhat idealistically, the mission of the university includes discriminating between ideas, and this involves closure, actively neglecting those which have been discredited or disproven. Therefore, as they argue in relation to the relation between participation and expertise in university events, "it is no intrinsic affront to the intellectual culture of the university [...] that a person should be deprived of a platform to express her views because of a negative appraisal of her credibility or the content of her views" (206). Similarly, Joan Scott has differentiated between freedom of speech as a "human right" and academic freedom as "a freedom granted in principle by the state to scholars (usually within educational institutions) because their critical activity has been considered vital to the public good, and because it is a self-regulated activity committed to processes of relentless questioning that requires disciplined forms of reading and reasoning" (n.pag.). As Scott notes, there are multiple ways in which states have come to increasingly violate this 'covenant', and a marked instance of this is the idea that academics who teach about, inter alia, race and racism, are abusing academic freedom, and they must be limited in order to protect free speech itself (n.pag.).

The most remarked-upon incidence of this is, of course, in the United States, where, since the start of 2021, there have been rolling attempts in state legislatures to ban the "promotion of divisive concepts" that, the accusation goes, suggest that the US, and/or white people, are "fundamentally racist". Much of this centres on a concocted moral panic about "critical race theory", a very specific theoretical field examining the historical intersection of race-making and legal provision, which is made to stand in for, particularly in the aftermath of the BLM mobilization, the frightening excesses of anti-racism, which seeks to divide the nation by milking white guilt.

Clearly, this is a variation on the established 'colour-blind' politics discussed previously, that to bring race into it is the real racism. But it is also a tactic that understands very well the decontextualizing dynamics of contemporary media and information systems. It doesn't matter that "critical race theory" is a fantasy projection which has nothing substantive to do with its academic existence. The point is circulation; not achieving mastery over meaning but preventing any accepted meaning from taking hold. So, not being able to 'defend your definition' doesn't matter as the politics being pursued is the noise itself, the production of confusion, the satisfactions of endless, repetitive debates.

Despite the very different conditions in which it has been engendered, the debate about academic freedom in France has strange echoes of the critical race panic in the US. It followed the horrendous murder in October 2020 of a high school teacher, Samuel Paty, in a Parisian suburb by a young man of Chechen origin who had come to France as an asylum-seeker. He targeted Paty after an online campaign was waged against him for displaying *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in a classroom discussion.

Amidst the sorrow and tributes, what Mayanthi Fernando has described as a "political theatre" of re-establishing republican authority was launched, targeting Muslim associational life, but also, teaching the *wrong ideas* in universities (n.pag.). In early November 2020, the Minister of National Education, Jean Michel Blanquer, stated that "indigenist, racialist and decolonial ideologies imported from North America" were in part responsible for creating the conditioning that led to Samuel Paty's assassination. Emmanuel Macron criticized academics that "ethnicize social questions" and thus, like critical race theory in Idaho, split the Republic. In February 2021, the Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Frédérique Vidal, castigated the "cancer-like spread" of "Islamo-leftism" within French academia, accusing academics of misusing their positions to disseminate ideologies that promote division in the nation (see Gautier and Zancarini-Fournel 1-16).

It is important to note that Vidal's statement was met with significant push-back from within universities, and it also prompted a debate about the creep of far-right ideas into mainstream political discourse: as the data scientist David Chavalarias demonstrated, the idea of *islamo-gauchisme* – "Islamo-leftism" – was exclusively used on Twitter by far-right accounts between 2017-2020, before it started to appear in such key pronouncements (n.pag.). However, what is equally important to note is how this kind of political spectacle has been replicated across national contexts. Migration researchers in Denmark have, during spring and summer 2021, been subject to orchestrated attacks in parliament, named under parliamentary privilege, and accused of wasting public funds on gender, critical migration, and postcolonial studies (Meret n.pag.) These attacks have been instigated from the radical right, but found sufficient support from other parties. In the UK, in March 2021, the so-called Sewell report into racial disparities in the impacts of Covid-19 set out a definition of racism as "direct animus towards ethnic minorities", and thus that any racial disparities in the impact of covid must, in order to be discussed in terms of racism, be directly tracked back to this animus (Knox).

These attacks, clearly, have different political rationales, but their transnational synchronicity is not an accident. As the pandemic, in the rich world, dissipates in intensity, and after the anti-racist protests that may act as preludes to more dissent to come, a politics has formed that seeks once again to restrict political understandings of racism, and to deny its structural and historical formation. The problem does not lie in our societies, the wounded proposition goes, but in the ideas we use to misrepresent them. Anyone who does not accept closure on racism's meaning seeks to divide where there are no divisions, and does so by importing ideas – for instance, American ideas imported to France, French theory imported to the US – that they seek to impose on society, regardless of their lack of salience.

Stranger Still: The Particulars of the Irish Public Sphere

Keen observers of EFACIS publications will note something eminently strange about this essay – the almost complete lack, thus far, of reference to Ireland. Irish public

culture has simply not witnessed antagonisms being played out around the question of freedom of speech, and there are particular, rather than exceptional reasons for this. The most important is that, in the main contexts under discussion – France, the UK, United States – parts of the political and media establishment are mobilizing to delegitimate antiracist and decolonial social movements whose conjunctural politics is also informed by a demand for a reckoning with the colonial and racist inheritances of the not-quite-finished-past. In the other, more comparable contexts mentioned, such as Finland and Denmark, the 'weaponization' of free speech is primarily – though in the latter case, not exclusively – deployed in the radical right's populist ventriloquism; we can't say what we want in our own country anymore. The political generativity of declaring a 'free speech crisis' has little purchase in terms of politics in Ireland, where dominant forms of nationalism and statism are not overtly dependent on the 'migration/integration problem', and where the revanchist ultra-rightism that has ebbed and flowed in the European post-war party political spectrum has never had any political resonance (Camus and Lebourg 7-34).

Nevertheless, in an intensively transnational media environment, the set pieces from elsewhere constitute attractive repertoires of action. This is most evident among the nascent far-right groups that have emerged and mobilized unevenly from a wider, highly mediated radical right milieu, and who seek to adapt tactics and 'playbooks' from other contexts in search of any form of visibility or traction. The Irish Freedom Party, for example, proclaims "championing free speech" and "opposing political correctness and shutting down debate on vital issues" among its core concerns (McDaid), but in practice this is a predictably derivative word salad half-heartedly in search of a plausible referent in social or political life. This kind of rhetoric was briefly ramped up during a number rallies seeking to oppose the reform of hate speech legislation in early 2020; 'free speech rallies' were held that sought to marshal the defence of a 'sacred principle' as a front for far-right recruitment, but to no real effect (this 'front' approach would have greater, if ephemeral, success during the social dislocation of the pandemic and periods of lockdown, but the free speech framework was relegated to secondary status).

The far-right's half-hearted attempts to mobilize a framework that has proven to be profoundly giving in other political contexts are weirdly mirrored by media commentators' attempts to transpose patterned anxieties about freedom of speech into Irish public culture. *The Irish Times*, for example, published a baffling large selection of opinion pieces in 2021 about the scourge of 'cancel culture', but in every instance these articles moved from a brief exposition of a British or American controversy into abstract homilies as to the value of an embattled freedom of speech, beset from all sides by generational extremism (see, for example, McDowell, McRedmond). In this kind of referential grab-bag, 'free speech crisis' functions as a way of gesturing at manifest antagonisms over the legitimacy of forms of speech in the public sphere, while evading the hard work of understanding these contests over legitimacy by reducing them to the zero-sum game of gauging fidelity to a sacrosanct principle. It remains to

be seen whether there are sufficiently divisive issues vested in real antagonisms that could provoke a more sustained mobilization of this transnational repertoire.

Works Cited

Bleich, Erik. *The Freedom to Be Racist? How the United States and Europe Struggle to Preserve Freedom and Combat Racism.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

Bonotti, Matteo, and Jonathan Seglow. *Free Speech*. Cambridge: Polity, 2021.

Buccola, Nicholas. *The Fire Is upon Us: James Baldwin, William F. Buckley Jr., and the Debate Over Race in America*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2019.

Camus, Jean-Yves, and Nicholas Lebourg. *Far-Right Politics in Europe*. Boston: Harvard UP, 2017.

Chavalarias, David. "'Islamogauchisme': La piège de l'alt-right se referme sur la Macronie." 21 Feb. 2021. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://iscpif.fr/chavalarias/?p=2067>.

Fernando, Mayanthi. "Rinse and Repeat: French Secularism as Political Theatre." *Berkley Forum*. Georgetown University Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. 13 May 2021. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/rinse-and-repeat-french-secularism-as-political-theater?fbclid=IwAR1-hjnVsVPtJJG8Mvbqf4pnj8ajQzpp0Z2Pksca_AkaykrHTvvrKA7UxJQ>.

Freedman, Des. "Media Power and the Framing of the Charlie Hebdo Attacks." *After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism, Free Speech*. Ed. Gavan Titley, Des Freedman, Gholam Khiabany, and Aurelien Mondon. London: Zed Books, 2017. 209-22.

Gautier, Claude, and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel. *De la défense des savoirs critiques*. *Quand le pouvoir s'en prend à l'autonomie de la recherche*. Paris: La Découverte, 2022.

Goldberg, David Theo. *Are We All Postracial Yet?* Cambridge: Polity, 2016.

Hesse, Barnor. "Im/plausible Deniability: Racism's Conceptual Double Bind." *Social Identities* 10.1 (2005): 9-29.

Hirsch, Shirin. *In the Shadow of Enoch Powell. Race, Locality and Resistance*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2018.

Knox, Robert. "Anti-racism, Materialism, and the Sewell Report." *Critical Legal Thinking*. 7 Apr. 2021. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2021/04/07/anti-racism-materialism-and-the-sewell-report/>.

Lentin, Alana. "Beyond Denial: 'Not Racism' as Racist Violence." *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 32.4 (2018): 400-14.

McDaid, Shaun. "What Is the Radical Right in Ireland?" C-Rex Center for Research on Extremism blog. 23 Mar. 2020. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/

english/news-and-events/right-now/2020/what-is-the-radical-right-in-ireland.html>.

McDowell, Michael. “Quidditch Falls to Earth with a Show of Intolerance.” *The Irish Times* 22 Dec. 2021.

McRedmond, Finn. “Sock Puppet Twitter Accounts Part of a Wider Problem in Public Discourse.” *The Irish Times* 13 May 2021.

Meret, Susi. “Attacks on Academic Freedom Escalate in France and Denmark.” *Open Democracy*. 20 July 2021. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/attacks-academic-freedom-escalate-france-and-denmark/>.

Mondal, Anshuman. “The Shape of Free Speech: Rethinking Liberal Free Speech Theory.” *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 32.4 (2018): 503-17.

Peters, John Durham. *Courting the Abyss: Free Speech and the Liberal Tradition.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005.

Riemer, Nick. “Trump’s Social Media Ban, Free Speech and the Left.” *Overland*. 28 Jan. 2021. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://overland.org.au/2021/01/trumps-social-media-ban-free-speech-and-the-left/comment-page-1/>.

Salem, Sara, and Vanessa Thompson. “Old Racisms, New Masks: On the Continuing Discontinuities of Racism and the Erasure of Race in European Contexts.” *Nineteen Sixty Nine: An Ethnic Studies Journal* 3.1 (2016): 1-23.

Scott, Joan W. “On Free Speech and Academic Freedom.” *AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom* 8 (2017). 20 Feb. 2022. <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Scott_0.pdf>.

-----. “What Kind of Freedom Is Academic Freedom?” *Critical Times.* 21 Oct. 2021. 20 Feb. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-9536460>.

Shilliam, Robbie. “Enoch Powell: Britain’s First Neoliberal Politician.” *New Political Economy* 26.2 (2021): 239-49.

Simpson, Robert Mark, and Amia Srinivasan. “No Platforming.” *Academic Freedom*. Ed. Jennifer Lackey. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018. 186-210.

Sivanandan, Ambalavaner. *Communities of Resistance: Writing on Black Struggles for Socialism*. London: Verso, 1990.

Titley, Gavan, Des Freedman, Gholam Khiabany, and Aurelien Mondon, eds. *After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism, Free Speech.* London: Zed Books, 2017.

Valluvan, Sivamohan. *The Clamour of Nationalism. Race and Nation in Twenty-First-Century Britain*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2019.

Wekker, Gloria. *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke UP, 2016.

TRANSCULTURAL DIALOGUE THROUGH CONNECTION: STORYTELLING AS A HOPEFUL INTERFACE IN COLUM MCCANN'S *APEIROGON*

Marion Bourdeau

Introduction

As he was writing his previous novel, *TransAtlantic* (2013), one section of which dealt with the Northern Irish Peace process, Irish writer Colum McCann was told by Senator George Mitchell: "If you think Ireland is complicated, you should try the Middle East." (Rankin) Seven years later, the novelist published *Apeirogon*, which tackles the conflict between Israel and Palestine through the stories of two fathers who each lost a daughter to violence: Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian scholar who was previously jailed for seven years after having been caught planning an attack on Israeli forces aged seventeen, and Rami Elhanan, an Israeli graphic designer and former tank mechanic and soldier in the Israeli Defence Forces. Bassam's daughter Abir was killed by an Israeli soldier's rubber bullet and Rami's daughter Smadar was killed in a Palestinian suicide bomb attack.

The word which gives the novel its title refers to a mathematical figure and is defined in the book as follows: "From the Greek, *apeiron*: to be boundless, to be endless. Alongside the Indo-European root of *per*: to try, to risk." (94b)[1] The novel follows this double orientation as it explores what McCann called "backgrounds of war and trauma" (Rankin) in a rather oblique manner, by highlighting the possible contact points between different human cultures, histories, stories, epistemologies and technologies. The formal choices mimic the contents of the book and give it a highly kaleidoscopic quality as it is made of one thousand and one segments of varying length, nature (textual but also pictorial), and topic.[2] These segments, which may at first seem merely juxtaposed, turn out to be intricately interlaced, and the meaning of the novel stems precisely from these interconnections.

This essay hence studies the thematic and stylistic strategies used by the author to weave a multifaceted – rather than simply dual – pattern of transcultural connections and dialogues through the novel, which constitutes an interface, the ethics of which will be interrogated. In order to do so, it first analyzes the (Northern) Irish–Middle Eastern connection presented in the novel, as it is McCann's point of entry into his

1 The numbers used in the quotations are not page but segment numbers as the novel is divided into 1001 segments. They go from 1 to 500; then 1001; then 500 to 1. To make references to the text clearer in this essay, the segments will be named here as follows: 1-500 (first part of the novel), 1001, 500b-1b (second part).

2 References to *One Thousand and One Nights* are one of the main golden threads in the book; see for instance segments 101, 223-225, 32b, 31b, 27-5b, 15-14b.

subject. It then examines how transcultural connection is created and promoted by various literary strategies. The purposes and effects of the latter raise potential ethical issues; therefore the last part of the essay focuses on storytelling and on the precarious exercise in balance inherent in attempting to produce a text that does not deny that it is necessary to retain some sense of identity, while also trying to transcend essentialist limits.

Part One – (Northern) Irishness as a Passport to Open Dialogue

The (Northern) Irish–Middle Eastern connection is one of the subthemes that underlie the novel. Irishness appears to act as a favourable interface to open a dialogue about and with conflict zones: "McCann's background also helped, Aramin, 56, said, because many Palestinians often feel a sense of solidarity with the Irish. 'We have the same history of conflict.'" (Khatib) McCann acknowledges that albeit conflictual, the Irish experience is in no way perfectly synonymous with the Middle-Eastern one: "I do come from a background of war and trauma, but it's entirely different." (Rankin) Still, (Northern) Irish history constitutes a "contact zone" with Palestinian and Israeli "backgrounds of war and trauma" (Rankin). As the writer says, his Irish identity was a helpful entry point into his story:

> When I was in Palestine, I walked through several checkpoints. But you know, I had also walked through checkpoints as a child in Northern Ireland. And I think that having spent a lot of time in Northern Ireland was very important to me. Having seen the Irish peace process and its completion in 1998 in close-up was helpful in my understanding of what was going on in the Middle East. (Schayan)

Throughout the novel, there are many possible implicit references to echoes between the Troubles and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For instance, segments 415b as well as 149-146b deal with hunger striking. On a more peaceful note, another golden thread in the novel is Smadar's love for Sinéad O'Connor's music (see 149, 152-153, 303, 348 for instance), which is itself linked to the Song of Solomon and the Kabbalah (304b-305b).

Some of the connections are explicitly stated, such as the one between the Separation walls in Belfast and Jerusalem (385-408). Segment 410 is dedicated to Bassam's visit to Belfast: "Bassam was taken by the names of the streets: Palestine, Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus. […] There had, he heard, been many shootings here. […] He recognised the relative ease of being Palestinian here. He was listened to. He was authentic." Other segments, such as 413, highlight the adoption of Middle Eastern politics by the two Northern Irish sides:

> In the 1980s the greatest sale of Israeli flags – outside of Israel itself – was in Northern Ireland, where the Loyalists flew them in defiance of Irish Republicans who had adopted the Palestinian flag: whole housing estates shrouded in either blue and white, or black red white and green.

Much in the same way as the two conflicts are paralleled, so are the peace processes between the various sides; segment 412 is about Senator George Mitchell and the Northern Irish peace process:

> The leaders of the parliamentary parties came to his office to sit down and tell him exactly where they stood. […] Loyalists, Republicans, Sinn Féin, the moderates, the socialists, the Women's Coalition, the vast slalom of acronyms: DUP, UVF, IRA, UFF, RIHA, ABD, RSF, UDA, INLA.

A little further in the novel, segment 416 focuses on the Middle East and plays on formal echoes to confirm the links between the two situations:

> When, in 2009, Mitchell was appointed as special envoy to the Middle East, he had a sudden feeling that he was walking into the middle of another smashed jigsaw – PLO, JDL, DFLP, LEHI, PFLP, ALA, PIJ, CPT, IWPS, ICAHD, AIC, AATW, EIJ, JTJ, ISM, AEI, NIF, ACRI, RHR, BDS, PACBI, BNC – only this time it was so much more difficult to find a straight edge with which to begin.

The connections between the two regions are thus presented, with several elements – explorer Christopher Costigan (see segments 490b-483b, 443b-441b 439-437b), music, but also and above all, paradoxically, conflict – acting as interfaces. Nonetheless, the dialogue thus opened by the novel does not only occur between Ireland and the Middle East. On the contrary, the text functions as a palimpsestic and kaleidoscopic interface allowing for a wider, would-be boundless transcultural dialogue.

Part Two – The Novel as a Palimpsestic and Kaleidoscopic Interface Promoting Dialogue and Connection

It must be acknowledged that due to the very form of the novel, it is difficult for a length-limited research paper to provide an exhaustive analysis of such a rich text, the issues it raises and the formal choices included. For the same reason, listing the various countries, regions, and cultures the novel weaves into its contents and its fabric would be a long and eventually pointless task; rather, this essay will, in the following section, analyze the way transcultural connections and dialogues are created and promoted by various literary strategies, turning the novel into an interface that opens a space for dialogue. While this can be said of all novels, it is particularly remarkable in *Apeirogon* as the text has a defining transcultural orientation. Transculturalism has been defined by König and Rakow (95) as "the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders", with "multipolarity, multiple perspectives, and transformative dynamics" being key. *Apeirogon* embodies this quest by foregrounding its vital importance through the story/stories told, as well as by formally using several literary mechanisms to convey this message.

One of them is the inclusion of human(e) stories, which very often reveal aspects of the lives of real people and systematically include – and sometimes even focus on – seemingly minor details:

> What fascinated Smadar most about her grandfather's story [in Auschwitz] was that a well-dressed man had slipped Yitzak a piece of seed cake at the train station […] Yitzak

> ate the cake in one sitting – he always regretted this, he told Smadar. He wished he had made it last longer, but he kept the piece of newspaper folded in his pocket all the way through his days in the camp. (266)
>
> [Bassam] leaned further forward. The microphone squeaked. A mistake. He leaned back. His jacket was warm. He didn't want to take it off. A pale blue shirt. It would show ovals at the underarms. (24b)

Such anecdotal details create embodied, intimate stories which stand out in the middle of more factual or scientific segments. They are deeply humanising and as such, play an essential role, one which is metareferentially hinted at in segment 85 ("So often, thought Rami, the ordinary can save us"). These details are simply human(e), regardless of national or cultural belonging, and facilitate easy empathy, especially as they often, as in the segments above, involve bodily mechanisms or instincts common to everyone.

In keeping with this focus on the ordinary and the minor to facilitate transcultural dialogues, the novel also relies on the use of empathy-triggering mechanisms such as addresses to the reader's imagination, which call for empathy and intersubjectivity, as illustrated by segments 277 ("Try the occupation of your imagination. Go ahead. Try it.") and 162b ("Imagine one [sound bomb] rolling at your feet."). What neuroscientists have identified as mirror mechanisms help create further empathy between the readers, whatever their nationalities, and the characters:

> The same neural structures activated by the actual execution of actions or by the subjective experience of emotions and sensations are also active when we see others acting or expressing the same emotions and sensations. These mirroring mechanisms have been interpreted as constituting a basic functional mechanism in social cognition, defined as embodied simulation. (Gallese)

Gallese and Wojciehowski go on to explain how embodied simulation helps people connect physically, and therefore emotionally:

> Embodied simulation mediates the capacity to share the meaning of actions, basic motor intentions, feelings, and emotions with others, thus grounding our identification with and connectedness to others. According to this hypothesis, intersubjectivity should be viewed first and foremost as intercorporeity.

While such phenomena occur in the real world between living beings, they also unfold when one is faced with art, including of course literature:

> A fundamental element of aesthetic response to works of art consists of the activation of embodied mechanisms encompassing the simulation of actions, emotions, and corporeal sensations. Mirroring mechanisms and embodied simulation can empirically ground the fundamental role of empathy in aesthetic experience. […] Empathic involvement […] encompasses a series of bodily reactions and bodily feelings of the beholder. (Gallese)

In *Apeirogon*, the inclusion of scenes characterized by a high level of details which make it easier for the reader to visualize the processes described is combined with a focus on banal events or actions, as well as with regular direct addresses to the reader's imagination. Together, they are part of McCann's arsenal to create empathy

and therefore to encourage the connections and the dialogues between his international readers and characters.

What is more, these human(e) stories are spangled with a variety of anecdotes – from all around the world and encompassing multiple fields – which act as metaphorical spaces of dialogue. Throughout its one thousand and one segments, *Apeirogon* indeed dabs in numerous areas of human knowledge, highlighting the connections between them even though they might appear as epistemologically different and geographically disjointed.

First of all, as evidenced by the many nods to *One Thousand and One Nights*, literary intertextuality abounds in the novel, with references to the Bible, to the lives and works of authors such as Borges (101, 306, 10b), Rumi (96), Yeats (96), Darwish (196, 197, 199), Goethe (132b), Artaud (159b), and even to some of McCann's former novels such as *This Side of Brightness* (236-239), *Let the Great World Spin* (through the figure of Philippe Petit: 342, 350-357, 361-363, 365-371, 381-383), or *TransAtlantic* (82, 412, 416, 141b).

Since one of the novel's two protagonists, Rami, works as a graphic designer, it is no surprise that visual arts should also be present in the novel, through textual references to this field but also via the inclusion of photos (27, 153, 317b), reproductions of artworks (234, 374, 31b), blank rectangles (284, 284b), and even a sound diagram (170b).

The multimodal nature of the text reveals its interest in interdisciplinarity, with a striking number of references to various types of art (dance, music, cinema, painting, wire-walking, video games, theatre), as well as to several fields of science (mathematics obviously, but also optics, physics, chemistry, IT, medicine, biology, psychiatry), and the humanities (psychology, post-colonial theory, epistemology, art history, philosophy, translation). The novel gathers these diverse sources of knowledge and creation from all around the world and thus appears as a palimpsestic and kaleidoscopic interface.

This is not to say that *Apeirogon* consists in a mere juxtaposition of anecdotes and facts: quite the contrary. The novel weaves intricate and multiple connections between the various segments and the themes and symbols they feature. It plays on the many ways its formally fragmented contents mirror one another, creating labyrinthine and multidirectional interlacing (see for instance segments 214-220). The manner in which apparently unrelated segments eventually shed new light on others or enable the reader to understand the inclusion of certain elements is a key part of the way the novel operates; it thereby opens spaces of dialogue and understanding. While the readers' inferring task is sometimes rendered useless by some examples of "all-too-obvious imagery" (Peled) and of rather unsubtle underlining of certain ideas or connections, it remains crucial on most occasions. Besides, as the point of view for each segment is not explicitly specified, and as the same themes can often be identified in several successive segments, the transitions are sometimes so fluid that it com-

plicates the interpretation work: it may be easy for the reader to mistake the story as Bassam's (while it is actually Rami's) or Abir's (while it is in fact Smadar's). Such porosity contributes to highlighting the possible existence of a common ground that might act as an interface between the two communities (see for example segments 288-290).

These aesthetic choices are thus structurally efficient, albeit potentially unethical: while underlining the echoes between the different countries and cultures the novel includes, they may also result in negating essential(ist) differences, a consequence of what Fiona McCann calls Colum McCann's – and many others' – (Eurocentric) universalist agenda. Is the novel facilitating or forcing intersubjectivity and transculturalism? Is it celebrating differences while underscoring points of connection or encouraging the erasure of cultural diversity by comparing different situations and concluding that they are the same? Trying to retain some sense of identity while attempting to transcend essentialist lines are the two contradictory poles between which contemporary fiction tries to find its path:

> If I will argue here that the contemporary novel is engaged in a relationship with a new era of modernity […], this is absolutely not to suggest that we have achieved a new, liquid state, in which national, political and material difference has been overcome. If this book argues that it is difficult to avoid a global perspective when thinking about any of our local or national traditions, it does not suggest that we have discovered what Pascale Casanova has recently and influentially called a "world republic of letters", a "literature-world" whose "boundaries and operational laws are not reducible to those of ordinary political space". On the contrary, what this book discovers, in its analysis of the global production of contemporary fiction, is a new sense of the intractable contradictions between the local and the international, and the stubborn persistence of forms of locally embedded material being, that refuse to be eroded […]. (Boxall 8)

Apeirogon is no exception as it strives to achieve a form of balance between contradictory poles, a delicate process the next – and last – part of this essay offers to study.

Part Three – The Stakes of Storytelling

While examining these questions, Marianne Hirsch specifies a key difference between a comparative and a connective approach to culture, identity and history: "[The term connective] eschews any implications that catastrophic histories are comparable, and it thus avoids the competition over suffering that comparative approaches can, at their worst, engender." (206) Such a distinction seems particularly relevant in the case of McCann's fiction, concerned with transcultural exchanges as it is, and of *Apeirogon* in particular, given its focus on the Israeli and Palestinian experience, as well as due to the inclusion of several other national and cultural traditions in the novel. McCann's fiction may, from time to time, be considered to stray towards questionable comparison,[3] naïve universalism and what Palestinian writer and

3 See for instance the part dedicated to Frederick Douglass in *TransAtlantic*, a part which highlights the common ground between the plights of African-American slaves and those

activist Susan Abulhawa calls “the stubborn belief that anything can be solved by the benevolent enthusiasm of well-meaning folks”. Still, it does appear to be connective more than comparative, especially as allowing space and legitimacy for each voice is a recurring ethical concern for the novelist, one which he has consistently voiced and which is explicitly stated several times in the course of the novel, as in segment 273 (“Nobody wants to be expelled from history.”).

Indeed, the message of the novel seems to be that everyone has the right to tell their story/ies, to make sure that the importance of their place or role in history is not erased or minimalized. In *Apeirogon*, the fear that such erasure might happen is explicitly highlighted as both a legitimate concern and as a potential hindrance for peace: “It struck him early on that people were afraid of the enemy because they were terrified that their lives might get diluted, that they might lose themselves in the tangle of knowing each other.” (277) What therefore appears as the moral of the story is that retaining some sense of identity is actually crucial to being able to connect and, eventually, to transcend essentialist lines. Whether or not this is enough to save the novel from being what Abulhawa calls “another colonialist misstep” written “with a sense of solidarity and a desire to foster ‘dialogue’” but exemplifying how “it is possible to do great harm with the noblest of intentions”, is far beyond the reaches and purposes of this essay. What clearly stands out, however, is that the novel highlights the power of stories and storytelling, showcasing how much is at stake in the storytelling process. The latter, along with what might be called the “storylistening” process, is indeed at the core of the novel, through Rami’s and Bassam’s activism. McCann’s focus has been on storytelling ever since the beginning of his career as a fiction writer, but this focus has distinctly sharpened since works such as *Zoli* (2006) and *TransAtlantic*, with *Apeirogon* marking the consecration of this theme.

Not only is storytelling diegetically instrumental in the stories he tells, but it also plays a defining role in the aesthetics and the ethics of his literature; Alison Garden argues that “it is able to subvert the epistemic violence of imperialism through its embodied nature; therefore storytelling can be understood as a form of anticolonial praxis and McCann’s use of it strengthens the (post)colonial aesthetic of his work” (279). Garden writes these lines about *Zoli*, which told the story of a Romani poet and singer during the Second World War and the Communist regime in Eastern Europe. Along with *Dancer* (2003), which used a fictional version of Rudolf Nureyev as its prism to portray the Eastern and Western societies throughout the course of the second half of the twentieth century, *Zoli* marks a turn in McCann’s fiction. The

---

of the Irish population facing British rule, offering a variation on the questionable motif of what Negra calls the “flexible racial status of Irishness” (2), defined as follows by Innes: “In the context of the British Empire and the Darwinian evolutionary theory of the mid-19th century, the Irish were often seen as an in-between race, belonging not only to what Bhabha has defined as the ambivalent world of the ‘not quite/not white’ but also to the ‘not quite/not black’” (14). See also Kiberd, Eagan, and Wilson.

author had always incorporated historical and social elements, in *This Side of Brightness* (1998) for instance, but also in short stories such as the ones in the collection *Everything in This Country Must* (2000), which focuses on the Northern Irish Troubles. However, since *Dancer* and *Zoli* he has started to use real people – mostly artists, as in *Let the Great World Spin* (2009), but also politicians such as Senator George Mitchell or the activist Frederick Douglass in *TransAtlantic* – to act as grounding elements around which multiple storylines expand, giving voice to characters representing those usually forgotten by history. In this general economy of McCann's corpus, opting to focus on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can therefore be seen as simply another way for McCann to continue his investigation of the storytelling possibilities offered by the coincidences between history and fiction.

These points of confluence between stories and history, but also between stories, history, and space – which, as highlighted by the "spatial turn" in critical theory, cannot be dissociated from history – are also part and parcel of metamodernist literature, which "emerges from, and reacts to, the postmodern as much as it is a cultural logic that corresponds to today's stage of global capitalism" according to van den Akker and Vermeulen (5-6). They explain that metamodernism "oscillates between what we may call […] postmodern and pre-postmodern (and often modern) predilections: between irony and enthusiasm, between sarcasm and sincerity, […] between deconstruction and construction and so forth" (11). This orientation is quite in keeping with the three major trends which Boxall identifies in twenty-first-century fiction, namely temporality, the real, and embodiment, resulting in literary texts expressing feelings of uncertainty about our time but also committing to the materiality of history, as they are fuelled by a fresh sense of awareness of the past as well as by the ethical obligation to bear witness to it (see Boxall 13). In order to do so,

> [r]ecent narratives take their cue from postmodernist insights and deconstructive impulses, but explore the ways in which fictionality and meta-referentiality may serve in the endeavour to reconstruct some kind of meaning that allows for intersubjective communication, for human connection and for a paradoxical authenticity. (Huber and Funk 153)

Apeirogon, with its fragmented form which yet suggests and encourages connection and a certain form of materiality, exemplifies this trend, much in the same way as it may be said to embody the metamodern stance and sensibility, which, according to Vermeulen and van den Akker (5), can be defined as "a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism" used to describe and interrogate the aspects and ethics of the contemporary world.

The ethics of the novel are therefore to be understood in this larger perspective; it is all the more crucial as the topics of the ethics and aesthetics of (story)telling are omnipresent in the text – especially as regards the sense of individual and cultural identity, and therefore the question of transculturalism and its potential ethical pitfalls such as blind, oppressive universalism. Another ethical concern foregrounded by the novel has to do with Rami's and Bassam's activism: they fight for reconciliation between their two peoples and as such, they frequently have to tell and re-tell the stories of their daughters' deaths. This leads them to think about and to question the

way they tell their stories (see 89, 90, 91), but also the legitimacy of their initiative: Rami wonders whether he is not, in fact, exploiting his grief (see 500). The novel also consistently tackles the theme of manipulation through artistic creation (see 260-263), especially under authoritarian political regimes, while also raising the issue of whose truth gets to be told (see segments 146 vs. 148, or 100b vs. 96b). The reader is thus frequently called on to ponder on these issues and is invited to keep a critical mind while being told a story.

While these warnings appear regularly, McCann has argued that the novel is above all a celebration of what (ethical) storytelling is and can do:

> In writing *Apeirogon*, I followed my different obsessions, and they always ended up coming back to these two girls: 13-year-old Smadar and 10-year-old Abir. And then **I started to realize that from one story is all stories**. In that way we're all complicit. **I felt it was my job as a novelist to go in and connect all the stories back towards these acts of violence that were perpetrated on these girls**. […] If I discovered anything, it's that **I had nothing to say except to reflect the stories of Rami and Bassam in a profound and poetic way so that people will look at it and be changed, shifted, curious**. (Rankin)[4]

In the light of the last part of this quotation (and of course the events that are at the origin of the story), it is no surprise that in *Apeirogon*, storytelling should often be associated with the lexical fields of violence and opening, as exemplified in segment 89:

> It was infinitesimal, yes, but something pulsed at its core, something spare, original, **nuclear**: he liked that word, *nuclear*. **The atoms of his story pressed against one another**. The force of what he wanted to say. […] He wanted to waken the sleep in his listeners. To see a **jolt** in them. **To see an eye open**. Or a lifted eyebrow. That was enough. **A crack in the wall**, he said. **A crease of doubt**. Anything.

As an example of the power of storytelling, the novel showcases Bassam's evolution from a member of the Fatah to a member of an organisation advocating for peace and reconciliation. The role of storytelling in this radical change is highlighted in segment 196: "It was only in the fourth year of his seven-year sentence – after watching a documentary in his cell – that **Bassam's balance got all knocked to hell.**" This documentary was about the Shoah, and it radically upset all of Bassam's certainties about the people he considered the Enemy. Bassam is therefore the embodiment of how an act (and/or a piece) of storytelling has the ability to create a form of dynamic, positive unbalance. The way this story is foregrounded – the details of Bassam's subsequent trajectory are told at length afterwards – hints that the message that McCann wants his novel to convey is that storytelling is essential to create connections and, thereby, a better world. This impression is reinforced by the inclusion, in segment 254, of a quotation by Freud: "Anything which creates emotional ties between human beings inevitably counteracts war." This sentence resonates with the actions of the organisations real-life Rami and Bassam take part in, the Parents' Circle and Combatants for Peace. It also finds an echo in the missions of McCann's own non-profit organisation, *Narrative 4*, which he co-created in 2012

4 In the entire essay, unless otherwise specified, all bold type in quotations is mine.

alongside Lisa Consiglio, and whose motto is "Share today. Change tomorrow." It is described on its website as follows:

> Narrative 4 is a global organization driven by artists, shaped by educators and led by students. Our core methodology, the story exchange, is designed to help students understand that their voices, stories, actions and lives matter, and that they have the power to change, rebuild and revolutionize systems.

It aims to have children and young adults from very different backgrounds exchange stories. They are paired with another person, to whom they tell a personal story; their partner then has to re-tell the same story in the first person, and vice-versa. The organization works nationally, but also internationally, and has been focusing both on in-person, local, and remote exchange. Its aim is therefore to put transcultural, embodied empathy into practice through story exchange, in the hope of a better, common future. The novel *Apeirogon*, which focuses on Bassam and Rami who travel the world telling their daughters' stories to promote reconciliation, is thus a sort of literary companion to its author's real-life organisation, as both shine a light on the ethical potential of connection through storytelling.

Conclusion – "It will not be over until we talk" (65)

"*Survival, in fact, is about the connection between things.*"[5] As shown in this essay, and as illustrated by the inclusion, in segment 153b, of this quotation by Edward Said, McCann's aesthetic and ethical project revolves around connection. In *Apeirogon*, the three main tools that are wielded by the author to create and promote connection are the following: first, multipolarity, with the inclusion of multiple perspectives and transdisciplinarity; second, a focus on transformative dynamics, both for the characters at the level of the plot and for the reader-citizen at the level of the real world; third, an insistence on the power of stories and inclusive storytelling.

Thus, the figure of the apeirogon, "a shape with a countably infinite number of sides" (95b), is not only used for its ability to evoke multiplicity, but also because it reflects life's potential for polymorphism. It also alludes to the endless possibility for multidirectional connection allowing to shed new light and understanding on the various parts of what is actually a whole:

> As a whole, an apeirogon approaches the shape of a circle, but a magnified view of a small piece appears to be a straight line. One can finally arrive at any point within the whole. Anywhere is reachable. Anything is possible, even the seemingly impossible. At the same time, one can arrive anywhere within an apeirogon and the entirety of the shape is complicit in the journey, even that which has not yet been imagined. (93b)

This journey is fuelled by connections, which the text celebrates while acknowledging the legitimacy of persisting differences. *Apeirogon* can thus be read as a quest – successful or not – for an ethically balanced text aiming to unbalance its readers through a kaleidoscopic (or apeirogonal) pattern of dialogue and interaction.

5 Original italics.

The power, ethics, and aesthetics of storytelling, as well as the role of the latter in preventing conflict are foregrounded as fundamental as they provide this web of connection(s). Walter Benjamin (see 87-107 in particular) wrote that the storyteller supplies stories of experience with the aim of opening up a communal dialogue and a communal space. In this light, and in keeping with the rest of his real life and fictional work, *Apeirogon* embodies McCann's contemporary and transcultural take on Ireland's storytelling tradition.

Works Cited

Abulhawa, Susan. "Apeirogon: Another Colonialist Misstep in Commercial Publishing." *Al Jazeera.* 11 March 2020. 17 Jan. 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/ 3/11/apeirogon-another-colonialist-misstep-in-commercial-publishing>.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Fontana, 1968.

Boxall, Peter. *Twenty-First-Century Fiction*: *A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013.

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Trans. M.B. DeBevoise. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004.

Eagan, Catherine M. "Still 'Black' And 'Proud': Irish America and the Racial Politics of Hibernophilia." *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture*. Ed. Diane Negra. Durham/London: Durham UP, 2006. 20-63.

Gallese, Vittorio. "Seeing Art… Beyond Vision. Liberated Embodied Simulation in Aesthetic Experience." *Seeing with the Eyes Closed.* Ed. A. Abbushi, I. Franke, and I. Mommenejad. Venice: Association for Neuroesthetics Symposium at the Guggenheim Collection, 2010. N. pag. 21 Apr. 2022. <https://johnbanksclass.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/vitorio-gallese-seeing-art-guggenheim_2011.pdf>.

Gallese, Vittorio, and Hannah Wojciehowski. "How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology." *California Italian Studies* 2.1 (2011). 13 Jan. 2022. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3jg726c2#main>.

Garden, Alison. "Empathy, Alterity and the Transnational Imagination in the Work of Colum McCann." PhD diss. University of Edinburgh, 2014.

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia UP, 2012.

Huber, Irmtraud, and Wolfgang Funk. "Reconstructing Depth: Authentic Fiction and Responsibility." *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect and Depth After Post-modernism*. Ed. Timotheus Vermeulen, Allison Gibbons, and Robin van den Akker. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017. 151-66.

Innes, Catherine L. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

Khatib, Joumana. “How Colum McCann Shaped Loss Into a Book.” *The New York Times* 17 Feb. 2020, updated 3 June 2021. 17 Jan. 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/17/books/colum-mccann-apeirogon-israel-palestine.html>.

Kiberd, Declan. “White Skins, Black Masks: Celticism and Negritude.” *The Irish Writer and the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 133-45.

König, Daniel, and Katja Rakow. “The Transcultural Approach Within a Disciplinary Framework: An Introduction.” *Transcultural Studies* 7.2 (2016): 89-100.

McCann, Colum. *Apeirogon*. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2020.

-----. *Narrative 4* website. 13 Jan. 2022. <https://narrative4.com/>.

McCann, Fiona. “Conflict and Care: Edna O’Brien’s *Girl* (2019), Colum McCann’s *Apeirogon* (2020), and the Globalization of Irish Literature.” Oral presentation at the 2021 SOFEIR Conference, University of Paris Nanterre.

Negra, Diane. “The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture”. *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture*. Ed. Diane Negra. Durham/London: Durham UP, 2006. 1-19.

Peled, Daniella. “Colum McCann’s *Apeirogon* Sheds Imaginative Light on a Seemingly Endless Conflict.” *Prospect Magazine.* 1 Apr. 2020. 17 Jan. 2022. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/colum-mccann-apeirogon-review-booker-prize>.

Rankin, Seija. “*Apeirogon* Author Colum McCann on Cultural Appropriation versus Celebration.” *Entertainment Weekly.* 25 Feb. 2020. 17 Jan. 2022. <https://ew.com/author-interviews/2020/02/25/colum-mccann-apeirogon-american-dirt-interview/>.

Riaz, Schayan. “Interview with Irish Author Colum McCann. ‘Apeirogon’ – An Entire Kaleidoscope of Pain.” *Qantara.* 25 Jan. 2021. 17 Jan. 2022. <https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-irish-author-colum-mccann-apeirogon-an-entire-kaleidoscope-of-pain>.

van den Akker, Robin, and Timotheus Vermeulen. “Periodising the 2000s, or, the Emergence of Metamodernism.” *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect and Depth After Postmodernism.* Ed. Timotheus Vermeulen, Allison Gibbons, and Robin van den Akker. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017. 1-19.

Vermeulen, Timotheus, and Robin van den Akker. “Notes on Metamodernism.” *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2.1 (2010): 1-14.

Wilson, David. “Whiteness and Irish Experience in North America.” *University of Toronto Journal of British Studies* 44.1 (2005): 153-60.

SYNGE'S *PLAYBOY* AS INTERCULTURAL CONTACT ZONE: THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE WESTERN WORLD

Jochen Achilles

Multiculturalism, Adaptation, and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907)

In the last decade of the twentieth century, when "multinational corporations [...] settled on the island to take advantage of generous tax concessions and subsidies, as well as an English-speaking labor force", Irish self-definition saw its latest substantial change (Reynolds 4; see Morash and Richards 122-23). The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 brought the violence in Northern Ireland to a halt (McDonald 329) and Celtic Tiger affluence accelerated Ireland's transition from an agrarian to a high-tech player in a globalized economy, marked not only by emigration and a large diaspora but, conversely, also by immigration and ethnic diversity: "[A] largely agricultural state became a multiethnic and multicultural nation heavily dependent on multilateral trade" (Kao 199; see Reynolds 2-5).

The new social situation, assessed in studies such as Carmen Kuhling and Kieran Keohane's *Cosmopolitan Ireland: Globalisation and Quality of Life* (2007), challenges the postcolonial understanding of Irish society. As the economic crisis of 2008 slowed but did not stop immigration, demographic change persists (Morash and Richards 136-37).[1] Unitary nationhood, ardently embraced in earlier periods in the Irish context, is increasingly superseded by multiplicity and a diversification of identities, which, in the words of Stuart Hall, define themselves "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference" (402). Transnationalism and multiculturalism have come to replace the postcolonial paradigm, in which Ireland figured as an oppressed and victimized nation. As the "Celtic Tiger's excesses of the late 1990s and early 2000s perhaps made Irish self-comparison with the wretched of the earth unseemly", Ireland begins to hover ambivalently "between colony and colonizer" (McDonald 339).

In addition, digital technologies render concepts of Irishness increasingly fluid, changing the ways in which Ireland is conceived of and understood in the computer age. Realities are being processed as media representations, which take their place. In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) Jean Baudrillard maintains that it is "a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (2). In this vein Patrick Lonergan registers

1 A socio-psychological analysis of the vulnerability of male immigrants in Ireland to self-images of hegemonic masculinity as a compensation for social and economic marginalization can be found in King, "Three Kings" 22-28. King's essay also discusses the impact of the economic crisis in 2008 on the situation of immigrants and their notions of masculinity (23-24, 26).

a cultural deterritorialization of Irishness, which begins to function "as a brand – a commodified abstraction that gives meaning to its purchaser instead of signifying the physical territory of a nation" (*Theatre and Globalization* 28). Paige Reynolds adds in *The New Irish Studies* (2020) that the "terms 'Irish writer' or 'Irish literature,' once aligned neatly with the author's nationality or the text's setting, are now moving targets that reflect the durability and adaptability of Irish writing in the present moment" (4). Shared cultural diversification leads to transnational and interdisciplinary homogenization.

Not only is Irish literature becoming increasingly hybrid and multicultural, the New Irish Studies are also pursuing trends which are not far away from the principles of the New American Studies, for example. In "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives" (1994) Donald Pease writes that the New American Studies are dissociating themselves from the traditional meta-narrative of national unity and are embracing class-, race-, and gender-based demands of social movements, which deconstruct nationhood (4). The notion of a unitary United States is critiqued in the name of minority groups, who are disenfranchised by an idea of unity which excludes them. The New Irish Studies diagnose a similar postnationalist dissolution of binaries, a blurring of the contours of what Irishness means and, at the same time, a greater interconnectedness of Ireland and the Irish within Europe and the globe.

As the National Theatre Movement of Yeats, Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, and Synge provided the dominant cultural expression of the nationalist paradigm of Irish self-definition around the turn of the twentieth century, the drama of Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Frank McGuinness, Dermot Bolger, Enda Walsh, Christina Reid, Marina Carr, and many others has reorganized old patterns into new syntheses on an intercultural basis from the 1980s onwards. The dissociation of cultural spaces, the hybridization of identities, and the constructedness of what passes for real define many contemporary Irish art works, from London Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's American movie *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017) to *The Ferryman* (2017), English dramatist Jez Butterworth's play on the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

In Dermot Bolger's plays *In High Germany* (1990/1992) and *The Parting Glass* (2010) Ireland's national soccer team turns into the composite image of a multiculturally redefined national identity. It replaces more cohesive, unitary images of Ireland as either an old woman, who is rejuvenated through the blood sacrifice of the young men that passionately fight for her, as in Yeats and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), or as a house that has to be renovated once independence is reached, as Sean O'Casey suggests in *Juno and the Paycock* (1923). Contemporary Caribbean, African, and Chinese "transpositional adaptation[s]" (Sanders 26; see Rees) of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* can be considered expressions of changes in the cultural imaginary. Embedded in specific historical situations, they turn Synge's masterpiece into an intercultural contact zone between familiarity and

otherness. These adaptations deal with options of interculturalism but also represent forms of hybridity themselves, as they aesthetically, structurally, and politically transform Synge's classic.

The development of a stable self-image in the face of opposition, resistance to the powers that be, resilience in adversity are at the heart of Synge's *Playboy*. The initiation story of youthful Christy Mahon is a performative narrative of growing self-awareness, which finally leads to a new attitude and a liberated life with a differently calibrated distribution of power and leadership. Christy's increasingly fabricated tale of his parricide develops into "the enabling condition for his transformation" (Townsend 53). A century before the age of social media, the play demonstrates how closely framing, storytelling, and viable self-images are intertwined.

That Christy's adolescent rebellion against paternal authority is also an ambiguous metaphor of political transformation generates the play's complexity and is responsible for its lasting appeal. Christy "promises to frighten away the colonial police" and "rekindles the town's resistance to the state – to its peelers, licences and laws" (Townsend 54, 55). In *Inventing Ireland* (1995) Declan Kiberd reads Christy's development as an anti-colonial political allegory, in which Old Mahon's colonialist dominance clashes with Christy's (genuine) and the villagers' (only pretended) anti-authoritarianism, a process which corresponds to "Frantz Fanon's dialectic of decolonization, from Occupation, though [*sic*] nationalism, to liberation" (184).

What this liberation signifies on the social and political plane is not easy to gauge. Sarah L. Townsend suggests that it translates into a form of "cosmopolitan-nationalist liberation" (47), which transcends national, religious, ethnic, and political demarcations and restrictions. It can be associated with the Fifth Province described in the 1977 first issue of the newly founded journal *The Crane Bag*. The Fifth Province is the ancient notion of an imaginary meeting ground where the conflicts of the four provinces of Ireland can be reconciled and resolved (Townsend 49). It is a consummation devoutly to be wished, a terrain which provides orientation but cannot be entered. Like the trajectory of Christy's emancipation it is comprehensive in its promise but hazy in its concrete contours. In a more transnational perspective it foreshadows Edward Soja's Thirdspace, "moving beyond entrenched boundaries, a margin or edge where ties can be severed and also where new ties can be forged. It can be mapped but never captured in conventional cartographies; it can be creatively imagined but obtains meaning only when practised and fully *lived*" (Soja 276; italics in original).

Intercultural adaptations of *The Playboy of the Western World* seize on Christy as the model decolonizer suggested by Kiberd and Townsend. Synge's quintessentially Irish *Playboy* thus develops into a "paradigmatic example […] of an emergent intercultural Irish theatre" (McIvor 72; see Lonergan, *Irish Drama* 125; Morash and Richards 127-44). The chief feature which makes Synge's play adaptable to distant lands and their impact on the Emerald Isle is its moving demonstration of the way personal and collective identities are forged and constructed. These identity constructions depend

on projections from outside which, by processes of internalization and instinctual self-fashioning, are converted into what we call ourselves. The emotional depth of this dramatization of identity formation turns Christy into the Playboy not only of the Western world but of many worlds (McIvor 40).

Over the last thirty-five years this potential for re-interpretation has been mined largely by three adaptations.[2] Mustapha Matura's 1984 *The Playboy of the West Indies*, which primarily explores intercultural parallels between communities in rural areas on the West coast of Ireland and the East coast of Trinidad, is by far the earliest of these plays. An African and a Chinese version of Synge's *Playboy*, produced between 2006 and 2009, are not informed by ethnographic comparability but motivated by the African and Asian immigration to Ireland since the 1990s. In these processes of transposition intercultural convergences but also historical developments between the 1980s and the early twenty-first century come to the fore. Different accentuations, triggered by changing political perspectives, distinguish these versions from each other.

The Playboy of the West Indies (1984) – Cosmopolitan Rebellion and Communal Xenophobia

Trinidad-born playwright Mustapha Matura's *The Playboy of the West Indies* transposes the plot of Synge's classic from the Mayo *shebeen* to a rum shop in Mayaro, an actual fishing village on Trinidad's East coast, in 1950. The cultural differences of locale are foregrounded. Both Peggy and Ken, the Pegeen and Christy replacements, are described as being "of African origin" (Matura 9, 17). Ken is a crab catcher and nature lover, who likes swimming in the lagoon (27). He excels not in sports on the beach but in a regatta on Discovery Day in honor of Christopher Columbus (32, 38, 51). The Caribbean Christy hits his father Mac with a cutlass, not a loy, "an he dead like a ripe mango, squash like one too" (21). The villagers drink rum instead of porter and do not dig potatoes but cut cane instead (21). Changes in cultural positioning, characterization, and linguistic expression are very prominent in Matura's *Playboy of the West Indies*. There are also changes of plot and characterization (40-41).

Matura's play is set in 1950, when Trinidad and Tobago were still under British rule, similar to Ireland in 1907. But colonial oppression, a moving force in Synge's original, does not have a plot-driving function in Matura's version. Direct references to oppression and the fight for freedom are scarce. In Mayaro racial discrimination seems to have largely merged with bureaucratic chicanery (10). At one point the village girls invoke the fight for freedom by the slaves in Haiti: "Drink, drink ter slaves dat run off wit cattle dey work for. De slaves a Haiti who rise up on de French an win de freedom,

2 There are other adaptations, which are more loosely related to Synge's original: the 1998 *Play-boy* by Desperate Optimists, which "pushes Synge's work beyond representation" (Morash and Richards 142), and "Brad Turner's 1994 Canadian film *Paris or Somewhere*, which transposes the play's characters and plot to smalltown Saskatchewan" (Morash and Richards 144).

ter Toussaint L'Ouverture" (43). This reference to colonial history stands alone, however, and is without consequence. There is very little contextualization and integration of this dimension into the action of the play.

The Mayaro villagers' reaction to Ken's attempt at father-slaying before their very eyes is meaner but also less politicized than the parallel events in Synge's version. In the original, Pegeen blows the bellows and burns Christy's leg with a sod, as the Mayoites want to tie and hand him over to the police (117). In the West Indies, Peggy drops a noose over Ken's head and holds the rope for her neighbours to hang him on an "almond tree" (75; see 45, 77) themselves. To complete her treachery, Peggy invents a story which will cover up Ken's lynching on the beach. She plans to "go say a turn 'im down an he string up heself" (76), as if he committed suicide because she jilted him. The ending of *The Playboy of the West Indies* raises sharper moral questions with regard to the villagers and especially Peggy as their ringleader than Synge's original, but it hardly raises wider political ones.[3]

Self-determined individuals like Mac and Ken oppose cruel schemers like Peggy and "de bloodthirsty village a Mayaro, an de fools dat live here" (78). It is a conflict between the community's xenophobia on the one hand and both Mac's and Ken's embrace of cosmopolitan liberation on the other – not between colonial oppression, collective cowardice, and emancipatory fervour as in Synge's original. Ken finally tells his father that he will come with him, not "like a gallant captain with his heathen slave" (Synge 117) but "like Robinson Crusoe an he Friday" (78; see Sihra 233). Both the original and the Caribbean version of the *Playboy* thus indicate an ironic inversion of the Hegelian dialectic of master and slave, the seizure of power by the oppressed, who can think of nothing better than to perpetuate the hierarchies they themselves suffered from.

The Nigerian *Playboy* (2007) – Acculturation and Repatriation

The Dublin-based Pan Pan Theatre Company and Nigerian playwright Bisi Adigun's Arambe Productions adapted Synge's *Playboy* to very different intercultural situations. Both these productions took place between 2006 and 2009 in the period shortly before and after the financial crisis, which in Ireland was marked by increased Eastern European, African, and Asian immigration to urban areas (Keating 251; Morash and Richards 136-37). Both these versions also draw on Christy Mahon's role as the outsider who tries to find his way into a specific social ensemble by means of a story of violent rebellion against paternal and political authorities. Unlike the Caribbean and the Chinese *Playboy*, the African version retains its Irish setting, moved from rural Mayo in 1907 to suburban Dublin a century later.

3 Contrary to my argument, Sihra sees an anti-colonial impulse in Matura's characterization of his protagonist as an anti-hero, outlaw, and rule-breaker (232). Sihra also considers Matura's use of language anti-colonial. Matura uses Caribbean English as Synge uses Hiberno-English, both deviating from the norm, "'the master's tongue'" (231; see 232-33).

Bisi Adigun, who founded Arambe Productions, Ireland's first African-Irish theatre company, in 2004, struck upon the idea that Christy Mahon is "the archetypal 'asylum seeker'", inventing a colourful tale to pave his way: "I see Christy Mahon as the epitome of the majority of immigrants constantly searching for who they are in a foreign land" (Adigun 261). Adigun approached Roddy Doyle, one of the most popular contemporary Irish writers, to engage in an adaptation of Synge's *Playboy*. Jointly written by a well-known Irish writer and an equally well-known advocate of interculturalism from Nigeria, co-produced by an Irish-African theatre company and the Abbey, the new version was staged as the national theatre's centennial production of *The Playboy* in 2007, showcasing the post-ethnic mind-set of the new multicultural Ireland (McIvor 66-67, 69; Townsend 60).

Against the background of a real-life Nigerian murder case (Adigun 265-66), Yoruba Christopher claims to have killed his father with a pestle for pounding yams instead of a loy for digging potatoes (Adigun and Doyle 16), to have subsequently buried him and fled from Niger to London and then to Belfast (17-18; 41).[4] He finally lands "in a modern, suburban pub, on the west side of Dublin. There is evidence of an invented form of Irishness" (Adigun and Doyle 3; see Morash and Richards 137; Kao 15-17, 214; Lonergan, *Irish Drama* 126; Sihra 229-30). This simulacral impression is re-inforced by "a CCTV screen, above and behind the bar" (Adigun and Doyle 3). Imagined realities rival empirical realities, as a real bale of turf sits beside an electric fireplace (3, 20). Adigun and Doyle's setting both concretizes and individualizes Lonergan's diagnosis of an increasingly simulacral and branded Irishness. Self-fashioning is linked with media representations, the cosmetics and clothes industry, and a general atmosphere of Celtic Tiger commercialism (3, 30). Both the girls around Pegeen and the gangsters surrounding her father are eager to become subjects of tabloid coverage (39). When Christopher tells her about his parricide in Nigeria, Pegeen immediately googles his murder (41). Jimmy and Philly, Michael's henchmen, imagine Christopher's father-slaying as the script of a crime movie (51).

Nigerian Christopher and Chief Clement Malomo, his father, differ from Synge's Christy and Old Mahon not only historically and culturally but also with regard to their social and educational status. Unlike the original Christy, Christopher is not at all "the looney of Mahon's" (Synge 99). The rise of a shy and naïve son of a poor small farmer to the champion of a Mayo village is replaced by the difficulties of a culturally and socially superior young African and his wealthy politician and businessman father to adapt to the ways of gangsters and drug traffickers in contemporary West Dublin (15, 35-36, 45, 52). In Christopher's narrative, his life in Nigeria appears marked by academic ambition and economic success (22), although the family's social rise may be contaminated by Chief Malomo's serious deficits of character (24).

4 I am grateful to Dr Bisi Adigun for generously sending me the unpublished manuscript of the play.

Compared to Michael James's Mayo *shebeen*, the moral climate of Michael's West Dublin pub has considerably deteriorated (26-27). Both the jargon and the atmosphere are fairly close to Pan Pan Theatre's Beijing hairdresser-cum-brothel (see below). Michael himself is introduced as a "publican and gangster" (2) and "a seemingly jovial, but dangerous, man" (7). Susan, Honor, and Sarah summarize the stratum of Irish society foregrounded by the play when they toast Christopher and the Widow Quin: "To the two of yis, the walking killers. . . . And all the others like you; the hit-men, the heroin dealers, coke dealers; crooked cops and politicians, and publicans and lawyers; celebs and DJs, and the whole fuckin' lot of them" (37; see 48). The sports on the beach, in which the original Christy excels, are replaced by a ferocious attack on Michael by rival thugs. In a street fight, Christopher, appointed the pub's security man, heroically beats off the assailants. These events are reproduced as footage on Honor's mobile phone in a twenty-first-century version of electronic teichoscopia. After his triumph the enraptured girls treat Christopher like a pop star, a martial arts icon like Conor McGregor (53-57).

For a brief moment – when Pegeen exclaims: "I never thought I'd feel like this, for someone who isn't even Irish" (59) and Christopher replies: "If I was told a few days ago that I would feel like this about a woman who is not from my country – my tribe, I would have laughed" (59) – the love of Irish Pegeen and Nigerian Christopher appears to be an intercultural utopia come true. It is as if the Fifth Province or a Thirdspace has been reached. That such intercultural understanding should dramatically fail on account of a disproved narrative of father-slaying in Africa followed by an unsuccessful second attempt of parricide in Ireland defies belief – especially as the would-be murderer has just been presented as a latter-day Bruce Lee.

In both Matura's Caribbean and Adigun and Doyle's African version the respective communities punish Christy's inability to kill his father by taking the law into their own hands. Michael's henchmen plan to bury both Africans together Mafia-style (66). In response, Chief Malomo denounces the "[j]ungle justice" (68) of the pub regulars and takes his son back to Africa with him. Ireland appears as an uncultivated jungle, Nigeria as the site of a more civilized life. Christopher does not want to reverse the relationship to his father by becoming "a gallant captain with his heathen slave" (Synge 117) as in the original or "like Robinson Crusoe an he Friday" (Matura 78) as in Matura's Caribbean version. All he wants is to shed the role of an immature son and to live a self-determined life, "the master of my own destiny" (68-69). This attitude appears as a less controversial form of emancipation than Christy's in the original and Ken's in *The Playboy of the West Indies.* African Christopher Malomo has shed his predecessors' colonialist mentality.

The interrelation between Christy Mahon's outsider status in the Mayo community and the fate of contemporary refugee Christopher Malomo in Dublin does not quite dovetail for several reasons. Christopher's "criminal act of murder in Nigeria disqualifies him for asylum under the Irish Refugee Act of 1996" (Townsend 60). In addition, "Christopher's 'freedom' is hampered permanently by black market ex-

ploitation, the threat of extradition and a complete absence of legal recourse" (Townsend 60-61). In view of his exploits as a streetfighter, Christopher may even be said to confirm "stereotypes of deceit and criminality associated with asylum seekers" (McIvor 70; see 72).

The most relevant structural modification in Adigun and Doyle's version is its lack of personal transformation. Unlike the original Christy, who turns from sheepish country bumpkin into a self-determined individual, Christopher Malomo has no reason to change. As he comes "from a wealthy background of upward mobility in Nigeria" (McIvor 70), he can at the end leave Dublin precisely as he came, not for any Fifth Province or Thirdspace, but for a Nigerian environment more prosperous than what he experiences in Ireland (Townsend 60; see Morash and Richards 137-38). Yoruba Christopher Malomo realizes his desires by returning home to Africa rather than by any form of diasporic acculturation. Christy's Irish project to go "romancing through a romping lifetime" (Synge 117) turns into a Nigerian success story.[5]

The Chinese *Playboy* (2006) – The Context-Dependence of Political Impact

The Pan Pan Theatre adaptation of Synge's *Playboy* was co-funded by Irish and Chinese sources (McIvor 56). It took Pan Pan four years and five futile attempts to find a suitable Chinese partner in the Beijing Oriental Pioneer Theatre (O'Toole 417-18). Their *Playboy* co-production was shown in Beijing first and later also in Dublin.[6] Gavin Quinn wrote an adaptation of Synge's play in a Chinese setting. Chinese dramatist Yue Sun and co-producer Wang Zhaohui rendered it in "the colloquial street language of contemporary Beijing" (O'Toole 408) in a complicated translation process, making use also of a Mandarin translation of Synge's original from the 1920s.[7]

5 The play's production history led to a deplorable conflict. Adigun and Arambe Productions claimed a breach of contract by Roddy Doyle and the Abbey, as the 2008-2009 resumption of their 2007 co-production contained over one hundred alterations, unauthorized by Adigun and Arambe. Royalties from both productions had also not been paid. The out-of-court settlement resulted in both Doyle's decision to relinquish his rights over the co-authored version to Adigun and in a financial agreement, costing the Abbey an estimated 600 000 Euros (McIvor 43-44; King, "Contemporary Irish Theatre"). Intercultural empowerment on stage sadly ended in intercultural conflict in the courts. The quarrel about control over the text of the *Playboy*'s new version appears as an unfortunate afterthought to the problems of territorial, communal, and individual authority which inform the play itself.

6 Pan Pan Theatre was founded in 1993 by artistic co-directors Aedín Cosgrove and Gavin Quinn. It is an avant-gardist theatre company, supported by the Irish Arts Council and Culture Ireland, which has toured widely and specializes in international co-operations involving foreign-language productions.

7 There is no accessible printed or manuscript version of the Pan Pan adaptation. Pan Pan Theatre informed me that there is currently no text version that can be shared but that Gavin Quinn may assemble an edition, which can then be circulated (email to the author, 5 October 2021).

Reminiscent of Brendan Behan's lodging house/brothel in *The Hostage* (1958), the play is set in "'whore-dressers' [...], or a hairdresser/foot massage parlour/brothel, on the outskirts of contemporary Beijing" (O'Toole 407). Cosmetic treatments serve as a front for prostitution, just as illegal *poitín* consumption may have similarly been camouflaged in Michael James's original *shebeen*. The women populating the Pan Pan whore-dresser, wearing miniskirts and lingerie, turn into reality Christy's imagined "drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself" (Synge 115) whose mere mention allegedly caused the *Playboy* riots in 1907. The Beijing production faced its own riots in 2006, as "audience members registered complaints with the Chinese Ministry of Culture about the highly sexualized nature of the performance" (Keating 253). In the original, this (in)famous remark is immediately followed by the Widow Quin's and Sara Tansey's attempt to protect Christy from the rage of the villagers by dressing him up as a woman. Sara pulls off one of her petticoats for Christy to wear but he adamantly rejects cross-dressing (Synge 115). Especially the extremely short miniskirt of the actress playing Sara Tansey seems to have provoked indecent reactions from male members of the Beijing audience, who were disciplined by police presence in subsequent performances (Kao 16). By contrast, the Pan Pan website markets the Dublin performance using newspaper headlines, such as *The Sun*'s "PEKING AT YOUR KNICKERS […] AN IRISH PLAY HAS SPARKED A SEX STORM IN CHINA – because one of the cast shows her KNICKERS" (Pan Pan Theatre Website, capitals in original; see Morash and Richards 140). Under Western eyes, overenthusiastic or prudishly indignant Chinese reactions to scantily clad performers figure as an invitation to watch the play. Building on the original Christy's extensive self-reflection in a mirror (Synge 88), the condensed "eighty-minute performance" (Morash and Richards 140) develops stage realism "into the contemporary cultural context of reality television" by video coverage of the actors preparing in the dressing rooms and by the use of salon mirrors reflecting the audience (Keating 253; see Morash and Richards 140). Like Adigun and Doyle's *Playboy*, the Pan Pan production emphasizes the topicality of the original's theme of self-definition as performative self-invention by demonstrating some of its ramifications in the computer age.

Regarding the political accentuation of the production, a debate developed about the descent of Ma Shang, the Chinese Christy Mahon. Quinn wanted him "to hail from Xin-Jiang, the troubled Uyghur and Sinomuslim province in the North-West of China" (O'Toole 408; see 409, 420). Quinn feared Chinese government censorship and Yue Sun interethnic vulnerabilities, however. For the performances in Beijing Ma Shang is therefore marked as an outsider in less controversial ways than in Dublin. In Beijing "Ma Shang hailed from Har Bin in the North East province of Dong Bei. When the play toured to Dublin, the playboy became a Uyghur once more" (O'Toole 408; see McIvor 57). In China people from Dong Bei are perceived as sufficiently different from the Han Chinese to also mark them as outsiders (O'Toole 420; McIvor 59; Morash and Richards 139-42). In Dublin Ma Shang's Uyghur ethnic and religious affiliation

suggests parallels to the history of the British colonization of Ireland and addresses the topical Western debate of human rights violations, Chinese attempts to assimilate the Muslim Uyghur cultural identity by relocations and other oppressive measures (McIvor 57-58).

Whereas in Beijing he is just different, in Dublin Ma Shang's Muslim identity is emphasized. He "praises Allah frequently" (Fricker) and wears a Muslim skull cap (McIvor 58; Morash and Richards 141). In Synge's original, Christy Mahon is at one point associated with political radicalism on an international scale. Philly Cullen, one of the villagers, assumes that the crime Christy committed may have been "fighting bloody wars for Kruger and the freedom of the Boers" in South Africa around the turn of the twentieth century (79). To this first suggestion of his potential transnational ambitions Christy flatly replies: "I never left my own parish till Tuesday was a week" (79). In the Dublin version of the Pan Pan production, the suspicion of Uighur Ma Shang's terrorist leanings is updated: "'Were you off to the middle east, young fellow, fighting bloody wars for Osma [*sic*] Bin Laden and the freedom of the arabs? [*sic*]'" (qtd. in McIvor 58; see Morash and Richards 140-41).

While both in Beijing and in Dublin an all-Chinese cast performed the play, in Dublin the spoken Chinese text was supplemented by English surtitles prominently placed behind and above the stage. The English surtitles reproduced Synge's original text so that "the production juxtaposed the action on stage against the historical Hiberno-English of Synge's play" (Keating 254). In an interview, director Quinn argues that "'the surtitle is the museum and the stage is the contemporary performance'" (qtd. in McIvor 58). The audience is to be sensitized to the historicity of the play "in order to query the relationship between an Irish 'then' and a Chinese 'now' quite overtly" (McIvor 59). The surtitles from Synge's text ambitiously evoke the rural Irish provenance and production history of the play, ranging from the Abbey premiere in 1907 to *DruidSynge* in 2005, which is contrasted with the intercultural thrust of the Beijing whore-dresser's stage action. It is also contrasted with the Chinese the actors speak, which was most probably lost on most of the Dublin audience. The intercultural dimension of the Pan Pan production would arguably have become more transparent had the surtitles consisted of the English version of Quinn's adapted text instead of Synge's original (McIvor 59-60).

Transpositional Adaptations – Problems and Opportunities

In Synge's original, personal liberation and the politics of decolonization structurally converge in a comedy of self-fashioning of near-Shakespearean complexity and lightness, which is difficult, if not impossible, to emulate. In Matura's *Playboy of the West Indies* the political dimension is reduced to the locally focused conflict between the hypocritical moral rigour of a community and a young man's self-assertion. In the Nigerian *Playboy* multicultural ideals clash with intercultural tensions, and African self-definition leads back to Africa rather than to any Western World. In the Pan Pan

Playboy the discrepancies between the original and its adaptation, between the Beijing and Dublin adjustments of the Pan Pan production, reflect differences of cultural and linguistic contexts, of intentions, perspectives, politics, and traditions.

Integrating more recent conflicts into Synge's canonical Irish play is not possible without mediation and compromise. Intercultural discrepancies are as inevitable as intercultural cooperation is promising and adaptations only go so far. They cannot totally reconcile the continuity of traditions and the differences of cultural contexts, the urgency of topical problems and the desire to preserve authenticity (Rees). Chris Morash and Shaun Richards raise the question as to "what relationship these *Playboys* have to their Syngean predecessor beyond the title and the bare elements of the plot" (142). The mirrors on the Dublin stage of the Pan Pan production, which also reflect the audience, throw this question back at all of us. Do these adaptations concern us and, if so, in what way? Like Christy and Old Mahon, originally faced with their own transformations and meanwhile with Caribbean, Chinese, and Nigerian revenants, Ireland and other countries of immigration may collectively ask in disbelief: "Is it me?" (Synge 82, 117).

The foundation on the Irish source text amalgamates distant locations and ethnically different protagonists with questions of Irish identity in both intercultural and intersectional contact zones. A deconstructive development is noticeable with regard to both national identities and textual authority. *The Playboy of the Caribbean* is a play written by single author, which was then produced and published. The Nigerian *Playboy* is based on the cooperation of a dramatist and theatre producer with a fiction writer. A script was jointly written for a specific production. Revisions of this script led to dissension. An assemblage of texts – Synge's original, Quinn's adaptation, and their respective Chinese translations – is behind the Pan Pan *Playboy*, rendering it as intertextual as it is intercultural.

The oedipal theme of Synge's *Playboy* widens this playing field even more. It indicates that the *Playboy*'s canonical Irishness can in turn be deconstructed as being based on Sophocles and Attic tragedy: "these texts rework texts that often themselves rework other texts. The process of adaptation is constant and ongoing" (Sanders 31). In contemporary convergence culture (Jenkins) the categorical difference between source and adaptation blurs. Synge's play and its contemporary adaptations demonstrate such pliability. The character development of Christy Mahon is an initiation story of individual emancipation, which has universal qualities. But the *Playboy* riots in 1907 were triggered by a specific political situation in a particular historical moment.

Answers to the question whether the *Playboy*'s adaptations concern us are tied to their transcultural appeal but also to the specific contexts which trigger them. The twenty-year gap between the Caribbean version of Synge's *Playboy* on the one hand and the African and Chinese adaptations on the other is characterized by the contrast between postcolonial pride in an independent culture and the sometimes

violent urgency of interethnic relations. The impact of the Caribbean version rests on the fusion of Synge's Irish plot and Matura's Trinidadian environment. The later African and Chinese versions take Christy Mahon's rebelliousness as a model to address problems of ethnic minorities and asylum seekers. Beyond transcultural adaptability the three versions of Synge's masterpiece discussed highlight the ways in which particular historical conditions influence and shape cultural production. Matura takes pleasure in delineating similarities in difference, Adigun, Doyle, and Quinn fit Synge's original to their political purposes.

The twenty-first century African and Chinese adaptations are marked by a fundamentally changed cultural climate in Ireland and everywhere. Their concern with ethnicity, otherness, and identity is fraught with an urgency and radicalism Matura's 1984 Caribbean version lacks. Adigun and Doyle highlight problems of contemporary Irish society, which render it so uninviting that a young would-be immigrant from Africa prefers to turn on his heels. Quinn, the director of a Dublin theatre, embraces co-operation with colleagues in Beijing, runs the risk of a Chinese-language adaptation of an Irish classic to be performed in both, very different, cultures – and is successful in bridging all these gaps.[8]

This vital interest in issues of ethnicity and identity, oppression and liberation in a transnational context is shared by other dramatists, as McIvor and Spangler's anthology *Staging Intercultural Ireland: New Plays and Practitioners* (2014) demonstrates. The exploratory spirit of Arambe Productions and Pan Pan Theatre with regard to assemblages of cultural diversification is also shared by the New Irish Studies, informed as they are by "the altered textures of life in twenty-first-century Ireland – the increased authority of formerly marginalized voices, the profound influence of digital technologies on everyday life, the international interest in Irish national concerns" (Reynolds, "Introduction" 2). In distinct variations these "altered textures of life" are characteristics of many Western countries.

In the same spirit, the Autumn/Winter 2020 issue of the *Irish University Review* opens with a collection of stories and poems, entitled "Amplifying Us: New Writing in Ireland" (Penney and Enyi-Amadi). The contributions by an Irish Traveller leader and by Irish black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) writers deal with in-betweenness, experiences of liminality, leading the life of "the Schrödinger cat of being Irish [...] simultaneously Irish and not Irish, visible and not visible, in and out of the pale", as Philomena

8 Both Pan Pan's engagement with China and Adigun's and Arambe Productions' enthusiasm for the insertion of African perspectives into Irish culture are ongoing. Both theatre companies continue to produce intercultural adaptations as well as original plays. Quinn and Pan Pan have continued their collaboration with Yue and Zhaohui, producing both a play by Yue and two adaptations of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* between 2010 and 2014 (McIvor 62). Adigun and Arambe Productions have produced other adaptations (King, "Three Kings" 20, 30-32). Adigun also writes original plays himself, such as *Once Upon a Time & Not So Long Ago* (published in McIvor and Spangler 201-44).

Mullen, born in Ireland to an Irish mother and a Nigerian father, describes herself (252). Against the wider background of a "'transnational turn' that has moved attention away from nation states as discrete entities, towards more comparative and global perspectives" (McDonald 340), the intercultural adaptations of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* can be said to open theatrical black boxes to their audiences to provide glimpses of Schrödinger cats inside. Trying to pave the way for a more diversified and yet egalitarian world, they open up opportunities for more and different experiments with postnational specificities.

Works Cited

Adigun, Bisi. "Re-writing Synge's *Playboy* – Christy's Metamorphosis, a Hundred Years On." *Synge and His Influences: Centenary Essays from the Synge Summer School.* Ed. Patrick Lonergan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2011. 261-68.

-----. "Once Upon a Time & Not So Long Ago." *Staging Intercultural Ireland: New Plays and Practitioner Perspectives.* Ed. Charlotte McIvor and Matthew Spangler. Cork: Cork UP, 2014. 197-244.

Adigun, Bisi, and Roddy Doyle. *The Playboy of the Western World: In a New Version*. Unpublished manuscript. 2007.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor, MI: The U of Michigan P, 1994.

Behan, Brendan. "The Hostage." *The Complete Plays*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1978. 127-237.

Bolger, Dermot. "In High Germany." *A Dublin Quartet*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992. 71-109.

-----. *The Parting Glass: A Play.* Dublin: New Island, 2011.

Butterworth, Jez. *The Ferryman*. London: Nick Hern, 2017.

Fricker, Karen. "The Playboy of the Western World." *The Guardian.* 18 Dec. 2006. 12 May 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2006/dec/18/theatre1>.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader.* Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1993. 393-403.

Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York UP, 2006.

Kao, Wei H. *Contemporary Irish Theatre: Transnational Practices.* Brussels: Peter Lang, 2015.

Keating, Sara. “Evolving *Playboys* for the Global World.” *Synge and His Influences: Centenary Essays from the Synge Summer School.* Ed. Patrick Lonergan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2011. 245-57.

Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995.

King, Jason. “Contemporary Irish Theatre, the New *Playboy* Controversy, and the Economic Crisis.” *Irish Studies Review* 24.1 (2016). 15 May 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2015.1113007>.

-----. “Three Kings: Migrant Masculinities in Irish Social Practice, Theoretical Perspective and Theatre Performance.” *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies* 16.1 (2016): 20-34.

Kuhling, Carmen, and Kieran Keohane. *Cosmopolitan Ireland: Globalisation and Quality of Life.* London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Lonergan, Patrick. *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

-----. *Irish Drama and Theatre Since 1950*. London: Methuen, 2019.

Matura, Mustapha. *The Playboy of the West Indies*. 1984. London: Oberon Books, 2012.

McDonald, Ronan. “Irish Studies and Its Discontents.” *Irish Literature in Transition, 1980-2020.* Ed. Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020. 327-43.

McIvor, Charlotte. *Migration and Performance in Contemporary Ireland: Towards a New Interculturalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

McIvor, Charlotte, and Matthew Spangler, eds. *Staging Intercultural Ireland. New Plays and Practitioner Perspectives.* Cork: Cork UP, 2014.

Meany, Helen. “The Playboy of the Western World.” *The Guardian.* 6 Oct. 2007. 12 May 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/oct/06/theatre1>.

Morash, Chris, and Shaun Richards. *Mapping Irish Theatre: Theories of Space and Place*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013.

Mullen, Philomena. “Black baby box[ed].” *Irish University Review* 50.2 (2020): 252-55.

O’Casey, Sean. “Juno and the Paycock.” *Three Plays*. London: Macmillan, 1969. 1-73.

O’Toole, Emer. “Cultural Capital in Intercultural Theatre: A Study of Pan Pan Theatre Company’s *The Playboy of the Western World*.” *Target* 25.3 (2013): 407-26.

Pan Pan Theatre Website. 12 May 2020. <https://www.panpantheatre.com/shows/the-playboy-of-the-western-world>.

Pease, Donald E. "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives." *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*. Ed. Donald E. Pease. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1994. 1-13.

Penney, Emma, and Chiamaka Enyi-Amadi, eds. "Amplifying Us: New Writing in Ireland." *Irish University Review* 50.2 (2020).

Rees, Catherine. *Adaptation and Nation: Theatrical Contexts for Contemporary English and Irish Drama.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Reynolds, Paige. "Introduction." *The New Irish Studies*. Ed. Paige Reynolds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020. 1-19.

Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Sihra, Melissa. "Re-location and Re-locution: Adapting Synge." *Synge and His Influences: Centenary Essays from the Synge Summer School.* Ed. Patrick Lonergan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2011. 225-43.

Soja, Edward W. "Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination." *Human Geography Today*. Ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Philip Sarre. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1999. 260-78.

Synge, John Millington. "The Playboy of the Western World." *Modern Irish Drama*. Ed. John P. Harrington. New York: Norton, 1991. 73-118.

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri. Screenplay and dir. Martin McDonagh. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2017.

Townsend, Sarah L. "Cosmopolitanism at Home: Ireland's Playboys from Celtic Revival to Celtic Tiger." *Journal of Modern Literature* 4.2 (Winter 2011): 45-64.

Yeats, William Butler. "Cathleen ni Houlihan." *The Collected Plays*. 1934. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, n.d. 73-88.

DIALOGUES WITH THE PAST:
MEMORY, RECOVERY, AND COMMEMORATION

FROM DIRECTOR TO COORDINATOR: THE IRISH STATE AND THE OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE EASTER RISING IN 1966 AND 2016

Vojtěch Halama

Introduction

Western commemorative practice changed significantly during the latter part of the twentieth century. French historian Pierre Nora has described the process as a disintegration of national metanarratives, the grand stories aiming to unify national experience and memory, and a turn towards more plural, diverse, subjectivist, and bottom-up commemoration. History gradually lost its status "as the myth underlying the destiny of the nation" and the relationship between national identity and history became "more elective than imperative" (Nora 614, 633).

Official commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising constitutes a part of this process. For the two largest events of such kind, the fiftieth anniversary in 1966 and the centenary in 2016, the central organizers prepared extensive programmes. Yet, even though both conceptualized the Rising as a founding myth of the modern Irish state, they utilized it in very different ways. This is because commemoration, in order to be successful, must be consistent with contemporary sentiment in both its ritual engagement with the past and the meaning which emerges from it (West 11). While the state acted as an active central organizer on both occasions, its role was not the same, nor was the underlying message it wanted to communicate through the programme. Focusing on the instrumentality of official commemoration, this essay discusses a shift in these two aspects between 1966 and 2016, arguing that the Irish state became more of a coordinator rather than a director, and that the underlying message switched from promoting unity to embracing diversity.

The text deals specifically with commemoration organized by the state, in this case the Republic of Ireland. This does not necessarily mean that the official programme dominated the anniversary experiences, nor that the original intentions of the central organizers led to the desired outcomes. Indeed, the blowing-up of Nelson's Pillar by a renegade republican group in 1966 represented a particularly noteworthy event for many contemporaries and the memory of the anniversary was retrospectively moulded by the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Similarly, for some, the centenary has been associated more with the #WakingTheFeminists campaign against female underrepresentation in Irish theatre rather than with the state ceremonies. This essay lacks space to elaborate on the latter topic; however, a more detailed account can be found elsewhere in this volume.[1]

1 See the plenary conversation "Art-making, Activism, and Collaboration", chaired by Clare Wallace, with Lian Bell and Maeve Stone discussing their involvement in the

The choice of the 1966 and 2016 anniversaries may seem somewhat natural for a comparative analysis, as the former was often recalled during the preparation of the latter. Nevertheless, during most of the 1916 commemorations in the last century, the Irish state was a non-entrepreneurial actor, and the selected jubilees represented rather extraordinary cases of staging a large-scale commemoration. On both occasions, the Easter Rising was conceptualized as a founding myth and the state confirmed the claim to its revolutionary legacy. This should not be taken for granted. Taoiseach Seán Lemass was at first reluctant to stage a large-scale commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary and it was conducted due to pressure from Fianna Fáil backbenchers and veteran organizations (R. Higgins 3; Daly 22-23). Nor did the problematic beginnings of the *Ireland 2016* programme in 2014 suggest that the state would be keen to proudly claim its violent legacy: focusing solely on present achievements, the launch of the programme found little room for the Easter Rising itself. Both programmes eventually did revolve around the Rising, paid tribute to those who had fought and died for the Republic, staged military parades through Dublin, and certainly hoped to defuse anti-establishment republicans who claimed the same legacy. Both presented Ireland to the outside world as a modern European nation that has overcome past enmities. Finally, both strived to create a sense of mutuality, to overcome cleavages within society and to maximise public participation – each in its own specific way.

The Role of the State in Official Commemoration

In the 1960s, the Irish state was an active, interventionist actor. Influenced by the European welfare state model, the government of Seán Lemass turned towards economic planning, higher involvement in education, providing modern civil services and a more active foreign policy. The Ireland of that time was also a Fianna Fáil state. The party had held power almost exclusively since 1932 under the leadership of Éamon de Valera, a veteran of the Rising and now the president of the state. The government was enabled to act almost as a monolithic force. Hence, for the official commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, the state assumed the position of a director, a sole leader determined to bring Irish nationalists together and pay proper tribute to the past.

Lemass desired neither to complicate the official narrative nor to open old wounds. In February 1965, he had set up the *Coiste Cuimhneachán*, “an informal committee, helping to advise upon the form of the ceremonies and celebrations”, stressing that the final arrangements would be made by the government. He chaired the committee himself and, as he proclaimed in the Dáil, he “invited a number of people to come together and asked them to suggest other people who, in their own knowledge, would be helpful and likely to be interested” (Dáil debate 215:7, 6 May 1965). This

#WakingTheFeminists campaign. The contribution also lists further sources on the topic.

rather ad-hoc formation resulted in the members being either Fianna Fáil politicians or civil servants. Opposition political parties and the public were omitted from the planning. Lemass had rejected calls to form a consultative all-party group, considering it neither necessary nor desirable, as it would, in his view, only duplicate the work of the organizational committee (Dáil debate 218:1, 20 Oct. 1965). The more radical republicans were likewise dismissed, most notably Kathleen Clarke, widow of the executed Rising leader Thomas Clarke, who had demanded to be put in charge of the planning (Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble* 358-59). The setting up of the programme was strongly controlled by the government and by the Taoiseach in particular.

During the two weeks of the official anniversary programme, most events took the form of centrally organized ceremonies. The principal event was the Easter Sunday parade in which marched not only current members of the Irish army but also representatives of various cultural and sporting organizations (R. Higgins 39-40). Even though the state organized some local ceremonies outside Dublin, these took form of local Easter Sunday parades featuring ministers or army representatives (Daly 19). More often, commemoration outside Dublin was left to independent initiatives and the broadening of the programme to the local level was largely limited to the television and newspaper coverage of the events in Dublin.

Turning to the centenary, Ireland of 2016 was an affluent, globalized country that had recently recovered from a devastating economic depression. The government of Enda Kenny (Fine Gael) replaced its Fianna Fáil predecessor in 2011 and set up a wider Decade of Centenaries programme of which the 1916 centenary represented the centrepiece. Determined to avoid the mistakes of the 1966 event that was seen as too triumphalist, two advisory committees overseeing the commemorations were established already in 2011. The first was the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations, consisting of historians from every major Irish academic institution. It was set up to advise the government "on historical matters" and to "consult widely with academic, community and voluntary groups and members of the public to ensure that significant events are commemorated accurately, proportionately and appropriately in tone" (Ireland 2016, *Remember, Reflect, Reimagine*). Far from being a mere consulting group, the Expert Advisory Group set the basic principles for the commemorations and participated heavily in them. The second was the All Party Oireachtas Group on Commemorations, bringing together representatives of "all parties in the Oireachtas as well as independents", including Sinn Féin. The group met regularly to ensure that the commemorative events were "conducted on a non-partisan, inclusive basis" (Ireland 2016, *Remember, Reflect, Reimagine*). The early planning was marked by controversies, but the preparations gathered new momentum after introduction of new leading figures of the programme: Heather Humphreys, the Minister for Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, and John Concannon, the director of the National Tourism Development Authority in Ireland.

The state, through its platform *Ireland 2016*, provided a framework for widespread organizational engagement. The organizers claimed that the planning involved, apart from the state institutions and the relatives of the revolutionaries, "all local authorities, local community groups, schools and universities, teachers at all levels, the Diaspora, historians and historical societies, and a multitude of individuals and organisations from all strands of society" (*Centenary Programme* 13). This was partly enabled by extending the scope of what was considered to be a commemorative event. The programme comprised seven strands, some more traditional (State Ceremonial, Historical Reflection, An Teanga Bheo / The Living Language, Global and Diaspora), others based on active participation of other actors (Youth and Imagination, Cultural Expression, Community Participation), leaving space for local commemoration, cultural events, and even table quizzes. Local authorities received funds for community commemorative initiatives and were recommended to relocate them on the basis of alignment to key themes of the centenary and maximizing public engagement (Department of Culture). For example, County Monaghan organized a public workshop on preparation for the centenary, with over 100 people in attendance, and received forty-three applications for funds. The approved events included exhibitions and lectures, a summer camp, school competitions, workshops and discussions, musical and theatrical events as well as the placing of permanent reminders commemorating local history (Ireland 2016, *Monaghan*). Through special coordinators, each county then developed a local programme as part of the wider *Ireland 2016* framework. Thus, the state assumed the role of a coordinator rather than a director, providing an authorized platform rather than direct leadership.

Yet, of course, coordination also represents a form of control. The wider engagement with the public and the blurring of the line between the official and the community-based commemoration certainly facilitated at least basic widespread acceptance of the authorized discourse. Indeed, heritage scholar Laurajane Smith suggests that concerns with multi-vocality "too often tend to be assimilationist and top-down" and that the related discussion is often "framed in terms of how excluded groups may be recruited into existing practices, and how many non-traditional visitors be attracted" instead of challenging the power relations surrounding heritage (37-38). Not even the involvement of experts ensures proper interrogation of national myths. Dominic Bryan has warned historians against becoming the "high priests of commemoration", pointing out that academic engagement with the past can both disguise and legitimize the contemporary political context of commemorative practice (24-42). The instrumentality of official commemoration can take different shapes, but the state never remains neutral, and this should not come as a surprise.

The Underlying Messages

The fiftieth anniversary commemoration was first and foremost focused on paying proper tribute to those who fought for the Republic, many of whom were still alive in

1966. Given the previous low-key approach – which some called "a chronicle of embarrassment" – caused by the many cleavages resulting from the revolution, the coming of the anniversary had produced significant pressure for such recognition (Fitzpatrick 184-203; Daly 22-23). The participants of the Rising and the wider struggle for independence represented the centrepiece of the ceremonies. The veterans paraded on Easter Sunday, their dead comrades were commemorated at the wreath-laying ceremonies and at the opening of the Garden of Remembrance, a new permanent reminder of their sacrifice. The remaining veterans, nevertheless, were dying out, their first-hand memories fading away. Instilling "into our youth an appreciation of the value of their heritage and of the sacrifices made for it", as Lemass put it, become an important imperative (Lemass, *Cuimhneachán 1916*). The TV series *Insurrection*, prepared by the national broadcaster RTÉ, exemplified these combined requirements for recognition and revitalisation: its aim was to "underline the 'heroic drama' of the week for a younger audience while, notably, also giving space for the voices of the survivors" (Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble* 364).

The Rising was still heavily understood in political terms in 1966. *An Claidheamh Soluis*, a flaming sword signifying revolutionary struggle for political and cultural independence, was chosen as the central symbol of the programme. However, the symbol was chosen through a public competition; the organizers refused suggestions to use the Easter Lily, the traditional commemorative symbol associated with hard-line republicanism (P. Faulkner to S.F. Lemass, 25 May 1965). This may serve as a reminder that the 1966 event itself represented a recalibration of the national narrative, making it more conciliatory and rational, less militaristic and emotive. Indeed, the nation was encouraged to build on the Rising's legacy by other means: Lemass used the anniversary as an opportunity to unite the nation behind the flag of modernity and welfare in opposition to the unfulfilled geopolitical and cultural goals of the revolution. His concept of pragmatic patriotism assumed that the political differences of the past must be overcome in favour of economic improvement. "For the next fifty years", Lemass emphasized, "the symbol of patriotism is not the armed Irish Volunteer, but the student in the technical college, the planning officer, the busy executive of industry and trade union, the progressive farmer, the builders and workers on whose skills and enthusiasm the country's future depends" (*Irish Press* 22 Apr. 1966).

The organizers aimed to create a single unifying narrative that would replace the previous shattered discourse, promote unity among Irish nationalists and finally leave the past to rest. The programme of events prominently quoted the passage from the Proclamation about "the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good [to] prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called" (*Cuimhneachán* 1) and Lemass desired that the preparations appear as having been conducted in "the fullest harmony" (S.F. Lemass to S. Dowling, 17 May 1965). The pro-Fianna Fáil *Irish Press* editorialized that the "jubilee celebrations" would hopefully lead to "a better understanding between the sponsors of all forms of national endeavour and a clearer realisation that their various activities are part of, or could be

knit into, a universal pattern making for unity in national effort". In calling for "sinking selfish aims in a united effort for the national well-being", it made apparent that the programme aimed at reconciling the political cleavages within Irish nationalism (*Irish Press* 8 Apr. 1966). Other identities – cultural, social, gender or politically non-nationalist – were either incorporated, downplayed, or omitted, even though the programme notably included religious ceremonies by all denominations (*Cuimhneachán* 4-5).

Nor were unionists addressed. Lemass understood the North–South cooperation in pragmatic, economic terms, and was helpless as to how participation of any unionist representatives in a fundamentally political commemoration could have been secured (S.F. Lemass to L. O'Doherty, 26 Apr. 1965). Even though commemoration focused on twenty-six-county Ireland and generally avoided beating the anti-partitionist drum, some such comments were made, most notably by Éamon de Valera at the closing ceremony when he called for ending the partition of the island by "the uniting of all the people and the forgetting of past differences and dissensions" (*Irish Press* 18 Apr. 1966). Admittedly, little attention was paid to the possibly radicalizing effects of the commemoration on the relations with and within Northern Ireland; Lemass at least continued to avoid provocations, dodging calls in the Dáil for a greater involvement in commemorations in the North (*Irish Press* 4 Mar. 1966). Good relations with Britain, nevertheless, were actively promoted. The Rising was presented as "the basis of the excellent relations that now exist between Ireland and England" and of modern Ireland's active international position (P. Keating to F. Coffey, 17 Jan. 1966).

In 2016, on the other hand, the Rising was already in the distant past. The living memory of the revolution had long vanished and the political value of the Rising as the symbolic beginning of Irish independence had diminished. Ireland had become a globalized, wealthy Western state. The traditional pillars of society had fallen and the pre-1990s social conservatism had been gradually replaced by liberal values. For the most part, the centenary focused on the lived experience of communities, families, and individuals in 1916 regardless of their status or involvement in the national struggle. This time, the Proclamation passage highlighted by the programme was the one about the Republic guaranteeing "religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens" (*Centenary Programme* 4).

The official centenary commemoration heavily implied that understanding the complexity of the past would lead to the support of inclusivity in the present. Army Chaplain Seamus Madigan's centenary prayer at the Easter Sunday wreath-laying at the General Post Office revolved around "singing a new song", different from the troubled past. This was to be "a song of compassion, inclusion and engagement, a song of listening, social justice and respect for all, a song of unity, diversity, equality and peace" (*Easter Sunday Commemoration 2016* 5-6). President Michael D. Higgins repeatedly called for generosity in embracing "the multitude of stories that comprise our past, in all their bewildering contradictions and differences", and that next to the leaders of the Rising, others are too worth the remembering, "all those

who suffered, so many who were too poor, too marginalised and too disenfranchised to be heard" (M. Higgins 2). The mantra, repeated in many official statements, proclaimed that "Ireland 2016 will belong to everyone on this island and to our friends and families overseas – regardless of political or family background, or personal interpretation of our modern history" (*Centenary Programme* 8). Again, it is debatable how the Republic's emphasis on the Easter Rising can attract Northern unionists, whose political parties declined invitations to participate in the ceremonies. Even though the state had included commemoration of the Battle of the Somme in the programme, the unionists' key event of the year, some commentators argued that commemorating the Rising was "fatally divisive" for "anyone unwilling or unable to honour the Rising as the defining act of Irishness" (Kennedy).

The concept of the "year for everyone" addressed not only traditional political divisions, but also the social cleavages of a globalized society. The official centenary video *Mise Éire // I Am Ireland* included statements from Irish citizens with many different backgrounds. "Mise Éire" was proudly pronounced by a red-haired schoolgirl as well as by Asian immigrants in their shop, by the young and the old, the urban and the rural, men and women, by the immigrants and their children as well as by the representatives of the diaspora. Similarly, RTÉ's TV series *Rebellion* revolved little around traditional national figures, as *Insurrection* had fifty years ago. Rather, under the slogan "Ordinary people. Extraordinary times", it focused on the experience of (fictional) women and men from various social backgrounds and affiliations. In general, the programme promoted embracing diversity and placed the variety of identities, narratives, experiences, interests, and opinions into a unique mosaic, creating mutuality without necessarily enforcing consensus. Thus, the very act of participation in any form became more important than adopting a specific narrative. As one commentator observed, the official commemoration "resonated with new audiences far beyond conservative traditionalists clinging to the past" (Ó Dochartaigh).

Within this mosaic, nevertheless, the official narrative retained a dominant position. The goal was indeed to "broaden sympathies, without having to abandon loyalties", allowing for a complexity of narratives under the central organizational umbrella but preventing complete disintegration into vagueness (*Centenary Programme* 62-64). "There is no doubt that the narrative of 1916 is an intrinsic part of our DNA as a State", proclaimed Taoiseach Enda Kenny at the launch of the programme. The attitude can be eloquently illustrated by two major events, the army parade and ceremonies on Easter Sunday and the public festival *Reflecting the Rising* on Easter Monday. John Concannon introduced them as being complementary to each other, presenting the former as "appropriate, respectful, dignified", with the latter a "family day" designed for public engagement and fulfilment of the idea that the centenary programme was "everybody's" (*RTÉ*, 24 Nov. 2015).

When Did the Shift Occur?

Official commemoration between the two anniversaries was largely shaped by the conflict in Northern Ireland. The Irish state was confronted by the Provisional IRA's re-interpretation of the Rising as unfinished business requiring further armed struggle (Regan 29-30). While many within the intellectual establishment responded with "anti-nationalist" revisionism, the state adopted a low-key stance, abandoning the annual military parade and largely avoiding any larger commemoration of the Rising. The anniversary ceremonies were not reintroduced until 2006, when Taoiseach Bertie Ahern decided to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the Rising. Given the ongoing peace process, the programme was now reconciliatory towards unionists, and an official state commemoration of the Battle of the Somme also took place that year.

The peace process, though, had not changed the fundamental understanding of the Rising, nor the means of commemoration. The revival aimed at recasting the Rising, as historian Mark McCarthy puts it, "in a new positive light and sanitising its legacy from all of the negative connotations associated with the actions of the Provisional IRA during the course of the Troubles" (362). The Troubles and the related "anti-nationalist" revisionism were implicitly side-lined as some sort of commemorative intermezzo, as Ahern once again linked the Rising to current peace and prosperity, and in many aspects continued where Lemass had ended in the 1960s. Indeed, Mary Daly has recognized remarkable similarities of message in Ahern's and Lemass's commemorative speeches (4). Most importantly, notwithstanding certain innovations, the programme again largely revolved around the army parade. Enda Kenny, who later became Taoiseach, remarked that the upcoming centenary needed to entail a broader range of events (McCarthy 382).

In fact, it was rather the discussion in the early 2010s, not the peace process nor the ninetieth anniversary, which initiated the transformation. The formation and the work of the all-party and the expert advisory groups represented a decisive turn that initiated fruitful discussion and at the same time courage to focus on national history in its troubling complexity. The chairman of the Expert Advisory Group, Maurice Manning, proclaimed that its goal was not to do the job of the peace process and that the group has a duty to prevent the hijacking of the centenary "by the government or anyone else" (Ferriter, "1916 in 2016" 165). This proved crucial especially after the troublesome beginnings of the centenary programme in late 2014 when it seemed that the revolutionary legacy would be sanitized. The launch was widely dismissed for its corporate tone and Sinn Féin, among others, dismissed it as a "bad joke", initiating its own commemorative programme which claimed to be truly "Ireland-wide [and] broad-based" (*An Phoblacht* 1 Dec. 2014).

The takeover failed to materialize and neither revisionism, disinterest, nor political hijacking characterized the centenary, partly due to the organizers' ability to learn from their own mistakes. Mark Daly, a member of the all-party group, has highlighted the renewed energies after Heather Humphreys and John Concannon got involved,

and their contribution to refocusing the programme towards its final form (History Hub). Broadly speaking, many more aspects contributed to this turn: the post-austerity context and the rise of public history, the level of affluence, relative peace in Northern Ireland, the stable but diverse political scene, the number of enriching counter-narratives, and the determination to avoid the retrospective failings of the fiftieth anniversary. A detailed analysis of the processes that led up to the last-minute refocusing lies beyond the scope of this essay and would require a separate study.

Conclusion

According to Pierre Nora, commemoration has become "less a matter of militant expression of the unity of a single group and more a matter of pluralistic unity of the many groups within conflicting agendas that constitute a democratic polity" (616). This essay has attempted to show that official commemoration of the Easter Rising has undergone similar transformation. Focusing on the instrumentality of commemoration during the anniversaries in 1966 and 2016, the essay has discussed the shift in the state's role as the central organizer and the changing "statement about the present" the programmes aimed to communicate.

The Irish state has ceased to act as a director and sole interpreter of the Rising's legacy. Instead, it has adopted a twofold role. Firstly, it has become more of a co-ordinator, providing an authorized platform rather than direct leadership. Secondly, it has claimed the revolutionary legacy but recognized that its narrative was only one of many. In 1966, the official programme was prepared by the central government represented by the Taoiseach, who chaired his own organizational committee, and others were merely invited to participate in what had been arranged. The planning of the centenary, apparently in direct opposition to this, was conducted in cooperation with an academic and an all-party advisory group. Furthermore, it included a variety of organizations and communities whose events were often funded by local authorities. Rather than focusing on the cultural centre and one unifying narrative, the state now allowed for a diverse programme under its organizational umbrella.

The underlying message changed accordingly. The fiftieth anniversary in 1966 saw many members of the revolutionary generation still alive and had to recognize their experience, but it also took place during the reorientation of the state from economic autarky towards international cooperation. Modernizing Irish nationalism for the post-revolutionary reality, the central organizers encouraged people to remember and respect the sacrifice of the founding fathers but to build on it by different, more pragmatic means. The nation, addressed as a rather singular body, was encouraged to overcome inner disputes and work in harmony towards prosperity. The 2016 centenary, on the other hand, suggested that understanding the complexity of the past would lead to embracing the diversity of the present. Even though the state paid homage to the founding myth and its actors, it extensively encouraged engagement of its citizens regardless of their social status, political affiliation, or compliance with

the official narrative. While both programmes promoted mutuality, the centenary did not enforce unity. Rather, it attempted to normalize a complex mosaic of experiences, interests, and opinions where – ideally – everyone could find a way to participate.

This essay has nevertheless argued that in the Irish case, the substantial shift in the state's role and the underlying message occurred only a few years prior to the centenary. The Troubles, in the long run, represented a commemorative intermezzo, and the ninetieth anniversary in 2006 largely reintroduced the pre-Troubles approach – with the important exception of a reconciliatory stance towards unionists. The conceptual shift apparently did not occur until the consolidation of the organizational framework in the early 2010s and the extensive refocusing with the advisory groups after the disastrous launch of the *Ireland 2016* programme in 2014. Reacting to enriching counter-narratives and learning from the state's own mistakes represented an important part of the process.

Works Cited

Bryan, Dominic. "Ritual, Identity and Nation: When the Historian Becomes the High Priest of Commemoration." *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*. Ed. Richard S. Grayson and Fearghal McGarry. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016. 24-42.

Cuimhneachán 1916: Tubhaile Órga Éirí Amach Sheachtain na Cásca, Clár 10 go 24 Aibreán 1966. Dublin: Hely Thom Limited, 1966.

Dáil Éireann Debate, 215:7, 6 May 1965.

Dáil Éireann Debate, 218:1, 20 Oct. 1965.

Daly, Mary E. "'Less a Commemoration of the Actual Achievements and More a Commemoration of the Hopes of the Men of 1916.'" *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising*. Ed. Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007. 18-85.

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. *Ireland 2016 Project Office and Commemorations*. 7 Apr. 2016. 10 Dec. 2021. <https://wayback.archive-it.org/org-1444/20171204192427/http:/www.chg.gov.ie/about/information-requests/freedom-of-information/foi-publications-scheme/services-provided-by-the-department/ireland- 2016-project-office-and-commemorations/>.

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). Letter from P. Keating to Frank Coffey, 17 Jan. 1966. DFA 2000/14/81. National Archive of Ireland, Dublin.

Department of the Taoiseach (DT). Letter from Pádraig Faulkner to Seán F. Lemass, 25 May 1965. DT 97/6/158. National Archive of Ireland, Dublin.

-----. Letter from Seán F. Lemass to Liam O'Doherty, 26 Apr. 1965. DT 97/6/157. National Archive of Ireland, Dublin.

-----. Letter from Seán F. Lemass to Seán Dowling, 17 May 1965. DT 97/6/158. National Archive of Ireland, Dublin.

-----. Lemass, Seán F. *Cuimhneachán 1916. A Message from the Government to the School Managers and Teachers of Ireland and to the Children under Their Care.* DT 2017/12/2. National Archive of Ireland, Dublin.

Ferriter, Diarmaid. *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923*. London: Profile Books, 2015.

-----. "1916 in 2016: Personal Reflections of an Irish Historian." *Irish Historical Studies*, 42.161 (2018): 161-74.

Fitzpatrick, David. "Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A Chronicle of Embarrassment." *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*. Ed. Ian McBride. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 184-203.

Higgins, Michael D. "A Special Message from President Michael D Higgins." *Centenary Programme Guide*. *Irish Independent* 5 Mar. 2016.

Higgins, Roisín. *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising*. Cork: Cork UP, 2012.

History Hub. "Mark Daly (1916 and Me – Full Interview)." *YouTube*. 21 Nov. 2016. 15 Sept. 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fV09v8GIdw>.

Ireland 2016 // Éire 2016 – Official Channel. *Mise Éire // I Am Ireland*. *YouTube.* 24 Dec. 2015. 20 Sept. 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xgodcJQAdM&t>.

Ireland 2016. *Centenary Programme. Monaghan.*

Ireland 2016. *Easter Sunday Commemoration 2016, 27.03.16.*

Ireland 2016. *Remember, Reflect, Reimagine.* 2016. 10 Mar. 2022. <https://www.ireland2016.gov.ie/>.

Kennedy, Daniel. "Pride in 'Inclusive' 1916 Commemoration Rings Hollow." *The Irish Times.* 7 Nov. 2016. 30 Sept. 2020. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/pride-in-inclusive-1916-commemoration-rings-hollow-1.2856808>.

Kenny, Enda. "Speech by the Taoiseach at the Launch of Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme." 31 Mar. 2015. 15 Sept. 2020. <https://www.finegael.ie/speech-by-the-taoiseach-at-the-launch-of-ireland-2016-centenary-programme/>.

McCarthy, Mark. *Ireland's 1916 Rising. Explorations of History-Making, Commemorations & Heritage in Modern Times*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.

Nora, Pierre. “Era of Commemoration.” *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Vol. III – Symbols*. Ed. Pierre Nora and Lawrence Kritzman. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. 609-37.

Ó Dochartaigh, Niall. “Turning to the Past: Global Contexts for the 2016 Commemorations.” *Irish Historians in Britain*. 2016. 20 Dec. 2021. <https://irishhistoriansinbritain.org/?p=296>.

Regan, John M. *Myth and the Irish State: Historical Problems and Other Essays*. Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2014.

RTÉ. “RTÉ News: ‘2016 Commemorations’ with Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Heather Humphreys & John Concannon, Ireland 2016.” *RTÉ.* 24 Nov. 2015. 15 Nov. 2021. <https://www.rte.ie/news/player/2015/1124/20887094-2016-commemorations-with-minister-for-arts-heritage-and-the-gaeltacht-heather-hunphreys-john-concannon-ireland-2016/>.

“Sinn Féin Gets Ready for 1916 Commemorations.” *An Phoblacht.* 1 Dec. 2014. 1 Sept. 2020. <http://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/24594>.

Smith, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.

The Irish Press.

West, Brad. *Re-enchanting Nationalisms: Rituals and Remembrances in a Post-modern Age*. New York: Springer, 2015.

WOMEN, WAR, AND WEARABLE HISTORY: WINIFRED CARNEY, GRACE GIFFORD-PLUNKETT, AND A CLASSICALLY INSPIRED CAMEO BROOCH

Susan Curley Meyer

Brooches as Socio-Economic and Cultural Markers

Brooches have been worn as expressions of status and prestige in Ireland since the Bronze Age, while the *Bretha Étgid* (Judgements of Inadvertence), an early Irish law tract from the seventh or eighth centuries, referenced honour price compensation based on societal status if a passer-by became injured by a protruding brooch pin (Whitfield 71-72). Apart from personal adornment, jewellery functioned as a form of currency in medieval economics, representing bullion in bartering societies. In medieval courts, where rich accoutrement was expected, social pretension was also reflected in brooch wearing; expressed as wearable wealth (Deevy 63-66).

Investigating and interpreting the potential symbolism embedded within brooches has been conducted across a range of disciplines incorporating art history, design history, archaeology, and material culture studies. Using modes of analysis including typology, visual rhetoric, and materiality, these small objects offer a view to the past which augments written and oral accounts of personal as well as public events. While this research focuses on one particular brooch gifted between two Irish women involved in the 1916 Rising, Grace Gifford-Plunkett (1888-1955) and Winifred Carney (1887-1943), it also acknowledges the value of brooches and cameos as historical indicators by briefly outlining the importance attributed to both via their inclusion in a number of past eras and events. Cameos, initially created as a form of visual communication, became popular as gifts via their endorsement from notable historical figures, many of whom attributed personal meaning to precious and semi-precious materials by having their likenesses carved into them.

This hermeneutical quality has rendered cameos as enduring fashionable objects for gift giving and exchange, reinforcing them as noteworthy mnemonic devices. French sociologist Marcel Mauss explored gift giving from a number of perspectives, in a variety of unique cultural environments. Viewing gift giving as a form of human transaction, he determined how some were endowed without obligation, while others were reciprocal; actions evident in a number of pre-coinage societies (6-12). Mauss also studied how giving objects as gifts shaped human relationships, noting that while the practice, in the main, focused on reciprocity, some archaic societies (including Greece) clearly defined between “obligatory presentations and pure gifts”, alleviating ambiguity around the act itself (46). In a number of medieval societies, nobles endowed their supporters with brooches as an expression of loyalty and fidelity, while ring brooches bearing inscriptions often symbolized love (lost and regained), as well

as influencing perceptions of chastity and purity; by clasping a garment covering the breast of the wearer (Deevy 66-69).

Cameos: Stylistic Expression and Interpretation

In archaic Greece, between 560 and 480 BC, human and animal forms decorated early cameos which were expressed in a rigid style, while the classical Greek era (480-330 BC) favoured birds, cupids, and winged female figures as subject matter (Miller 255). Although predated by earlier forms of visual communication which used stone carvings (including petroglyphs and the engraved cylinder seals of Mesopotamia), cameo carving is recorded as early as 3100 BC; attributed to the Sumerian civilization, who used high-quality gemstones to demonstrate painstaking precision and detail through skilled craftsmanship, with most early cameos carved in onyx or agate (Clements 33). It is Alexander the Great's love of exotic materials and oriental style, however, that has been credited for the popularity of cameo carving and, later, jewellery spreading to the West. From 332 BC, skilled carvers created intricate scenes on multi-layered stones which were brought into Alexandria from India and Arabia. These layered hard stones included sardonyx, a new medium for bas-relief carving showcasing the skill and dexterity of the carver. A shift from classical Greek to Roman rule during the Hellenistic era included the use of cameos as wearable status symbols (Miller 3-22).

Cameos could be used as carved expressions of loyalty, love, and faith, depending on the scene or image portrayed. The Greeks preferred naked imagery while the Romans used drapery to cover their figures, providing possible dating clues. Cameos were worn on breast plates, sword handles, and helmets, and, by 79 AD (according to Pliny the Elder), had become collectible status symbols, worn by nobles as insignias on ceremonial dress. By the eleventh century, classical cameos were highly sought after for use as pendants, while during the early Renaissance, pendants, rings, and badges were set with carved cameos depicting classically inspired mythological divinities due to a renewed interest in the arts of antiquity (Miller 8). During the eighteenth century, cameos were viewed as wearable art, miniature sculptures worn as adornment, buoyed by a sustained interest in Greek and Roman iconography, while a series of nineteenth-century Great Exhibitions increased their exposure to a wider public audience, as did photographs of them appearing in contemporary journals and newspapers, cementing the cameo's popularity with a broader clientele.

Cameos were also given as gifts by a number of high-profile historical figures as a mark of friendship and loyalty. Queen Elizabeth the first liked to give loyal subjects cameo jewellery, including the now famous ring presented to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, which contained a cameo portrait in her likeness, carved in sardonyx. In the nineteenth century, Queen Victoria commissioned a series of jewel-encrusted cameos carved in her likeness beside that of her late husband, after his death in 1861. These were gifted to members of the Royal order of Victoria and Albert as a mark of their

allegiance and steadfastness towards the royal couple and worn as brooches or badges (Miller 27, 45, 64).

Mauss expands upon gift giving from the perspectives of "personal" and "real" when referencing early laws in Roman societies which addressed people and things, and where the *nexum* (legal bond) applied to both, when exchanged or traded (46). Objects were given value by their prior associations (47), such as Royal likenesses carved in stone, shell, and even lava, which became further reinforced when encased in elaborately jewelled settings, including rings, pendants, ear-rings, and brooches.

Brooches, Women, and National Independence

Brooches have acted as markers of social and cultural affiliation for centuries, while stylistic analysis has linked makers and wearers with specific shapes, designs, and materials. This includes the penannular style (where the brooch is not completely circular or annular), just one of the many types of brooches used to track patterns of migration, trade, and mobility in early Ireland (Laing 15). In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ireland, the penannular style brooch also became intrinsically linked with women and Irish independence. The Nationalist organization, Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland) used a "Celtic" brooch as their membership badge, based on medieval designs and motifs they felt represented a pure Irish identity, encompassed in a penannular pattern, engraved with the group's name. Founded by Maud Gonne, the aims of Inghinidhe na hÉireann were aligned with those of the Gaelic League; to revive Irish arts and culture, including literature, language, music, dancing, and games. At her first Inghinidhe na hÉireann meeting, Countess Markievicz (later heavily involved in the Easter Rising), offered to sell a diamond brooch in order to secure funding for the group (McCoole 24).

Although it has been acknowledged that dress was used as an overt expression of Irish identity during the Celtic Revival (O'Kelly, "Reconstructing Irishness" and "Dressing Rebellion"; Dunlevy; A. Ward), the women involved in Inghinidhe na hÉireann did not wear an identifiable uniform, opting instead for the penannular style brooch to signify group membership (McCoole 20-22). The brooch offered a less obvious identifier of personal affiliation with nationalist ideals, affording the wearer a flexible form of anonymity, as it was easy to remove or cover quickly. In May 1915, Inghinidhe na hÉireann became a branch of Cumann na mBan (The Women's Council; McCoole 31), a group founded in April 1914, as a women's ancillary to the Irish Nationalist Volunteers (Gosling and Rogers 23). Cumann na mBan (CB) members explicitly displayed their affiliation by wearing a brooch depicting the group's initials interwoven with a rifle. While components of the CB brooches overlap with each other, a variety of designs exist. Although posited as "more imagined than real", various interpretations have been offered relating to the style of CB brooches and the status of the wearer, suggesting that individual styles indicated particular ranks within the organization (Gosling and Rogers 23).

Typological analysis has been used to investigate a number of these brooches (also described as pins or badges) worn by CB members, which not only vary in design, but also in materials. Described as "artefactual heritage" (Gosling and Rogers 22), distinctions in the CB brooch motifs include the use of different makes of rifle, comprising the War Office Pattern Miniature (WOPM), the Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE), and the Skeuomorph; a rifle crossed over a halberd (an axe-type weapon popular in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries), encircled by the words "Cumann na mBan" and "1916", embossed on a green *cloisonné* enamel and brass-coloured metal base (Gosling and Rogers 24).

Winifred Carney was a member of Cumann na mBan, and although Grace Gifford was not, she and Carney became intimately linked through their involvement in the 1916 Rising, reflected here through a cameo brooch. The significance of gifting a brooch from one woman to the other is amplified by the use of brooches as nationalist membership markers by Inghinidhe na hÉireann and Cumann na mBan. A note written by Joseph Plunkett (editor of *The Irish Review* and founder of the Irish Volunteers)[1] on 29 April 1916 was delivered to Gifford by Carney (along with a bangle and rings he was wearing), after Carney's release from Aylesbury prison in December 1916 (O'Brolchain 392).[2] The jewellery worn by Plunkett, the note written by him, and the cameo brooch are all objects linking these two women historically, with the note and brooch both bearing the same date inscription, signifying the Irish Volunteers' submission to British forces.

1 Joseph Mary Plunkett has been acknowledged as one of the key organizers of the 1916 Rising. A member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, he was appointed to their military council in 1915. While initially forged through literary interests, his friendships with Thomas MacDonagh and Patrick Pearse, became further established through nationalist beliefs. MacDonagh and Plunkett were two of the seven signatories on the Proclamation of Independence executed for their roles in the Rebellion, including Tom Clarke, Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, Éamonn Ceannt and Seán Mac Diarmada. Roger Casement, Con Colbert, Edward Daly, Seán Heuston, Thomas Kent, John MacBride, Michael Mallin, Michael O'Hanrahan, William Pearse (Patrick's brother and Grace Gifford's contemporary), were also executed for their parts in the Easter Rising. All of them were executed in May 1916, except for Casement, whose execution took place in London, in August the same year (O'Brolchain; White; Donoghue; McGreevy).

2 Winifred Carney was one of the estimated 300 women involved in the Easter Rising, remembered more recently via public exhibitions including the "Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising" at the NMI, and through a number of published works cited here, including Cullen and Luddy; Clare; McAuliffe and Gillis; McCoole; Finlay; A. Murphy; Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women* and "New Issues and Old"; and L. Connolly, which have reviewed women's roles in, and experiences of the now historic event. Much of this research has revealed how women played pivotal roles in the Rebellion, the War of Independence and the Civil War. Carney and Gifford were two of a number of women interned for their activity in the bid for Irish nationalism, including Countess Markievicz, Annie Cooney, Maura (May) Gibney O'Neill, Brigid Davis O'Duffy, Brigid Foley, Madeline Ffrench Mullen, Rose McNamara, Countess Plunkett, Nora O'Daly, Kathleen Lynn, Josie McGowan, Marie Perolz, Brigid Lyons Thornton, Nell Ryan, and Helena Molony.

The Cameo Brooch Gifted to Carney from Gifford-Plunkett

The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) descriptor of the cameo brooch reads:

> Brooch presented to Winifred Carney from Grace Gilford [*sic*]. Cameo brooch in gold frame, engraved on back "To Winifred Carney from Grace Plunkett in Memory of April 29th, 1916". Elliptical convex plate, 2 inches by 13/5 inches, of shell or similar substance, white, opaque with head of female, hair wreathed in flowers and foliage, carved on it in relief; hair, wreath and garment at shoulders coloured buff; the plate mounted in elliptical gold frame, made by Hopkins & Hopkins, Dublin. The frame is a plain band of gold to which a twisted strip of gold is applied. Pin for attachment and guard cord through loop in top back; 1916 (NMI.HE: EW. 1310).

Fig. 1. The cameo brooch displayed beside Winifred Carney's personalized rosary beads case. © National Museum of Ireland

Re-viewing this object beyond its physical description inspires a new dialogue around the cameo as an indicator of social, cultural, and historical events – nationally and internationally. As Lori Ettlinger Gross has stated, "[a] brooch is a very powerful object. Within the confines of a relatively small composition, it is a complete work of art that has its own voice" (9).

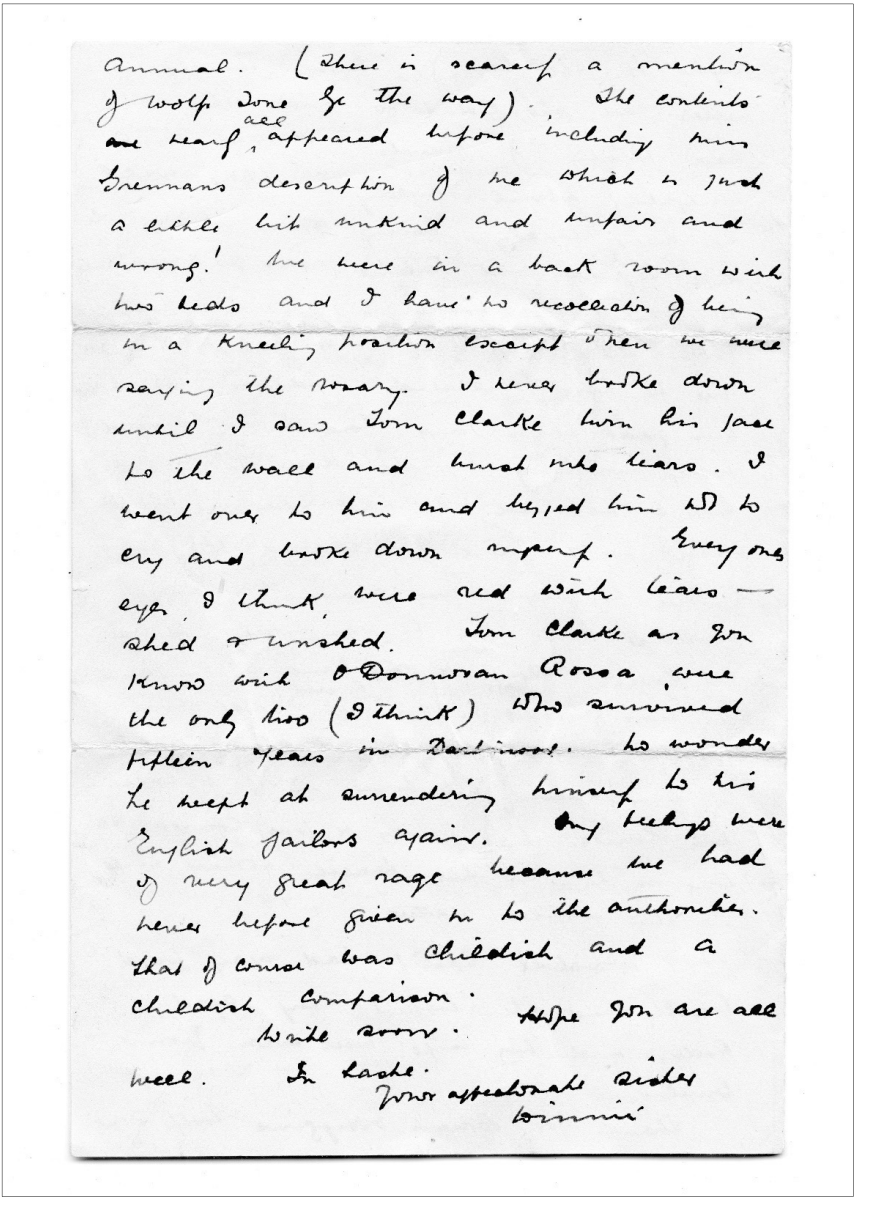
The brooch and letter (Fig. 3), donated to the NMI by Ernest Carney, offer valuable primary source material for this time in Irish history, where women have only recently been remembered for their roles in the bid for national autonomy; accounts of which vacillate between feminism and nationalism (Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women* 3). The letter describes how Winifred felt unkindly portrayed in the Wolf Tone Annual of 1935 (currently part of the Sean O'Mahony collection held at the National Library of Ireland), where Brian O'Higgins reflected on the "Spirit of 1916". In her letter, Carney also wrote of Tom Clarke's treatment at the hands of British soldiers while in prison, as well as her own personal experiences. And, while the letter offers documentary evidence of events, the cameo proposes another layer to the existing narrative around women, revolution, and Irish independence by exploring both archival and

cultural sources. Exploring both, therefore, reinforces the merits of adopting multi-disciplinary approaches when interpreting pivotal events (Dyer 282-85).

Fig. 2. The inscription from Plunkett to Carney and the H & H hallmark stamp.

As Toby Barnard points out, material culture dwells on things and, by doing so, can shed light on those who fabricated, bought, and used certain objects (11). Equally, the study of material culture also concerns ideas, which includes the use of objects as symbols of events, capturing a certain time and place in history. This small decorative object not only signals symbolic patriotism between two women connected by such a significant occasion, but illuminates contemporary literary connotations around the Greek and the Gael during this period. It also represents a publicly displayed miniature reminder of women in a city, where a minute amount of the two hundred plus public monuments on display commemorate them, prompting a re-evaluation of monumentality in Dublin (P. Murphy 3).

The cameo gifted from Gifford to Carney is most likely made from shell, due to its translucent nature and pale palette, while the elliptical gold frame has both a loop and a c-shape clasp and pin which allows the wearer the choice of either necklace or brooch. While the classically inspired cameo and engraved frame it is mounted in echo a close bond between the two women, they also provide an alternative view of extended connections during this period in Irish history.



annual. (There is scarcely a mention of Wolfe Tone for the way). The contents one scarf, all appeared before including Miss Brennans description of me which is just a little bit unkind and unfair and wrong.' We were in a back room with two beds and I have no recollection of being in a kneeling position except when we were saying the rosary. I never broke down until I saw Tom Clarke turn his face to the wall and brush his tears. I went over to him and begged him not to cry and broke down myself. Every one's eyes, I think, were red with tears — shed & unshed. Tom Clarke as you know with O'Donovan Rossa were the only two (I think) who survived fifteen years in Dartmoor. No wonder he wept at surrendering himself to his English jailors again. Any feelings of very great rage because we had never before given in to the authorities. That of course was childish and a childish comparison. While Tom are all well. In haste. Your affectionate sister Winnie

Fig. 3. The letter to Ernest Carney from Winifred Carney (page 4 of 4).

Numerous women in Cumann na mBan and the Irish Citizen Army prevailed beyond 1916, campaigning for a liberated Ireland during and beyond the War of Independence.

They have been remembered more systematically during the recent decade of centenaries (see, for example, Mc Auliffe and Gillis; Pašeta, "New Issues and Old"; Ryan and Ward; L. Connolly; Frawley), where primary photographic and other material culture (as well as documentary) sources have been revisited (Rose; Godson and Brück, *Making 1916*), in a bid to elucidate their roles in the Easter Rising, Civil War, and the War of Independence. While a number of scholarly works cited here include accounts of Grace Gifford and Winifred Carney's involvement in Irish nationalism, the cameo brooch displayed at the Reclaiming a Republic exhibition, on the centenary of the Easter Rising in 2016, links these two women on a personal level.

The Giver: Grace Evelyn Vandeleur Gifford-Plunkett

While Grace Gifford (Fig. 4) may be best known for her marriage to Joseph Mary Plunkett on the eve of his execution in Kilmainham Gaol, she was also a talented illustrator who had studied art in Dublin and London, with family connections illustrating a long-established artistic legacy in Ireland. Gifford was a great-niece of Sir Frederic William Burton (1816-1900), artist, Royal Irish Academy council member and director of the National Gallery in London. Burton's father was also an accomplished artist. Marie O'Neill notes how having entered the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art in 1904, at the age of sixteen, Gifford studied under William Orpen who regarded her as one of his most promising students. Her contemporaries included a number of now prominent artists such as Estella Solomons, Beatrice Elvery, Margaret Crilly (later Clarke), and Kathleen Fox. Gifford also met Willie (William) Pearse, Patrick Pearse's brother, in night classes she attended in Dublin, when the former was training to be a sculptor to work in his father's stone-carving firm (O'Neill 5-7).

After Joseph Plunkett's execution on 3 May 1916, Grace continued to use her artistic skills to promote Sinn Féin policies during the War of Independence. Following the Civil War, she supported herself with her art, while fighting to secure a military pension. In a witness statement outlining Joseph Plunkett's political activities, Gifford stated: "I have never lived a normal person's life, I have always been in the thick of things" (BMH.WS: 257, 2).

Gifford added how she knew little of Joseph Plunkett's military life, recalling more intimate incidents instead, including how, when he had once gone to Algiers for his health, he was so good at skating, that they had made him manager of the rink there (BMH.WS: 257, 4). Remaining adamant about her lack of knowledge of political events, Gifford stated, "I shall have to read a book on the Rising as I know nothing of the Military History of it" (BMH.WS: 257, 6). Gifford, a Protestant, converted to Catholicism in order to marry Plunkett. Plunkett proposed a wedding date during lent which Gifford felt may be unlucky, suggesting Easter instead. Plunkett's rebuttal of an Easter wedding, however, echoed a direct reference to the impending Rebellion: "We may be running a revolution by then" (BMH.WS: 257, 10).

Fig. 4. Grace Gifford-Plunkett, May 1916. © National Museum of Ireland

Although Grace Gifford was not directly involved in military activity, and claims to have little knowledge of the Rising (BMH.WS: 257, 6), accounts of immediate and extended family members with nationalist connections are well documented. Gifford's sister, Muriel, was married to Thomas MacDonagh, also executed on the same day as Joseph Plunkett for his part in the Rising (McCoole 52). MacDonagh was a firm nationalist, and is depicted wearing traditional Irish style clothing (including the *brat* and *léine*, two items of Revivalist clothing worn by members of the Gaelic League) in

a family photograph taken of him, Muriel, and their young son, in 1913 (NPA/TMD/52 NLI) (O'Kelly, "Dressing Rebellion" 172).

He is also shown wearing a penannular style brooch, as are a number of other members of the Gaelic League, evident in various group photographs (O'Kelly, "Dressing Rebellion" 169). Muriel MacDonagh (née Gifford) was also a member of Inghinidhe na hÉireann and, later, Cumann na mBan (O'Neill 32), while Nellie Gifford, sister to both Grace and Muriel, was a founding member of the Irish Citizen Army (McCoole 52). After Joseph Plunkett's death, Grace Gifford continued to support the idea of a nationalist Ireland, strongly opposing the Treaty.

In 1923, seven years after the Easter Rising, Gifford was one of several female prisoners involved in the Rising, interned in Kilmainham Gaol, including Nora Connolly O'Brien (daughter of James Connolly; McCoole 119-20). Gifford's artistic talent endured even when in prison, evident through a number of drawings created on the walls of her cell – number 10 (M.E. Ward 4). Grace Gifford-Plunkett died on 13 December 1955 and is buried in Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin.

The Recipient: Maria Winifred (Winnie) Carney

Winifred Carney (Fig. 5), described as a "pistol-packing member of the women's Republican volunteer movement", was an ardent supporter of the suffragette campaign and dubbed "the typist with the Webley" because of the revolver she carried alongside her typewriter (Naughton 31). Reports of women relieving snipers in Dublin's General Post Office (GPO) during the Rebellion most likely refer to Carney who was considered a "crack shot" (McCarthy 65). Due to its central location on Dublin's main street (Sackville, now O'Connell Street), the GPO was selected as the proposed headquarters for the Rising (McCoole 35).

Carney, a County Down native, met James Connolly in Belfast in 1912 and became not only his secretary, but also his confidante (A. Murphy 13). Carney was the first woman inside the GPO on Monday, 24 April 1916, and one of the last to leave it, alongside Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grennan; three of the estimated fifty-five to sixty-one women who were recorded inside the building during the event (Finlay 173).

Carney did not think much of Joseph Plunkett initially, according to reports from survivors from the GPO (Clare 160). They had become acquainted through the events of 1916, where Plunkett had initially offended Carney by wearing a filigree bracelet and large ornate rings she felt were misplaced during a rebellion. It was only when he had put these items in an envelope and asked her to make sure his fiancée, Grace Gifford, received them should anything happen to him, that her opinion of him changed. Plunkett told Carney how Gifford's Protestant family had renounced her after she had converted to Catholicism and he wanted her to be taken care of in the event of his death. In fact, Plunkett's request prompted Carney to go around each of the other volunteers to collect their home addresses and any small treasures they

may wish her to pass on to their families should they not make it out alive (A. Murphy 167), underscoring the value of personally charged objects and their role in expanding upon established historiographies.

Fig. 5. Studio portrait of Winifred Carney of Cumann na mBan. 1922. Head and shoulders. 6.5 inches by 4.25 inches. © National Museum of Ireland

Carney was interned in Kilmainham Gaol, and later Aylesbury prison in England, along with Helena Molony and Constance Markievicz until December 1916 (Cullen and Luddy 153). In 1924, Carney, who was a Catholic, married George McBride – a Protestant and a staunch Orangeman – when they met through the Northern Irish labour party. The marriage was criticized by Carney's family, including her brother Ernest who demanded his sister be buried separately from her husband in an unmarked grave after her death in 1943. She is buried in Milltown cemetery in Belfast, where the National Graves Association stepped in and recognized Carney with a marked headstone in 1985, and has tended to her grave to this day (Devine 179-86).

The Brooch Frame Makers: Hopkins and Hopkins Jewellers

The setting in which a cameo sits can also reflect social, political, and economic conditions in a particular historical period (Scarisbrick et al. 10). The "H and H" hallmark stamped on the elliptical base of the brooch provides valuable information about the jewellers who made and engraved it, Hopkins and Hopkins of Dublin. Hopkins and Hopkins are one of many Dublin jewellers who replicated objects based on medieval design antecedents during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. One of their most notable pieces, the twentieth-century Sam Maguire Cup, is modelled on the eighth-century Ardagh Chalice. The cup was commissioned by friends of Sam Maguire, a Cork native heavily involved in the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), after his death in 1927. A talented Gaelic-football player, Maguire also played a pivotal role in Irish independence, recruiting Michael Collins into the republican movement in 1909 (K. Connolly 29). The silver cup commemorating him was made by Matthew Staunton of Hopkins and Hopkins and cost in the region of £300. The cup, a trophy awarded annually to the winning GAA senior football team in an all-Ireland final, was first won by Kildare in 1928 (K. Connolly 8).

Like the penannular style brooches worn by both Inghinidhe na hÉireann and the Gaelic League members, Revivalist metal work (emulating medieval motifs and materials) became hugely popular as material displays of nationalism during the Celtic Revival, and a number of Dublin-based jewellers, including Hopkins and Hopkins, contributed to, and benefitted from, this popularity.

Using the Celtic Revival as a powerful marketing tool, Hopkins and Hopkins advertised their skills as silversmiths and watchmakers in various publications, including newspapers and GAA catalogues. They also advertised in the *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*, published by the *Irish Times* in May 1917. The name Hopkins has a long-standing relationship with Dublin's city centre, recorded as early as 1787, with Myles Hopkins trading as a draper in Sackville Street. Law and Sons, already established as a city centre jeweller, were taken over by Hopkins who later operated on the corner of Sackville Street and Eden Quay. Due to its prime location, the building was one of the first to become occupied by Irish volunteers during the Rising, where, by Saturday 29 April, it had been heavily damaged by fire. The jewellers continued to operate in temporary premises at the same location from September 1916 however, after securing funding from the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee. In 1923, purpose-built premises were erected at the same location and described by *The Irish Times* as a landmark building "executed in the Neo-Grec classic style and designed with restraint" ("Hopkins and Hopkins").

Connections between the Dublin jewellers and 1916 extend beyond the building's occupation and damage during the Rising, however. Hopkins and Hopkins are included in witness statements regarding the event, provided by Seán T. O'Kelly, president of Ireland from 1945 to 1959 and one of the founders of Sinn Féin (BMH.WS: 1765, 1). Myles R. Hopkins is recalled by O'Kelly as a great benefactor of

the *Sinn Féin* newspaper, often providing loans of up to £500 in order to see it published. Diarmuid O'Leary, a managing director of Hopkins and Hopkins, is also mentioned in O'Kelly's witness statements. O'Leary is listed as one of the Irish Republican Brotherhood members who travelled by train to Kilcoole in County Wicklow, in order to secure arms for the Rising, due to arrive there by a boat owned by Thomas Myles, a well-known Dublin surgeon. These associations underscore Gifford's choice of Hopkins and Hopkins as the jewellers commissioned to make and engrave the cameo base dedicated to Carney.

The Cameo, the Greek, and the Gael

The iconography in the cameo gifted to Carney most likely references a bacchante maiden or female votary of Bacchus, symbolising bounty, harvest, and fertility. These allegories could symbolize Carney and Gifford's connection as women, committed to the fruition of Irish independence, while the fact that a classically inspired cameo was chosen as a gift during a period in Irish history where literary connections between 1916 and ancient Greece and Rome are well documented, is also noteworthy.

In 1897, Patrick Pearse revealed nationalist tendencies described as "more mystical than revolutionary", by distinguishing the Gael from other men. He further declared, "what the Greek was to the ancient world, the Gael will be to the modern" (Thornley 13). Fiona Macintosh observes how Pearse's statement reflects a long-standing belief that Ireland and ancient Greece fostered a "special relationship", where Irish sagas were deemed reminiscent of Greek heroic tales, including a reference to Cú Chulainn as the "Irish Achilles" (189). Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett taught with Pearse in St Enda's School in Dublin, before becoming three of the seven signatories on the Proclamation of Independence. All three were also published poets, and parallels drawn between classicism and nationalism are evident in the writings of Plunkett, Gifford's husband, and MacDonagh, her brother-in-law, further augmenting her choice of a classically inspired gift, with a known visual rhetoric.

Brian McGing has studied Pearse and MacDonagh's commitment to the Gaelic movement and 1916 Rising, arguing how a marked interest in classical culture, including the reception of classical rhetoric in political oratory, informed Pearse's own writings on Irish independence. MacDonagh translated ninth-century poems by Roman poet Catullus, and MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett were also co-editors of *The Irish Review*, a short-lived monthly magazine dedicated to Irish literature, arts, and science. MacDonagh also set Gaelic literature against the great works of Greek and Latin in his *Literature in Ireland: Studies Irish and Anglo-Irish*, published in 1916 (44-47).

Conclusions

While Grace Gifford-Plunkett and Winifred Carney are just two of the many women who contributed to Irish independence, they are remembered here through a

personal act of gift-giving. This act has shed light on a number of historic events, highlighting how cameos and brooches are both potent markers of such, reiterating how objects are not only central to the construction of memory, but that they also have life cycles which become intertwined with people (Godson and Brück, "Approaching the Material and Visual Culture" 8-10).

This argument becomes further established when brooches are viewed as membership badges; worn by a number of nationalist groups including the Gaelic League, Inghinidhe na hÉireann, and Cumann na mBan. When considering the symbolism of a classically inspired object in conjunction with contemporaneous literature, analogies between the Greek and the Gael – including the question of how this influenced ideas around rebellion and nationalism – become further revealed. Carney and Gifford became allies during a period of significant political and personal turmoil, reflected through the gifting of an object which has been historically established as signifying loyalty and commitment. The mounting of this carving in an engraved frame fashioned by Dublin-based jewellers with established connections to 1916, underscores the value of investigating objects as primary sources, both independent of and in conjunction with documentary examples, augmenting the advantages of adopting multidisciplinary methodologies when attempting to add to established historiographies which consider women, war, and national identity. Encased in a framework punctuated by socio-economic and cultural practices around gift giving, brooches, and cameo carvings are valuable case studies, each warranting further investigation and evaluation.

Works Cited

Barnard, Toby. *A Guide to the Sources of Material Culture in Ireland, 1500-2000*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005.

Bureau of Military History Witness Statements: BMH.WS: 257.

Bureau of Military History Witness Statements: BMH.WS: 1765.

Clare, Anne. *Unlikely Rebels. The Gifford Girls and the Fight for Irish Freedom*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2011.

Clements, Monica Lynn. "Victorian Cameos." *Antiques and Collecting Magazine* 105.12 (2001): 32-36, 70.

Connolly, Kieran. *Sam Maguire: The Man and the Cup*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2017.

Connolly, Linda, ed. *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence*. Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020.

Cullen, Mary, and Maria Luddy, eds. *Female Activists. Irish Women and Change 1900-1960.* Dublin: Woodfield Press, 2001.

Deevy, Mary, B. *Medieval Ring Brooches in Ireland.* Wicklow: Wordwell, 1998.

Devine, Francis. "'A Great & Trusted Custodian of Confidences' Betrayed? Winifred Carney's Military Service Pension Application." *Saothar* 41 (2016): 179-86.

Donoghue, Denis. "Easter 1916." *Field Day Review* 11 (2015): 1-17. 8 Apr. 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/fieldayrev.11.1>.

Dunlevy, Mairead. *Dress in Ireland. A History*. 2nd ed. Cork: The Collins Press, 1999.

Dyer, Serena. "State of the Field: Material Culture." *History. The Journal of the Historical Association* 106.370 (2021): 282-92.

Ettlinger Gross, Lori. *Brooches: Timeless Adornment*. New York: Rizzoli International, 1998.

Finlay, Ken. "Inside the GPO 1916: The Eye-witness Accounts." *Dublin Historical Record* 69.2 (2016): 173-88.

Frawley, Oona, ed. *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2021.

Godson, Lisa, and Joanna Brück, eds. *Making 1916. Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising.* Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015.

Godson, Lisa, and Joanna Brück. "Approaching the Material and Visual Culture of the 1916 Rising: An Introduction." *Making 1916. Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*. Ed. Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015. 1-12.

Gosling, Paul, and Ailbhe Rogers. "Badge, Brooch or Pin?" *Archaeology Ireland* 33.1 (2019): 22-25.

"Hopkins and Hopkins New Premises." *The Irish Times.* 18 Jan. 1923: 2.

Laing, Lloyd. "Penannular Brooches in Ireland and Scotland." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 39 (1976): 15-19.

Macintosh, Fiona. "When Gael Joins Greek." *Books Ireland* 162 (1992): 189.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Eastford, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011.

McAuliffe, Mary, and Liz Gillis. *Richmond Barracks 1916: We Were There, 77 Women of the Easter Rising*. Dublin: Dublin City Council, 2016.

McCarthy, Cal. *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution*. Cork: The Collins Press, 2014.

McCoole, Sinéad. *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years, 1900-1923*. Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2015.

McGing, Brian. "Greece, Rome, and the Revolutionaries of 1916." *Classics and Irish Politics 1916-2016*. Ed. Isabelle Torrance and Donncha O'Rourke. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020. 52-59.

McGreevy, Ronan. “The Joseph Mary Plunkett Papers.” *The Irish Times.* 5 Mar. 2016: 5.

Miller, Anna M. *Cameos Old and New*. 3rd ed. Vermont: Gemstone Press, 2002.

Murphy, Allison. *Winnie and George: An Unlikely Union*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2017.

Murphy, Paula. “Ireland’s Sculptures: Where Are the Women?” *The Irish Times.* 21 Apr. 2021: 3.

Naughton, Celine. “How a Somme Veteran and a Pistol-packing Republican Found Love across the Political Divide.” *The Belfast Telegraph.* 29 Jan. 2016: 31.

O’Brolchain, Honor. *Joseph Plunkett: 16 Lives*. Dublin: O’Brien Press, 2012.

O’Kelly, Hilary. “Reconstructing Irishness: Dress in the Celtic Revival, 1880-1920.” *Chic Thrills. A Fashion Reader.* Ed. Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson. London: Pandora Press, 1992. 74-83.

-----. “Dressing Rebellion: National Revival Dress and 1916.” *Making 1916. Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising.* Ed. Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015. 164-75.

O’Neill, Marie. *Grace Gifford Plunkett and Irish Freedom: Tragic Bride of 1916*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000.

Pašeta, Senia. *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013.

-----. “New Issues and Old: Women and Politics in Ireland, 1914-1918.” *Women’s History Review* 27.3 (2018): 432-49. 19 Mar. 2022. <https://doi-org.ucd.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/09612025.2016.1221290>.

Rose, Kayla. “Illuminating Ireland: Illuminated Addresses and the Material Culture of Irish Civic and National Identity in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.” PhD diss. University of Ulster, 2014. 19 Mar. 2022. <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.627629>.

Ryan, Louise, and Margaret Ward, eds. *Irish Women & Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags*. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2019.

Scarisbrick, Diana, Jack Ogden, Ronald Lightbrown, Peter Hinks, Patricia Bayer, Vivienne Becker, and Helen Craven. *Jewellery Makers, Motifs, History, Techniques*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1989.

Thom’s Irish Almanac and Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, for the Year 1874. Dublin: Alexander Thom, 1874.

Thom’s Irish Almanac and Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, for the Year 1916. Dublin: Alexander Thom, 1916.

Thornley, David. “Patrick Pearse.” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 55.217 (Spring 1966): 10-20. 28 Dec. 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30088626>.

Ward, Alex. “Dress and National Identity: Women’s Clothing and the Celtic Revival.” *Costume* 48.2 (2014): 193-212.

Ward, Margaret. “A Role in Home Rule.” *The Irish Times.* 17 Oct. 2012: 20.

Ward, Margaret E. “Graffiti Crumbling from Kilmainham Gaol’s Walls.” *The Irish Times.* 18 Jan. 1999: 4.

White, Lawrence William. “Plunkett, Joseph, Mary.” *The Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2012. 8 April 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.007389.v1>.

Whitfield, Niamh. “More Thoughts on the Wearing of Brooches in Early Medieval Ireland.” *Irish Art Historical Studies in Honour of Peter Harbison*. Ed. Colum Hourihane. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004. 70-108.

A "WOMAN'S DOOM": CLASS AND GENDERED VIOLENCE DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Mary McAuliffe

In May 1920, two women both working as barrack servants in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) Barracks in Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, received anonymous letters in the post. In these they were threatened with a "woman's doom" if they did not withdraw their services and stop working in the barracks (CO 904/148).[1] It is unclear what, exactly, was meant by a "woman's doom", as various types of intimidation and violence, which will be outlined in this essay, were used against female barrack servants. However, the threat was frightening enough that it had the intended outcome of forcing the women out of their jobs. In this essay, I look at the impact the boycott had on RIC wives and families, and more especially on an overlooked, and often marginalized group of people, poor, working-class women who worked as barrack servants. In April 1919 Dáil Éireann secretary Diarmuid O'Hegarty wrote about the impact that a policy of ostracization or boycott would have on the RIC. "The police", he wrote, were to receive "no social recognition from the people" (Hughes 25). Members of the RIC were not to be spoken to, no business was to be conducted with them, they were not to be regarded as friends or included in social or sporting occasions, courtship and marriage with local women was discouraged and those working for them were to be dissuaded from doing so. Furthermore, they were to be treated "as persons, who having been adjudged guilty of treason to their country, are regarded unworthy to enjoy any of the privileges or comforts which arise from cordial relations with the public" (Hughes 25).

Boycott was not a new tactic in Ireland through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century and the use of peaceful mass mobilisation, collective actions against state institutions, boycotts and ostracization were common. From Daniel O'Connell's monster meetings during Catholic Emancipation campaigns of the early nineteenth century, through to the Land League movement of the 1880s, civil disobedience had proved a powerful weapon of the powerless and would continue to be part of republican, trade union, and feminist activism in the first decades of the twentieth century. As W.J. Lowe has indicated, there was widespread support for the boycott during the War of Independence, as it had already been directed against the RIC during the nineteenth-century Land War (79-117). Women were also much involved in the RIC boycott, the women of Cumann na mBan were told to have no social contact with RIC members and to make sure that young women of their locality shunned policemen and avoided

1 The National Archives, London, Dublin Castle Records, CO series, "Work and Administration of the Royal Irish Constabulary (from 1905)". I wish to thank Seán Gannon for drawing my attention to the threats made to barrack servants in Limerick.

"places where police are known to visit, particularly public houses which they frequent" (Lowe 85). Support for boycotts by political and militant women were nothing new. During the Land War rural peasant women were very significant in the Land League campaigns in "their role as protesters against evictions and as participants in the boycott campaign" (TeBrake 73). In many of these boycott campaigns women were at the "centre of food riots, tax riots, religious protests, and political protests; they were essential to collective action" as they would be again in nationalist and republican boycotts (TeBrake 73). For instance, in 1900 the separatist, feminist organization, *Inghinidhe na hÉireann, which had* emerged from a group that organized a boycott of the events marking Queen Victoria's 1900 Irish visit, later called for the boycott of British goods in shops, and began a campaign against recruitment of Irish men into the British army, and discouraged young women from associating with British soldiers (see Markievicz).

After the 1916 Rising, mass civil disobedience and propaganda again became important tools of resistance, and the republican movement, in large part driven by the work of militant women, built a mass movement of resistance to British rule. In particular, the anti-conscription campaigns of 1918 demonstrated the power of mass mobilization, when on 24 April a one-day strike brought most of the country, outside of the North-East, to a standstill. This mass strike effectively killed conscription. A further countrywide campaign by women's organizations, including Cumann na mBan, continued to resist recruitment campaigns with a "Lá na mBan" (Women's Day) protest day on 8 June 1918. As well as impeding recruitment, these campaigns accelerated, as Charles Townsend writes, "the process of levering the police apart from the community" (30). The success of Lá na mBan demonstrated the ability of political women to "organise nationwide events of civil disobedience" (McAuliffe, "Resisting the Menace" 37). The hostile attitudes of political and militant women towards police were pivotal to successful boycotts, and Cumann na mBan organizers worked hard to ensure that the boycott was observed. However, women were caught up in the boycott campaigns "both as instruments of boycott and as its victims" (Townsend 80). Women both as participants and victims are central to the histories of the RIC boycott during the War of Independence and it is women as victims of boycott, particularly poor working-class women and their experiences and traumas, whom I focus on in this essay.

The military side of the War of Independence, that of ambushes, assassinations, and attacks on RIC and military targets, was important, but so too was the collaboration and compliance with republican activities, active or forced, of the civilian population. The development of the counter state, particularly the Dáil courts and republican / Sinn Féin police, depended on the compliance of civilians and their refusal to engage with the policing, military, and judicial arms of the British state. Collaboration organized and unorganized has been recognized as central to the successful functioning of the counter state and its military wing, the IRA, and any defiance or resistance from the civilian population, especially those it considered "spies and informers", who were

suspect in their loyalties to the republican cause, had to be dealt with. Large-scale surveillance of the population was undertaken by the IRA, Cumann na mBan and other republican sympathizers, and violence was often the consequence of that surveillance. Although over 270 civilians were executed as spies or informers between January 1919 and December 1921, non-lethal violence and coercion of suspected civilians was more widespread. As Hughes writes, it is difficult to precisely map these “everyday acts of harm and threats” as they did not “operate in isolation to the less common ambushes and executions but combined to dictate the atmosphere of violence and fear in an individual community” (149). A boycott of the RIC had been ongoing from late 1919, but it was not until 4 June 1920 that General Head Quarters (GHQ) of the IRA issued a communique entitled “Boycott of the RIC” (P7/A/45).[2] It stated that the IRA were to have “no intercourse with the R.I.C. and shall stimulate and support in every way the boycott of this force ordered by the Dáil”, and further outlined that “persons who associate with the R.I.C. shall be subjected to the same boycott” (P7/A/45). Lists of persons associating with the RIC were to be kept by each IRA company, battalion and brigade commander and acted upon. Hughes remarks that as there was no direct suggestion from GHQ on how the boycott might work, it was down to “individual companies of Volunteers to obey the boycott and ensure others did likewise, by whatever means they deemed necessary” (25). This meant that coercion and intimidation was conducted at local community level and varied around the country. However, the records do show that policemen, their families, and associates were on the receiving end of differing levels of violence and intimidation in almost all areas.

From early 1920 the success of the RIC boycott was impacting on the functions of policing throughout the country and reports indicate that there was “a dramatic surge of dissent and intimidation aimed at police in the first six months” of that year (Hughes 26). As well as experiencing the impact of the boycott personally, the wives and children of RIC members were intimidated and ostracized, which impacted adversely on RIC families. In Galway, in August 1920, the RIC County Inspector wrote that RIC wives “are miserable, and their children suffer in schools, and nobody cares” (CO 904/112). As well as their wives, the mothers, and widows of serving or retired members of the force were ostracized, the accommodation of families of serving members was looted and burned, while landlords were encouraged not to rent to police families, and in many places, shops would not deal with the local barracks or with RIC families. For instance, in June 1920, in Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry, the wives of RIC Constables Murphy and Sullivan, who had shared lodgings since Mrs Murphy had been forced out of her home, were told, by local republicans, to leave their house. Both women complained to the local priest, but he said he “could do nothing, that they were strangers and must go” (Earls Fitzgerald 117). On

2 Richard Mulcahy Papers, “General Orders (New Series)”, No. 6, 4 June 1920, UCD Archives (UCDA: P7/A/45).

the night of 20 June 1920 over thirty men called to Mrs Sullivan's house and ordered her to leave the parish, "by order of the I.R.A." (CO 904/ 148). A week later, the "armed and disguised" men called again, put Mrs Sullivan and her four children out on the road and told her that "she would not be allowed to remain in the parish another night" (CO 904/148). Mrs Sullivan and her children had no option but to leave and move to the safety of the nearby town, Castleisland. On 23 June 1920, in Edenderry, Co. Offaly, "three armed and masked men" called to the home of Mrs Bessie Churchill, wife a Constable serving in Streamstown, Co. Westmeath and ordered her to leave "within the month". Mrs Churchill was a local schoolteacher, and the raid was also an attempt "to drive this woman out of her employment" (CO/762/ 107/9). Other times, efforts were made to burn police families out: for instance, in Bantry, Co. Cork on 25 June 1920, the home of Constable John Cleary was attacked, and an attempt was made to set it on fire. His wife and a visiting lady friend "succeeded in extinguishing the flames" (CO/762/107/9). As the report further reveals, "the object [was] to terrorise and drive the families of police out of the country, and thus attempt to break down the morale of the men" (CO/762/107/9).

As argued by Townsend, boycotting, threatening, and ostracizing the RIC and their families worked "in part because of its enabling logic – that the armed RIC was an army of occupation, rather than a legitimate police force" (31). These threats against police and their families and intimidation of those presumed to be sympathetic to the RIC "constituted, after ambushes, the largest number of incidents that the police encountered, especially in 1920" (Lowe 99). The impact on the RIC was felt in many ways; smaller, rural, more isolated barracks were abandoned and often, subsequently, looted, burnt, and destroyed, leaving large parts of the country without a police presence. As the police entrenched themselves behind the walls of more fortified barracks in large towns, those related to or associated with them, who continued to live unprotected among hostile communities, were targeted more and more often. The threat faced by their families impacted on the morale of the men, as while the men might be safe behind barrack walls, the safety of the families, many living among these hostile communities engaging in the boycott, was a constant worry. For example, on 23 June 1920 Sergeant Hurst, "who had been 36 years in the service", resigned, as the Ballybrack barracks in Co. Dublin, where he had been stationed and in which his wife and children still lived, was burnt down ("RIC Sergeant Resigns" 1). Elsewhere, at 2 a.m. in the morning of 4 July 1920, the vacated RIC barracks in Blessington, Co. Wicklow, in which an RIC Sergeant's wife was still living, was attacked. She was "ordered to leave" and the building was set on fire (CO 904/14).

Many RIC men resigned their positions citing the threats to their families. For instance, the parents of Sergeant Patrick Fallon, who were living in Co. Sligo, were visited at home by "a number of unknown men" in July 1920, and "were ordered to take their son out of the R.I. Constabulary [*sic*]" (CO 904/168). No notice was taken of this visit, so on 28 September 1920, a number of masked and disguised men called again at the home and "dragged the mother and father out of the bed, put them on their knees

and made them take an oath that they would have their son out of the Force in a month” (CO 904/168). This second visit had the desired effect: Sergeant Fallon resigned, “not for his own safety but for the safety of his parents” (CO 904/168). In September 1920, in Co. Meath, Constable John J. Harte resigned from the force as his parents’ home had been raided and his father “threatened with death” if his son did not resign (CO 904/ 168). The impact of intimidation of families on resignations throughout the country was effective although uneven. As Hughes argues, there was a successful campaign “against police families in Cork [and ...] in the ‘quieter’ counties Roscommon and Leitrim [... and] Cavan”, whereas only two men in Ulster resigned citing family intimidation, “pointing to a comparatively safe environment for police and their families there” (29-30).

While raids, home invasion, and threatening family members were effective means, among the most common ways of intimidating those not related to but rather associated with the force were public notices and threatening letters. For example, in Kilglass and Enniscrone, Co. Sligo notices appeared on the local chapel gates on 19 and 20 June 1920, which stated that “any person that does work or associates with the R.I.C. will be sorry” (CO 904/148). In analyses of reports of intimidation from contemporary newspaper accounts, Dublin Castle/RIC records, sources such as the intelligence files in the Collins Papers (Military Archives of Ireland), which are predominantly communications (despatches) between IRA Brigade and Battalion Officers and GHQ including many despatches to Michael Collins, as well as the military pension application files (MSPC) and the Bureau of Military History (BMH), it becomes clear that the use of the threatening letter and the public notice was widespread. On the night of 24 April 1920, a public notice was posted on a pillar box at Garragh Bridge, Glenbeigh, Co. Kerry. People were warned that for their own safety and “in the interests of their country” they should avoid “all communications of a friendly nature with members of the R.I.C […] BEWARE [*their emphasis*] […] those who ignore this will be meted out the punishment of traitors – signed, Soldiers of the Irish Republic” (CO 904/148). This and other notices put out around the country meant that the police, and anyone who associated or worked for them, were considered valid targets. Businesses who supplied the barracks with provisions, pubs in which they socialized, retired members who were friendly with ex-comrades, locals who were deemed too friendly and therefore suspected as spies, and young women who might be seen to be too friendly were among the groups targeted by republicans.

A sense of the mass surveillance undertaken can be seen in Intelligence files in the Collins Papers.[3] While men and women were under surveillance, the offences most women under surveillance were accused of was forming personal relationships with Crown Forces, “keeping company” with RIC members, Black and Tans, or with the

3 The Collins Papers, Military Archives are searchable online at <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/the-collins-papers/>.

military, and being suspect during those encounters of passing information to the enemy. As Louise Ryan argued, "women were defined through their relationship with the enemy: as spies or as girlfriend", and these relationships marked young women as shameful, as deviant, as immoral, as lacking that "most necessary of makers of Irish femininity, respectability" (84). This possessive and coercive attitude towards women is reflected in several statements by IRA men to the Bureau of Military History (BMH). As James Maloney of the Bruff, Co. Limerick IRA reflected in his BMH witness statement,

> Some young girls created a problem. The British uniform was an attraction for them, as indeed would any uniform. They could be a real danger to the movement and gave a bad example by consorting with the enemy. They were warned repeatedly, and stronger measures had to be resorted to. No Volunteer liked the job, but on occasions these girls' hair had to be cut. (Maloney, BMH WS 1525)

How republicans dealt with these young women varied. Many women and girls received verbal warnings and threats; more received threatening letters, were physically assaulted or in many cases, were attacked and bobbed, i.e., their hair was forcibly cropped off, usually in a late-night violent attack by armed and masked men. With the guilty woman/girl shamed, her sins obvious from her shorn head – as Leo Buckley, I/O of the Cork No. 1 Brigade later said in his BMH Witness Statement, "the appearance of a girl with 'bobbed' hair clearly denoted her way of life" (Buckley, BMH WS 1714) – with her ostracization assured, republican men could uphold and defend the community they claimed to protect and reinforce their moral authority and leadership amongst civilians.

This surveillance and punishment of women associated with them served to further isolate the RIC, making their lives and the job of policing physically, mentally, and emotionally much more onerous. There was, however, one group of women, not related as family or associated as friends or love interests, who were especially targeted to further the aims of intimidation and ostracization as part of the RIC boycott. These were female barracks servants. In late 1920 the British Labour Commission, led by Arthur Henderson, MP, came to investigate the ongoing violence in Ireland. The subsequent report published in 1921 included reports on violence committed by republicans against differing groups of women. In a chapter on the "Victimisation of Policemen's Wives and Barrack Servants", the threats to RIC wives and families, the young women who "kept company" with policemen, and the female barrack servants were noted (*Report of the Labour Commission* 80). In Appendix III, "Material Supplied to or Obtained by the Commission", the victimization of female barrack servants was discussed, and examples provided:

> May 22, 1920
>
> Mrs --- who was barrack servant at the R.I.C. barracks, ---, had to leave her employment through being terrorised by receiving a threatening letter to leave her employment at once.

> May 24, 1920
>
> Mrs --- who is employed as barrack servant, was warned by two masked and armed men who entered her house that it was against the rules of the I.R.A. to work for the R.I.C., and that if she continued her hair would be cut off.
>
> [...]
>
> August 10, 1920
>
> Injured person was made swear an oath that she would cease working for police.
>
> [...]
>
> September 5, 1920
>
> Seven or eight masked men entered the house of injured person, forcibly removed her outside, and cut her hair off. She was a barrack servant and had been previously warned to leave police employment.
>
> September 11, 1920 – 10.30 p.m.
>
> ---- was taken from her lodgings by armed and masked men, gagged, and taken to a field where her hair was cut off, and she was kicked in the body. She was employed as a barrack servant, where her predecessor had left owing to the boycott of the police. (*Report of the Labour Commission* 80-81)

The *Irish Times* gives some more detail on the victim of the assault of 11 September 1920. The unnamed barrack servant was an older woman, “60 years of age” (“Catalogue of Crime” 3), which fits the profile of the typical female barrack servant. She was attacked as she had ignored a warning to leave her job and because she had replaced the previous barrack servant who had quit because of intimidation.

While these are just a few examples of the victimization suffered by female barracks servants, most of the usual violent methods of intimidation used against other groups of women were also used in the case of these women: threatening letters, intimidation, physical assault, and forcible hair cropping. Targeted in these cases, however, were a particularly marginalized group of women. Many were widows living on small pensions or poor working-class married women, and this was sometimes the only income in the family: a low-paid, but steady and secure income. According to Brian Griffin, young, unmarried women were not welcome as workers or residents in RIC barracks, even if related to police, and children, especially “daughters, had to move out of barracks when they reached the age of fourteen-and-a-half years” (173). This was a way of protecting the reputations of the young girls, particularly against what an inspector-general described as “the ruin in which some of them have been involved, by constantly living in a confined barracks, with none but single men as their companions” (qtd. in Griffin 173). There was need for women in the barracks as in addition to domestic duties, a woman could provide an important service as a “lady searcher”. When a woman prisoner needed to be searched, it had to be done by “the wife of a constable, or should she decline, the barrack servant in her presence, but not in the presence of the men” (*The Royal Irish Constabulary Manual*). In addition, to avoid any hint of scandal with female servants working in close quarters in the all-male environment of the barracks, RIC regulations “stipulated that [they] had either to

be old women or married" (Griffin 173). Many of these women were unwilling to leave such secure employment, suffering the loss of income and poverty which that might entail, so coercion and intimidation was used to encourage those resisting the boycott to leave their job. The problem of what to do with barrack servants gave concern to the leadership in local brigades. In late June 1920, a letter in the Collins Papers from the Dingle, Co. Kerry company of the IRA to GHQ in Dublin sought clarification on several issues relating to the RIC boycott, including asking if it should be extended to the "one or two women who cook and wash for them – are they to be made to give up their jobs" (A/0494). The answer was a terse "yes".

As it was domestic labour, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and uniforms, and general care work, the work of a barrack servant could not be considered essential in a military or policing sense. RIC wives were "expected to be invisible to the barracks" (Malcolm 182) and RIC personnel were expected to be models of respectable behaviour in communities in which they lived and served. The wife and family of the Constable or Sergeant also had to be models of proper behaviour, therefore any association with unmarried RIC men was closely monitored. Wives were not expected to cater for, or work in association with, the men in the barracks, so it is in this domestic space where the barrack servant was a necessity. She often lived nearby and was an important figure especially for younger, unmarried Constables who lived in the barracks. As outlined by Elizabeth Malcolm, she began her day when "she lit the fires in the morning, made the tea, filled the lamps, scrubbed the tables […] before an inspection she had to clean the barracks thoroughly" (181). As characterized, in the *RIC Magazine* in February 1912, by RIC Sergeant Thomas Dolan, the barrack servant he knew was "a tall, raw boned woman of considerable strength of character". It was she, Dolan wrote, who could guide a raw recruit in his dealings with his superiors or alternatively "could work a baneful influence on his career by going upstairs to the sergeant's wife" (qtd. in Malcolm 181). While Dolan's article exhibits considerable hostility towards barrack servants, seeing her as "incompetent or a tyrant, and frequently a combination of both" and "an atrocious cook", there is no doubt that the work of the female barrack servant was central to the smooth functioning of an RIC barracks (Malcolm 181-83). The men spent the larger part of their day out of the barracks, so it was the barrack servant who saw to the provision of food, heat, clean clothes, and the cleaning of their sleeping quarters; if she was not there, they had to undertake this work themselves. Therefore, in terms of an RIC boycott aimed at disrupting the smooth functioning of the local barracks, the female barrack servant became an important, and, most critically, living as she did among the local community, an accessible target.

While some women may have left their employment with the RIC as soon at the boycott began, many did not and had to be encouraged to do so – in many parts of the country, republicans would not be found wanting in the many and varied methods of encouragement, intimidation, and outright violence used to force female barrack servants from their jobs. Bridget O'Toole was a barrack servant at the Rearcross, Co.

Tipperary RIC barracks in 1920. She was married to Edward O’Toole, an agricultural labourer, and was about forty years old (1911 Census).[4] Dependent on the low wages of an agricultural labourer, the O’Toole family were poor, so Bridget’s wages would have been important. In April 1920, a letter addressed to her husband, and signed, by “the Firing Party”, referenced Bridget (CO 904/148). It warned that “unless you withdraw the services of your wife from the local peelers within three days after receiving this notice you shall undergo the extreme penalty at the hands of the Irish Republican Army i.e. DEATH” (CO 904/148). It also included a terrifying reference to a recently killed Constable: “Remember Finn’s eyes were missing, so mind yours.” (CO 904/148) Constable William Finn was one of two policemen ambushed and killed while cycling from Rearcross to the Petty Sessions in the nearby town of Newport on 9 April 1920. Both policemen suffered traumatic injuries, and graphic evidence from the inquiry indicates that Constable Finn’s head was badly disfigured by gunshot. Stationed at Rearcross barracks, he would have been known to Mrs O’Toole, and no doubt she would have known the nature and extent of his injuries. That the IRA were threatening her husband with similar harm had the desired impact and she left her job.

This threatening letter, while more detailed than most, contains similar warnings which many female barrack servants received throughout the country in 1920 and into 1921. They were threatened with ostracization, exile, assault, and death. On the same night as Edward O’Toole and his wife were threatened, another barrack servant, Mrs Crowley, who worked at Kilcommon RIC barracks, also in Co. Tipperary, was “warned to cease working for the police” (CO 904/148). On 1 May 1920, in Broadford, Co. Clare, shots were fired into the house of Michael O’Keefe “whose wife is a barrack servant to the RIC” (“Life in Sinn Fein Ireland” 5). On 23 May 1920, the home of Winnie Molloy, a barrack servant in the Tobercurry District, in Co. Mayo, was raided by a number of masked men. They beat her, fired shots outside the house and made her swear she “would not work for the police again” (CO 904/14). In August 1920, Jane Doyle, a barrack servant to Baltinglass RIC in Co. Wicklow, received a letter. In it she was threatened with death if she did not leave the town; “the motive is to deprive the police of a servant” (CO 904/148). In September 1920, Mrs Maria Valentine, who was working as a barrack servant at Gorey, Co. Wexford, was threatened: “We request you to leave the RIC Barrack at once or you will be doomed by order of the IRA Soldiers.” (qtd. in Hennigan 291) She had been in the job only two weeks.

Not all women who were threatened by republicans could or would leave their job. On 24 May 1920, two masked and armed men entered the house of Bridget Rourke, a barrack servant in Adare, Co. Limerick. She was ordered to leave her job, which she refused to do, “informing the raiders that she was the sole means of earning a livelihood and had six children to support” (CO 904/148). Mrs Rourke was not the only one who refused. In July 1920, Mary Bonner, barrack servant in Dungloe, Co.

4 According to the census, the O’Tooles lived in Shanballyedmond (Abington, Co. Tipperary).

Donegal, received a threatening letter, but refused to leave her employment (CO 904/148). In June 1920 in Templemore, Co. Tipperary, barrack servant Mary Mathews and her family were threatened but she refused to leave her job (CO 904/148). In Middleton in Co. Cork, Mary Grogan was warned that her "house would be burned to the ground" if she did not cease working for the police, but she refused (CO 904/148). In cases where women were reluctant to leave their jobs, there was often an escalation in violence following on the threatening letters. One of the ways in which republicans punished young women who were keeping company with police or the military were assaults marked by forcible hair cropping. The RIC and Black and Tans also used this gendered violence as a punishment for women associated with the republican cause, including members of Cumann na mBan. While the use of this tactic was widespread, those who were forcibly hair cropped by republicans for company keeping with the RIC, or those hair cropped by the Crown Forces for suspected republican associations or activities, generally were younger, unmarried women. In these cases, hair cropping, as Gemma Clarke argues, targeted hair, a part of women's body long associated with "eroticism and sexuality", and shamed and defeminized the woman (Clarke 86). Hair cropping, shearing, or bobbing (all these terms were used contemporaneously) was a deliberate violation of a victim's femininity, usually within or adjacent to what was considered the safe space of the home (McAuliffe, "The Homefront as Battlefront" 164-82). Whilst the cutting itself was painful, the aftermath could be worse as the shaved woman became a symbol of betrayal of her community, her family and her nation, and a warning to others, since by the "visible marking out of the target […] shearing is a tactic of exclusion and punishment" (Clarke 87).

Hair cropping becomes a weapon with which not only to control the behaviours of women, but also to mark some behaviours out, publicly, as shameful. For republicans, the continued existence of women working in RIC barracks, defying the boycott, was shameful and so those women, if they could not be threatened out of their job, had to be beaten and shamed out of their job. In late 1919, the home of Mrs Mary Scanlon, who worked in Kildysart, Co. Clare RIC barracks and lived in the town, was "entered forcibly by a party of disguised men, who caught her, cut her hair, tarred and otherwise maltreated her" ("Women Tarred" 4). This attack not only impacted on Mrs Scanlon, but also had negative consequences for Margaret Kelly, a maternity nurse in Kildysart, who had attended Mrs Scanlon after she had been seriously injured in the brutal assault. As a result of attending the injured barrack servant, Nurse Kelly was also "rigorously boycotted", and "every paying patient who employed her received threatening letters, and those patients who had insisted on having her had their houses fired into" ("Boycotted Nurse" 4). This is evidence that once a barrack servant was marked out as potentially treacherous by republicans, even dealing with them could bring serious repercussions.

In other events in September 1920, Ellen Gillen, a barrack servant in Ballyshannon RIC barracks in Co. Donegal, was attacked (CO 904/149). She had been living in a

boarding house near the barracks and was therefore an accessible target. The house was raided late at night by armed and masked men, who took her out of the house to the big meadow nearby and made her “swear she would not go back to the police, then they cut off her hair with a [*sic*] scissors” (“Compensation Claims” 6). One of them said “she was a traitor to her country and her religion and [then] she was kicked” by the men (“Compensation Claims” 6). Gillen returned to her room battered and bruised, her hair roughly cropped and with a bleeding lip. She then had to leave her lodging as it was no longer safe for her or, indeed, for her landlord, as he and his home would have also been a target for violence for renting to someone working for the RIC. She lived in the barracks for nine weeks, after which she left as the work and the threat of further violence was too much for her. At the Quarter Sessions in January 1921, she was granted £40 for nervousness and the fact that she now had difficulty finding employment. As an ex-barrack servant, few would have been inclined to offer her work. An RIC Sergeant who gave witness on the attack on Gillen said that he believed that it was engineered locally as “the boycott of the police was being rigorously enforced at the time” (“Compensation Claims” 6). Other barrack servants suffered similar violence. Kate Kelly was attacked by six or seven masked men in her home. They cut her hair “close to her scalp” and she was “confined to bed suffering from shock” (“Women’s Hair Cut Off” 3; “Servant’s Hair Cut” 3). The RIC records for August to December 1920 evidence threats to a number of barrack servants. These included Mary Brogan, Co. Donegal, who was threatened with having her hair cropped if she didn’t leave her job, as was Esther Tims in Co. Longford (CO 904/149). In Co. Mayo, Bridget O’Malley was similarly threatened if she did not stop working for the police, as was an unnamed barrack servant in Killenaule, Co. Tipperary, while Mary Coffey, barrack servant at Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath, was also threatened with violence (CO 904/149).

These are just a few of the very many attacks on barrack servants, most of which did have the desired effect, with the women leaving their place of employment, often placing themselves and their families in deeper poverty and want. While the intimidation of women out of jobs in RIC barracks is not usually considered in the histories of boycott against the police, it is important to note this very specific and gendered targeting of women workers. The working of an RIC barracks was dependent on supplies from local businesses, and on the domestic work of female barrack servants. Without the barrack servant, the domestic work had to be undertaken by the men themselves, taking them from the work of policing, and without the barrack servant, a barracks that was already under pressure was a more unpleasant place in which to live and work. For the barrack servants themselves, giving up their job could be a real hardship as it often was their only income if they were widows or single women with children. For instance, Joanna Hanafin of Castlegregory, Co. Kerry, gave up her job as a barrack servant because of the boycott, and by 1922 was looking for help from Dáil Éireann because she was “penniless, unable to find work, and living in a cabin that was falling down around her” (Hughes 34). For many barrack servants there

was often no other work to be had or as the evidence has shown, no employers who would take them on. As her pension application demonstrates, Amelia Wilmot, a barrack servant in Listowel, Co. Kerry, despite working with the IRA and supplying them with intelligence, experienced poverty and never held steady employment again after she was dismissed from her post in September 1921 (MAI, MSP34REF32473). Female barrack servants, living in their local communities, endured threats, physical violence, and gendered assaults as part of the process of undermining the work of the RIC. These working-class women were shamed and coerced out of their jobs, yet many would never be employed again as the legacy of their association with the RIC made them unemployable. For most, poverty and ostracization continued even after they left their jobs. The attacks on this specific group of women are part of the histories of deliberate, targeted, gendered assaults which were a central component of violence during the Irish War of Independence, and fit within the broader narratives of female victimization, coercion, and shaming during this revolutionary period. The legacy impacts are part of the trauma, silence, shame, and poverty endured by many working-class women on into the Irish Free State.

Works Cited

Archival Sources

1911 Census. The National Archives of Ireland. <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>.

Bureau of Military History (BMH). Military Archives, Dublin.

Dublin Castle Records. CO series, Work and Administration of the Royal Irish Constabulary (from 1905). The National Archives, London.

Richard Mulcahy Papers. “General Orders (New Series).” UCD Archives.

The Collins Papers. Military Archives, Dublin (MAI).

The Royal Irish Constabulary Manual (1909). The RIC Collection, 2011c.

Secondary Sources

“Boycotted Nurse.” *Evening Echo.* 14 Apr. 1920: 4.

“Catalogue of Crime in Ireland.” *Irish Times.* 25 Sept. 1920: 3.

Clarke, Gemma. “Violence against Women in the Irish Civil War, 1922-3: Gender-based Harm in Global Perspective.” *Irish Historical Studies* 44.165 (May 2020): 75-90.

“Compensation Claims.” *Fermanagh Herald.* 15 Jan. 1921: 6.

Earls FitzGerald, Thomas. *Combatants and Civilians in Revolutionary Ireland, 1918-1923.* London: Routledge, 2021.

Griffin, Brian. “The Irish Police: Love, Sex and Marriage in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.” *Gender Perspectives in 19th-century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres.* Ed. Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997. 168-78.

Hennigan, Hal. *The World of Constable John Hennigan*, *Royal Irish Constabulary 1912-1922*. Kilworth: Troubador Publishing, 2018.

Hughes, Brian. *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, Coercion, and Communities during the Revolution.* Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2016.

“Life in Sinn Fein Ireland.” *Belfast Newsletter.* 5 May 1920: 5.

Lowe, W.J. “The War against the R.I.C., 1919-21.” *Éire-Ireland* 37.3&4 (Fómhar/ Geimhreadh / Fall/Winter, 2002): 79-117.

Malcolm, Elizabeth. *The Irish Policeman, 1822-1922: A Life*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006.

Markievicz, Countess Constance. *Women, Ideals and the Nation*. Dublin: The Tower Press, 1909.

McAuliffe, Mary. “Resisting the Menace of Conscription: Women, Mass Mobilisation and Lá na mBan, 1918.” *Lá na mBan. Papers of the Centenary Commemoration, June 2018.* Dublin: Kilmainham Tales, 2018. 37-46.

-----. “The Homefront as Battlefront: Women, Violence and the Domestic Space during War in Ireland 1919-1921.” *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence.* Ed. Linda Connolly. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2019. 164-82.

Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland. London: Caledonian Press, 1921.

“RIC Sergeant Resigns.” *Evening Herald.* 23 June 1920: 1.

Ryan, Louise. “‘Drunken Tans’: Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919-21).” *Feminist Review* 66.1 (September 2000): 73-94.

“Servant’s Hair Cut.” *Freeman’s Journal.* 9 Sept. 1920: 3.

TeBrake, Janet K. “Irish Peasant Women in Revolt: The Land League Years.” *Irish Historical Studies* 28.109 (May 1992): 63-80.

Townsend, Charles. *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence.* London: Allen Lane, 2013.

“Women’s Hair Cut Off.” *Anglo-Celt.* 18 Sept. 1920: 3.

“Women Tarred and Maltreated by Disguised Raiders.” *Freeman’s Journal.* 22 Dec. 1919: 4.

DIGITAL WITNESSING AS MEMORY WORK: THE CASE OF THE BESSBOROUGH PLANNING HEARING

Rachel Andrews

Introduction

Between 21-23 April 2021, An Bord Pleanála (ABP), Ireland's planning authority, held an oral hearing into plans for the development of a block of apartments at the site of the former mother and baby home at Bessborough, Co. Cork. The proposed development had caused controversy because of the unknown whereabouts of the remains of around 900 infants who were born at or associated with Bessborough between 1922 and its closure in 1998 (Roche, "Bessborough Home Development"). Due to restrictions surrounding the Covid-19 virus, the oral hearing was held virtually, but media and other interested parties who wished to attend were able to do so. Over the three days of the hearing members of the Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance (CSSA), which represents survivors of the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home, and which argued that at least part of the development should not go ahead, live-tweeted events and testimony from the hearing, providing a real-time witnessing that existed outside of the traditional media infrastructure, whereby one or more professional reporters mediate events for an audience (Ashuri and Pinchevski 139; Mortensen 1393-406; Schankweiler et al. 1-13).

As Kurasawa has written, our current era is one of "witnessing fever", whereby "public spaces have been transformed into veritable machines for the production of testimonial discourses and evidence" (93), due to the number of media forms willing and available to present testimony and evidence, and the many audience members interested in receiving them. It is an analysis that, in recent years, has also proved important for researchers concerned with the way witnessing has been employed in digital spaces, particularly on social media (Andén-Papadopoulos; Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann; Núñez Puente et al.; Ristovska 1034-47; Schankweiler et al. 1-13; Truelove). Indeed, as Schankweiler et al. point out, new technologies, and societal adoption of same, have allowed for an intensification of the "affective economies" (1) of testimonies that are circulated in real time on social media platforms. Schankweiler et al. focus their exploration on the role of image testimonies on social media, as does Andén-Papadopoulos, while Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann consider the interplay between the visual, sonic, and textual components of posts to the Instagram platform. This essay draws upon this research by undertaking a concentration on the written witness testimonies of the CSSA activist group on Twitter over a period of three days in April 2021. As Núñez Puente et al. note in their examination of digital activism on Twitter, the platform can offer those wishing to speak about uncomfortable topics, such as gender-based violence, a way of "circumventing invisibility" as well as an opportunity for "diffusing messages at a mass scale" (295). This is due in part to

the platform's capacity for the creation of "conversational communities" (295-96) and also because of how hashtags can be used to organize and mobilize actions across physical borders. While this study relates primarily to digital witnessing, rather than digital activism, it is also concerned with the idea of circumventing invisibility, arguing that the digital witnessing work carried out by the CSSA in April 2021 operated as a way of claiming and reclaiming the narrative on behalf of those who have frequently been "condemned to silence" (Ashuri and Pinchevski 144) due to their dependence on mediators to be able to deliver public testimony (Ashuri and Pinchevski 127-51). Given that mother and baby homes can be suggested to operate as sites of trauma in the Irish collective memory and culture (Andrews; Enright; Wills) and given that the Bessborough site in Cork has its own very particular history of hurt and sadness (Andrews; Wills), it can also be argued that the digital witnessing by the activist group represents an act of memory work necessary for social justice, particularly if such an act can be defined as one of "naming, as listing, as re-calling, as re-storying, as accounting, as deferring, as listening, as speaking, and as claiming" (Grunebaum 214).

Making use of Ashuri and Pinchevski's framework for the act of witnessing, this essay also considers how Twitter allows for the blurring of the traditional roles of eyewitness and mediator (127-51), with the narratives delivered by the CSSA on the digital platform not constructed as "witnessable" (140), in the manner they would have been had they been presented by the professional media. Instead, because the testimonies being considered here were delivered virtually in real time, in fragmentary fashion, because they were often disembodied and outside of context, they enabled a form of witnessing neither shaped, nor framed, by an outside, mediating, agent (Ashuri and Pinchevski 140). While Pine (1-4) has considered the ways in which such outside media agents have offered victim witnesses the possibility of accruing social and mnemonic power, she has also written of the risk of such power being temporary and fleeting, with witnesses becoming trapped in the space of abuse tourism as they look to trade their memories for the value of being heard. This essay builds upon such work to examine the reconfiguration of the relationship between the individual and collective on digital platforms (see Mortensen 1393-406).

In doing so, the essay also interrogates how audience members on Twitter have the opportunity to step outside their traditional position as "remote spectators" (Ashuri and Pinchevski 140) through the public performance of audience-witness on the platform. That this relationship, between witness and spectator, is subject to far fewer checks and balances than would traditionally have been the case for media testimonies (Simons 17-29), meaning witness credibility on Twitter cannot be guaranteed, also needs to be borne in mind when considering both the diffusion and reception of information on the platform. Nonetheless, it is this essay's argument that the digital narratives examined here make up a crucial component of the witnessing field (Ashuri and Pinchevski 130-35) of survivor testimonies from carceral institutions such as mother and baby homes, and thus merit close consideration as the search continues for social justice among those communities.

Following a brief discussion of the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home and the contentions that there is a children's burial ground at the site, this essay then offers an overview of the ABP Oral Hearing in April 2021 along with a consideration of the CSSA's presence on the Twitter platform. The analysis is then developed through the case study of the digital testimonies published to Twitter by the CSSA group over the course of the planning hearing, as well as some of the audience responses to those testimonies. The essay concludes by reiterating that digital spaces must now be considered among those that provide the conditions for survivors of the Irish carceral state to voice their responses to past injustices.

The Children's Burial Ground at Bessborough Former Mother and Baby Home, Cork, Ireland

The Bessborough Mother and Baby Home was owned and run by the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary from 1922 until 1998, during which time 9 768 mothers entered the home and 8 938 children were born or reared there (Commission of Investigation, "Chapter 18" 1). Most women who gave birth in Bessborough remained in the home for at least a year, although many stayed much longer, and they were all expected to work as unpaid domestic servants until they were in a position to arrange for the future care of their children (15, 98-128). Some women left with their children, but in most cases the children were either adopted, placed in foster homes – where often their birth mothers paid for their upkeep – transferred to other institutions such as orphanages or industrial schools, or they died (98-128).

As with other mother and baby homes in Ireland, the Bessborough home had a high rate of infant mortality, and during the 1930s it had the highest rate of infant deaths of all four mother and baby homes then in existence (Commission of Investigation, "Chapter 18" 16). By the early 1940s, the infant death rate in the home was almost 70% and later that decade the state chief medical officer temporarily closed the institution due to concerns about the level of child deaths there (Ó Fátharta, "68% of babies in Bessborough home died"). Of the nearly 9 000 children born or reared at Bessborough between 1922 and its closure in 1998, 923 died in the home or in hospital after being transferred there from Bessborough (Commission of Investigation, "Chapter 18" 1; English, "Bessborough").

The information regarding the deaths at Bessborough was made public in 2019 following an interim report of the Commission of Investigation to inquire into Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland. The Commission had been established by the Irish government in 2015 after allegations that around 800 babies and young children had been buried in a disused sewage tank at the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway, between 1925 and 1961 (Commission of Investigation, "Introduction" 1-2; O'Reilly). The Commission's Fifth Interim Report, published in March 2019, dealt with burial practices at the mother and baby homes, and found it could not establish where the vast majority of children who died in the Bessborough Home are buried (Commission of Investigation, *Fifth Interim Report* 26-40).

Following the Commission's interim report, the CSSA, which represents family members of children who died while resident at Bessborough, and whose burial location is not recorded, called for a thorough examination of the Bessborough grounds to see if it contains the remains of the infants whose burial places remain unknown (Roche, "Bessborough Home Development"). In a submission to Cork City Council in August 2020, the CSSA stated it had discovered compelling evidence from two eyewitnesses and a 1950 Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) trace map to suggest there is an unmarked children's burial ground at Bessborough and requested the local authority take possession of that section of the grounds to allow public access to the burial space (CSSA, Submission 3-4). As of today, that section remains in private ownership, but in March 2022, Cork City Councillors voted to afford a level of protection to the area, rezoning it as a landscape preservation zone, which makes it unlikely it will be built on without taking into account the sensitivities of the landscape (English, "Cork City Council").

The Oral Planning Hearing and the CSSA's Twitter Feed

In November 2021, property developer MWB Two Limited lodged a planning application with ABP for permission to construct 179 apartments in three blocks on the section of the Bessborough estate in the developer's ownership. In a written submission opposing the development, the CSSA said that part of the planned construction would take place on an area of the site marked as a children's burial ground on a 1950 OSI trace map (CSSA, Opening Statement 5-6; English, "Bessborough"), prompting the planning authority to take the rare decision to opt for an oral hearing on the case (English, "Oral Hearing"). An ABP Oral Hearing is a public meeting anyone can attend but due to public health restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, in this instance the hearing was held virtually on the Microsoft Teams platform (An Bord Pleanála, Agenda and Order of Proceedings 4) with attendees joining once they had registered their details with ABP. The hearing was originally scheduled to take place on Wednesday 21 April and Thursday 22 April, 2021, but it was extended to a third day, and concluded on Friday 23 April, 2021, with a decision on the planning application to be reached by 25 May 2021 (English, "Oral Hearing").

Over the three days, a range of oral submissions was heard, including from Roderic O'Gorman, the Irish Minister for Children; from local politicians; and from observers associated with Bessborough, some of whom were survivors of the institution. Submissions were heard by counsel for the developer; counsel for Cork City Council; and counsel for the CSSA, along with evidence from a range of expert witnesses including surveyors, cartographers, archaeologists, and a mapping expert from the OSI. Professional journalists from an array of print and online national and local media outlets were also in attendance and filed reports on the hearing.

Members of the CSSA attended the hearing as observers of the proceedings. The organization is represented publicly either by its main researcher, Maureen Considine,

a PhD candidate in the History of Art Department at University College Cork (UCC), or by the organization's survivor liaison officer, Catherine Coffey O'Brien, who is a Bessborough survivor and a graduate of UCC School of Social Science. The CSSA, which joined Twitter in June 2020, tweets under the Twitter handle @Lost900 Bessboro, a reference to the 900 children from Bessborough whose burial place has not been established. As of March 2022, the organization follows 1 573 accounts on Twitter and is followed by 1 442 accounts. Its followers include local and national politicians, members of the Irish media, Irish historians and other academics; members of charities and social activists, artists and writers; survivors of Ireland's institutional system; Traveller rights advocates, human rights lawyers, adoption rights organizations, and miscellaneous individual followers. These followers see in their timeline any tweets, retweets or likes by the CSSA whenever they log into Twitter. Meantime, the CSSA follows back many of these same people and organizations, as well as some international victim rights advocates, some national and international media organizations and journalists, and a range of national and international art, history, environmental, and advocate organizations.

The ABP hearing began at 10 a.m. each morning, and from that time on each of the three days, the CSSA live-tweeted events of the hearing. It did this by creating a Twitter thread, a series of connected tweets that can be used to provide context, an update, or an extended point. The thread was updated by CSSA members on an almost minute-by-minute basis throughout the three days of the hearing, beginning each day with a new thread. Although ABP does not allow recording, streaming, or use of mobile phones during an oral hearing, the virtual nature of the event meant it was not possible to enforce these rules in this case.

The CSSA averaged around eighty tweets a day over the three days of the hearing, with most of these tweets forming part of the main Twitter thread, although the organization occasionally responded to comments or replies to its timeline. From time to time over the three days, the group also tagged some of the observers to the hearing who have profiles on Twitter. This included the Minister for Children, Roderic O'Gorman; local Green Party Councillor Lorna Bogue; local Sinn Féin TD Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire; as well as Bessborough survivor Terri Harrison. On the final day of the hearing, after the proceedings had concluded, the organization posted a series of emotional tweets tagging and thanking its legal counsel, as well as the advocates, witnesses, and local and national politicians who had spoken in support of the group's position.

For each day of the hearing the group received the most likes for its first tweet of the day, which announced the start of the day's events, with each subsequent tweet in the thread generally receiving a handful of likes. For its first tweet of the day, the CSSA received 32 likes and 20 retweets on 21 April, 22 likes and 10 retweets on 22 April, and 85 likes and 15 retweets on 23 April. These likes and retweets were carried out by users who described themselves in their Twitter profiles as survivors,

politicians, journalists, media producers, writers, activists, academics, artists, mothers, feminists, and psychologists, with some of the likes and retweets being made by the same users across the three days, although this was not exclusively the case. The CSSA received two quote tweets – retweets with an added comment from the retweeter – on day one of the hearing, for its first tweet of the day. The first of these came from user @maryeaslattery, whose profile calls for adoption societies to be investigated. The quote tweet tagged 11 profiles, including survivors, adopted people, and local politicians, and it stated:

> @maryeaslattery (Mary Slattery)
>
> "Great thread, thank you."
>
> @Lost900Bessboro @LouiseGall24 @KayCuritin1 @cllrkmac @Terri_KHarrison @akaalison1 @_KieranSheahan @deirdreforde @CllrDesCahill @johnbuttimer @jerrybuttimer
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/maryeaslattery/status/1384916858973917184>

The second quote tweet came from @KathyDArcyCork, whose profile describes her as a poet performer, as Irish in Finland, as a doctor, as an advocate for Trans Rights, as a member of the Cork Together for Yes campaign, which sought to repeal abortion laws in Ireland, and as NeuroDiverse. The tweet, which didn't tag any other users, stated:

> @KathyDArcyCork (Kathy D'Arcy)
>
> "We should all be following this hearing: survivers [*sic*] of incarceration and torture at the hands of the Irish church and state beg the agents of that state not to allow property developers to disinter their lost babies. WE'RE WATCHING."
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/KathyDArcyCork/status/1384898424558993408>

Finally, there were occasional conversations and responses between the CSSA and other Twitter users during the hearing. For example, towards the close of day one of the hearing, the organization shared a joke with user @IveaghGael (Finn), whom it follows, stating:

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "thanks for the light relief OFinlome its badly needed."
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1384894472241270789>

On the same day, while the hearing was on recess for lunch, the organization responded to user @DjJonhussey (Jon Hussey), who had asked about the connections between the Bessborough property developer and the National Asset Management Company, which was established by the Irish government in 2009 to take over property loans from the Republic's banks. On Twitter the CSSA clarified to the user that there was such a connection, tagging in its reply local television reporter Paul Byrne, television station Virgin Media, the Taoiseach Micheál Martin, and the Minister for Children, Roderic O'Gorman, as well as the affiliate campaign group Survivors

Unite at Last. On day two of the hearing, during the afternoon session, the CSSA replied to user @jimfitzpatrick, who is followed by the organization on Twitter and whose profile describes him as the Irish artist best-known for his iconic two-tone portrait of Che Guevara created in 1968. In his tweet @jimfitzpatrick asked:

> @jimfitzpatrick (Jim Fitzpatrick)
>
> "Who are these 'developers representatives' who want to build their apartment blocks on a sacred children's burial ground? Disgusting. Sacrilegious. Name and shame them."
>
> *Twitter*, 22 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/jimfitzpatrick/status/1385176196208529408>

The CSSA replied on Twitter by giving the name of the barrister and the solicitor representing the Bessborough developer at the hearing. The group's tweet was then replied to by user @HuggyBlair (Eric Arthur Blair), who is not followed by the organisation, and who stated:

> @HuggyBlair (Eric Arthur Blair)
>
> "You want to shame lawyers for representing people you don't agree with? What kind of society would we have if lawyers only acted for 'good' clients? Cop on."
>
> *Twitter*, 22 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/HuggyBlair/status/1385183625306648576>

However, @KathyDArcyCork (Kathy D'Arcy) also replied to the CSSA's tweet and stated:

> @KathyDArcyCork (Kathy D'Arcy)
>
> "I hope everyone shares and takes note of these names. I am."
>
> *Twitter*, 22 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/KathyDArcyCork/status/1385178738938220546>

On the final day of the hearing, the CSSA responded to other users only after the hearing had ended. At 6:05 p.m. that day, it sent a reply to Gary Gannon TD, a member of the Social Democrat party. Earlier that week, Gannon had expressed solidarity with the group on Twitter, but the CSSA used the platform to publicly disavow any support from Gannon and his party, suggesting his encouragement was inauthentic:

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "we could have done with your solidarity months ago keep it"
>
> *Twitter*, 23 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1385640937792098305>

In contrast, the organization publicly expressed its thanks on the Twitter platform to a number of other elected representatives once the hearing had finished proceedings, tagging in a series of emotional tweets by the Minister for Children, local Green party Councillors Lorna Bogue and Dan Boyle, local Fine Gael Councillor Joe Kavanagh, local Labour party representative Peter Horgan, local Sinn Féin TD Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, as well as survivors and advocates Terri Harrison, Mary Slattery, and the organization's legal team.

Having set the CSSA's Twitter feed in context, this essay will continue with a closer reading of the Twitter thread created by the CSSA over the three days of the ABP hearing, with the aim of considering how this digital document presents a divergence from traditional witness testimonies outside of the virtual sphere.

Digital Witnessing and Social Justice

Since the late 1990s survivors of Irish carceral institutions have been regularly afforded the chance to publicly bear witness to their trauma. They have been interviewed by Irish and international professional media. They have participated in many state-funded inquiries, and in a series of oral history projects by academic institutions. Meantime, contemporary Irish theatre productions have made use of verbatim survivor testimony to highlight Ireland's church and state abuses. While these forms of witnessing have certainly given survivors opportunities to be heard, victims of Ireland's carceral institutions have also expressed their disquiet at the ways their testimonies have been employed by mediating agents. Pembroke has noted the negative impact on survivors of the redress scheme procedure established by the Irish state in 1999, which required victims to write a detailed statement, and undergo an assessment by a psychologist to verify their trauma (1-17). More recently, survivors of Irish mother and baby homes said their words had been paraphrased and summarized rather than accurately transcribed by the Commission of Investigation to inquire into Mother and Baby Homes, and the revelation that this Commission had destroyed original recordings of survivors' testimony also caused enormous anger and distress (Crowe). While the Irish media has been rightly praised for its role in exposing historical child abuse, it has also been noted that journalistic accounts of trauma can be sensational and transient (Powell and Scanlon), often lacking capacity to confront systemic or underlying societal issues. Ashuri and Pinchevski (140), meantime, emphasize that mediators, in their role as gatekeepers, always hold significant power regarding how a witness is perceived by an audience, while Pine (1-22) has reminded us of the transactional nature of this kind of witnessing, whereby witnesses rely on mediators shaping and presenting their painful story in such a way as to secure an audience's interest and validation, as well as, hopefully, some form of social justice.

Does the digital documenting by the CSSA of the ABP Oral Hearing differ from these other modes of witnessing, most particularly by offering survivor witnesses the opportunity to claim and reclaim their narratives outside of the dominant codes of any mediators (Ashuri and Pinchevski 139)? If we consider the CSSA's live Twitter thread over the course of the hearing, we can see it both documented and commented on the events taking place.

For example, its second tweet of day one stated:

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "Each person or group are now briefly introducing themselves. The applicants [*sic*] barrister first, then the CSSA's barrister, now a number of individuals connected with Bessborough and local elected politicians."
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1384800725872648192>

In its third tweet, the CSSA explained:

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "Statement from the National Monuments Service is now being read out by the ABP inspector. NMS says 20th century burials are outside of its remit. The letter speaks of a licence that they issued to he [*sic*] applicant they say 'it was in fact issued in error.'"
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1384805869716656130>

On day one of the hearing, the CSSA's final few tweets reported verbatim the testimony of Mary Slattery, who lost her first child to a secret adoption in 1979 and who spoke as an observer at the hearing. The Twitter thread stated:

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "Mary Slattery 'a mother who lost my first born to adoption' is up now. She says 'I feel I am carrying the emotion' for all of the mothers. She speaks of the trauma and pain of the mothers. 'We deserve to be treated with respect…in life and in death'"
>
> "My heart is breaking for the mothers and babies who are unaccounted for. We deserve dignity…. I see this development as continuing to demonise us… To silence us… to deny us"
>
> "I am one of the mothers who do not want the resting places to be disturbed"
>
> "It has to be preserved, it has to be preserved"…"to bring peace to everyones [*sic*] heart"
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1384903322004557826>

In these examples, it can be suggested the CSSA is taking on the role of reporter as eyewitness, a position Ashuri and Pinchevski describe as that of the professional eyewitness, whereby reporters are "actors in an institutionalized practice of witnessing with its specific combination of competence and circumstance" (133). By the same token, however, the CSSA also operated frequently as a form of lay witness (see Ashuri and Pinchevski 133) during the hearing, in that it enunciated not only its knowledge of the event, but also its emotional response to it. For example, on day one, it followed its tweet reporting on the evidence of the National Monuments Service with this tweet:

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "bit of a kick in the stomach from the NMS saying that Bessborough burials are not within its remit – if not the NMS responsibility then what body is responsible for the preservation and protection of burial ground"
>
> *Twitter*, 21 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1384806612599296000>

On day three, Maureen Considine of the CSSA tweeted (as part of the CSSA Twitter thread):

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "Maureen here – just want to say I'm disgusted by the arrogance of the developers that they would set themselves up as an investigative agency. There is a massive conflict of interest here."
>
> *Twitter*, 23 Apr. 2021, <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1385547839414099970>

In other words, what the CSSA is providing here is a sense of emotional authenticity no reporter can match (Ashuri and Pinchevski 134). It is, at the same time, showing a capacity for rhetoric, while it is also technologically astute, resources that make it an extremely valuable eyewitness to the events of the hearing (Ashuri and Pinchevski 134), and we can imagine that mediators, such as professional journalists or theatre producers, might also have wished to make use of the organization as eyewitness. Conversely, however, the CSSA did not need these kinds of gatekeepers to deliver its testimony. While it certainly needed to draw on what Ashuri and Pinchevski describe as "habitus and capital" (132) – the technology and permission to join the event on MS Teams, confidence with the Twitter platform, ability to communicate to an audience – it did not rely on an outside mediating agent to determine these things. This allowed it to produce testimony outside of any external ideological framework, thus potentially reclaiming the narrative on behalf of those who might have previously been deemed unqualified by such a framework, and thus "condemned to silence" (Ashuri and Pinchevski 144). Mortensen (1393-406) has described this as a fundamental shift in the practice of witnessing, with witnesses on digital media platforms now enabled to both produce and distribute their testimony, making the act of witnessing a "participatory and reflective act" (1394), and one which Mortensen has termed "connective witnessing" (1396).

It is a description that holds despite the fact that Twitter narratives, by their nature, refuse easy construction as "witnessable" (Ashuri and Pinchevski 140). That is: they arrive in fragmentary fashion, without "a timeline, context, circumstance, and causality", and with no shaped narrative constructed from a previously chaotic event (Ashuri and Pinchevski 145), as is the case in more traditional formats. What we find instead is Mortensen's connective mode of witnessing, where non-professional information is shared in a manner inviting "personalization, appropriation and collaboration" (Bennett and Segerberg, qtd. in Mortensen 1403), all of which moves towards enabling or accentuating the increasing overlap between acts of witnessing and political participation (Mortensen 1400-402) and offers the witness a role as agent rather than victim (Núñez Puente et al. 306-07).

This is not to suggest this mode of witnessing is immune to influence from external factors. As noted above, the CSSA's testimony on Twitter is contingent on the group's confidence and capacity with the platform. It is also contingent on the architecture and affordances of the platform, and on the audience users' navigation of and

presence on the Twitter site (Mortensen 1404). As has been detailed, the CSSA does not have a large number of followers on Twitter, meaning it lacks the audience reach of a national media organization, while when one considers the type of followers that like, retweet, and quote tweet its statements on Twitter, it is not obvious that it is reaching people outside of its own ideological position. At the same time, however, many of those who follow and who are followed on Twitter by the CSSA have profiles of national and even international prominence, meaning there is the potential for the CSSA's Twitter feed to become amplified and read by a larger audience.

Separately, and even if the CSSA Twitter feed is not subject to any external ideological framework, whereby a gatekeeper grants it the status of testimony (Ashuri and Pinchevski 138), its testimony is, as already noted, driven by emotional subjectivities, as well as by political inclinations, and also by space-time parameters – the 'real-time' nature of social media posts – all of which transforms the way witnessing is being presented and received (Frosh and Pinchevski 1-23; Schankweiler et al. 1-13). As Faulkner (89-104) notes in his discussion of the way Palestinian photojournalists have used digital media to challenge a stereotypical viewpoint of Palestinian victimhood, social media have often been employed to enact witnessing as a form of resistance, neither objective nor neutral, but subjective and personalized.

Thus, if we turn again to the example from the CSSA Twitter feed, we can see that by making use of such phrases as

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "Mr Cronin for the developer has interrupted – he says the method statement for the archeological [*sic*] dig was prepared by Colm Chambers. Seems a random unnecessary interruption."
>
> *Twitter*, 22 Apr. 2021,
> <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1385177124340916227>

and

> @Lost900Bessboro (Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance)
>
> "Now David Holland (for the developer) interrupts and tries to bring our attention to the nuns [*sic*] 'angels plot' where the nuns said the children were buried. We all know the children are not buried there."
>
> *Twitter*, 22 Apr. 2021,
> <https://twitter.com/Lost900Bessboro/status/1385177124340916227>

the CSSA is staking a clear narrative position, which is that the developers of the proposed apartment block are fully aware that if the development goes ahead, it will likely do so on the unmarked graves of Bessborough children. It is plausible to suggest, as per Ashuri and Pinchevski, that the proximity of first-hand witness in this instance causes "an annihilation of perspective" by simply reproducing the immediate and subjective experience of being there (140) and nothing more. However, it can also be argued that the subjectivity inherent in the tweets is a crucial factor by means of which survivors of trauma may in fact claim agency, eschewing any pretence of

objectivity or neutrality. Separately, as the tweets not only provide an eyewitness account of the events, but also seek to parse and analyze (albeit subjectively) the action as it takes place, one can suggest the witnessing carried out here becomes both participatory (as the CSSA is documenting the hearing in real time) and reflective at once. Indeed, it is the presentation of a "synthesized and informational narrative" (Mortensen 1401) alongside the immediate and subjective experience, which offers survivors yet another opportunity to claim ownership of a narrative and to define it according to their perspective of the experience.

There is, however, a difference between having a voice, and that voice being heard, and this case study will conclude considering the place of the audience/users on Twitter, and their role in listening to and engaging with the testimony of the CSSA on the platform. As Ricoeur has noted, the greatest failure of witnessing occurs because "witnesses [...] never encounter an audience capable of listening to them or hearing what they have to say" (166), and, as noted above, survivors of Ireland's carceral institutions, despite their frequent public testimonials, have long had difficulty with the ways their narratives have been shaped and moulded (Crowe; Ó Fátharta, "Ryan Report"). While mediating agents hold significant power in relation to this, the remote position of the spectator (Ashuri and Pinchevski 134), whereby spectators share a common moral universe with eyewitnesses and mediators, but inhabit a separate sphere within which they engage with images of suffering beyond their immediate context, can also be suggested to have a bearing on the way victim narratives are received in society (140). However, as Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann (5) note, because the social media witnessing mode is one that focuses on sharing experiences, participatory culture and joint work from both producers and users, it offers audiences the opportunity to ask and reply to questions and comments, and, most notably in this instance, to express their emotions in relation to the Bessborough story.

Thus, although the CSSA tweets received small numbers of likes in general, and even smaller numbers of retweets and quote tweets, their feed *was* responded to, in the moment, and mostly in a positive manner, placing emphasis on what Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann term the "responsive space" (1) of the platform, one that enables ideas of "interaction rather than narration" and "testimony that is more focused on connection and dialogue than on documentation and preservation" (5). It is a space that affects both witness and user alike, with the witness feeling that they have the power to voice and communicate their experiences to others (7) and the user now a part of a process of digitally bearing witness, rather than the detached spectator of old. Even when the conversation became temporarily antagonistic, as shown earlier, that interaction was not enough to outweigh the CSSA's sense of narrative ownership and the confidence of its voice.

Any study regarding the enabling of witness-producers, however, needs to be accompanied by an acknowledgment of the plurality of witnessing practices (Schankweiler et al. 6). As Simons has written in relation to the proliferation of audio-visual

testimonies and sources on social media platforms, we now face a situation where neutrality and objectivity give way to "subjective involvement and affective contagion", leading to the intensification of a "general unreliability of witnessing that arises from the notorious difficulty of translating lived experience into discursive form" (18). Truelove et al. have considered the various ways academics have attempted to confront this crisis, and identify credible information on Twitter. They found that this can be achieved by means of securing location information generated from metadata and content (3), but also explored ways of defining who can be called a witness on Twitter, suggesting that to be a witness, a micro-blogger on Twitter must be understood as a "person who has directly observed the event and posted a micro-blog about their observation" (2), while also employing a range of characteristics including descriptions of sensing, linked content such as photos, and explicit acknowledgment of being impacted by the event (2). Although a deep incursion into the area of social media witness credibility is outside the scope of this essay, the above conceptual model has proved useful when assessing the digital testimonies of the CSSA activist group on the micro-blogging platform.

Conclusion

The aim of this essay has been to suggest that digital narratives now form a crucial component of the witnessing field (Ashuri and Pinchevski 130-35) and thus must be paid close attention as forming part of the memory work necessary for social justice (Grunebaum 210-19). The essay has dealt with this topic in terms of examples of the way social media witnessing alters the relationships among eyewitnesses, mediators, and audience, suggesting that it narrows and flattens the divide between the witness and the receiver of testimony (Henig and Ebbrecht-Hartmann 21-22), which can lead to witnessing becoming a shared, collective event that allows voices long condemned to silence (Ashuri and Pinchevski 138) to feel heard, and new truths to emerge.

The essay also considers the impact of the changing nature of the relation between witness and mediator, with witnesses on social media no longer beholden to a traditional media infrastructure to circulate their testimony, and instead enabled to independently produce and diffuse their perspectives. While this has, on the one hand, brought about a destabilization of the conventional checks and balances used by journalists and other mediators to verify the credibility of a witness, it has also radically impacted on the kind of stories being told, by whom, and why, with substantive implications for collective memory-making in the digital age. While there is little doubt we are in an era of a crisis of credibility (Simons 17-18, 22, 25), important research has also been done to identify ways of finding credible information on Twitter (Truelove et al. 339-59), and this research will likely only gain in significance as use of the micro-blogging site among witness-producers continues. In relation to the specific situation of survivors of the Irish carceral state, social media appears to have offered them virtual contexts in which to claim and reclaim their narratives, to

generate collective counter-memory (Demos), to enact witnessing as a form of resistance (Faulkner 95-100), and to define events from the perspective of their experience, all of which is part of the work of making trauma visible and justice possible.

Works Cited

An Bord Pleanála. Inspector's Report, ABP-308790-20. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.pleanala.ie/anbordpleanala/media/abp/cases/reports/308/r308790.pdf?r=596498>.

-----. Agenda and Order of Proceedings, ABP-308790-20. 21-22 Apr. 2021. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.pleanala.ie/getmedia/2402d0e4-cbe0-497e-8494-2912c5eff06a/308790-Oral-Hearing-Agenda-EN.pdf?ext=.pdf>.

Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari. "Citizen Camera-Witnessing: Embodied Political Dissent in the Age of 'Mediated Mass Self-Communication.'" *New Media & Society* 16.5 (2014): 753-69.

Andrews, Rachel. "At Bessborough." *London Review of Books.* 30 Apr. 2019. 19 Nov. 2021. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2019/april/at-bessborough>.

Ashuri, Tamir, and Amit Pinchevski. "Witnessing as a Field." *Media Witnessing*: *Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*. Ed. Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 127-51.

Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. *Fifth Interim Report*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2019. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a12324-mother-and-baby-homes-commission-of-investigation-5th-interim-report/>.

-----. "Chapter 18: Bessborough." *Final Report*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021. 1-128. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4b3d-final-report-of-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes/>.

-----. "Introduction." *Final Report*. Dublin: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021. 1-16. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4b3d-final-report-of-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes/>.

Cork Survivors and Supporters Alliance (CSSA). Submission to Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028. 21 Aug. 2020.

-----. Opening Statement: Scheme of a Certain Institutional Burials (Authorised Interventions) Bill. 14 Mar. 2021.

Crowe, Catriona. "The Commission and the Survivors." *The Dublin Review* (Summer 2021). 20 Apr. 2022. <https://thedublinreview.com/article/the-commission-and-the-survivors/>.

Demos, T.J. “Sites of Collective Counter-Memory.” *Animate Projects*. 2012. 19 Nov. 2021. <http://animateprojectsarchive.org/writing/essays/tj_demos>.

English, Eoin. “Bessborough. Mystery Remains around the Missing 859 Babies and Infants.” *Irish Examiner.* 28 Feb. 2021. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/spotlight/arid-40233401.html>.

-----. “Cork City Council Agrees to Protect Bessborough ‘children’s burial site’ from Development.” *Irish Examiner.* 16 Mar. 2022. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-40829867.html>.

-----. “Oral Hearing to be Held on Bessborough Apartments Plan.” *Irish Examiner.* 26 Mar. 2021. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-40252055.html>.

Enright, Anne. “Antigone in Galway.” *London Review of Books.* 17 Dec. 2015. 19 Nov. 2021. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v37/n24/anne-enright/antigone-in-galway>.

Faulkner, Simon. “Photographic Witnessing, the Occupation and Palestinian Politics.” *Image Testimonies: Witnessing in Times of Social Media*. Ed. Kerstin Schankweiler, Verena Straub, and Tobias Wendl. London: Routledge, 2019. 89-103.

Frosh, Paul, and Amit Pinchevski, eds. *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Grunebaum, Heidi. “Unburying the Dead in the ‘Mother City’: Urban Topographies of Erasure.” *PMLA* 122.1 (2007): 210-19.

Henig, Lital, and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. “Witnessing Eva Stories: Media Witnessing and Self-Inscription in Social Media Memory.” *New Media and Society* (2020): 1-25.

Kurasawa, Fuyuki. “A Message in a Bottle: Bearing Witness as a Mode of Transnational Practice.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 26.1 (2009): 92-111.

Mortensen, Mette. “Connective Witnessing: Reconfiguring the Relationship between the Individual and the Collective.” *Information, Communication & Society* 18.11 (2005): 1393-406.

Núñez Puente, Sonia, Sergio D’Antonio Maceiras, and Diana Fernández Romero. “Twitter Activism and Ethical Witnessing: Possibilities and Challenges of Feminist Politics against Gender-Based Violence.” *Social Science Computer Review* 39.2 (2021): 295-311.

Ó Fátharta, Conall. “68% of Babies in Bessborough Home Died.” *Irish Examiner.* 26 Aug. 2014. 19 Apr. 2022. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20283446.html>.

-----. “Ryan Report That Shocked the Nation Offers Much but Gaps in the Detail Remain.” *Irish Examiner* 19 May 2019. 9 Aug. 2021. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/arid-30925312.html>.

O'Reilly, Alison. "A Mass Grave of 800 Babies." *The Irish Mail on Sunday.* 25 May 2014. 12 Aug. 2021. <https://www.pressreader.com/ireland/the-irish-mail-on-sunday/20140525/281479274456129>.

Pembroke, Sinead. "Historical Institutional Child Abuse in Ireland: Survivor Perspectives on Taking Part in the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA) and the Redress Scheme." *Contemporary Justice Review* 22.2 (2019): 1-17.

Pine, Emilie. *The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre*. Indiana: Indiana UP, 2020.

Powell, Fred, and Margaret Scanlon. *Dark Secrets of Childhood: Media Power, Child Abuse and Public Scandals.* Bristol: Policy Press, 2015.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Kathleen Blarney and David Pellauer. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004.

Ristovska, Sandra. "Strategic Witnessing in an Age of Video Activism." *Media, Culture & Society* 38.7 (2016): 1034-47.

Roche, Barry. "Bessborough Home Development Plans to Undergo Oral Hearing." *The Irish Times.* 26 Mar. 2021. 9 Aug. 2021. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/bessborough-home-development-plans-to-undergo-oral-hearing-1.4520941>.

-----. "Bessborough Site Should Never Be Built on, Cork Councillors Tell Hearing." *The Irish Times.* 23 Apr. 2021. 22 Apr. 2022. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/bessborough-site-should-never-be-built-on-cork-councillors-tell-hearing-1.4546132>.

Schankweiler, Kerstin, Verena Straub, and Tobias Wendl. "Image Testimonies: Witnessing in Times of Social Media." *Image Testimonies: Witnessing in Times of Social Media*. Ed. Kerstin Schankweiler, Verena Straub, and Tobias Wendl. London: Routledge, 2019. 1-13.

Simons, Sascha. "Credibility in Crisis: Contradictions in Video Web Witnessing." *Image Testimonies: Witnessing in Times of Social Media*. Ed. Kerstin Schankweiler, Verena Straub, and Tobias Wendl. London: Routledge, 2019. 17-29.

Truelove, Marie. "Witnesses of Events in Social Media." PhD diss. The University of Melbourne, 2018.

Truelove, Marie, Maria Vasardani, and Stephan Winter. "Towards Credibility of Micro-Blogs: Characterising Witness Accounts." *GeoJournal* 80.3 (2015): 339-59.

Wills, Clair. "Architectures of Containment: Ireland's Lost Children." *London Review of Books.* 20 May 2021. 20 May 2021. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n10/clair-wills/architectures-of-containment>.

A Popular Centenary:
Irish Popular Music's Re-Interpretation of the 1916 Rising

Michael Lydon

Introduction: A Popular Centenary

In this essay, I consider a re-interpretation of Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising and its aftermath by selected Irish popular musicians. I position these re-interpretations as either (state-)authorized acts of remembrance, or what I term as remembrance activism. This initially entails assessing performances by Irish popular musicians from *Centenary*, a concert for television produced by RTÉ to mark the 100-year anniversary of the Rising. A department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht spokesperson noted that *Centenary* was a "major flagship" event of the centenary remembrance (McManus). It is thus a (state-)authorized reflection on the Rising that prominently features Irish popular musicians. Fundamental to the assessment is a reflection on *Centenary*'s negotiation of the problematic politics of remembrance, particularly in terms of muting any glorification of violence and the Rising's socialist ambitions. Timothy J. White and Denis Marnane suggest that those who were responsible for organising the centenary of the Rising needed to balance the desire to celebrate Ireland's hard-won freedom with the need not to re-ignite the conflicts of the past (30). In looking to specific performances by Irish popular musicians during *Centenary*, I investigate their role as authorizing agents, employed as part of a state-mandated negotiation of the problematic politics of remembrance.

Next, I present two examples of what I consider remembrance activism by Irish popular musicians. The term remembrance activism constitutes re-interpretations of the Rising that seek to reassess and/or challenge (state-)authorized narratives. The first act of remembrance activism I consider is Damien Dempsey's independently funded project album *No Force on Earth* (2016) and his appearance at the #Reclaim1916 open air pageant and concert. The #Reclaim1916 event was the final event of the Reclaim 1916 programme, a "citizens' initiative" instigated to challenge state-mandated acts of remembrance (Trade Union TV). The chief patron of the event, Robert Ballagh, noted that the concert was about "reclaiming the bravery and sacrifice of the men and women who fought in 1916" (Trade Union TV). I position Dempsey's personal connection to the Rising as key to his remembrance, specifically as it relates to one of the principal agitators of the Rising, James Connolly. I then assess the electro-pop duo Zrazy's reflection on the Rising. I outline how the group responded to the Rising by creating what they termed an alternative national anthem, "Women of '16". This song not only highlights the women missing from (state-)authorized narratives of the Rising, but also repurposes the Rising's remembrance to give voice to the experiences of Irish lesbians. Ultimately, I reveal that for Dempsey and Zrazy selected ideals of

the Rising are still pertinent to them in their desire to address socio-political injustices evident in Ireland.

Irish Popular Music and a "New" Ireland

In commemorating the Rising, Irish state-authorizing agents needed to honour the Rising while negotiating the problematic politics of remembrance. In 2016, Ireland was entrenched in protests that railed against austerity measures such as the introduction of water charges; a peaceful protest movement led by Right2Water Ireland that campaigned against Irish Water's introduction of water charges in Ireland. Alison O'Malley-Younger observes that "national remembrance can be a powerful tool in constructing cultural identity but is fraught with contested legacies vying for representation" (456). In fact, commemorations of Ireland's revolutionary period (1912-1923) reveal much more about contemporary Ireland than about the actual history (Daly 48). Historians competed with journalists and politicians for control of the narratives surrounding the commemorations, aware of the possible dangers in repeating the "unrestrained triumphalism" of the 1966 commemoration – which possibly stoked sectarian violence in Northern Ireland (White and Marnane 32). Hence, any official programme marking the centenary needed to celebrate those involved in Ireland's revolutionary period, while also deflecting from some of the era's nationalist and socialist ideology. While the centenary celebrations achieved this goal in the main, some features of it gave rise to criticism. For example, the Abbey Theatre's 1916 commemorative programme "Waking the Nation" and the National Concert Hall's "Composing the Island" both drew widespread condemnation due to the lack of women represented in respective (state-)authorized programmes. This condemnation subsequently resulted in the formation of #WakingTheFeminists and Composing the Feminists, two grassroots campaigns that sought to advance equality for women in Irish theatre and music (Blake Knox; Kelly). Ann C. Averill suggests that "[t]he official 2016 Centenary Programme was launched in November 2014 in an ill-prepared manner. It was incomplete, with elements of the programme not in place, and there were errors in the Irish-language version." (212) She further writes: "The response to the programme launch was negative due to the fact that the accompanying video, *Ireland Inspires*, in fact neglected to mention the Rising at all, instead focusing on more recent entities such as Google, Bono, and Queen Elizabeth II." (214) The prominent historian Diarmaid Ferriter later dismissed the video as "embarrassing, unhistorical shit" (Dolan). The video was subsequently withdrawn from circulation.

For the purposes of this essay, it is notable that the U2 frontperson Bono received more prominence in the launch of the centenary programme than the actual Rising. Nonetheless, it does underscore the use of Irish popular musicians as (state-) authorizing agents, employed to deflect attention away from undesired narratives. In relation to U2, no Irish popular music band are loved and loathed in equal measures.

The group not only attract open hostility, especially towards lead singer Bono, but also apparent slavish devotion (McLaughlin and McLoone 144). For many, U2's imposing presence in popular culture serves to position them as an "icon of popular music imperialism" (McLaughlin and McLoone 145), a point that not only explains why the inclusion of Bono in *Ireland Inspires* was so divisive, but also indicates popular music's problematic use in authorizing heritage or remembrance discourse. Popular music has the potential to articulate or erase unofficial/vernacular histories (Cohen et al. 6), and for this reason it can potentially act as "authorised heritage discourse" (Cohen et al. 1). Popular music is now embedded firmly in the cultural memory of the baby-boomer generation (Bennett 20), thus granting popular musicians a semblance of power in forming political and public opinion. This alignment with authorizing discourse, and specifically state-authorizing discourse, is of course counter to popular music's embedded (albeit often imagined) association with counterculture and activism. Nonetheless, in Ireland popular music has become a "flagship industry of new Ireland" (Smyth 4), a cultural force often utilized effectively in (state-)authorized heritage and remembrance discourse. The *Centenary* concert is an example of Irish popular music's use in (state-)authorizing remembrance, and the presentation of a "new" Ireland that exists 100 years after the Rising.

Centenary

Directed by Cillian Fennell, *Centenary* was an eighty-five-minute-long show, broadcast live from the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre in Dublin, that told the story of Ireland's centenary in eighteen chapters of song, dance, and poetry. These chapters have titles such as "Awakening", "Myths", "Protesting", "Turbulence", "Building", and "Emigration". In the "Programme Notes" for the show, Theo Dorgan writes:

> Tonight we follow the course of Ireland's story, out of the rich past of legend and myth, through a cultural and political awakening, and into a renewed sense of who we could be. The heroism of the Easter Rising, the difficulty of building the republic, and the struggles our parents endured so that we could have our freedom, are all acknowledged and remembered.

The chapters thus present a broad linear narrative of Ireland's "story", with the Rising and more broadly the revolutionary period forming a central part of it. In total six hundred performers and eighty crew members were involved in the production, which had a budget in excess of €2.5 million (Finn). The show was a musical and choreographic climax to Rising-related commemorative activities (Ní Fhuartháin 326), and featured performances by popular musicians Imelda May, Jack L, Gavin James, Conor O'Brien, Danny O'Reilly of the Coronas, and Aoife Scott. As well as the main venue, there were musical performances from the historically significant locations of Kilmainham Gaol and the Garden of Remembrance. Méabh Ní Fhuartháin notes that in *Centenary*, "music [is] deployed as a vehicle for national identity" (325). Thereby, alongside musicians from the classical and traditional scene, popular musicians were equally charged with utilizing music for nationalistic purposes.

In all, the reception of the show was favourable with Aoife Barry writing that "it was deemed a massive, goosebump-inducing success". Darragh McManus remarked that it was "a tremendously entertaining, and genuinely affecting, 90 minutes". Nonetheless, despite praise which situated *Centenary* as a major cultural event, or a "new *Riverdance*" (RTÉ Entertainment), the show was not without its flaws. As noted, the linear narrative of the event is broken into specific chapters. The transition between these chapters is however rather abrupt, with each performance failing to reflect in any detail on the events being commemorated. To elucidate, the fourth chapter "Protesting" is presented as a theatrical experience, with the musician Jack L positioned as a diegetic element within the action. In his performance of Thomas Moore's popular song "The Minstrel Boy", Jack L is choreographed to move in tandem with other actors. Hence, he is a featured character representing pre-Rising protestors. However, in the next chapter "Foggy Dew", the musician Gavin James is situated front and centre, with a barricade of frozen/still performers behind him. James is thus a non-diegetic presence, with the Rising and the on-stage characters serving as a frame to his performance. Crucially, in each chapter the popular musicians fail to reflect on the nationalist and socialist ideologies of the period being commemorated. Instead, their performances are included in each chapter to filter the events of the period through a contemporary lens. The chapters are thereby not solely concerned with presenting Ireland's "story", but with presenting a "new" Ireland that exists 100 years after the Rising. As noted, several chapters are also not live or onstage performances, with musical videos from Kilmainham Gaol and the Garden of Remembrance inserted into the concert. This is evident in the chapter "Captivity", a section of the programme that remembers the "rebel leaders [who] were brought to the grim stone gaol of Kilmainham to be tried" (Dorgan). Featured in the chapter are three songs, notably with siblings Danny O'Reilly of the Coronas and Roisin O, along with their cousin Aoife Scott, performing a rendition of "Grace" – Frank and Seán O'Meara's song about Grace Gifford-Plunkett. In this performance, the use of Kilmainham as a location enhances the ability of the performers to deliver an authorized account of the period. However, from a storytelling perspective the offstage insertions into the concert feel disjointed, presenting an overly vague interpretation of the socio-political situation that surrounded the Rising and its aftermath.

A more striking issue in terms of *Centenary*'s role in remembrance pertains to some of the songs chosen as part of this commemoration. In her appraisal of the concert, Ní Fhuartháin writes that Sibéal Ní Chasaide's performance of "Mise Éire" is significant in that the song "articulates Ireland past and present, or a broad aspiration of an Ireland, suitably vague, to which all listeners can belong" (328). With its association with Pádraig Pearse and Seán Ó Riada's iconic film score *Mise Éire* (1959), "Mise Éire" serves as a sonic cultural container that was sufficiently filled with meaning in the nation's consciousness (Ní Fhuartháin 331). As one of several Irish-language songs performed as part of *Centenary*, the inclusion of "Mise Éire" is non-contentious. However, its ability to act as a sonic cultural container for Ireland's broad

and vague aspirations is notable when considered alongside more contentious songs selected as part of this (state-)authorized remembrance. A specific song of note is "Bein' Green", which follows the chapter "It Wasn't Easy". "It Wasn't Easy" was a powerful montage of newsreel footage inserted into the concert that referenced everything from the Anne Lovett tragedy to the Catholic Church's silencing of child sex abuse. Rather jarringly, this is followed by Imelda May singing a cover of Kermit the Frog's song "Bein' Green". At best this rather unusual transition can be construed as a moment of light-hearted revery, included in the programme to ease tensions. But it can just as easily be viewed as an affront, with this (state-)authorized reflection on the Rising glossing over state negligence to deliver such a flippant refute as "It's not easy bein' green." The choice of May as a performer is also of note, given her music's reliance on retro culture, with all the implicit "nostalgic" narratives. Kelly Davidson writes that "May's celebrity is constructed through a series of 'nostalgic' narratives that serve to normalize Irish austerity as a cultural experience" (78). As a cultural text May evokes traces of an older Irish popular memory of radical collective activism against limiting economic opportunities, yet also speaks to the passive normalization of austerity as communal experience in a contemporary context (Davidson 90). For this reason, May has become an important cultural ambassador for austerity Ireland, a (state-)authorized voice often employed to mute radical collective activism. This does not suggest May's performance is disingenuous. Indeed, ahead of her performance, May – whose grandparents were involved in the Rising – commented:

> To commemorate [the Rising] with music, art and poetry across our country is very fitting considering that the Rising was led, not by traditional soldiers, but by poets and artists fighting with passion and pride. It is no accident that the emblem of our free country is a harp; a musical instrument. I think of that and those men and women every time I look at my passport […] with gratitude and pride. (RTÉ Entertainment)

The Rising is thus an important event in May's construct of her Irish identity. Nonetheless, her (state-)authorized version of "Bein' Green" clearly served to pacify public discord at a time when normalizing austerity measures coincided with remembrance of the Rising.

As a major flagship event of the centenary remembrance, *Centenary* deployed selected performances by Irish popular musicians as vehicles for national identity. The "new" Ireland they presented made little reference to the nationalist and socialist ideologies that animated the actions of those involved in Ireland's revolutionary period. Hence, as a (state-)authorized act of remembrance it was successful in celebrating selected achievements of the period, while also enforcing (state-)approved narratives intended to pacify public discord.

"Missing from the Record": Remembrance Activism

Áine Mangaoang et al. write: "Solo singer-songwriters who emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s are perhaps best summarised in the two Damiens: indie-rock singer

Damien Rice and Damien Dempsey, who fuses traditional Irish with politically conscious lyrics and reggae inflections" (8). Dempsey is one of Irish popular music's most significant protesting voices. According to Aileen Dillane et al., Dempsey's

> repertoire has consistently championed working-class values and spoken out on the issues that affect the vulnerable in society […] his life experiences and upbringing in Donaghmede have ultimately instilled in him a desire to question/ protest against (through his artistic endeavour) what he considers to be an unequal social and political order. (460)

This questioning nature has seen Dempsey challenge numerous socio-political injustices, with him a regular feature at various anti-austerity campaigns throughout his career. In terms of his re-interpretation of the Rising, in 2016 Dempsey released the album *No Force On Earth.* Of the album, Dempsey notes that he "needed to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Irish Rising in some way, to help people remember and hopefully think about and discuss the Ireland envisioned by its brave assassinated leaders […] Their vision has yet to be realised" (Sleeve Notes). The album features tracks commemorating the centenary, such as the traditional song "James Connolly" which Dempsey regularly sang at water charges protests during that time. *No Force On Earth* also features "Aunt Jenny", a song written by Dempsey to honour his great aunt Jennie Shanahan who took part in the Rising. As evident in the lyrics, the song affirms Dempsey's personal *lived* connection to the Rising: "Aunt Jenny, your gallant bravery gives me strength in this crazy world […] thank you for your example against the tyrants of this world" ("Damien Dempsey – Aunt Jenny" 00:01:38-00:02:09). On its initial release, the album was only available to buy at live concerts with a limited production run of 2016 copies. In this way, a purchase of *No Force On Earth* was aligned with "positive fetishism" (Bartmanski and Woodward 168), or a heightened sense of value associated with the tangible album. Dempsey also performed tracks from *No Force On Earth* as part of the #Reclaim1916 concert, which was the final event of the Reclaim 1916 programme. Reclaim the Vision of 1916 was a civil society group of artists, academics, trade unionists, community activists, journalists and other interested citizens who believed Ireland can be reinvigorated by the ideals of those involved in the Rising (Hayes). Before his performance of "James Connolly", Dempsey affirmed the group's message while also stressing his own personal lived connection:

> *A Chairde*, I'm going to try and sing this without crying […]. 100 years ago the man in this song he handed all the women in Liberty Hall revolvers and my Aunt Jenny Shanahan was one of them […]. They went on to fight the mightiest empire the world had ever seen and we never saw James Connolly again […]. We can visualise his dream of a thirty-two-county socialist Republic and work towards it […] where all the children are cherished. ("#Reclaim1916 Damien Dempsey sings 'James Connolly'" 00:01:03-00:01:50)

Thus, Dempsey clearly desired that any commemoration of the Rising would be intrinsically in line with the ideals of the signatories of the Proclamation and in particular the socialist values associated with Connolly. Connolly was central to the decade of centenaries, but his celebration of disparaged ways of thinking and being

received no attention in the (state-)authorized programme of commemorations (Laird 46). Indeed, Heather Laird observes a particular caustic use of Connolly's image in a window display at the Dublin branch of the upmarket clothing chain Brown Thomas to commemorate the Rising, noting that it "is responsible for arguably the single most ironic image produced by Ireland's decade of centenaries thus far" (43). In framing Dempsey's re-interpretation of the Rising as counter to the (state-)authorized acts of remembrance, these acts serve as a form of remembrance activism. Thereupon, the re-interpretations become lived ideals employed by Dempsey to negotiate his response to Ireland's ongoing socio-political injustices.

Since their formation in 1992, Zrazy have been a public, and often solitary, lesbian voice in the Irish popular music scene (Hanlon 67). Consisting of two principal members Carole Nelson and Maria Walsh, Zrazy have throughout their career used their music for various activist purposes, especially in the areas of women's and LGBTQ+ rights. Ann-Marie Hanlon notes that "Zrazy are icons for many lesbians, particularly those who grew up in Ireland when gay male homosexuality was illegal, and queer sexual identities were often shrouded in shame and secrecy." (67) She further writes that the group "are visible as lesbian rather than queer women" (68). Zrazy are consequently public representations of the double-othering of Irish lesbians (Hanlon 68). In their music and activism, they not only challenge the demoted position of women by Ireland's patriarchal structures of power, but also give voice to the experiences of Irish lesbians. McDonagh writes that since the formation of the Free State, being a homosexual in Ireland constituted as "being criminal, sinful, promiscuous, effeminate, mentally unwell and un-Irish" (9). In Ireland, a public acknowledgment of one's homosexuality was then a challenge to the specific (often unspoken) meanings of what constituted "Irishness" (McDonagh 4). Zrazy thus present an "alternative formulation of Irish identity within popular music, one that reflects a lesbian feminist sensibility within the sphere of an Irish musical heritage" (Hanlon 72). The group's recordings, music videos, and live performances crucially situate the Irish lesbian experience alongside dominant heteronormative representations of Irish identity.

As with Dempsey, Zrazy's artistic endeavours often challenge what they consider to be Ireland's unequal social and political order. For that reason, Hanlon suggests that Zrazy must be considered "cultural workers" (67). As cultural workers, Zrazy released "Women of '16" to coincide with the centenary of the Rising. The track is a "polemical song that accuses historians of sexism in their treatment of women's role in Irish history" (Hanlon 75). Zrazy describe "Women of '16" as a radical re-write of the Irish National Anthem ("Amhrán na bhFiann"), an attempt to retrieve the activist women who were erased from the history books (Zrazy Music). Specifically, the song pays homage to the forgotten women of 1916, while also lamenting the lost socialist ideals of the Rising. The track begins: "Here we are again, 100 years later […] Full of ideals. In 1916, believing in equality, equality […] when the fight was over, and new men stepped in and pushed aside the ideals of 16" ("Women of 16' Anthem in GPO,

Dublin 2016" 00:00:47-00:02:17). "Women of '16" is then an act of remembrance activism, as it highlights the demotion of women and socialist ideology by patriarchal structures of power. As with Dempsey, a central figure in Zrazy's remembrance activism is Connolly: "the song's narrative laments the fact that James Connolly's ideal of all Irish citizens being equal was forgotten once the fight was over and that this inequality has passed into the Irish educational system" (Hanlon 75). Zrazy challenge this inequality by highlighting the actions of Cumann na mBan (the Irish Women's Association), the Irish republican women's paramilitary organisation that played a crucial role in the Rising. In their alternative national anthem, they name specific members of Cumann na mBan such as Rose McNamara, who they sing was "in command of the female detachment of twenty-one women in Marrowbone Lane Distillery" ("Women of 16' Anthem in GPO, Dublin 2016" 00:03:15-00:03:20). As with Dempsey's "Aunt Jenny", "Women of '16" thus highlights specific women who have been marginalized in (state-)authorized narratives of the Rising.

Zrazy's debut performance of "Women of '16" was in the symbolic setting of the General Post Office (GPO), a building in Dublin that served as the headquarters of the leaders of the Rising. The performance took place on International Women's Day 2016 (March 8) and featured Nelson and Walsh dressed in military uniforms similar to those worn by women involved in the Rising. In using the GPO as a location, Zrazy placed the Irish lesbian experience, an alternative formulation of Irish identity, at the centre of Irish nationalism. The performance is thus a further act of remembrance activism, as the duo not only challenge the accepted narrative of the Rising, but crucially raise the question what individuals and organisations are legitimate custodians of the Rising's legacy. The chorus of "Women of '16" repeats the line "Cumann na mBan missing from the record" ("Women of 16' Anthem in GPO, Dublin 2016" 00:03: 28-00:03:36). As with Dempsey, Zrazy challenge the official remembrance of the Rising by highlighting salient people that were not acknowledged. As cultural workers in use of their artistic endeavours, Dempsey, Nelson, and Walsh responded to the (state-)authorized commemoration of the Rising with remembrance activism.

Conclusion

Commemoration is part of what defines a nation and its configuration. The considerable investment of the Irish state during 2016 in commemorating the Rising highlights the importance of commemoration in both defining and affirming the state itself and the role these organisations play in it. These acts of commemoration are subsequently rife with contradictions, unresolved tensions, and paradoxes (Crosson 41). In relation to Irish popular music, it is certain that any engagement with a commemoration of the Rising needed to navigate the problematic politics of remembrance.

As evident in the Irish popular musicians involved in *Centenary,* as well as with Damien Dempsey and Zrazy, the Rising's commemoration defines and affirms the state along conflicting lines. In the (state-)authorized *Centenary*, Irish popular musi-

cians are deployed as vehicles for national identity. The performances of Jack L, James, and May discussed in this essay made little reference to the nationalist and socialist ideologies that animated the actions of those involved in Ireland's revolutionary period. Thus, *Centenary* successfully celebrated specific achievements, yet also enforced (state-) approved narratives intended to pacify public discord. For Dempsey and Zrazy, the Rising is reinterpreted as a means of remembrance activism. As cultural workers, Dempsey, Nelson, and Walsh used their artistic endeavours to highlight those missing from the official accounts of the Rising. In doing so, they challenged (state-)authorized discourses surrounding the Rising, while also locating marginalized narrators of the Irish experience as pertinent custodians of some of the ideologies of Ireland's revolutionary period. Ultimately, the Irish popular musicians discussed in the essay each reinterpreted the Rising along different and often conflicting lines of execution. Yet, these re-interpretations show that Irish popular musicians offered illuminating insight into commemorating the (popular) centenary of Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising.

Works Cited

Averill, Ann C. "Rising: Reverence, Relevance, Revelry – Commemorations of the 1916 Rising in Dublin, Easter 2016." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 19.2 (2019): 207-27.

Barry, Aoife. "RTÉ Had Another 'Riverdance Moment' Last Night." *TheJournal.ie.* 29 Mar. 2016. 2 Jan. 2022. <https://www.thejournal.ie/rte-centenary-event-tv-2685409-Mar2016/>.

Bartmanski, Dominik, and Ian Woodward. *Vinyl: The Analogue Record in the Digital Age*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Bennett, Andy. "Popular Music and the 'Problem' of Heritage." *Sites of Popular Music Heritage: Memories, Histories, Places*. Ed. Sara Cohen, Robert Knifton, Marion Leonard, and Les Roberts. New York: Routledge, 2015. 12-25.

Blake Knox, Kirsty. "Abbey Protesters Demand 'Respect' as Waking the Feminists Takes Stage." *Independent.ie.* 13 Nov. 2015. 20 Apr. 2022. <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/theatre-arts/abbey-protesters-demand-respect-as-waking-the-feminists-takes-stage-34196368.html>.

Cohen, Sara, Robert Knifton, Marion Leonard, and Les Roberts. "Introduction: Locating Popular Music Heritage." *Sites of Popular Music Heritage: Memories, Histories, Places*. Ed. Sara Cohen, Robert Knifton, Marion Leonard, and Les Roberts. New York: Routledge, 2015. 1-11.

Crosson, Seán. "Sport, Representation, and the Commemoration of the 1916 Rising: A New Ireland Rises?" *Review of Irish Studies in Europe* 2.2 (2018): 40-54.

Daly, Mary. “History à la Carte? Historical Commemoration and Modern Ireland.” *Commemorating Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*. Ed. Eberhard Bort. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004. 34-55.

Davidson, Kelly. “Imelda Rocks the Boom Boom: Retro Nostalgia, Imelda May and the Culture of Irish Austerity.” *Journal of European Popular Culture* 8.1 (2017): 77-96.

Dempsey, Damien. “Damien Dempsey – Aunt Jenny.” *YouTube*. 14 Apr. 2016. 2 Jan. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7I3EAnmpA4>.

-----. *No Force On Earth*. CD. Dublin: Clear Records, 2016.

-----. Sleeve Notes. *No Force On Earth*. CD. Dublin: Clear Records, 2016.

-----. “#Reclaim1916 Damien Dempsey Sings ‘James Connolly.’” *YouTube*. 26 Apr. 2016. 2 Jan. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q27_r1T94eo>.

Department of the Taoiseach. “Proclamation of Independence.” *Gov.ie*. 19 Nov. 2018. 6 Jan. 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bfa965-proclamation-of-independence/>.

Dillane, Aileen, Martin Power, Eoin Devereux, and Amanda Haynes. “Against the Grain: Counter Hegemonic Representations of Pre and Post Celtic-Tiger Ireland in the ‘Protest’ Songs of Damien Dempsey.” *Songs of Social Protest: International Perspectives.* Ed. Aileen Dillane, Martin Power, Eoin Devereux, and Amanda Haynes. London/New York: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2018. 455-72.

Dolan, Anne. “Commemorating 1916: How Much Does the Integrity of the Past Count?” *The Irish Times.* 2 Jan. 2015. 5 Jan. 2022. <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/commemorating-1916-how-much-does-the-integrity-of-the-past-count-1.2052868>.

Dorgan, Theo. “Centenary: Online Programme.” *RTÉ*. Mar. 2016. 3 Jan. 2022. <https://1916.rte.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Centenary-English6-1.pdf>.

Finn, Melanie. “RTÉ’s 85 Minute TV Spectacular for 1916 Centenary Cost €2.5m.” *Independent.ie*. 28 Dec. 2016. 20 Apr. 2022. <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/television/rtes-85-minute-tv-spectacular-for-1916-centenary-cost-25m-35325065.html>.

Hanlon, Ann-Marie. “‘Missing from the Record’: Zrazy and Women’s Music in Ireland.” *Made in Ireland: Studies in Popular Music*. Ed. Áine Mangaoang, John O’Flynn, and Lonán Ó Briain. London: Routledge, 2021. 67-78.

Hayes, Cathy. “New Group ‘reclaim the vision of 1916’ to Mark Centenary in ‘appropriate and fitting’ Way.” *Irish Central.* 5 Jan. 2015. 2 Jan. 2022. <https://www.irishcentral.com/news/politics/new-group-reclaim-the-vision-of-1916-to-mark-centenary-in-appropriate-and-fitting-way>.

Kelly, Darragh. “Composing the Feminists.” *TN2 Magazine*. 25 Sept. 2016. 21 Apr. 2022. <https://www.tn2magazine.ie/composing-the-feminists/>.

Laird, Heather. *Commemoration*. Cork: Cork UP, 2018.

Mangaoang, Áine, John O’Flynn, and Lonán Ó Briain. “Introduction: Popular Music in Ireland: Mapping the Field.” *Made in Ireland: Studies in Popular Music*. Ed. Áine Mangaoang, John O’Flynn, and Lonán Ó Briain. London: Routledge, 2021. 1-17.

McDonagh, Patrick. *Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1973-93*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.

McLaughlin, Noel, and Martin McLoone. *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland before and after U2.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012.

McManus, Darragh. “RTE’s *Centenary*: ‘This is the finest of what we are – tremendously entertaining and genuinely affecting.’” *Independent.ie.* 29 Mar. 2016. 3 Jan. 2022. <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/television/tv-reviews/rtes-centenary-this-is-the-finest-of-what-we-are-tremendously-entertaining-and-genuinely-affecting-34581204.html>.

Ní Fhuartháin, Méabh. “‘Mise Éire’: (Re)imaginings in Irish Music Studies.” *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies*. Ed. Renée Fox, Mike Cronin, and Brian Ó Conchubhair. London: Routledge, 2021. 323-33.

O’Malley-Younger, Alison. “A Terrible Beauty Is Bought: 1916, Commemoration and Commodification.” *Irish Studies Review* 24.4 (2016): 455-67.

Roberts, Les. “Marketing Musicscapes, or the Political Economy of Contagious Magic.” *Tourist Studies* 14.1 (2014): 10-29.

RTÉ Entertainment. “‘A New Riverdance’. Centenary Provokes Praise and Pride.” *RTÉ*. 30 Mar. 2016. 6 Mar. 2022. <https://www.rte.ie/entertainment/2016/0328/777250-centenary-features-danny-oreilly-and-roisin-o/>.

RTÉ Television. “RTÉ Centenary Concert 2016.” *YouTube*. 6 Jan. 2017. 1 Jan. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlqJplBKOVY&t=892s>.

Trade Union TV. “#Reclaim1916 Damien Dempsey Sings ‘James Connolly’.” *You Tube*. 26 Apr. 2016. 2 Jan. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q27_r1T94eo>.

Smyth, Gerry. *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Popular Music*. Cork: Cork UP, 2005.

White, Timothy J., and Denis Marnane. “The Politics of Remembrance: Commemorating 1916.” *Irish Political Studies* 31.1 (2016): 24-43.

Zrazy Music. “Women of 16’ Anthem in GPO, Dublin 2016.” *YouTube*. 22 Apr. 2016. 28 Mar. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z5J68YHG0Y>.

INTERSECTIONS, CONFLUENCE, AND EMBODIMENT OF IRISH TRADITIONAL AND FOLK MUSIC REVIVALS: GALWAY, 1961-1981

Anna Falkenau

This essay explores the intersections, confluence and embodiment of Irish traditional and folk music revivals in an urban locus, Galway city, 1961-1981. Revival efforts of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (Confraternity of Irish Musicians – Comhaltas thereafter), the second wave of Anglo-American folk revival and site-specific circumstances emerge as major stimuli.[1] Of particular focus is the relocation of Irish traditional music-making into public houses (pubs), as it propelled music revival at a local level. Throughout my discussion, I investigate dynamic interchanges and multi-directional movements of ideas, policies, and people – socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic in nature, theorized as macro and micro flows.[2]

My enquiry of "complexities of flows and idiosyncrasies of place" (Billick and Price 63) reveals the importance of people-driven extraneous circumstances as important stepping-stones in the causality of revival processes in Galway city. Such extraneous factors are adventitious in the sense that they do not relate directly to ongoing music revival processes, but nevertheless form a significant part in their realization. Crucially, internal or local manifestations of revival processes subsequently also travel out and embody macro flows. This is a dynamic most apparent in the formation and musical activities of several successful music groups. Furthermore, I show that Galway city's vibrant Irish traditional music scene (Kelly) was entwined with the performance of songs associated with folk music revival: a 'blueprint' repertoire existing of traditional instrumental music and ballads became endemic across commercial pub music venues throughout the 1970s. Popular with customers, such a "hybridisation" (Hall 466) was the direct result of the confluence of the two music revival strands. My analysis is an attempt to untangle the on-the-ground reality of key actors and of cultural and societal developments which are embodied through their actions. It

1 This essay forms part of my doctoral research (ongoing), which is funded by a Freyer-Hardiman Scholarship from the National University of Ireland, Galway (now University of Galway). I am most grateful to the time witnesses who have generously shared memories and archival materials. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr Méabh Ní Fhuartháin, for valuable feedback in the writing of this contribution.

2 Initially working with the categories of local and global used in ethnomusicological and Irish traditional music scholarship (see for instance Slobin, "Micromusics of the West"; Ó hAllmhuráin, *Flowing Tides*; Kaul, "The Limits of Commodification"), I subsequently came to the conclusion that the terms macro and micro, borrowed from the field of anthropology, are more apt in the context of my research. Macro flows may be larger scale but not global, as was for instance the case with Comhaltas's revival efforts during the 1950s and 1960s.

enables insights into the specific context in which Irish music revival – a national phenomenon – flourished in Galway city. In highlighting the role of Comhaltas and key individuals in revival processes in a West of Ireland urban centre, I expand on a prevailing narrative, which focuses on the enormous, albeit perhaps at times "exaggerated" influence of Seán Ó Riada (Breathnach, "The Traditional Music Scene" 172), Ceoltóirí Chualann, and the Chieftains in the popularization of Irish traditional music during the 1960s and 1970s.[3]

Music Revivals: A Complex Web

Musical developments in Galway city were deeply embedded in larger processes of Irish traditional and folk music revivals: macro flows, traversing local, national, and international dimensions, interplayed with and enriched site-specific micro flows (extending DeWalt and Pelto 1-21). Forming a complex web, folk and traditional revival strands intersected and nourished each other to varying degrees at different points in time, described by Ní Fhuartháin as "a twin track process, overlapping continuously and reciprocally dependent" ("Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 24). With my research situated in the microcosm of Galway city, I use the term macro flows referring to developments at a larger scale, in a national and international context, and the term micro flows relating to processes at a local level. These are also referred to as external and internal events respectively. Crucially, local refers not only to locality of place but also to the locus of individual experience, acknowledged by Arjun Appadurai as the ultimate one in his "perspectival set of landscapes" (33).

Previous instances of music revival in Ireland were inextricably linked to nationalist aspirations of independence. A key historical moment was the 1792 Belfast Harper's Assembly, which took place in parallel with Bastille Day celebrations in Belfast.[4] Subsequently, "both music and poetry played a major part in the political propaganda to raise support for the United Irish uprisings of 1798 and 1803" (Lanier, "It is New-Strung and Shan't be Heard" 12). Revival efforts were further advanced with the foundation of the Cork Pipers' Club in 1898, the year of the centenary of the Irish Rebellion of 1798, and that of the Dublin Pipers' Club soon after in 1900. Both clubs had close ties in aspiration and personnel to the Gaelic League, founded in 1893. In addition to its annual Oireachtas festival competition, the Gaelic League organized feiseanna (competitions which featured Irish traditional music, song, and dance) and céilí dances to further the use of the Irish language in social settings (Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 82-90; Hamilton, "The Role of Commercial Recordings" 37-41). In all three organizations, elements of Irish indigenous

3 Geraldine Cotter's research on Ennis offers already a valuable expansion on such a narrative.

4 While the term Belfast Harp Festival is frequently used in more recent literature, the event was referred to as an assembly by contemporaries (Lanier, "Belfast Harpers' Assembly" 64-65).

culture – music, language, and dance – served as identity markers and highlighted distinctiveness under colonial rule.

Fast-forwarding to the second half of the twentieth century, the socio-political context of revival processes in Irish traditional music is pronouncedly different. Ireland was entering the fourth decade of its existence as an independent political entity. An initial expectation that the newly founded state would take care of the promotion of indigenous music was however disappointed (Devlin 87; Ó Tuama 99), with a mere "lip service" being "paid" (Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann" 223).[5] Dire economic post-war conditions led to internal migration from rural to urban areas and large-scale emigration, which meant the relocation of musicians into towns and cities in Ireland, England, and the US. Musically, while céilí dancing was thriving throughout the 1950s, among a younger generation, Irish traditional music was not popular (Ryan; Hession and Carney; Mullin). It was against this backdrop, that Comhaltas was founded in 1951, widely recognized as an initiator of Irish traditional music revival (Fairbairn 582; Ní Fhuartháin, "Irish Music in Irish Life" 528). Promoting "Irish traditional music in all its forms" (Ó Dubhthaigh 127), the organization drew on ideas of earlier revival formats used by the Gaelic League (Stoebel 30; Vallely, "Revival" 576). Changing economic state policies from the late 1950s and resulting economic growth throughout the 1960s nurtured an increasing confidence of Ireland in its own culture (Curtis 17-18) and by extension aided Comhaltas's revival efforts.

While accounts of 1940s and 1950s Ireland frequently highlight a decline in Irish traditional music-making, traditional music practice was in fact well and alive in parts of Ireland. Proof of this are the myriad of céilí band musicians active during this era (Hall 452; Ryan; Vallely, "Céilí [Ceilidh]" 116) as well as an abundance of sources being available to collectors such as Séamus Ennis and Alan Lomax (Long).[6] It is further evidenced by time witnesses in my own research for rural areas surrounding Galway city.[7] As such, Comhaltas's efforts were building on an ongoing and unbroken instrumental and song tradition rather than attempting to bring to life a "moribund or dead cultural" tradition (Ó Giolláin 17). For these reasons, the term revival has been rejected by a number of Irish music scholars, and numerous alternate terms have been used.[8] What is termed a bringing "back to life" (Slobin, "Rethinking 'Revival'" 37) was in essence a re-evaluation of Irish traditional music. Associations of Irish

5 For a detailed discussion see Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 73-75.

6 Regarding this point, the author Siobhán Long is citing Nicholas Carolan and Harry Bradshaw.

7 Fiddle player Kevin Rohan from Tysaxon, Athenry, Co. Galway, expresses that "[…] there was a musician in every house" (Rohan).

8 Revival processes in an Irish setting during the 1960s and 1970s have been referred to in numerous terms by various authors, for instance: revival, regeneration (Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 317), revitalization (Fleming 227), or resurgence (Miller 505).

traditional music with poverty and rural backwardness were gradually left behind as music practice was re-contextualized (Commins 96; Kaul, "The Limits of Commodification" 705).[9] Despite these considerations, I employ the term revival throughout my discussion because practitioner numbers grew during the 1960s and 1970s, and continued to do so throughout the following decades. This developing interest took place predominantly among a younger generation, constituting an intergenerational shift, which went hand in hand with growing higher education levels and increased monetary affluence.[10]

For the purpose of clarity throughout my discussion, I use the term Irish traditional music revival in reference to the practice of Irish instrumental traditional music and unaccompanied English- and Irish-language song.[11] This was at the heart of Comhaltas's revival efforts (Ó Dubhthaigh 22, 127). I reserve the term folk music revivals for the British and American folk revivals of the second half of the twentieth century. While there are also instrumental strands to these movements, it was the song component that had a strong influence on developments in Ireland at large, and in Galway specifically. An indicator of this is the interchangeable usage of the terms ballad boom and folk revival as by Catherine Curran (59). Importantly, Anglo-American folk music was the "the pop music of the day" in the 1960s, and "commercial folk groups" fell under the mid-twentieth century folk music revival fold (Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 31-33) with the music of the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem "creating a potential audience for the older traditional song and dance music" (Breathnach, "The Traditional Music Scene" 171). In other words, their music constituted "a gateway to more traditional forms of practice".[12]

The Pub: A New Socio-Cultural Setting

Comhaltas, as a main driver of Irish traditional music revival on a macro level (Vallely "Revival" 576; Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 4), provided an early framework in the establishment of Irish traditional music-making in pubs in Galway City. This was part of an ongoing process of re-traditionalization

9 Associations of Irish traditional music with poverty and rural backwardness are discussed in Hamilton, "Innovation, Conservatism" 85; Hughes; Kaul, *Turning the Tune* 24; Lamb; McDonagh; Ó Laoire and Williams 211. Fintan Vallely describes this process of re-evaluation thus: "What it [revival] has achieved in Ireland, however, is the installation, for a significant section of the population, of cultural confidence in the aesthetic and artistic merits of indigenous music" ("Revival" 576).

10 I would like to acknowledge Professor Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh's stimulating input in this regard in informal conversation. The following authors point to a younger base of revivalist practitioners: Hall 465; Hamilton, "The Role of Commercial Recordings" 26, 185; Kaul, *Turning the Tune* 705; Rosenberg 239; and Slobin, "Re-thinking 'Revival'" 40-41.

11 For a discussion thereof see Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* 1-2.

12 A succinct paraphrasing of Breathnach's observation by Ní Fhuartháin ("Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 16).

initiated by Comhaltas on a number of levels.[13] Notably, it encompassed the emergence of a festival scene or *fleadheanna,* centring on competitions. In a grass roots development, extensive informal and spontaneous music-making took place in public spaces (Hall 464), including pubs, "bringing people physically together" (Livingston 73). The latter dynamic coincided with a general re-positioning of the pub as more central to social activity within Irish communities.[14]

The rise of the pub as a new socio-cultural setting for traditional music-making was facilitated by Comhaltas's focus on local branch formation, which was initially realized predominantly by practitioners and tradition bearers (Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 80). It happened in tandem with and later away from céilí band performance and domestic music practice. In addition, the emergence of the pub as a key site of music practice, transmission, and socialization was aided by a "conveyor belt of knowledge" (Egan 17) between rural and urban areas in Ireland, and with the Irish diaspora due to migrational patterns. Of particular influence here was a macro flow with London, where pub sessions regularized more than a decade earlier than in Galway.[15]

In a local embodiment of these revival processes, Irish traditional music-making in Galway also moved into this new space, the pub. It was a gradual process, which tentatively commenced in the mid-1950s, gathered pace throughout the 1960s, accelerated in the 1970s and flourished by the 1980s. Eventually, the city morphed into one of the Irish "hotspots for revival sessions" (Kaul, *Turning the Tune* 63). There were precursors to such a move and irregular, non-remunerated sessions already took place in the 1950s in pubs in Galway, in Cullen's on Forster Street, the Eagle Bar on Henry Street, Tigh Neachtain on Quay Street, but also in surrounding rural areas. Of the latter, those in Spiddal to the West of the city, in Folan's (now An Crúiscín Lán), were of particular importance for subsequent developments in Galway because of multi-directional, transient people flows.[16]

Key Individuals

Within American ethnic music revival, ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin recognizes that it is "usually a very small number of key individuals who set the pace and/or serve as source for an entire ethnic community. Often this consists of a kernel group including an activist, a researcher and a pragmatic practitioner" ("Rethinking 'Revival'" 39). Irish traditional music revival had its own particularities:

13 I am employing the spelling as favoured by Commins, rather than Ó Giolláin's "retraditionalization". For a discussion of processes of re-traditionalization see Commins 92-102 and Ó Giolláin 10-13, 16-17.

14 See also Brody 160; Hall 565-89; and Ó hAllmhuráin, *O'Brien's Pocket History* 151.

15 For a detailed account of early pub sessions in London, see Hall 586-617.

16 The pub's front signage read: Mac Fualáin. However, time witnesses refer to it as Folan's, or Tim Johnny's after the first name of its then proprietor.

> When compared to other twentieth century, international music revival movements, Comhaltas was, and is, quite distinct as a grass roots organisation, initially driven by the tradition bearers themselves from inside the community of practice and not by those outside. (Ní Fhuartháin, "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition" 80)

As has been demonstrated by Reg Hall in the case of the earliest sessions in pubs in London from 1948 (588), by Adam Kaul regarding the first sessions in Doolin from the 1950s (Kaul, *Turning the Tune* 39-40), and by Geraldine Cotter writing on Ennis from 1945 (59), publicans with an interest in Irish traditional music were of crucial importance in this development. In Galway, Larry Cullen of Cullen's, and Mary and Martin Ford of the Eagle Bar facilitated Irish traditional music sessions that went hand-in-hand with the establishment of the Galway City Comhaltas branch and the foundation of the Lough Lurgan Céilí Band. A founding member of the Galway City Comhaltas branch, established in 1956, was Brian Galligan, one of Comhaltas's early cultural and national activists and president thereof from 1956 to 1959. He advocated "that branches should be founded throughout the land, any place and every place possible" (Ó Dubhthaigh 95). Hence, Galway is one arena were Galligan actively furthered that goal himself. Cultural activists like Galligan, acting on a macro level – and, as shown above, intersecting with Galway's local specificity – and Mary and Martin Ford, the Eagle Bar owners, at a micro level, functioned as organizers, administrators and facilitators, and on occasion straddled a middle ground, as a part of a musical community but not, or not primarily, as practitioners.

Fig. 1. The original Lough Lurgan Céilí Band. From left to right: Anne Hynes (piano); Tommy Mulhaire (fiddle); Tommy Coen (fiddle); Brendan Mulhaire (accordion); Eamonn Ryan (drums); Eddie Moloney (flute); Lar Kelly (flute/piccolo); Mícheál Ó hEidhin (accordion). Eagle Bar, ca 1956. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Tom Kenny.

By the 1960s, there were a number of practicing traditional musicians in Galway, most of them recent migrants from East Galway, who were involved to varying degrees with the Galway City Comhaltas branch. A nucleus Irish traditional music scene had emerged during the 1950s as a result of rural–urban migration in a local realization of a macro level phenomenon throughout Ireland. People came for reasons of work from surrounding rural areas to the urban hub of Galway City, Connacht's largest economic centre then and now, in a migrational flow for extra-musical reasons. A particularly high number of musicians was to be found amongst the incomers from East Galway, then an area with strong traditional music practice. These tradition bearers included fiddle and flute player Tommy Mulhaire, who, alongside Mary and Martin Forde, became central to the Galway Comhaltas Branch (Mullin; Moloney). Musicians such as Eddie Moloney, Tommy Coen, Lar Kelly, Brendan Mulhaire, Paddy Farrell, and others from East Galway met in the pub to rehearse for céilí band performances and competitions (Mulhaire; Kenny) and also gathered for irregular, semi-private sessions (Burke) from ca 1956 (see Fig. 1).[17]

Intersections

An investigation of the regularization of sessions at the Eagle Bar reveals the importance of folk revival influences, as well as that of local particularities (or what I coin extraneous circumstances) – in this instance the socialization network associated with a musical society. Key activist in this process was Dick Byrne, a pragmatic practitioner and recent newcomer to Irish traditional music (see Fig. 3). His eclectic music interests spanned Western art music, jazz, dance band, American folk, and a growing repertoire of narrative English-language songs from the Irish oral tradition. In the late 1950s, he became involved in the small session scene in Spiddal, centring around violinist and fiddle player May Standún, originally from Mullingar, and Spiddal native, renowned tin whistle player Festy Conlon. Music-making at Folan's was enabled by family ties between the publican and Festy Conlon and was informal and non-remunerated in nature. Having made the acquaintance of May Standún at Galway's Patrician Musical Society,[18] Dick Byrne was invited to attend sessions in Spiddal (Byrne, Personal Communication). Dick Byrne remembers: "[…] but then I got a guitar. I had known the Standún's in Spiddal, so May said: 'Oh, you should come out sometime, we have great craic, we play in Tim Johnny's [Folan's]'" (Personal Interview). These Spiddal sessions subsequently inspired Dick Byrne to set up a ballad club in 1961, later named the Fo'Castle Folk Club (1963), in the Enda Hotel on Dominick Street in Galway. It was an experiment made possible by friendship ties between Dick Byrne and the owners' son, Joe Hegarty, and linked to the coincidence

17 There was a smaller number of musicians from other surrounding regions of Galway who merged with this nucleus scene, namely Mícheál Ó hEidhin (whose father had co-founded the Comhaltas Branch with Bernard Galligan), Martin Rabbitte, Michael Hession, and Jimmy Cummins.

18 Like Comhaltas, the Patrician Musical Society was founded in 1951.

of a cold winter, in which the car journey to Spiddal became cumbersome (Byrne, *Tell 'em Who You Are!* 153-55). The first pub venue in Galway city for regular sessions with a commercial element,[19] it featured predominantly folk revival song material. However, Irish traditional musicians May Standún and Festy Conlon participated regularly in its early years, as well as singer Eithne Burke from Tuam (Byrne, Personal Interview). Subsequently, a younger generation of musicians took over from Dick Byrne, a peer group of arts students from University College Galway (UCG, later National University of Ireland, Galway) who called themselves the Freedom Folk. These friends influenced each other musically, playing folk music material (Tyrrell; Ó Connaire). At their gigs, Irish traditional music was regularly featured when brothers Martin and Eamonn Rabbitte played a half-hour guest slot on fiddle and banjo (see Fig. 2).[20]

Fig. 2. Martin Rabbitte and Eamonn Rabbitte, at the Fo'castle Folk Club, Enda Hotel, ca 1965. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Eamonn Rabbitte.

Dick Byrne refers to the Fo'castle as ballad club or folk club interchangeably throughout interviews and conversations, while younger time witnesses like Jackie Small, Seán Tyrrell and Eamonn Rabbitte speak only of the Fo'castle Folk Club. This points to the extent to which folk revival movements in Ireland were driven by the popularization of the ballad repertoire during the early 1960s, in particular through the success of the Clancy Brothers in an Irish context, but also through musicians such

19 O'Connor's Pub in Salthill had live music during the summer months even before that, since the mid-to-late 1940s, consisting of popular music, ballads, and an odd céilí band tune. These were amplified performances catering to the many seaside tourists (Falkenau). Tom and Abigail O'Connor had moved into Galway from the Moylough area, in the Northeast of County Galway and took over the pub in Salthill in 1942. Tom O'Connor played accordion and sang in the pub during the summer months: "[…] to draw a crowd" (Byrne, Personal Communication).

20 Their father Martin Rabbitte played with the Lough Lurgan Céilí Band and had moved into Galway city from Tysaxon, Athenry, Co. Galway (Rabbitte).

as Burle Ives, Joan Baez, Woodie Guthrie, and Pete Seeger.[21] Eventually, 'ballad club' became too narrow a term and 'folk club' suited better as an umbrella term for the wide range of musical styles performed at the Fo'castle: English and American folk and protest songs, sea shanties, traditional Irish instrumental music, sean-nós songs, and original song compositions. Time witness, musician, and scholar Jackie Small remembers:

> That was a place where you could consciously hear the emerging performers in traditional music. I remember hearing Joe Heaney sing there at a time when nobody knew of him really, Ronnie Drew on his own as solo artist. (Personal Interview)

Importantly, the Fo'Castle Folk Club was also the catalytic locus for the emergence of seminal Irish folk revival band Sweeney's Men in 1966. Its genesis was the result of a brief intersection with the location. The group had a major influence "on the make-up of future groups such as Planxty, De Danann and The Bothy Band" (O'Doherty 673) and by extension on the revitalization and popularization of Irish traditional music nationally and internationally.

Confluence

Dick Byrne helped to further influence Irish traditional music revival on a local level with regard to the regularization of the Comhaltas affiliated sessions, which until then had been taking place on a monthly basis (Mulhaire). Here however, the importance of peer groups must not be ignored, so as to do justice to the tangled reality on the ground and to the complex web of interconnections. It was on May Standún's and Festy Conlon's suggestion – who were involved both with the Ballad Club at the Enda Hotel and the Comhaltas meetings at the Eagle Bar – that Dick Byrne and tin whistle player Pádraig Ó Carra attended Comhaltas meetings at the Eagle Bar, which was in close proximity (Byrne, Personal Communication).[22] According to Dick Byrne, meetings were a formal affair, but when elected onto the committee, Dick Byrne suggested regular, weekly sessions in lieu of meetings (Personal Interview). This was accepted and the thus regularized Comhaltas sessions became an important port of call for a new generation of novice learners from the mid-1960s: "The Eagle was pioneering in my time" remembers Jackie Small, then a student at University College Galway (Personal Interview). With international folk revival movements gaining momentum in England and the US, and with an increase in Irish traditional

21 These musicians are named repeatedly by time witnesses who I have interviewed. Radio programming also played an important role. In particular, Ciarán Mac Mathúna's *A Job of American Journeywork*, 1962 and 1966, featuring music collected in recording sessions in the US, in which he included music by the Clancy Brothers with Tommy Makem (Hall 465). It laid the foundation to their successful first tour in Ireland, 1963. Notably, *A Job of American Journeywork* also featured Irish traditional musicians who had emigrated to America, a considerable number of whom were from East Galway, among them Joe Cooley and Joe Mills (Collins, T. 17).

22 Dick Byrne and Pádraig Ó Carra were friends since their days of attending Cóláiste Iognáid, Galway's oldest Irish language secondary school colloquially known as the Jes.

music on Irish stage, radio, and newspaper, these sessions now attracted newcomers from a variety of musical and social backgrounds but mostly from the student body of UCG. These came to experience Irish traditional music first-hand in a social space: to listen, observe, learn, and perhaps join in. The Eagle Bar sessions enabled a transmission flow, informal and non-institutional in nature, instigating the revitalization of Irish traditional music on a local level in Galway city.

Comhaltas affiliated sessions at the Eagle Bar continued until the early 1970s, when the Fordes sold the pub and moved to Claregalway. The branch's sessions subsequently took place in Cullen's and by the summer of 1973 had moved to O'Flaherty's, Lower Salthill. Galway city's Comhaltas branch fizzled out in the mid-to-late 1970s, with the branch failing to attract new and younger musicians and herewith a renewed organizer base to carry on the running of it. However, as I will show below, Comhaltas still influenced developments through macro level flows, often in a grass-roots dimension.

The 1970s saw an acceleration of developments on a macro and a micro level. Ireland joining the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 propelled developments causing a "welcome boost in regional development, improved educational standards and new levels of Irish tourism", writes Ó hAllmhuráin (*O'Brien Pocket History* 158). Free second level education had been introduced in 1967. Together with the introduction of third-level student grants by the end of the 1960s (Ferriter 599), this resulted in a significant increase of students at UCG (Uí Chionna 27). In Galway, "[…] the two decades from 1961 saw the population of the city nearly double in size, inspiring the use of the moniker of 'the fastest growing city in Europe'" (Collins, P. 68).[23] The foundation for such a population growth had already been laid on a macro level with the 1958 Programme for Economic Expansion, also referred to as the Lemass-Whitaker Economic Plan, which "dislodged the country from its insular moorings, boosted native industry and opened the floodgates to foreign investment" (Ó hAllmhuráin, *O'Brien Pocket History* 150). As a direct result, economic investment increased in Galway, creating new employment opportunities for incomers and locals alike. From 1971 in particular, the American enterprise Digital Equipment Corporation (Western Digital) attracted a substantial number of musicians in its workforce (Mullin; Lamb), of whom some became key agents in Galway's traditional music scene, namely flute player John Lewis and accordion player Coli Mullin.[24]

A rise in population in Galway in general and a significant growth of UCG's student body in particular, by 442% between 1961 and 1981,[25] as well as "new levels of Irish

23 Between 1961 and 1971, the city grew by 3 080 inhabitants to 29 375. However, it experienced the fastest growth rate in its history during the following decade, 1971-1981, so that by 1981 its population stood at 41 861, with a growth rate of 42.5 percent (Collins, P. 63).

24 Further musicians who were working at Western Digital included Pat Mitchell (uilleann pipes) and Con Corcoran (fiddle) (Mullin).

25 Student numbers more than tripled between 1960 and 1970 from ca 945 students (Commission on Higher Education 39) to ca 2 913 students (Newell 31). Between 1971 and

tourism" (Ó hAllmhuráin, *O'Brien Pocket History* 158) coincided with the Irish traditional music scene in Galway city pubs expanding dramatically. "It became a kind of a boom then for the pubs, you see. They all wanted to have music. Quite a lot of them had sessions, back then, oh, in a very short time [...] because obviously it was bringing in people" recalls Pat McDonagh and Seán Tyrrell remembers: "There was a whole big mushrooming of a scene really in Galway."

During the 1970s, a pub scene developed for remunerated music performances. In this context, a blueprint of music emerged, remaining popular throughout the 1970s and beyond. This blueprint denotes a repertoire of half-and-half ballads and instrumental pieces (tunes), along with ever-present guitar accompaniment. Such a hybridization is the direct result of the confluence of the two music revival strands (Hall 465). I coined the term blueprint for its endemic reach across pub venues in 1960s and 1970s Galway. Remunerated, regular sessions of predominantly instrumental music and unaccompanied singing were relatively rare throughout the 1970s and until the mid-1980s. This points to the higher popularity of combined musical material and a customer demand for sessions featuring it. A blueprint repertoire was performed for instance in the Castle Hotel on Abbeygate Street Lower, the Cellar on Eglington Street, O'Reilly's on Forster Street, the Kings Head on Shop Street, the Cottage Bar in Lower Salthill, and in An Crúiscín Lán in Spiddal, with which a lively transient flow took place – including both Galway musicians performing there and Galwegians on a night out. However, throughout the 1970s, in a small number of venues Irish traditional instrumental music was played regularly, including occasional unaccompanied song. In Tigh Hughes in Spiddal and in Cullen's in Galway such sessions took place in a Comhaltas affiliated context. In those two pubs, musicians also met up spontaneously for non-remunerated sessions. Other meeting places for impromptu music-making included Tigh Neachtain on Quay Street (owners with Connemara roots), the Coachman on Dominick Street (run by supportive publicans), and the aforementioned Cellar on Eglinton Street (popular with UCG students). Thus, some venues were the locus of both remunerated sessions and impromptu music-making, such as the Cellar, Cullen's, and the Coachman.[26]

1981 there were further substantial increases, with the student body growing from 3 255 (Ó hEocha, *President's Report Sessions 1974-75 and 1975-76* iii) to 4 400 (Ó hEocha, *The President's Report to the Governing Body – Session 1981-82* 5).

26 The information in this section is drawing on analysis of primary data gathered in interviews conducted by the author between 2018-2020, as well as from personal communication, with time witnesses. These include: Dick Byrne, Alban Carney, Gerry Carthy, Philip Conlon, Noel Conneely, Johnny Finn, Des Forde, Seán Gavin, Greg Cotter, Jimmy Dillon, Pat McDonagh, Gerry Hanley, Celine Hession, Eleanor Hough, Seán 'Henry' Higgins, Breda Hughes, Ollie Jennings, Tony Kelly, Eugene Lamb, Charlie Lennon, Seán Moloney, Bernadette Mulligan, Coli Mullin, Íde Ní Fhaoláin, Charlie Piggott, Eamonn Rabbitte, Seán Ryan, Jackie Small, Donal Standún, Steve Sweeney, Seán Tyrrell, Séamus Walsh.

Embodiment

Throughout the 1970s, folk music and Irish traditional music remained strong in Galway, with the latter increasingly gaining in popularity (McDonagh; Hough; Ní Fhaoláin). This mirrors and embodies similar tendencies on a macro level. Broadcaster and music collector Ciarán MacMathúna estimated "that in 1977, Irish traditional music had come into its own" and went on to exclaim that no one "could have foreseen the tremendous upsurge of interest in Irish traditional music", describing Irish traditional and folk music revival processes of emerging pub sessions and Comhaltas's *fleadhanna* as a "cultural revolution". In fact, in Galway, sessions in public houses moved into a central position culturally. Galway Arts Festival founding member Ollie Jennings remembers: "And here was this mighty scene in Galway [...] jigs, reels, drink, songs, sex [...] that's where the buzz and energy was in Galway in the mid-to-late 70s." This is affirmed by film-maker Bob Quinn recalling Irish traditional music as Galway's "main attraction" during the mid-1970s. Guitarist and writer Fred Johnston supports such a view, highlighting the dominant place of pub sessions by pointing to a limited cultural scene beyond it: "But if you didn't play music, there was no other choice, culturally."

Fig. 3. Ceoltóirí Chonnacht, Eagle Bar, ca 1968. Back row, left to right: Pádraig Ó Carra, Eamonn Rabbitte, Martin Rabbitte, Dick Byrne, Donal Standún; front row, left to right: May Standún, Celine Hession, Pádraic Johnny Bán Ó Choisdealbha. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Eamonn Rabbitte.

Comhaltas's influence continued to be felt in a number of vital instances, albeit at times not immediately visible and often in confluence with other factors located on the folk revival spectrum and with extraneous circumstances. An example is the formation of Ceoltóirí Chonnacht, Galway's "first band of influence" (Gavin). Ceoltóirí Chonnacht was assembled by Dick Byrne for participation in Comhaltas's *Scoraíocht* (Cabaret) competitions, ca 1968 (Byrne, Personal Communication). Here, Dick Byrne drew initially on the socio-musical peer group which developed at the Spiddal sessions and which expanded at the Comhaltas affiliated Eagle Bar sessions. Initially, this peer group encompassed tradition bearers and subsequently a newer generation of traditional musicians. As such, Ceoltóirí Chonnacht was a direct offspring of the new session scene, which had emerged in the early 1960s as a result of Comhaltas's revival efforts, folk music revival happenings and local specificities (see Fig. 3).

Another example can be found in the formation of De Danann, a seminal 1970s Irish traditional music band. This also shows once more a confluence of revival processes in conjunction with extraneous circumstances. As a band, De Danann found together at sessions in Spiddal at Tigh Hughes pub throughout the autumn of 1973 (Piggott; Quinn, T.). These sessions were run as a Comhaltas event, organized by John Lewis (Hughes). John and Breda Lewis had moved to Furbo with their young family in the early 1970s, with John Lewis taking up work at the aforementioned Western Digital (Mitchell; Mullin). Individually, members of what was to become De Danann – Frankie Gavin, Charlie Piggott, Johnny McDonagh – previously met at Comhaltas run sessions at O'Flaherty's in Lower Salthill in the early autumn of 1973 (Piggott). Furthermore, Comhaltas indirectly facilitated Johnny 'Ringo' McDonagh's entry into traditional music through its grass roots socialization scene in pubs at *fleadhanna.* He went to the Mountbellew *fleadh* in 1967 and recalls:

> And I was watching, there was a session going on, and I was watching, and there was an old guy playing a bodhrán, and I was watching him, and I said, "Jaysus, I can do that", sure right? And low and behold about an hour later, Charlie Byrnes came into the pub selling bodhráns, and jaysus, I said, "I want one of them." (O'Neill)

Building on a strong family background of Irish traditional music-making, Comhaltas's competitive scene played a substantial role in Frankie Gavin's musical development. Revival sessions at the Cellar Bar brought Frankie Gavin, Alec Finn, and later Charlie Piggott together, and subsequently drew in Johnny 'Ringo' McDonagh (O'Neill; Piggott; McGuire). Located on the extraneous spectrum, Charlie Piggott points to a non-musical interest in birds, which created an additional commonality with Alec Finn. Last but not least, UCG's socialization network played a large part in De Danann's formation. UCG student Ollie Jennings started his career in arts with a first concert promotion in early 1974, booking the Chieftains and Ceoltóirí UCG. Featuring Frankie Gavin, Alec Finn, Charlie Piggott, and Johnny 'Ringo' McDonagh, Ceoltóirí UCG was *de facto* De Danann. This was in fact their first public performance, ahead of a pivotal concert in a Dublin folk club. Ollie Jennings created numerous concert opportunities for the band throughout the 1970s and subsequently managed them from 1980-1982 (Jennings).

With the novel combination of fiddle, bouzouki, and bodhrán, as well as Charlie Piggott's banjo, De Danann combined a folk revival soundscape with expertise in and a depth of Irish traditional music performance. The result was a sound, which "followers of folk music should find […] [a] refreshing addition to the traditional musical culture that still thrives in Ireland" as Jackie Small wrote in the sleeve notes for De Danann's first EP from 1974 (Sleeve Notes).

Conclusion

In my discussion, I explored the degree to which two strands of twentieth-century music revival – that of Irish traditional and that of Anglo-American folk music – related to each other in a nascent and pivotal period for the development of an Irish traditional music community of practice in Galway city during the 1960s and 1970s. I showed that micro and macro flows of Irish traditional and American and English folk music revivals form a dynamic web in the imaginary landscape of Irish traditional music performance in Galway. Extraneous circumstances, site-specific and located in the ethno-scape, are essential in the local embodiment of revival processes. At times, these manifestations travel out, morphing into macro level flows. The emergence of a blueprint repertoire for remunerated Irish traditional music-making in pubs presents a confluence of the two music revival strands discussed here. An attempt at their clear-cut separation would not do justice to the lived realities of agents and practitioners and to the complexities of music revival processes on a local level.

Works Cited

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Billick, Ian, and Mary V. Price. "The Idiosyncrasy of Place: Challenges and Opportunities." *The Ecology of Place: Contributions of Place-Based Research to Ecological Understanding*. Ed. Ian Billick and Mary V. Price. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010. 63-68.

Breathnach, Breandán. *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*. Dublin and Cork: Mercier Press, [1971] 1977.

-----. "The Traditional Music Scene in Ireland." *Ireland and the Arts: A Special Issue of Literary Review*. Ed. Tim Pat Coogan. London: Literary Review/Namara Press, 1983. 170-75.

Brody, Hugh. *Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland*. London: Allen Lane, 1973.

Burke, Joe. Personal Communication. 6 Mar. 2020.

Byrne, Dick. *Tell 'em Who You Are! A Life in the West of Ireland*. Dohaghadee, UK: Cottage Publications, 2008.

-----. Personal Interview. 20 June 2018.

-----. Personal Communication. 15 Mar. 2019; 30 May 2020.

Collins, Patrick. "Who Makes the City? The Evolution of Galway City." *Administration* 68.2 (2020): 59-78.

Collins, Timothy. "Music Mountain: Space, Place and Irish Traditional Music Practices in Sliabh Aughty." PhD diss. National University of Ireland, Galway, 2013.

Commins, Verena. "Locating the Centre: Irish Traditional Music and Re-Traditionalisation at the Willie Clancy Summer School." *Ordinary Irish Life: Music, Sport and Culture*. Ed. Méabh Ní Fhuartháin and David Doyle. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013. 92-102.

Commission on Higher Education. *II Report*. Vol. 1. Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1967.

Cotter, Geraldine. "Institutional and Social Teaching, Learning and Performing of Irish Traditional Music in Ennis, County Clare 1961-1980." PhD diss. University of Limerick, 2013.

Curran, Catherine. "Changing Audience for Traditional Irish Music." *Crosbhealach an Cheoil – The Crossroads Conference 1996*. Ed. Fintan Vallely, Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty. Vol. 1. Dublin: Whinstone Music, 1999. 56-63.

Curtis, P.J. *Notes from the Heart: A Celebration of Traditional Irish Music*. Dublin: Torc, 1994.

Devlin, Brendan. "The Gaelic League – A Spent Force?" *The Gaelic League Idea*. Ed. Seán Ó Tuama. The Thomas Davis Lectures. Cork: Mercier Press, 1972. 87-97.

DeWalt, Billie R., and Perrti J. Pelto. "Microlevel/Macrolevel Linkages: An Introduction to the Issues and a Framework for Analysis." *Micro and Macro Levels of Analysis in Anthropology: Issues in Theory and Research*. Ed. Billie R. DeWalt and Perrti J. Pelto. London/New York: Routledge, 2018. 1-21.

Egan, Malachy. "A New Model: Seán Ó Riada, Ceoltóirí Cualann and Irish Traditional Music." PhD diss. National University of Ireland, Galway, 2020.

Fairbairn, Hazel. "Changing Contexts for Traditional Dance Music in Ireland: The Rise of Group Performance Practice." *Folk Music Journal* 6.5 (1994): 566-99.

Falkenau, Anna. "'It was in the air': Irish Traditional Music in Galway, 1960-1979." *Galway: Hardiman & Beyond. Arts and Culture, 1820-2020*. Ed. John Cunningham and Ciaran McDonough. North Melbourne: Arden, forthcoming in 2022.

Ferriter, Diarmaid. *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*. London: Profile Books, 2005.

Fleming, Rachel C. “Resisting Cultural Standardization: Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Revitalization of Traditional Music in Ireland.” *Journal of Folklore Research* 41.2-3 (2004): 227-57. 10 Mar. 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3814592>.

Gavin, Seán. Personal Interview. 12 July 2018.

Hall, Reg. *A Few Tunes of Good Music: A History of Irish Music and Dance in London, 1800-1980 & Beyond*. London: N.p., 2016. 8 Jan. 2022. <http://www.topicrecords.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/few-tunes-reg-hall.pdf>.

Hamilton, Samuel Colin. “Innovation, Conservatism, and the Aesthetic of Irish Traditional Music.” *Crosbhealach An Cheoil – The Crossroads Conference, 1996*. Ed. Fintan Vallely, Hammy Hamilton, Eithne Vallely, and Liz Doherty. Dublin: Whinstone Music, 1996. 82-87.

-----. “The Role of Commercial Recordings in the Development and Survival of Irish Traditional Music, 1899-1993.” PhD diss. University of Limerick, 1996.

Hession, Celine, and Alban Carney. Personal Interview. 25 July 2018.

Hough, Eleanor. Personal Interview. 17 July 2018.

Hughes, Breda. Personal Interview. 16 Oct. 2019.

Jennings, Ollie. Personal Interview. 30 Aug. 2018.

Johnston, Fred. Personal Communication. 14 July 2020.

Kaul, Adam R. “The Limits of Commodification in Traditional Irish Music Sessions.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13.3 (2007): 703-19.

-----. *Turning the Tune: Traditional Music, Tourism, and Social Change in an Irish Village*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013.

Kelly, Ita. “Galway.” *Companion to Irish Traditional Music*. Ed. Fintan Vallely. Cork: Cork UP, 2010. 295-97.

Kenny, Tom. “The Galway Sessions.” *Galway Advertiser.* 17 June 2010. 25 Mar. 2022. <https://www.advertiser.ie/Galway/article/27544/the-galway-sessions>.

Lamb, Eugene. Personal Interview. 19 July 2018.

Lanier, S.C. “‘It is New-Strung and Shan’t be Heard’: Nationalism and Memory in the Irish Harp Tradition.” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 8.1 (1999): 1-26.

-----. “Belfast Harpers’ Assembly.” *Companion to Irish Traditional Music*. Ed. Fintan Vallely. Cork: Cork UP, 2011. 64-65.

Livingston, Tamara E. “Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory.” *Ethnomusicology* 43.1 (1999): 66-85.

Long, Siobhan. “Two Seminal Collections of Irish Traditional Music Brought Back to Life.” *The Irish Times.* 26 Feb. 2022. 26 Feb. 2022. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/music/two-seminal-collections-of-irish-traditional-music-brought-back-to-life-1.4806122>.

MacMathúna, Ciarán. “Traditional Music.” *Magill.* 2 Oct. 1977. 15 Jan. 2022. <https://magill.ie/archive/traditional-music>.

McDonagh, Pat. Personal Interview. 4 June 2019.

McGuire, Kevin. “From Rocking with Phil Lynott to Hybernia Rhapsodies with Frankie Gavin.” *Galway Advertiser.* 20 Dec. 2007: 52.

Miller, Rebecca S. “Irish Traditional and Popular Music in New York City: Identity and Social Change, 1930-1975.” *The New York Irish*. Ed. Ronald H. Beyer and Timothy J. Meagher. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996. 481-692.

Mitchell, Pat. Sleeve Notes. Muintir Lewis. *Weeds in the Garden*. CD. Dublin: Tara, 1978.

Moloney, Seán. Personal Interview. 13 Dec. 2018.

Mulhaire, Brendan. Personal Communication. 27 May 2019.

Mullin, Coli. Personal Interview. 23 Sept. 2019.

Newell, Martin J. *The President’s Report – Session 1969-70*. Galway: UCG: 1970.

Ní Fhaoláin, Íde. Personal Interview. 19 July 2018.

Ní Fhuartháin, Méabh. “Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Shaping Tradition, 1951-1970.” PhD diss. National University of Ireland, Galway, 2011.

-----. “Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.” *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*. Ed. Harry White and Barra Boydell. Dublin: UCD Press, 2013. 222-25.

-----. “‘Irish Music in Irish Life’: Articulating a Vision of Revival.” *Culture and Society in Ireland Since 1752: Essays in Honour of Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh*. Ed. Niall Ó Ciosáin and John Cunningham. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2015. 528-54.

Ó Connaire, Seán. Personal Interview. 17 Sept. 2019.

Ó Dubhthaigh, Séamus. *Survival: Irish Traditional Music and Song, A View*. Knock: CCÉ, 2009.

Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid. “The National and the Local: Practices of De- and Retraditionalization.” *FF Network* 28 (2005): 10-13, 16-18.

Ó hAllmhuráin, Gearóid. *O’Brien Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music*. 3rd ed. 1998. Dublin: O’Brien Press, 2008.

-----. *Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016.

Ó hEocha, Colm. *The President's Report, Sessions 1974-75 and 1975-76*. Galway, UCG: 1976.

-----. *The President's Report to the Governing Body, Session 1981-82*. Galway, UCG: 1982.

Ó Laoire, Lillis, and Sean Williams. *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song Man*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

Ó Tuama, Seán. "The Gaelic League Idea in the Future." *The Gaelic League Idea*. Ed. Seán Ó Tuama. The Thomas Davis Lectures. Cork: Mercier Press, 1972. 98-109.

O'Doherty, Eamonn. "Sweeney's Men." *Companion to Irish Traditional Music*. Ed. Fintan Vallely. Cork: Cork UP, 2010. 673.

O'Neill, Eoin. "Episode 9: Johnny 'Ringo' McDonagh." *The Eoin O'Neill Podcast*. 12 June 2020. 6 Dec. 2020. <https://www.podbean.com/site/EpisodeDownload/PBF43657HAG7Z>.

Piggott, Charlie. Personal Interview. 2 Nov. 2019.

Quinn, Bob. Personal Interview. 19 May 2019.

Quinn, Toner. "An Interview with Fiddle-Player Frankie Gavin." *The Journal of Music*. 1 Mar. 2004. 31 Mar. 2019. <http://journalofmusic.com/focus/interview-fiddle-player-frankie-gavin>.

Rabbitte, Eamonn. Personal Interview. 3 July 2019.

Rohan, Kevin. Personal Communication. 12 Oct. 2021.

Rosenberg, Neil V. "'An Icy Mountain Brook': Revival, Aesthetics, and the 'Coal Creek March'." *Journal of Folklore Research* 28.2/3 (1991): 221-40.

Ryan, Seán. Personal Interview. 9 Sept. 2018.

Slobin, Mark. "Rethinking 'Revival' of American Ethnic Music." *New York Folklore* 9 (1983): 37-44.

-----. "Micromusics of the West: A Comparative Approach." *Ethnomusicology* 36 (Winter 1992): 1-87.

Small, Jackie. Sleeve Notes. De Danann. *The Rambling Irishman*. LP. Polydor, 1974.

-----. Personal Interview. 29 Jan. 2011.

Stoebel, Lauren Weintraub. "Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (The Irish Musicians' Association) and the Politics of Musical Community in Irish Traditional Music." PhD diss. City University of New York, 2015.

Tyrrell, Seán. Personal Interview. 10 July 2018.

Uí Chionna, Jackie. *An Oral History of University College Galway, 1930-80: A University in Living Memory*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2019.

Vallely, Fintan. “Céilí [Ceilidh].” *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*. Ed. Fintan Vallely. Cork: Cork UP, 2011. 116.

-----. “Revival.” *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*. Ed. Fintan Vallely. Cork: Cork UP, 2011. 576.

ROUNDTABLE ON IRISH DOCUMENTARY CINEMA WITH ALAN GILSENAN, GILLIAN MARSH, AND PAT COLLINS

Chair: Seán Crosson[1]

Introduction

Alan Gilsenan is a multi-award-winning Irish film-maker, writer and theatre director. His widely diverse body of film work extends across documentary, feature films and experimental work, from his ground-breaking 1988 documentary *The Road to God Knows Where* to *The Great Book of Ireland* (2020), featured at EFACIS 2021; the recent feature film *Unless* (2016), based upon the final novel of Carol Shields with Catherine Keener in the lead role; and a range of acclaimed theatrical productions, including adaptations of works by John Banville and Samuel Beckett. Alan has also served on the Irish Film Board (now Screen Ireland) (2000-2008); as Chairman of the Irish Film Institute (2002-2007); as Chairman of Film-Makers Ireland – now Screen Producers Ireland – (1995-1998); and as a member of the board of the International Dance Festival Ireland (2001-2007). From 2009 to 2014, he served on the board of Ireland's state broadcaster RTÉ. He is currently on the board of Fighting Words, a creative writing centre for young people.

For the last thirty years, **Gillian Marsh** has been successfully producing and directing both broadcast and corporate productions throughout America, Australia, and Europe. She is based in North Mayo where over twenty-five years ago she set up probably the most rural production company in Ireland, GMarsh TV. Her work has emerged often from the people who surround her or the world she encountered, including convincing her veterinarian husband to allow her to film his daily life and so archiving a way of life that is disappearing with many series of "Vets on Call". Her interest in the natural world was also evident in her work as producer of eight series (50 episodes) of "Living the Wildlife" – RTÉ's flagship natural history series covering the nature that lives right on our doorstep. In addition, GMarsh TV has had various productions broadcast on international channels including Channel 4, UTV, The Discovery Channel, Discovery Europe, Asia, and SBS Australia. Gillian has either directed or produced well over thirty productions to date, including the award-winning intimate portrait of the life and work of Irish collage artist Seán Hillen, *Tomorrow Is Saturday*, featured at EFACIS 2021.

Pat Collins is an award-winning director of over thirty films to date. A particular focus of his work has been on creative artists across a wide range of areas. He has made films

1 The following text is an edited version of the roundtable that took place on Friday 3 September as part of EFACIS 2021. The editors acknowledge Nathalie Lamprecht's work in transcribing the original recording.

on the writer John McGahern, the poets Michael Hartnett and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, and the late Connemara-based writer and cartographer Tim Robinson – as well as the folklorist and writer Henry Glassie, the focus of *Henry Glassie: Field Work* (2019), screened at EFACIS 2021. Other acclaimed productions include *Abbas Kiarostami – The Art of Living* (co-directed with Fergus Daly) (2003); his 2017 feature film *Song of Granite*, focused on the life of the traditional Irish singer Joe Heaney; and the remarkable 2012 feature *Silence* (recipient of the Michael Dwyer Discovery Award at the 2012 Dublin International Film Festival) which follows the journey of a sound recordist from Berlin to his Donegal home in search of landscapes free from man-made sound.

Seán Crosson: You're all very welcome to this afternoon's roundtable on Irish documentary cinema. My name is Seán Crosson, I'm Senior Lecturer in Film in the Huston School of Film & Digital Media, NUI Galway [now University of Galway]. It's my great pleasure to chair this session today and to be among people I hugely respect, three of the finest film-makers working in Ireland today. They are people who have worked across a range of platforms and media forms and have made extraordinary contributions in each. So, thank you Alan, Gillian, and Pat for being with us today. I want to begin if I could, by asking each of you to tell us a little about your path into film and perhaps particularly into documentary film-making.

Gillian Marsh: When I'd finished studying communications in Rathmines, in Dublin, I went abroad for about ten years or so and when I came back to Ireland, I knew nobody in film or anybody in television or anything. And it was luck really, knocking on doors and I just brought ideas to companies and ended up getting *From the Horse's Mouth*, the history of the Irish bloodstock industry which I had sort of grown up in, so I had a fair knowledge of it and managed to get Emdee[2] to pitch that for me and so – I think it was luck in lots of ways. I got an idea off the ground that quite a big company eventually put forward to RTÉ and I got the opportunity to produce it at the time – nobody knew who I was or anything, I'd made nothing in Ireland so I didn't get to direct it myself unfortunately, but I was lucky because I worked with some of the best cameramen and soundmen in the country and learned a lot. Suddenly I was working with such fantastic crews, I kind of absorbed everything and I love just telling stories and working on things – while I was in Emdee I found a letter for the geological survey of Ireland wanting to make a 150-year series. I knew I had to try and keep myself in work; I put in a treatment[3] for this, not knowing anything about geology but sometimes that is the best way to do a documentary, learning the topic as you go. At the end of the day, I had rocks, they were grey, they didn't move – how was I going to make it interesting? I suppose it is all about the story for me, that's what drives me basically.

2 Emdee Productions was a Dublin-based film production company.

3 A treatment is a document that outlines the story idea of a project before an entire script is written.

Seán Crosson: Would that be at the core then of your own distinctive approach to film and say the choices you make around the subjects and how you develop a scenario around those subjects?

Gillian Marsh: Yeah, a lot of the times I will be driven by the individuals. I suppose if the story is interesting, if it has heart then that's the one for me. I'd be driven very much on human stories and I tend to pick things that might take a bit of time, like *The Funeral Director* – I had to wait for people to pass away. For a story like *Tomorrow Is Saturday* with Seán – it's evolved a lot through the filming and the storytelling. It needed a loose approach to try and get the story and more importantly his personality through because that's what I really wanted to capture.

Seán Crosson: Yeah, we'll come back to that, but it's extraordinary the insight, the access, that you have in that documentary in terms of Seán's life, career, and remarkable talent as well.

Gillian Marsh: I think access is one of the most important things.

Seán Crosson: Pat, if you'd like to talk a little about your path into documentary film, I know you came from a very different background to Gillian in some respects.

Pat Collins: Yeah, I think I was in my late twenties or maybe thirty before I made my first documentary but I was working around film. I was editing a film journal, called *Film West*, in Galway for three or four years and I was programming the Galway Film Festival. All during my twenties I was trying to get into documentary film-making but I didn't really know how to do it. I'm kind of glad that I didn't now because I think the films I would have made wouldn't have been that great, but it was just a very slow process of discovering documentary. I didn't really want to make feature films or anything; I didn't want to work in drama, I think I just purely wanted to work in documentary. And I was interested in history and I was interested in music and things and that's what lead me very slowly, over the course of ten years, into documentary. I didn't study film or anything like that but it was coming out of Irish cultural subject matter. Like I was trying to find a way to work in that area I suppose.

Seán Crosson: And film provided your way in to tell those stories.

Pat Collins: Yeah, I think so, yes. And I think a lot of people involved in film that I've met over the years originally wanted to be involved in music and it didn't work out for them and they went into film or maybe twenty years previously it would have been poetry or it would have been maybe theatre. But I think by the time that I came into any kind of maturity in my late twenties, film was the thing of the time. But I would certainly have been interested in culture and art in my twenties and film was the thing that I thought I could do so that's what I went after I suppose.

Seán Crosson: Thanks for that, Pat. You were coming into film in the late 1990s, early noughties. It was a time when – well at least the Irish Film Board was there – there were structures in place or emerging to support film production and develop

film growth. If I could turn to Alan – when you were working on, say, *The Road to God Knows Where* and coming out of the mid-1980s, the board was shut down in '87 and Channel 4 came in to support you in that production – it was a very very different time and a different context. Even the thought of making a documentary, of making a film in Ireland at that time must have been, for many people, unimaginable.

Alan Gilsenan: Yeah, very different, Seán. And you know like Pat I didn't do film in college or anything, none of those courses. They were only starting to come through. And really to be honest I was a kind of an accidental documentary-maker. I was interested in writing, I was interested in theatre, I was interested in drama. I hadn't really thought about documentary that much, which might be apparent, but I think what's interesting about that time when we made *The Road to God Knows Where*, in the mid-eighties, I had made one short film which had been funded by the first incarnation of the Irish Film Board and then the Film Board was abolished. And as a result of that short film, Channel 4, which was just setting up, came to me and asked me to make a documentary, which at the time I was kind of blasé about. Now I realize how lucky I was. But it's also kind of interesting historically, if you think about a small investment of the Irish Film Board in one little short film leading to this bigger film with Channel 4.

Seán Crosson: Absolutely.

Alan Gilsenan: So, it was a very very different time. And also, I remember when I made that first documentary and I hadn't a clue really, I was totally going on instinct – the crew that I had (because the Irish film industry was so dampened at the time) were some of the best people in the country and I really learned. I was a total innocent and I really learned from them. And it's kind of hard now when you say to film-makers, young film-makers coming out – there's probably maybe 2 000 short films made a year and I remember when I made my very first short film there were I think two. And if you made a film, if you finished it, it was a cause for celebration. It didn't have to be any good, just get it done.

Seán Crosson: And do you think that context, as you say, you didn't have formal training in film-making, you were coming into something in a context where making films was really challenging and where few films were made – do you think that that in some ways contributed [to the film] – because it's quite an experimental, innovative documentary. While a hugely significant and remarkable text, at the time some people just didn't know how to deal with it. It was perhaps ahead of its time in a way and some people were just not ready for the type of direct engagement that you gave with the really challenging 1980s in Ireland.

Alan Gilsenan: I think, I mean it was definitely – it wasn't planned. It was totally a result of my own innocence in a way and looking back I can appreciate that. And I think the whole landscape of film has changed, not just in Ireland but globally. And I think there's almost too much awareness and too much cynicism in how films are approached. And if you talk to film students now, they're far more educated, which is

good. They are far more cineliterate, which is fantastic. But they have been inculcated with a cynicism. It's not about, "Well, what do you want to do?" I sat down, thought: "I have a screen – what am I going to put on it?" There's a cynicism, there's a kind of career-driven sophistication which, I think, if you're a young film-maker, can be very deadening.

Seán Crosson: Yeah, absolutely. I might, if it's okay, move on to the question of approach (something Gillian addressed earlier): what is it that guides you in terms of the projects, the decisions you make around the projects you choose, and how you approach those projects?

Alan Gilsenan: I think for me, it's very instinctive, why I do something, why I choose a subject is usually some sort of gut feeling. I think also you have to have some curiosity; you have to think: I want to know more about this and sometimes I don't quite know why I do, sometimes it's like an attraction, you're drawn to something, sometimes you want to know, sometimes just a gut feeling, sometimes it's something personal that's happened in your life that sparks an idea. And then in terms of the process, and for me that's a bit of an article of faith, which I know frustrates funders and producers and all the serious people. I'd be a great believer in discovery, in that the process is about discovery. It's not going in knowing what you want. A lot of people think directing is about "what do you want"; it's "going to look", it's "going to find", it's "going to listen", "going to learn" and in that process, if you connect to that, and it takes a bit of concentration and effort – which are things that don't come naturally to me – but if you connect to a subject in terms of listening and looking closely, it can reveal itself to you. So, I don't really believe in this idea of imposing a story. I want to find something out. And a lot of that is an instinctive thing, which I know sounds kind of vague – well it is vague, but you go on a journey, every documentary is a kind of journey, it's a kind of searching. And the story comes out of that. Your job is to find it. And it's not necessarily where you start it, but it evolves and I think that's more interesting and that maybe harks back to what I said before: increasingly that's become a bit of a lost art, the idea that the documentary is in some old-fashioned way, like Gillian was alluding to, is about finding out the truth, or a truth, or your truth, or a sort of truth. I think there is a real trend now that documentary has become – has tripped into kind of creating truth and manufacturing truth, that it seems now that every feature documentary aspires to be a Hollywood thriller. And it's about imposing a structure, some sort of dramatic structure which may be of no relevance to the subject matter, but it makes for a good product. In lots of ways, you could say we're in a golden era of feature-length documentaries. When I started, the idea that people would be going to the cinema or turning on documentaries on Netflix would have seemed a distant hope. So, in one sense I can see that and that's very exciting. But part of that is that documentary has become less about finding a truth but more about manipulating and creating a truth that's kind of satisfying in some sort of faux dramatic way. So, end of rant.

Seán Crosson: No, not at all. I think it speaks as well to the kind of pressures that are on film-makers to make it "entertaining". That there is a concept of what an entertaining narrative is or what is required and often that's driving directors towards creating documentary works that are incorporating aesthetics we might more usually expect in mainstream fiction film and that can work against the documentary instinct or what documentary perhaps should be doing or can be doing. And I think that's a real issue in contemporary film practice. Pat, if I could come to you with the same question, just to talk a bit about your own approach and what brings you to the subjects.

Pat Collins: Yeah, I think it's similar in that it's coming out of my own interest, my own life and it's coming out of my own instinctual reaction. And also, I tend to make films if I want to find out more about a subject. I see it in the old-fashioned sense of "educational". Some film-makers never ask a question that they wouldn't know the answer to and I think I'm kind of the opposite in that I'm not afraid that I don't know about the subject – because I'm only learning of the subject as I'm going on. I sometimes say to commissioning editors – and I really shouldn't – that if I knew what I was going to do, I wouldn't start. I just wouldn't have the interest if I knew exactly what it was going to be. It's probably a kind of philosophical approach to a certain extent – learning to love what you have rather than always trying to get what you want. You're not chasing and trying to control everything; you're trying to almost get out of the way as much as possible, without imposing yourself. You're obviously present, but just that you are trying to – especially if you are making a documentary about a person – I think you are trying to get out of the way so that that person is communicating through you to the audience. I've been thinking about this recently about storytelling. Personally, I'm not that interested in storytelling but I've just kind of realized that. I'm interested in somebody telling me a story, in real life when I meet them, and I'm interested in story in other people's work. If somebody tells me an interesting story, I'm all ears but in my own work I'm not trying to tell a story as such or shape a story. I saw a documentary recently called *Three Identical Strangers* (2018), which is completely story-led and I would have much preferred to read a newspaper – a short newspaper article on it. The idea of having 90 minutes of a film just being a playing out of the story, a playing out of events – I genuinely can't see the point in it. People talk about the Irish story-telling tradition but I really don't think they mean the three-act structure. If you think about the Irish story-telling tradition it's around a fire side and it's stories that went on for days. And it's to do with the smoke from the fire, the light, the atmosphere, the people present. It's got nothing to do with a three-act structure. And I think in Ireland and maybe even in Europe that the three-act structure idea is still prevalent but I think, even in America, I don't think they are even thinking about it as much anymore. Sometimes I feel that documentary is slavishly chasing drama, but actually a lot of the Hollywood films are actually more honest than a lot of the documentaries that are being made. A lot of the documentaries are being made from one very narrow vantage or political view and they are being

kind of shaped in the same way that Hollywood movies are being shaped. And it's perhaps actually more cynical than the Hollywood movies. And that's coming from a pressure of screening in film festivals. There is something great about actually making a documentary that's just broadcast on television. It's an amazing thing to actually screen to 100 000 people or 200 000 people in your own country in one sitting. And the kind of preoccupation with screening at festivals all over the world like in Ireland or in Prague – wherever. Television is still one of the most powerful mediums, and sometimes it is the best way of actually reaching an audience.

Seán Crosson: Absolutely, Pat, you raise some really interesting issues that I will return to when we come to talk about your Henry Glassie documentary a little later. I might come back to you Gillian to talk a bit about the films that delegates had access to during the conference at this point and then we'll open to the floor in the next five to ten minutes as well. So, Gillian you mentioned the word "access" earlier and Seán Hillen is somebody that most of us at the very least will be familiar with his work, if we're not familiar with him as a person. And it was extraordinary to me, watching *Tomorrow Is Saturday*, the degree of access you had and the degree of vulnerability as well that was evident there in terms of Seán, his life, his profession, and the really extraordinary challenges he's had to face that I had no idea of and I'm sure most of us didn't. How did you come to meet and how did you come to build that kind of rapport with Seán Hillen to allow you to share that kind of insight?

Gillian Marsh: I was given his name by Chris Doris, an artist down here who works in counselling and meditation and he told me this fellow is really interesting and I should meet him, so I was in Dublin one time and I just gave him a call and said: "Do you want to meet up?" And I met up with him one day and chatted for about three hours. Seán is so articulate and so eloquent and he's just such a fantastic person. Paddy Cahill – Lord rest him – made a lovely short film on Seán Hillen a few years ago which won at the Galway Film Fleadh and it was beautiful and he actually allowed me to use it when I was trying to get commissioned with BAI. So, when I met Seán I just thought: This man has so much to tell and share with the world, and Seán's circumstances in ways have created Seán and his art: growing up in the Troubles, finding out he had Asperger's – I mean if Seán had had a manager back in the day, in the eighties, he'd probably be one of the wealthiest men in Ireland. His unbelievable intelligence, the things he invented when he was young, in his twenties. He invented computer pens, large printers, everything. If he had had somebody that could focus him and had been his manager, that man would have been massively wealthy. And he never knew he had Asperger's so he struggled.

I think what I wanted to try and do was let Seán tell his story and not confine it in any way like a normal documentary, to let it flow the way Seán is. This man started as a student, became a good artist, failed because his art was no longer popular – politically popular that is – and then just disappeared. This is his story as a human and his story with warts and all, the struggles that he encountered in life and, like, a

lot of us, [we] overlook them. One in sixty-five people are on the spectrum and there may be a little bit in all of us. So, Seán really told his story his way and I had a fantastic editor Gretta Ohle – it was not an easy documentary to edit – we could have edited it in hundreds of different ways. And we went down a lot of different rabbit holes but Gretta and myself started cutting, but then we parked it for a while because Covid hit and other commitments. This was great as we wanted Seán to get to the next stage of his life and maybe be entering a bright time in his life. He was hoping to sell his collages and photographs to the National Gallery. For Seán, one of the biggest things in his life is to be remembered and he wanted the Irish National Gallery to buy one of his collages. Which was actually wonderful because his love affair with Amy [Madden] continued into a different phase; she got locked-down in Ireland and we had a real positive ending rather than having to be forced to make one seem good.

Seán Crosson: Yeah, it was extraordinarily uplifting as well. It had a real narrative coherence, because of what had happened. One of the things I wanted to ask you that was striking was: Seán himself was clearly going through a process of trying to get his life in order. Even physically you see him clearing out his house and then bringing things back and trying to bring some order to everything – was there any sense in which the production of the documentary around him was in some way an instigator for him to engage in those activities?

Gillian Marsh: Oh, totally. When I met him I was thinking: how do you tell this man's story? Seán is very good at giving his PR speak, he's so eloquent, he makes a fantastic positive story but it would be exactly what he wants and you may never get past the barrier. No matter where you walk in that studio I would knock things over or stand on something and it would crack and I'd go, "oh my god have I just broken something really precious". In Sean's studio everywhere you touched fell down – you had to walk through very carefully. I said, "if we're going to tell your story we got to clear this place out, we've got to look at every box as they each have a story" – and everything was discovered. I mean he had no idea what was in there, he had no idea of where things are. Seán couldn't remember the day of the week and he doesn't remember the time of the day so he would pull these boxes down and it was like a treasure trove of his past and it brought out a lot of emotion, as you saw in the documentary. I mean there was times when he cried. The whole Northern Irish Troubles had a huge effect on him and that influenced his art. I was trying to get people to understand his life. So many art documentaries are made for the art fraternity not the general public like myself. They go over our head and we're like, "oh right", but I wanted people to understand the passion he was squeezing into his art and into his collages and he wanted it to say something, and to mean something. And I think he really got that across. I couldn't tell that story better; he had to tell it himself.

Seán Crosson: Absolutely. It was a remarkable insight into an extraordinary artist. I might move on to Alan and *The Great Book of Ireland*. You were dealing with a remarkable subject here also in terms of this publication that Theo [Dorgan] and Gene

[Lambert] came out with in the late 1980s as well, out of a period not long after you had produced *The Road to God Knows Where* and also, I thought there were some interesting parallels – at several points they talk about the gloominess, there's a gloominess about some of the images, and about some of the poetry that may reflect that kind of dark period. But what was it that brought you to the work – was there something there that you connected with in terms of the project?

Alan Gilsenan: Well, it was quite an unusual project for me in that I was aware of *The Great Book of Ireland* when it was made and I of course knew Theo and Gene a little bit. And it's an extraordinary artefact. An extraordinary thing. And then it sort of just disappeared. For a variety of reasons, even though there was a huge amount of fuss about it at the time. But to cut a long story short, the University College of Cork acquired it, the librarian there, John Fitzgerald, a wonderful poet, saw the potential in this book and finally raised the finance. And so, in a way, UCC were going to re-launch this book to an audience who may have forgotten the history of it. So, there was a practical desire to tell the story of the Great Book. But I suppose when I came to that, I realized there was Tony Barry, another great Irish film-maker had made a documentary at the time which I thought served perfectly. You know, it documented the process. So, I felt we needed to do something else and I suppose what I imagined the film would be was to make it in the spirit of the book itself, and the book is made of all these pages and that I would make a series of stories, images, little short films that were like pages, like electronic pages, digital pages to the book, that would kind of respond to the book, but also in some way tell the story of the book.

Seán Crosson: It's remarkable. Some of the sequences are just stunning, I'm thinking in particular of the performance of Gerald Barry's *Sleeping Beauty* and how the actual text of the Great Book is blended in with the performance, and you do that several times in the documentary. It's visually stunning and makes complete sense in terms of what you're depicting there. Again, maybe in a similar way to what we've heard Pat and Gillian describe, the film is emerging from the subject rather than trying to – as you've described in other documentaries – impose a standard narrative on the work itself.

Alan Gilsenan: Yeah, and you know what was lovely about it, my initial thing was to tell a story in some way but also make these little responses, but actually kind of the biggest story which I didn't imagine at all is that of course it was a huge thing at the time, both for the artists and for Theo and Gene creating the book and it was also very difficult, very stressful, pretty fraught and they had forgotten it too. So, we were kind of rediscovering things with them. It was like going back to somebody saying: "Remember that fabulous love affair you had twenty years ago? Tell me about it." So, like in lots of ways everybody in the film was kind of rediscovering this thing that they had also forgotten. A bit like Gillian was saying taking up a box – and there was even a moment which we used in the film where Sebastian Barry came along and I had a copy of the poem that he'd inscribed in the book just in case he needed to refresh his

memory and he looked at me and he said: “Oh I didn’t think that’s the one that I wrote down at all.” He had thought he had done something totally different. So, also in some indirect way it was also about memory and what we remember.

Seán Crosson: I think that’s the opening piece that you have in the documentary and there’s something quite moving about that as well because not only does he realize that he hadn’t remembered that that was the piece, but it’s also a poem about family division, or there’s a trauma there, he refers to that quite directly in his comments after reading the poem. I thought that was quite a moving and powerful opening to the documentary.

Alan Gilsenan: Yeah, and there were those things that you don’t imagine that happen, I remember going down to film with Derek Mahon, the poet, and everybody said to me: “Oh Derek won’t do it, you know he doesn’t do anything.” And I wrote to him and he said: “Come down”, and then very sadly he died not long after that. And lots of contributors had died, so you’re also aware that you were catching something before it evaporated completely.

Seán Crosson: Absolutely. Thank you for that, Alan. I might now turn to Pat if that’s okay and talk a little bit about *Henry Glassie: Fieldwork*. Henry Glassie is somebody that I, and I imagine many of the attendees here, will have encountered, particularly through his extraordinary book *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* and that revelatory text about the rural culture of a small village in Fermanagh and the music and story-telling traditions there, so it was extraordinary in your documentary, Pat, the manner in which again like we’ve heard described, the story emerges from Henry’s very unique approach to his life and to his work and the kind of dedication and integrity above all that he brings to his engagement with the various communities and cultures he studies. What was it that brought you to Henry Glassie as a subject or how did this project come about?

Pat Collins: I heard him speak on RTÉ Radio 1 one night with Vincent Woods – *Arts Tonight* is the name of the programme – and I was driving back from a shoot and there was the soundman who was on the shoot in the car in front of me and we were both listening to the radio and there was an ad break after half an hour and we rang each other and we said: “Are you listening to Radio 1?” and it was the most extraordinary character talking, this American, and it was just one of the best interviews I’d ever heard on radio. And so, about a year later I think, I wrote to Vincent Woods and asked him for contact details for Henry and he didn’t do email and he didn’t have a mobile phone and still doesn’t – so I had to write him letters and over the course of maybe five years he wrote back a few times – he wasn’t that interested in a documentary being made I don’t think. He didn’t want there to be anything to maybe distract him from his own work. But I suppose it was his philosophical outlook and his approach to art and the democratic way that he approaches art and talks about art and writes about it that made me feel that he had something very important to say and his books are maybe a little obscure. I mean they are not obscure in the aca-

demic sense but the general reader doesn't get the opportunity to come across his ideas that much. So, it was one of the rare occasions where I felt that I wanted to get his ideas to a wider audience. Because I think they are so positive and I think that they are so empowering for the ordinary person who creates art in a local situation that it doesn't have to be about the artist who is kind of selling a lot of work in Manhattan or London or whatever. The real important work is the stuff that's being done locally and it's nothing to do with the commodification of art, it's all to do with the practice of just making. And I suppose that was it really. And I wanted to learn as well, getting back to my earlier point, I wanted to learn myself from him and sometimes you pick people who are – who you feel you can learn something from. I remember making the documentary on John McGahern, which somebody actually asked me to direct, it wasn't something that I originated myself but I felt I learned a huge amount making that film and it's the same with Henry Glassie as well. It's a kind of a unique opportunity to study his work, think about the things that he's thinking about, and to spend a year or maybe six months in the edit concentrating on that. It's a real luxury and a privilege. And that's kind of what drew me to him. I was trying to figure out a way of getting out of the way so that he could communicate with the audience. And we shot in Brazil for about ten days and at the end of it we didn't even have almost any shots of him on camera after ten days in Brazil. Every time we'd film, he'd just slip out of the frame. And so, it was really kind of challenging – he said he didn't care if he was in it or not. And that's actually reflected in the film.

Seán Crosson: I was struck by that, Pat, I imagine it was something that developed organically as well in the production but it's well into the doc before we encounter Henry Glassie. And in a way, Henry I think would respect and would endorse that. It's not about him ultimately, right? And he says that himself, it's about the artist, the community, that he is recording or he is living among. And you captured that wonderfully, that focus on the artist at work in an extraordinary range of contexts. That was something else that was impressive: you move from Brazil, there's sequences from Turkey, from the UK, from Ireland, Japan – you're traveling around the world – much as his work does.

Pat Collins: Yes, after Ireland he went to Turkey and he went back and forward there for ten years and maybe he spent two years living there but he might get a grant of 5 000 euro and he'd go, he'd live in the poorest place in Istanbul and he learnt the language. So, it's real serious engagement. Even with Brazil [his partner] Pravina was working with him on the book and she is Brazilian and she's fluent in Portuguese and so it's a real – trying to meet the culture. He's written an amazing book on Turkish art and so it's kind of like I suppose a gift to artists in Turkey that he did do that – but it's a two-way transmission.

Seán Crosson: Okay, I see we have a question in the "chat" from our good friend Hedwig Schwall. Hedwig did you want to ask this directly to Alan about *The Great Book of Ireland*?

Hedwig Schwall: Yeah, it's just that Alan, I think from what I read on what you said about Banville you are attracted to that which is haunting and the dark side of things but what interested me most of all is that you said that making a documentary is like a process not a projection but a discovery, and something that's very receptive, not so much active, and so I was wondering when I looked at your film on *The Great Book of Ireland* – it's brilliant because it's so quick that you see all the pages and you open the book up literally to us and you also add a lot of literally colourful detail but on the other hand as you said yourself with Sebastian Barry it was very slow, a very meditative moment and with Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill as well and with a few others, so would you say that rhythm is an important ingredient in this process? Of making any documentary not just this one?

Alan Gilsenan: Thank you, Hedwig. I think hugely rhythm is so so important and I think a lot of that comes from the editor, in this case Bjorn Mac Giolla so I always feel somehow that film is aspiring to be music and failing. So, I think the rhythm of how it moves is really important and you kind of just find that again, that's an instinct of feeling out and even though I'm receptive to it, it's often the editors that take responsibility for the detail of that movement. And I think, certainly as I started to make films there was a fashion and we're all susceptible for things to get faster and faster. You know, the faster you could make it the more exciting it was. And slowly it appears I'm finding that – maybe it's just age – but I'm finding the pleasure of stillness and silence. Pat's films are an extraordinary example of that at its best. But I think in the case of *The Great Book* no two pages were the same and so I had to reflect that, that some things are slow and quiet and other things are frantic and then I had one strange notion that every page in the book – and, I don't know, maybe there's 300 pages – that every page should be in the film at least once, even if it's not even for a second. So, there's one very fast sequence (that features) I think literally every page in the book so that at least somewhere in posterity you know with a freeze frame you could stop and say: "Ah – there's my page."

Seán Crosson: Thank you Hedwig. I see a hand up as well? Clare Wallace – did you have a question?

Clare Wallace: Yeah, I have. I've only watched *The Great Book* once but it really struck me that there was a tension between this artefact that has some kind of timeless quality and then the very strong sense of death and mortality that is coming through all the interactions with those who contributed to it. Especially that reading with Brendan Kennelly and the kind of close-up and seeing his spittle as he's reading. Was that something that was on your mind as a friction in telling some kind of story about the book?

Alan Gilsenan: Thanks, Clare. I think it evolved. Partly, because it was about time, partly because we were going back to something from the late eighties and some people had died, a lot of people got older and so that sort of emerged. I've known Brendan Kennelly for a long time and we went down to Tralee and he is older now

and in some ways physically weak if not intellectually. You really felt that this was – these might be last moments of public iteration and I'm very conscious in documentary that you do that, that's important. Often people die and they say: "Oh there was never a great documentary on Henry Glassie" – well there is now. And I think those things are really important and I have a slight melancholy side which is probably drawn to that. But, no, it was very present in *The Great Book* and also, I think I remember many years ago I did a film with the playwright Tom Murphy and he said to me, Tom was a friend and he said to me: "Look, we really only do this so there's something left behind when we die." And I think there is that somewhere in all artists, and I think the people who inscribed their poems or their writings in that book those many years ago knew that this was one little mark on the universe and I think that has to be there somewhere.

Seán Crosson: Thanks, Clare. We're way over time so we might have to bring things to a close. We have one more question and perhaps it's a nice question to end on, it's from Stephen Boyd. Stephen, did you want to turn your camera on and ask it directly?

Stephen Boyd: Hi to everybody. I'm a big fan of all your work and actually *Living the Wildlife*, Gillian, I was a huge fan of on RTÉ because it's not often on RTÉ that you get a lot of natural history broadcasting. I was just curious because you all have amazing output and I was wondering what aspects of your own work or which piece of your own work you enjoy the most or provided you with the most satisfaction after you made it?

Gillian Marsh: It's hard – well I've always believed if somebody doesn't learn anything out of your programmes you didn't do your job properly. Or if it's not talked about in the pubs or somewhere, you know, that somebody goes, "Oh I saw this" then you haven't succeeded. And I suppose there's a few of them, in one way Seán Hillen and *Tomorrow Is Saturday* has kind of shown people how much a struggle life is being an artist, what a struggle life is in general, I feel he brought an awareness to a lot of things. When you are on the autistic spectrum, your life, it's tough and he's told that in not a moany way, it's just real, that hits everybody no matter who watches the documentary. Some parts of his life are very similar to your own, it makes you think. Another programme I made – *The Funeral Director* – after my father died, I realized how little I knew about the practicalities of death and I googled what to do with a dead man in your house at 3 a.m. in the morning and they told me how to do my tax returns and I just thought: "Nobody knows what to actually do", and it's one of the things that's going to happen to us all. So, I decided to team up with our funeral director and follow the process and I think it worked because we got so many emails and texts about the programme – it really touched people. The funeral director David McGowan got 600 texts and emails just thanking him and thanking the documentary-makers for taking the fear out of death. And that's the real satisfaction. I really felt this documentary did its job. When a programme teaches somebody, or people learn

something out of it or it changes the way they look at something, then I kind of feel like we've done our job, we've given something back. So, I suppose *The Funeral Director* probably is the strongest; we got an awful lot of thanks for that. Death is a hard time in people's lives, people were struggling with hard times and it kind of gave some people clarity, they weren't so afraid, and myself included you know. I just went to Kildare and I dressed my mother's grave in a way I'd never have dressed a grave. She just died last week and we lined it with flowers and palms so that it looked like we were putting her in a nest and people came from all around because they'd never seen it done before; you'd see graves dressed like that in the West of Ireland but not as much on the East coast. I don't know, I think if it's affected people's lives, that's the most satisfying thing that I get out of it.

Seán Crosson: Thank you Gillian, I know I speak for everybody here in expressing our deepest condolences on your mother's passing last week.

Gillian Marsh: Thank you.

Seán Crosson: The same question maybe to Alan first and Pat and we'll have to finish up on this. Alan?

Alan Gilsenan: Yeah, I think I look at every film I've made and I just die like and hate life and then you have to get over that and be proud of what they are. So, you know and probably the ones I like best are not always the ones that get the most acclaim or anything but really I'd have to say you know my favourite film is always the next one because maybe for once we'll make a good one. So, the next film.

Seán Crosson: Oh, I think you made a few good ones already, Alan. You might be excessively modest there. But we definitely all look forward to the next one. Pat?

Pat Collins: Yeah, I mean it's a very difficult – it's kind of the ones that don't get made I think are the ones you always – it's a little bit like Alan's next one – but it's all the unmade films are the ones that you really think – they would've been great if I'd have got the opportunity to make that film it would've been better than all the other films, but I think maybe just even for sentimental reasons I think that the couple of early films I made which – the one on Michael Hartnett, oddly enough, I suppose the second film I made was called *Talking to the Dead* and that was about the funeral tradition in Ireland actually and that had a very kind of big impact on me. Alan was actually supposed to direct it but Alan couldn't do it, I think, and I begged the producer to do it and it was my second documentary that I ever made and it gave me a huge education, the whole Irish cultural subject matter and actually with the importance of the funeral tradition within Ireland, just to echo what Gillian was saying. I mean it's one of the most powerful things we have in the country, I think, and it's one of the few continuums we have and we still do it pretty well. So, I would say the early films because even when I look back at them now, they feel like from a completely other time. You know, they already feel like archive and they feel like a different country or something. So, I'm kind of glad to have had the opportunity to work at that time but

it's only when you look back at the films that you made in your early days that you kind of realize how much the country has actually changed. Yeah, so that's – the early ones, the early funny ones!!

Seán Crosson: Yeah, thanks, Pat. And thanks, Stephen, for your question as well. We're way over time and I have to bring things to a close and as I hope Alan, Gillian, and Pat can see we've had a lot of very positive feedback on the chat there, people really really really appreciating what you've had to say today, the remarkable films that were screened or were available to view during the conference, and I want to thank you all sincerely for your generosity and the insights that you've offered here in this session.

ART-MAKING, ACTIVISM, AND COLLABORATION: PLENARY CONVERSATION WITH LIAN BELL AND MAEVE STONE

Chair: Clare Wallace[1]

Clare Wallace: It is a real pleasure to close this conference with two amazing Irish arts practitioners whose work has engaged directly and dynamically with the arts and civic public spaces within the performance environment both in Ireland and abroad, as well as working across genres of different kinds of art-making with diverse communities and audiences. Since the theme of EFACIS 2021 has been interfaces and dialogues, it is especially apt that we finish with Lian Bell and Maeve Stone, who are ideally placed to tease out some threads connecting arts practices in Ireland, representational politics, activism, and the challenges of working in culture in the current moment. The keywords that I invited Lian and Maeve to reflect on as we were preparing this conversation were collaboration and change, resistance, resilience and, one way or another, these ideas will infuse and orientate what we discuss here. But before asking Lian and Maeve to tell us more about their work, interests and their current situation, let's begin with some brief introductions.

Lian Bell is a multidisciplinary artist, a freelance arts manager, and a designer for performance; she is perhaps most widely known as the Campaign Director of #WakingTheFeminists, a grassroots campaign for equality for women in Irish theatre. That campaign, launched in response to the Abbey Theatre's Waking the Nation 1916 centenary programme, ran from 2015 to 2016, and the outcomes of that public provocation and the subsequent dialogues it initiated is something that I think would be interesting to come back to for both our panellists today. In addition to widespread media coverage of the campaign, several academic articles have been written about that moment and #WakingTheFeminists that attest to the significance of what was achieved (Haughton; O'Connell; O'Toole). However, Lian's work also encompasses a lot of other things: scenography with the designs for Moonfish Theatre's *Redemption Falls* (2019), Annie Ryan's stage adaptation of *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*, performed at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2014, Louise White's *This Is the Funeral of Your Life* at the Project Arts Centre in 2017, as well as work with theatre companies such as Pan Pan Theatre, Brokentalkers, Junk Ensemble, among others. Lian was also the Dublin Fringe Festival programme manager from 2009 to 2011 and was the exhibition coordinator for Ireland's contribution to the Prague Quadrennial in 2007.

---

1 The following text is an edited version of the plenary conversation that took place on Saturday 4 September as part of EFACIS 2021. Clare Wallace acknowledges the support of the European Regional Development Fund-Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734) and Klára Hutková's work in transcribing the original recording.

Maeve Stone is a director and writer for film and theatre; she is also an activist concerned with climate and feminism and participated in the #WakingTheFeminists campaign. She's project leader for axis, Ballymun's PopUp Green Arts Department and a Platform 31 artist focusing on climate and biodiversity in County Clare. She was a resident assistant director at the Abbey in 2012 and the first associate director with Pan Pan Theatre Company. Most recently, Maeve was the embedded artist for a European Cultural Adaptation project with Codema (Dublin's energy efficiency agency) and axis, Ballymun that considered the role of artists in climate adaptation. Maeve's first short film *The House Fell* premiered at the Cork Film Festival in 2019. Her theatre work is interdisciplinary and experimental, including a piece called *Bodies of Water* with Eoghan Carrick and Jonah King from 2019, *UNWOMAN* Part III with feminist theatre company The Rabble from 2018 and many other works.[2]

So, Lian and Maeve, welcome, thank you for joining us. I'd like to begin by asking both of you to speak a little about the background of your careers, the catalysts to your work in the arts and, also, how you know each other.

Lian Bell: I suppose I've been working in theatre for a very long time really. I got involved in youth theatre when I was a teenager in Dublin and I've kind of never stopped since. My connection with Pan Pan Theatre, which is how I think Maeve and I really got to know each other, started when I was eighteen and I volunteered for the Dublin International Theatre Symposium, which was an international festival that Pan Pan ran for a number of years.[3]

In some ways I identify myself with theatre, particularly because of #WakingThe Feminists, but I tend to work with lots of different kinds of arts organisations, not just theatre organisations. And in the last few years, I've been trying to sort of work out what my own work is as an artist, which is certainly the big question in my mind at the moment. I suppose I ended up in a kind of a dual career where I'm a designer and I'm also a project manager for different types of cultural events. In terms of the project management side of things, I'm usually interested in things that have either some aspect of international artists meeting Irish artists, or artist support and development, or sometimes, community-based arts. They tend to be my areas of focus. So, in the last number of years, I've run the Pan Pan International Mentorship programme, a programme called Gap Days which I've run with Mermaid Arts Centre, that provides micro-residencies to independent freelance theatre artists.

In normal times, I would usually be designing two to three shows of, mostly contemporary devised work, often not in conventional theatre spaces. I would be doing

2 For a fuller picture of Maeve's work, see her website: <https://www.maevestone.com/>.

3 The Dublin International Theatre Symposium was produced by Pan Pan from 1997 to 2003. The programme of workshops, talks and performances sought to bring together diverse approaches to theatre and performance from Ireland, Europe, and beyond. For further details, see <https://www.panpantheatre.com/symposia>.

two or three shows a year. Of course, and we'll come to this later, maybe, but … everything has changed in the last year and half.

Maeve Stone: Lian's done a great job of sketching the foundations of how we got to know each other originally. I also had the gateway drug of youth theatre as my introduction to theatre, and it's interesting because I think it's the first time where, as a young person, you're really introduced into a community of creativity, and that's really appealing at that age, and can do long-standing damage in terms of steering you away from a solid income and, you know, security in your life. But I'm very grateful to it as well, for introducing me to such amazing people and leaving me with interesting things to be doing with my time.

I studied in Trinity and when I finished, I was really interested in making work with a small group of writers, so I focused a lot on new writing. It was 2009 and the city had stopped; the global economic crash had emptied so many buildings around Dublin that you could get into places, and you could spend time and make a world. It was a really rich time for artists, and I was lucky to experience it. I'm crossing my fingers that the crisis that we're heading into currently, maybe is going to foster the same kind of fertility in creative circles as it once did.

So, yes, I was very lucky in that way and cut my teeth learning all of the mistakes first-hand. At that point, I realised that the work that I was most interested in was more experimental and I had the opportunity to assist Gavin Quinn and Aedín Cosgrove, the artistic directors of Pan Pan, on a couple of projects, and just kind of learned by watching. It was an odd time as well because I was simultaneously Assistant Director at the Abbey which is, obviously, the national theatre. As a result, I had this very bizarre cocktail of, on one hand, the most experimental, international work happening in Ireland and on the other, what some people would see as the most conservative or canonical work happening in the country. That year, both companies produced a version of *King Lear*, so by the end of the year I knew everything there was to know about *King Lear*, and all the ways you could approach it.

It also gave me a bit of time to grow creatively as well, led me to a point of questioning what was the work I wanted to make. I was really curious about the same kind of multidisciplinary approaches that Lian is describing where you have multiple sources of curiosity feeding your process. And one of the things that became central to my work at that stage was the idea of bringing people from different forms and different backgrounds together, because of the language that it required and because of the language it creates. If you've got people from really diverse contexts with differing frames of reference, you have to seek out the common language. It's like a very complicated Venn diagram, but the centre of that Venn diagram is so beautiful, if you can find it.

I think that really spurred me on towards more interdisciplinary, more experimental work. Around that time #WakingTheFeminists happened and was a booster shot in

terms of political action and political voice, not just for me, but for the entire industry. And that was another catalyst to the kind of work that I was making and the kinds of people that I was seeking to make work with. It was the same year I co-founded Change of Address, which is a collective that ran for five years with the aim of connecting artists and asylum seekers in a diverse range of projects.[4] I don't think we ever did anything twice; over the five years, there wasn't a single project that could be mistaken for another project.

So yes, I think my work has taken a strange path through discovery of creative and imaginative and story-telling ideas and ideals, and then more into political and macro themes – the way that we make work being as much of a source of power and pleasure as the kind of work that ends up being on stage for people.

Clare Wallace: I think what I'm hearing from you both is how forms of collaboration and process are of key importance to you. Ok, let's go back to #WakingTheFeminists. This is where, I think, in our present academic setting, most people will have heard of you and would have some sense of what you were doing. How would you describe the outcomes of that campaign, of that experience? Maeve has already started with some of the ways that involvement might have changed what you do. Lian, maybe that's an idea that I could come back to you with, I'm interested in what comes out of that activity as the after-effect, is there is a shift, would you say, either personally or generally?

Lian Bell: I mean, it's really hard to encapsulate because there were enormous shifts of all kinds, personally and within Irish theatre. I won't go into too much detail, but suddenly all our major funded theatre organisations in the country plus all the national cultural institutions in the country formulated gender policies, which they never had before. Because all of a sudden, we were going: "Hang on a second, you don't have one? Why don't you have one?" And realising that this was actually something that they were way behind on.

At a policy level, that understanding, maybe I'm too hopeful in saying an understanding, but at least an awareness that this is something that needs to be addressed is now present. On a very day-to-day level, I think, it's not an understatement to say that pretty much everybody in Irish theatre is conscious of it. Before #WakingThe Feminists, I look back and I think … why were we so nervous of talking about these things? But we really were and there was a real fear which I could feel at the start of #WakingTheFeminists, which simply started by me and a few other people beginning to write things on social media, and more and more and more people adding their voices, more and more women talking about their experiences in the Abbey and then not just in the Abbey – in theatre across Ireland. There was a real sense of danger

4 Change of Address was created by artists Moira Brady Averill, Oonagh Murphy, and Maeve Stone in 2015 "to increase visibility and raise awareness of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Irish society". For fuller details of their work, see <http://changeofaddresscollective.com/>.

around that, there was a sense of, "are you sure you really want to say that publicly?" Now when I look back at what people were saying, which I remember vividly at the time thinking was dangerous, I look at it and go: "Oh, is that all that they said?" So, the sense of what can be talked about in the workplace has completely shifted.

Obviously now the conversation, I'm delighted to say, is spreading out to more than just feminism, we're talking a lot more about intersectional feminism, about the fact that Irish theatre is still very, very predominantly, white … sadly and probably increasingly middle-class. We don't hear a lot of voices from the margins so, when something like, for example *Walls and Windows*[5] was on in the Abbey recently … a story written by a Traveller woman about a Traveller family, I sat there and I watched it and I thought: "I have never seen this before." I have never seen this story told from this point of view, and I just thought that was extraordinary. And all these things, I think, can be traced back in some way to #WakingTheFeminists.

From a personal point of view, pre-#WakingTheFeminists I was not an activist, I hadn't ever really spoken publicly – I was very much a behind-the-scenes kind of a person. It wasn't a choice. I didn't set out to go: "Right, let's create this campaign and make some big changes." It kind of happened, there was a group of us who went: "Right, we have to take this momentum and use it. Because otherwise it'd be a waste." And, you know, I'm very glad I did it. It's not a problem in any way, I learned a lot of things and I'm very grateful for that. But it did shift not just my sense of who I am, but how other people see me. It was like: "Oh, you're a leader, what're you going to do next?", "What're you going to lead next?" And I was thinking: "Am I? Oh my God, do I have to lead something? What do I want to lead?" It took a long time to just realize, "Oh no, I don't have to. That wasn't something I signed up to." Like I said, I'm glad I did it, but I'm also quite happy to just continue my path as an artist.

It was a big shift, that whole year; the campaign itself was only a year long but the echoes of it keep going on … and not just in theatre. It spreads out from theatre into other creative communities in Ireland. So yes, I really can't understate the hugeness of the change.

Clare Wallace: Thanks, that's so interesting.

Lian Bell: I've gone greyer, as well. Just, so you can all see. You can compare and contrast with five years ago. [*laughs*]

Maeve Stone: I know it's a cliché, but it's never felt truer than with you, Lian, that the best leaders are the people who don't want to be them. You know, they're the people who aren't choosing that for themselves, but who are the perfect ones to perform that role at that time. I know I am incredibly grateful to you, and I'm not alone in that. I think there are an awful lot of people who are very grateful to you, and particularly

5 *Walls and Windows* by Rosaleen McDonagh was performed at the Abbey Theatre on 23 August-11 September 2021. It was also available as a livestream. The play is published by Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

grateful that it *was* you, as well, for a multitude of reasons – one of them being that there was a care in how the conversation was conducted, particularly in the early days when it was held on platforms that are incredibly shouty as a species. It was one of the few times I'd actually seen those platforms used in a way that was holding space in a very caring and positive way around a subject that was a critical subject … particularly of an institution. I think it set the tone for #WakingTheFeminists. It gave the movement an identity that we were all very proud of. Often with political movements or moments of political shift where the paradigm changes, there can be a lot of confusion over what the message or idea includes. There can be multiplicity in the ideas that makes it confusing or difficult for a person to say wholeheartedly: "Yes, I'm behind this. I believe in this. This represents exactly how I feel."

But I think that Lian and the core group of people who were working together from the very beginning were incredibly well-positioned and had incredible skill in directing conversation in a positive way. When you ask the question of what are the kinds of contemporary resonances of that, I think, as Lian says, there's no way of measuring it because when it has that organically positive origin story, the ways it grows are equally expansive because it's a positive message that people can get behind and endorse. There was a philosophy, or an idea, underneath #WakingTheFeminists from the very beginning – and I don't know whose idea it was, but I suspect it might have been yours Lian – which was that if you wanted to be a part of #WakingThe Feminists you were, and if you wanted to host a #WakingTheFemists event you just did. And so, there was no centralized messaging, there was no governance of what the conversation should be, which democratized it completely. It gave people ownership of the idea that things were changing. And that meant that things did change at a very personal level, which have just continued to grow out into the ecosystem.

For me personally, it's not a coincidence that #WakingTheFeminists is the same year that Change of Address was created. It was started by two other women and me, and I think one of the things that the moment offered was conversation between women. That conversation seeded all sorts of projects, which if you could map them would be the most beautiful map I've ever seen. Though I have no empirical evidence to support it, I feel confident in saying that the seed of political action that #WakingThe Feminists sowed amongst women and amongst men, absolutely fed the Repeal Campaign, which had been gathering momentum at that time. For me the two are inextricably linked. I would not have had the confidence to just step into that political conversation, and to show up for what I believed in in the same way if I hadn't already had the incredibly connecting experience of #WakingTheFeminists.

Lian Bell: Absolutely. I think there was a very clear series of big social movements and big social events where the energy moved from one to the other. The big things from my point of view were marriage equality, #WakingTheFeminists, followed by #MeToo as it happened in Ireland, and particularly in theatre with Grace Dyas, a

young theatre director, who basically outed the person who had run the Gate Theatre for the previous thirty-three years and very publicly talked about his behaviour towards her and started a whole ball rolling with that. And I know she has said she wouldn't have been able to do that without #WakingTheFeminists. Then that led on the following year to the Repeal Campaign and … I think it's still going. There's been such huge social change in Ireland in a very short period, and there's a feeling now in Ireland, certainly in the circles that I am aware of – "OK, we've done all these big things, what next?" Looking out for the next big thing to put our energy into. And I do think now it's probably housing … hopefully when things start opening up again. So, I'm hopeful that'll be the next little social revolution in Ireland.

Maeve Stone: Connected to that as well, and a very direct response to the wave of female voices in political spaces, if you want to put it that way, is gender representation in politics. There's been a huge shift, I'm thinking specifically of Sarah Durcan, who was directly involved in the #WakingTheFeminists campaign and who's now one of our leading female politicians, one of the ones I would have the most hope for in terms of tackling some of those big social issues like housing, and climate.

Clare Wallace: Yes, and people like Ivana Bacik, who has been around since the early 1990s in the struggle for reproductive rights…

Lian Bell: Absolutely, and who was on the stage as a compere for the #Waking TheFeminists event when she was still a senator. She's obviously been an incredible force for social change for decades. So yes, I'm delighted that she's now in the Dáil.

Clare Wallace: These changes are so extensive; it's hard to grasp them properly especially from afar. Certainly, the expanding after-effects of those debates and discussions are palpable in the work produced now at the Abbey and elsewhere, in plays like *Walls and Windows*, as you've said, but also the incredible performance *Home: Part One* which was broadcast during lockdown.[6] It seems as if there's a whole sequence of recent work actively beginning to unpack what's happened.

Let's turn to what you've been doing since. Quite obviously both of you work in very non-singular ways, in a fashion that's very much about collaborating with others and creating networks. It would be interesting to hear a bit more about how that defines or complicates your ways of being artists or your creative practice. I think I sense this with Lian especially, when you have two hats, the management and the artistic one. And in our earlier conversation you brought up the point about "What's 'centre' and what's 'periphery' or what's home and what's beyond?" So, maybe, can I start with Maeve? Would you describe some of your work to us?

6 *Home: Part One* was created collectively as a response to the publication of the *Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes* (January 2021). *Home: Part One* drew on the testimonies of survivors whose words were read by actors and leading public figures. It was broadcast online on 17 March 2021 (<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/whats-on/home-part-one/>).

Maeve Stone: Ok, I'm just going to do a speedy trip through some of the highlights from my career over the last decade or so. I'll start with *Wake*, a site-specific piece which was a seed of an idea that grew through a commission from the Limerick City of Culture in 2014.[7] They had brought an Australian organisation called Chamber Made Opera on board, and there was an open call which I was really excited to be chosen for because it meant collaborating with an experimental opera company in Melbourne and devising a piece that ended up being an opera with no singing.

Fig. 1. Katherine O'Malley and Tom Lane in *Wake*. Photo courtesy of Ros Kavanagh.

We chose to work with dance artist Katherine O'Malley, who's in the picture above. It was a piece that focused on the nature of grief, grieving,, and the wake ritual in Irish tradition. It speaks to or from the things that we can learn through grief and through loss. And this was also one of the first echoes of dealing with the climate crisis in my work; the piece was looking at the idea of flood events in the city and was made personal through the idea of the loss of the mother. So, it was a really special piece to work on.

The Shitstorm was another amazing, but very different, experience. It is the only piece of straight theatre I think you'll see on my list. *The Shitstorm* was a co-commission by the Abbey and Dublin Fringe in 2017. It was my homage to *The Tempest* and to the character Miranda. I wanted to, on the back of #WakingTheFeminists,

7 Performed by Katherine O'Malley and created by Maeve Stone in collaboration with Chamber Made Opera, *Wake* (2014) "is a response to the ancient 'Curse on Limerick' by St Munchin who grew so furious at the lack of help from locals in building his church that he prayed strangers would prosper in the town whilst locals would remain forever unfortunate and unsuccessful" (<https://www. maevestone.com/wake-1>).

deep dive into the canon with a feminist lens and I set on Shakespeare's last play, or the one that we know that he was definitively involved in writing last. I wanted to explore the character in a different way because Miranda as a character is incredibly controlled and quite contrived. The origin point for me was thinking about if there were a sequel to *The Tempest*, and Miranda and her father were alone on the island together – and she's a teenage girl, right – so, what happens? And if she had more autonomy, more voice, what would it sound like? That led very organically towards the Riot Grrrl movement, towards punk music, towards the origins of protest female voices in public spaces … Spot the connection! It ended up being a collaborative project with Simon Doyle as a writer. Simon wrote a couple of pieces that have been made with Pan Pan including *Oedipus Loves You*, which was a really influential piece in my early theatre life.

The Mouth of a Shark is the first performance outcome from the Change of Address work. And it was a commission from THISISPOPBABY for their Where We Live Festival in 2018.[8] It took us three years to feel confident that we had earned a place as people who have built friendships within the community, so that beginning to collaborate, professionally and creatively, wasn't a nervous territory for us anymore. It didn't feel like it would lead us in the wrong direction towards work that could be exploitative or damaging or negative in any way for the people that we were working with. It took us a long, long time to get there, and I think it was a beautiful piece to work on.

Fig. 2. Photo courtesy of THISISPOPBABY.

8 *The Mouth of a Shark* was directed by Oonagh Murphy, composed by Maeve Stone, and was created with Michelle O'Rourke, Osaro Azams, Daryl McCormack, and Ashley Xiu for the "Where We Live" Festival at the Complex in Dublin, including a community choir from immigrant and asylum communities. Produced by Karen Twomey.

It was specifically about LGBT experience, so it used verbatim interviews with Irish people who left Ireland in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s because it wasn't safe to be gay. They were matched by narratives of people arriving in Ireland today because it's not safe to be gay where they're coming from. We were working with extraordinary people and it was my first experience of trying to cast Ireland in a diverse way. And my God, it was really, really challenging. It made me realize that the skills that I'd been developing in thinking about art in a non-linear way were incredibly useful and important when it came to challenging the methods, the approaches, and the processes that we were using day to day. For example, if we want to cast a show with four people who aren't quite Irish, we need to think in a different way. I think that's something that became really important and positive with that work.

UNWOMAN Part III was a collaboration with a company from Melbourne called The Rabble, another resonance from #WakingTheFeminists. The Rabble are a radical feminist theatre company who make extraordinary work. *UNWOMAN* Part III was commissioned by the Fringe Festival in Dublin in 2018 and starred Olwen Fouéré. It then had its premiere in Melbourne with an Australian cast in 2019.

Fig. 3. Photo courtesy of Pato Cassinoni.

The piece was about bodily autonomy and pregnancy as an experience. Ironically, the project did not get funded by the Irish Arts Council, but the Dublin production was funded by the Australian Arts Council. Keep in mind that it was presented in Dublin in 2018, the year of the referendum for abortion rights; it was quite eye-opening to have that experience of support from afar but not locally. And I'm grateful for the opportunity to make those connections abroad.

The last known live work that I presented before the world stopped working is *Bodies of Water*; it was a collaboration with Jonah King, a visual artist based in New York, Eoghan Carrick, another director, and Úna Kavanagh, an incredible performer and visual artist. It was presented at the Dublin Fringe Festival in September 2019.

Fig. 4. Úna Kavanagh in *Bodies of Water*. Photo courtesy of Alex Gill.

Again, it was a piece taking grief as a central structure, a scaffold, and looking at the climate crisis at a personal level via a character who is mourning loss of a lover from years back. It was loosely based on the life of Bastiaan Ader, an artist who disappeared at sea as he attempted to cross from America to Europe.[9] His widow was left in charge of his estate and that became her job. I became fascinated with the story and the relationship between the person left behind and the work, and the world's relationship to that work. So, it's a piece that took the idea of the North Atlantic gyre, which is just filled with our rubbish and spins constantly as a central image, and then builds the story of this woman's grief around that image.

Clare Wallace: It's a pleasure to hear about your work and to get a sense of its evolution. I'll hand over to you now, Lian, could you tell us a bit about some of your projects?

Lian Bell: Sure. There are so many different types of work that I've done over the years, in different directions. So, I've taken three pieces of work, just to show you

9 Bastiaan Ader, also known as Bas Jan Ader (1942-1975) was a photographer, performance and conceptual artist. He vanished during an attempt to cross the Atlantic in a thirteen-foot sailboat. His empty boat was found off the coast of Ireland in 1976.

three very different things that I've worked on over the years – but you might see connections between them. I will, basically, just show you my website lianbell.com, which means that you can always go back and see more. I splinter into three simple headlines: Set Design, Artwork, and Arts Management, which is kind of the easiest way to describe what I do.

Under Set Design, you'll see all the different projects I've worked on over the years. One of these, *Foyle Punt*, is a show that I worked on about three years ago with a company called the Local Group, which was a very short-lived collective. The person who's the producer, who pulled it all together is called Róise Goan. She's now the director of Artsadmin in London. Many years ago, we met because she was the director of Dublin Fringe Festival when I was the Programme Manager. She got in touch with me and a few other artists, including Caitríona McLaughlin now co-director of the Abbey Theatre, Little John Nee who is a musician and performer, Farah Elle (Farah El Neihum) who is a young Irish-Libyan singer-songwriter, Jennie Moran who is a visual artist working mostly in food and hospitality, and a few other people.

And we made this show which, improbably, had a boat and we did it in five different little harbours around Donegal, Derry, and Sligo. The boat – handmade by Philip McDonald, a boat-builder from Greencastle, and his brother – is called a Foyle Punt, which became the name of the show.

Fig. 5. Jennie Moran, Little John Nee, and Farah Elle performing in *Foyle Punt*. Photo courtesy of Darren Murphy.

The audience was split into different groups and got to see different things at different times. Obviously, in each harbour everything was different, we had to reconfigure everything each time. Caitríona, the director, and I would come in with our plan of what the show was in the morning, and look at the space and go: “Right, we’ll do this bit there, that bit there, that bit there, that bit there, right, Ok, let’s put everything up.” We had no time at all, so it was all very quick.

Fig. 6. Boat-maker Philip McDonald performing in *Foyle Punt*. Photo courtesy of Lian Bell.

The photo above shows one of the performance spaces. What I did was create this table with tools, the outlines of tools on it, which were tools that came from the boat-builder’s shed. And Jenny, the artist, had a kind of a kitchen set up nearby and as the boat-builder described how he made an oar with his tools over on one side, Jenny over on the other side was making food, which she then served to everybody on the end of the oar. And at one point they wiped the table. All of the tools were made out of sawdust from the floor of the boat builder’s shed, so they all got wiped away. At the end of the performance, we turned the boat into a table and served the dinner that Jenny had made during the performance around fire pits to the audience. I had different set elements that we set up in different spaces that had to shift for each performance, of course. We also got all the audience into lifejackets, so they almost became part of the set, as well. So, I hope that gives you an idea of the sort of set design, site-responsive, collaborative, devised pieces that I have worked on. Those are the things that I love the best, for sure – in terms of being a designer.

In terms of being a manager, *Wandering Methods* is a project that I worked on in 2012 and 2014 between Bealtaine Festival – a festival for older people and creativity

in older age, basically – and an organisation in Birmingham called Craftspace, and the Office of Public Works, which is the organisation that manages many of the historical buildings in Ireland. For this project, I was the coordinator, rather than an artist on it. But I also had to lend my artistic eye to it. We worked with a group of older people who lived near Rathfarnham Castle in 2012 and another group who lived near Dublin Castle in 2014, bringing in craft artists to work with them.

We spent a lot of time in the buildings, looking at the architectural details of the buildings, looking at the history of the buildings, and then teaching those women and men craft skills to use some of those details and those stories to make into things. The first year we worked with a paper-cutting artist called Maeve Clancy and a wallpaper designer called Linda Florence. The participants made spectacularly beautiful work.

Fig. 7. Participants at work in Rathfarnham Castle. Photo courtesy of Lian Bell.

My job was getting the people involved, facilitating everything, and also just helping to work out how we were going to display things because we didn't know what the project was as the start. We just started and then had to make it up and respond to it as time went along. So, this is one of the exhibitions I designed that we made in Rathfarnham Castle. You can see how beautiful ceilings there are, and then some of the paper-cut responses and print responses that came from the participants.

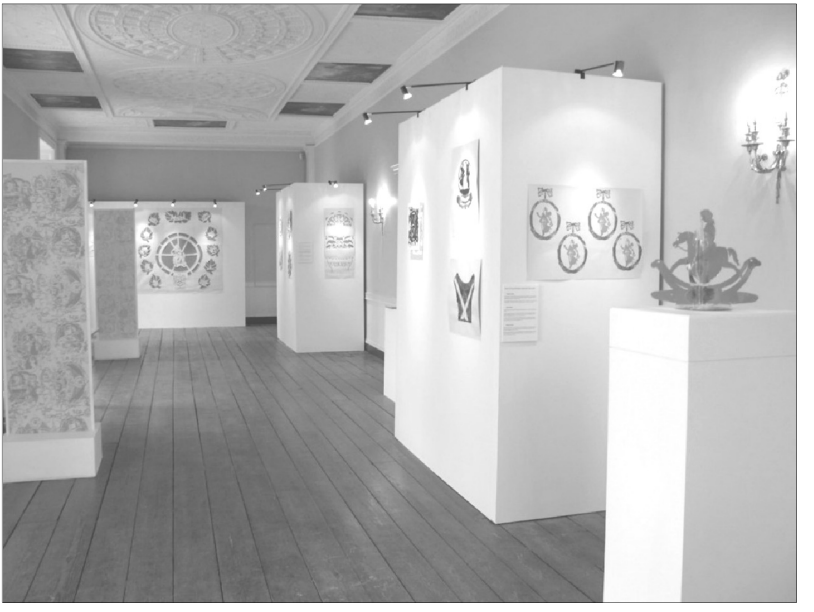


Fig. 8. *Wandering Methods* exhibition, Rathfarnham Castle. Photo courtesy of Lian Bell.

Finally, in the last few years, I've been thinking a lot more about my own artistic work because I've always worked collaboratively, and I really enjoy that. I went to Trinity College where I studied the Theatre Studies undergraduate course, then I went to Central Saint Martins in London and I studied scenography, which was a course that was a lot more about making your own, visually-led work – usually, in an installation or in a performance – time-based work. And that involved me making my own work, which I haven't done for a very long time. So, I'm still working out what that is … and, you know, where it goes.

But weirdly, a few years ago the Glucksman Gallery, which is in University College Cork, a beautiful gallery, did a call-out for artists who use photography in some way in their work. Not necessarily photographers but artists who use photography and I pulled out this piece which ended up being a series of five images. The work actually comes from research that I was doing while I was in Central Saint Martins, twenty years ago. It ended up being pairs of images with text in five frames. These were photographs taken when I was twenty-one-ish in my grandparents' house, the day the house was being cleared. Seeing all the places that I knew, all the objects, all the things that were associated with my grandparents and knowing that they were going to be moved. The piece is called "Sum Total (Becoming Things Again)".[10]

10 "Sum Total (Becoming Things Again)" was part of *The Parted Veil* exhibition on commemoration in photographic practice at The Glucksman Gallery, Cork, 2019.

Fig. 9. “(Sum Total) Becoming Things Again”, The Glucksman Gallery.
Photo courtesy of Lian Bell.

At that time, I interviewed different people in my family about the objects that they remembered. I was talking about my grandfather because my grandmother was still alive, and I transcribed that. In London I’d made a piece based on that work, but this was something else that came out of it many years later. In each frame there are two photos, and above and beneath were transcribed texts from different people. For instance, in the picture below, the top part reads:

> Em. He was never as involved as… one would have liked I suppose. He certainly treated me as the boy of the family. With the constant feeling of failure because I wasn’t a boy.
>
> I don’t know if this is the sort of stuff you want.

Fig. 10. “Sum Total (Becoming Things Again)”, The Glucksman Gallery.
Photo courtesy of Lian Bell.

While the text beneath the photos reads:

> And the two of them together were very elegant, very, very eh elegant, and social, a very sociable pair emm. His evening jackets of course you know from faraway places were something else, I mean you would, I haven't seen another human being wearing anything like that (laughs). Even the … the evening jackets … brocadey sort of things like that. Yeah, but rich, rich materials too and … umm. I mean god, we/I remember them getting dressed up to go to the Horse Show and he … he, I think he wore a top hat to the Horse Show and he'd get all dressed up and Ma on his arm, you know, who'd gone to Paris to buy her hats, and gone to the best, best umm couturiers and gone to get her outfits made. Outfits you know. They'd have maybe, she'd have two or three for the week, you know? Anyway.

These were little snippets of people's memories of my grandparents, basically, who were, obviously, going to the Horse Show in top hats. [*laughs*] Snippets juxtaposed with those images of household objects and furniture. So, that's just to give you a really fast overview of the variety of things that I end up doing. Which is hard to describe … and also confuses the hell out of me … and is part of my ongoing existential crisis, in life. [*laughs*]

Clare Wallace: With existential crisis in mind, [*laughs*] obviously, everybody has been experiencing an incredible sense of suspension and halt with the pandemic. And now it's further complicated by the fact that reopening seems to privilege certain activities over others, in Ireland at least, for the time being – GAA events can happen, but music events cannot, and so on. It's a period of suspension that we're, hopefully, coming out of, but it has hit the arts sectors particularly hard. How would you describe the impact of that on your own work? Have you just … been in suspension yourself or have you something up your sleeve? Maeve, I know you were working on the Cultural Adaptations Project which has been distorted by the pandemic disruptions. Maybe we could, just briefly, start with that?

Maeve Stone: The Cultural Adaptations Project[11] was a research project across four different cities: Dublin, Gothenburg, Ghent, and Glasgow, and it kind of positioned me on a new journey. I was really interested in understanding where my skills and thinking could be useful within the climate conversation as it is evolving in an Irish context. It was interesting to be set on that path in advance of this gigantic global crisis, because it had seeded all of these questions for me, and while the practical outcomes of the project, as you say, became much more adapted to an online world and maybe not as connecting and walking-based as I would have liked, I think that it was also a really useful and powerful thing to be in conversation with so many people internationally about climate issues and seeing, I guess, some of the overlap in an intersectional approach to ecology and to feminism and to rights and access to housing. All of these things suddenly felt as if they were a part of the same conversation.

11 Information on the Cultural Adaptations Project and the artists embedded in the scheme is available at <https://www.culturaladaptations.com/adaptation/>.

As an artist, particularly in theatre in Ireland, you're a vulnerable species. And when the lockdowns happened, and ours was the first industry to close, we were very conscious that, even in those early days, we would probably be the last industry to reopen. I think it forced an existential crisis upon us all: "Can we survive this?" and then: "When we survive it, what do we want to have changed in the interim?" Without being naively optimistic or trying to make a beautiful thing out of a really hard time ... it's been incredibly challenging and there's an awful lot to talk about in terms of: How can a person be creative when a person is afraid, when a person is anxious? Living in a daily state of fear and anxiety, but also feeling like, the one thing I can do with myself is work. Then how do we manage that? At points of crisis and emergency, how do we access the things that make us happy as artists? … which are the creative tools we have spent our lives building. It was challenging and confronting to realize that they're some of the things that can be taken away in those moments of extremity. But then also slowly feeling like there was space and time … I don't know, I feel like there's too much in terms of trying to figure out "What just happened?" [*laughs*]

Lian Bell: I still feel like we're very much in a state of suspension. I think the rug was pulled from under everybody, particularly in theatre because it just stopped. Around the world, theatre stopped. Completely. Which was quite shocking … it shook a lot of us to our core. And I think as you alluded, Clare, to all the debate around when different things should open, and sport seems to be the favoured child of the country, as that's the most important thing to open first. As somebody who has worked in the arts for a long time, and as somebody who still struggles with calling myself an artist, actually saying it out loud … there's a huge struggle with self-confidence. Personally, but also collectively, we have a big struggle with self-confidence, and that's been exacerbated massively in the last while because people, particularly working in theatre, haven't had a chance to work in theatre.

So, as things open up again, there's going to be a lot of people not feeling confident about their skills. And, sadly, it's not just around the pandemic. I think we've been told, throughout our professional careers: "Aren't you great for doing what you love", followed by: "But when're you going to get a real job?" Which you hear, maybe not explicitly, but implicitly your entire career. It's almost a schizophrenic thing that Ireland has – in relationship to its artists – in that we have this great calling card of Irish culture and it's the thing that we're known for around the world. It's one of the most important aspects of our internationally facing selves, while at the same time, we're not nourished as artists, we're not supported as artists, and arts is seen as a kind of an added luxury to life. And there was a great moment last year where I felt: "Oh, look, now that everything's been pulled away from everybody, everyone is starting to understand how important the arts are and culture is in their life because they don't have it anymore. They can't go to gigs, they can't go to the cinema, they can't go to theatre." And then this year, to see the value of the arts so very clearly placed very far down the rungs of the ladder made me go: "Oh, maybe I was being a

bit optimistic there." [*laughs*] That, you know, Ireland had woken up to why the arts needs to be supported. And how intrinsic it is to our lives.

But I am still hopeful, one of the things I'm hopeful for is that there's been a year and a half of so many artists sitting and thinking and pondering and developing ideas and, really, giving a lot more time to ideas than they would normally have a chance to, so that when things get going again there is going to be a sudden rush, not just in Ireland but internationally, of really interesting work. I'm very optimistic about that. I'm also optimistic about what Maeve was saying happened post-Crash, particularly in Dublin, when all of a sudden space was accessible and affordable. That hasn't been the case in Dublin for a long time. And now, again, there's this feeling of: "Oh, if we suddenly get access to more space, we'll be able to do a lot more." You know, we've all been sort of working out of our bedrooms – or leaving Dublin. Maeve is just one of the artists who's left Dublin in the last number of months.

So, I feel like there's a lot of possibility, and there are a lot of things to look forward to. But the things that I was really hoping might shift, which was the idea of the arts being actually valued at a fundamental level by our country, I am, sadly, less optimistic about them than I was this time last year.

Clare Wallace: Thank you so much, Maeve and Lian; I think those are interesting thoughts to land on because, of course, we don't know yet what is to come. And there *are* these enduring questions of what is valued, what seems to be valued and then how it's valued, how it's evaluated… and that is a constant process. We have a few moments for open questions and comments, so I would welcome some audience participation.

Katharina Rennhak: I was fascinated by the insights you gave us, and I also want to thank you for joining us here for EFACIS 2021. You shocked me a bit there because I could never have imagined such fabulous artists like you are struggling with their self-confidence but it's, of course, very convincing now that you explained this to us and that's something, I think, you share with many in the academic community and, therefore, I just wanted to say: We shouldn't. We have all good reasons, and you definitely have to be confident, and we should work towards establishing this confidence in the future. And I hope that our European co-operations help and that together we will fight this misbalance of what is deemed important in our societies. So, basically, thanks again for a wonderful last session for this conference.

Lian Bell: Thanks, Katharina. I was just going say, in response to that … A conversation that we had with Clare a couple of days ago touched on this. I think academia and the arts both struggle with being defined within a capitalist society. What we stand for and what we value, and what we *do* for society is being constrained by a capitalist system that doesn't value the intangible. It's always looking for how do we report on things, how do we assess things. And unfortunately, that might be one of the aspects of lack of self-confidence. When you're told over and over

again that what you do doesn't really have value because – underlying that – it's not making money which is the main point obviously, and if it's not making profit for anybody then it's not valuable. I think that underlies a lot of the reasons why there's a confidence crisis. And I *would* say in the arts, there is a confidence crisis. We're maybe very good at hiding it because we've done it for so long – but there definitely is.

Maeve Stone: It brings to mind as well, an amazing civic practice artist called Frances Whitehead, who's an American artist, and she spoke at a conference that I was involved in. She said that it's hard to deal scientifically with feelings. And I think that there is something of that in what we're describing here, where there's an empirical value system – a hierarchical empirical value system – that is prescribed by capitalist structures that don't make space for human beings having feelings, and doubt and fear and all of those things that make us human, and that actually are the fabric of what connects us all to one other, as well, and, you know… those are often the subjects that we gain from the most when we can experience them through art. They're the most cathartic things that we can experience. It stuck with me because it seems to sum up so much.

James Little: I was interested to hear the topic of housing come up so many times in both your talks and it's something that's the central political issue in Irish society at the moment, and something that theatre practitioners and artists working with space are really well-equipped to feel – to go back to Maeve's idea of an art of emotions. I know this might be an impossible question to answer, but I was wondering if you see the kinds of availabilities for space opening up in a way that they did after the Crash of 2008-2009 … is that possible to sense yet? Or do we still have to wait and see what happens?

Lian Bell: Certainly, in Dublin I think it's still early days. We've been walking down the streets where all the shutters have been pulled down for months and months and months, and we're at a point where some of those shutters are coming up but not all of them. And we don't know yet – are they not going up because the business is closed? Or because the person is still not confident about being exposed to other people? Or are there other reasons behind it? So, we just don't know yet … it's kind of like waiting to see what the city is going to look like again.

Another thing is, as we emerge from our lairs and come out into the light and look around, I'm slightly terrified that we're going to emerge and look around and realize lots of people have disappeared. Lots of artists will have left the arts because they needed to make money elsewhere, and not just the artists, technicians, production managers – the people who actually make things happen but very much behind the scenes. A lot of those will have had to find other jobs, and a lot of them will have left Dublin. And that's a really interesting change in Ireland, the spreading of people into the countryside.

The questions of whether that's long-term or not, of what it does to how we work together and of how/where art is available because it's been very concentrated on the capital city and on cities, and so on are still very much open. So, I'm hopeful, again, where art is available around the country will change. But Maeve is the expert on this because she is one of the people who has left the capital.

Maeve Stone: [*laughs*] Yeah, it was odd timing. I left two months before the pandemic, and it was on the back of thinking about future emergencies and really questioning what I wanted for my life in the event of an emergency. I want to be *not* in a city, I want to be near my family, and I want to be really connected and embedded in a strong community that I can add value to. So, that was kind of the thinking behind our move out West.

But it's been really interesting because, even with the Crash in 2008-2009, the rent prices weren't crazy. You could live in Dublin, and it wasn't going to cost you an arm and a leg, now it does. The difference in quality of life and the space a move out of the city affords you is quite something. But there's also the question of working from home and how that's going to impact the multinationals that are based in the city, because they are the main the catalysts of insane rental prices that have swept Dublin. I am hopeful that if that ecosystem stays permanently changed, it might also have a knock-on effect on the cost of renting because that's where artists are impacted immediately and directly in this situation. And the bonus, I suppose, isn't the small businesses closing – I really hope all of those shutters go up again – it's the big chains, the large outlets, those are the spaces that become really interesting playgrounds for artists in a city and in an economic crisis. So, the fingers are firmly crossed; there are things to be hopeful about, but we'll have to see how the chips will fall.

Lian Bell: The other thing that has a big potential is the announcement of a test run of universal basic income, using the arts as the testing ground. We don't know yet what that means. We don't know yet the scale of the test-case, but the idea is that some artists and arts workers would be supported with a small amount of money, regularly, to then do whatever they want to do, to produce work while having a bit of stability. Anyone you talk to who works in the arts, you can see their eyes just starting to glisten when you mention it, because everyone's just been thinking: "Oh my God, if I got that it would change my life." So, we're all crossing our fingers that the universal basic income test will happen in the arts and will then stay … It would be life-changing.

Clare Wallace: On that more optimistic note, let's draw this conversation to a close. Once again, thank you, Lian and Maeve, for a very stimulating sharing of experience and ideas about the interfaces and the artistic dialogues that shape their creative work, and we look forward to your next projects.

Works Cited

Haughton, Miriam. "'Them the Breaks': #WakingTheFeminists and Staging the Easter/ Estrogen Rising." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 28.3 (2018): 345-54.

O'Connell, Brenda. "Waking the Feminists: Gender 'Counts'." *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*. Ed. Oona Frawley. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2021. 242-68.

O'Toole, Emer. "Waking the Feminists: Re-imagining the Space of the National Theatre in the Era of the Celtic Phoenix." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 28.2 (2017): 134-52.

HAUNTINGS AND TRAUMAS:
COMMUNITY, CLASS, AND GENDER

"I'M THEIR GHOST": TRAUMA, RADIANCE, AND THE MACABRE IN ANTHONY GLAVIN'S "LIVING IN HIROSHIMA"

Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha

Introduction

Anthony Glavin (1945-2006) was a poet, musician, and professor at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. In 1989, the Gallery Press published his poetry collection, *The Wrong Side of the Alps*, which contains the first three sections of the poet's un-finished, yet most notable work, "Living in Hiroshima", the subject of this essay. A submission of his work had earned Glavin the prestigious Patrick Kavanagh Award for a first poetry collection in 1987, leading to the publication of his collection in 1989. In 1990, he was awarded an Irish Arts Council bursary, and in the same year, *The Wrong Side of the Alps* was shortlisted for the Irish Book Awards. Glavin's clear aptitude and early successes did not lead to the production of further collections, however. This was due in no small part to an ongoing illness, emphysema, which hastened his passing at the age of sixty-one in 2006. *The Wrong Side of the Alps* stands as Glavin's sole collection, and "Living in Hiroshima" remains an unfinished work of literature.

Despite the scope and quality of Glavin's work, and favourable critical reception of his poems, even posthumously (Longley; Johnston), Glavin's slim yet significant output has been understudied to date. This is excepting the work of scholar Irene de Angelis, who has produced a welcome summary of the sequence in her monograph, *The Japanese Effect in Contemporary Irish Poetry* (2012). This essay will further scholarly engagement with Glavin's work by examining some of the most compelling aspects of "Living in Hiroshima", namely, the poet's use of radiant and macabre imagery, and the theme of trauma which underpins the composition of the sequence itself.

Description and Context of the Poem

Despite its incomplete state, "Living in Hiroshima" is a compelling poetic sequence. It represents various aspects of twentieth-century history, with a focus on the ethical implications and the traumatic aftermaths of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. The bombing of the city, a manoeuvre by the United States of America to bring a decisive end to the war against Japan during World War II, led to the immediate deaths of tens of thousands of Hiroshima residents, as well as further deaths and suffering from radiation sickness in subsequent years (Pope 305). "Living in Hiroshima" is a long work, comprising fifty-eight individually titled quatrain poems, each of which is separated into two couplets. The sequence is also further divided into three subsections: "Oblivion's Throe", "Ions", and "Half-Lives".

Scholars of Irish literature may note significant similarities between the tone, content, and reception of Anthony Glavin's "Living in Hiroshima", and the bilingual writer Eoghan Ó Tuairisc's[1] Irish-language poem on the Hiroshima bombing: "Aifreann na Marbh" (translated by Colbert Kearney as "Mass of the Dead"), a long sequence in the collection *Lux Aeterna* (1964). Both "Aifreann na Marbh" and "Living in Hiroshima" consider the aftermaths of the bombing of Hiroshima from an Irish perspective, albeit in different languages. Both are challenging works, embellished with layers of reference and meaning, including, but not limited to: classical, biblical, and philosophical allusions; intertextual references to other literary works; examples of ekphrasis in references to visual arts such as sculpture and painting; mentions of electronic media such as video, news reports, and cinema; and references to various historical events and people.

Notably, both poets, and their Hiroshima poems, initially attracted relatively scant attention. Conleth Ellis, an acolyte of Ó Tuairisc, in a special edition of *Poetry Ireland Review* dedicated to Ó Tuairisc on the event of his passing, acknowledged the lack of recognition that Ó Tuairisc's work had received, in Irish or in English: "to write in two languages is to invite being ignored by the readers of each" (8). An important point of divergence, however, is that Ó Tuairisc's "Aifreann na Marbh" and wider literary output in both Irish and English has gained deserved recognition over the years, in Irish-language literary studies and far beyond (Kearney; Mac Craith; Nic Eoin; McCabe; Markus; O'Leary; de Angelis). Glavin's "Living in Hiroshima", as well as the wider contents of *The Wrong Side of the Alps*, however, have not yet received due attention in any field of literary criticism.

Similarly to "Aifreann na Marbh", "Living in Hiroshima" deserves scholarly engagement, inasmuch that it is a rare poem. Considering the breadth of war poetry, comparatively few authors of Western traditions wrote about Hiroshima. In discussing the significance of Ó Tuairisc's "Aifreann na Marbh" in 2004, the literary scholar Máirín Nic Eoin underlined this fact in noting the remarkable lack of poetry written about Hiroshima included in recent Anglophone war poetry anthologies:

> Níl oiread is dán amháin le fáil in *The Oxford Book of War Poetry* ná i ndíolaim Paul Fussell *The Bloody Game: An Anthology of Modern War* a thagraíonn don eachtra. Tá dán amháin faoin mbuama adamhach le fáil i ndíolaim Victor Selwyn *The Voice of War: Poems of the Second World War*. Agus é ag cur sleachta ó dhán Edith Sitwell "The Shadow of Cain" i láthair ina dhíolaim *The Terrible Rain: The War Poets 1939-1945*, luann Brian Gardner gurb éard atá i ndán Sitwell "one of the few attempts to write a major poem about a supremely major event". (212)
>
> [There is no poem in *The Oxford Book of War Poetry* nor in Paul Fussell's anthology *The Bloody Game: An Anthology of Modern War* which references the event. There is one poem about the atomic bomb in Victor Selwyn's *The Voice of War: Poems of the Second World War*. Introducing an excerpt from Edith Sitwell's "The Shadow of Cain" in his anthology, *The Terrible Rain: The War Poets 1939-1945*, Brian Gardner mentioned

1 Eoghan Ó Tuairisc used the English version of his name, Eugene R. Watters, when writing and publishing in English.

> that Sitwell's poem was "one of the few attempts to write a major poem about a supremely major event".]

Since Nic Eoin's time of writing, Gerald Dawe's consequential anthology, *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914-1945* has been published (2009), which includes sections from "Aifreann na Marbh" in Irish, and in English translation. The entirety of Glavin's "Living in Hiroshima" is also included in the anthology, the first comprehensive publication of the sequence since its initial appearance in 1989. The fact that two extended poetic sequences about the bombing of Hiroshima exist in each of the Irish state's official languages is notable,[2] and the similarities and differences between these works deserve sustained critical attention in further studies. Some points of comparison will be mentioned as part of the main discussion of this essay.

Before the content of "Living in Hiroshima" is examined, however, in the light of this essay's venture it is pertinent to define what is meant by trauma, and to explore some of the ethical dilemmas of trauma and witnessing from the perspective of the poet who considers the extremity of the bombing of Hiroshima from a distance.

Trauma and Transference

The work of trauma scholar Cathy Caruth is invaluable in the understanding of trauma theory. She defines trauma as being

> an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (11)

Caruth's exploration of trauma is centred on the psychoanalytical tradition of Sigmund Freud, whose seminal work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* described the repetitive detrimental psychological effects of war, accidents, and disasters on the human psyche:

> A condition has long been known and described which occurs after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life; it has been given the name of "traumatic neurosis" […] The symptomatic picture presented by traumatic neurosis approaches that of hysteria in the wealth of its similar motor symptoms, but surpasses it as a rule in its strongly marked signs of subjective ailment (in which it resembles hypochondria or melancholia) as well as in the evidence it gives of a far more comprehensive general enfeeblement and disturbance of the mental capacities. (6)

"Living in Hiroshima" describes many facets of an experience of "traumatic neurosis", as Freud describes it. However, if it is accepted that this sequence is a work that explores an experience of trauma, can it be stated that those who are far removed from the direct effects of bombing of Hiroshima may write a trauma narrative of

2 Not mentioned in this essay's discussion is Watters's long poem in English about the bombing of Hiroshima and its implications for humanity, *The Week-End of Dermot and Grace*. This poem, published on the same day as the Irish language collection, *Lux Aeterna*, in 1964, is similar in theme to "Aifreann na Marbh", but is significantly longer.

Hiroshima? The question must be posed here, as there is a clear conflation between the poet himself and the narrator(s) of the sequence, an occasional use of "we" to describe the witnessing of the bombing itself, as well as stark and brutal imagery of war which the poet did not and could not have directly witnessed. The scholar and poet Carolyn Forché has discussed this conundrum in terms of witnessing and writing about atrocity in relation to the Holocaust:

> In an age of atrocity, witness becomes an imperative and a problem: how does one bear witness to suffering and before what court of law? Such is the dilemma of Ariel Dorfman, in "Vocabulary": "But how can I tell their story / if I was not there?" The poet claims he cannot find the words to tell the story of people who have been tortured, raped, and murdered. Nevertheless, it is vitally important that the story be told. Who shall tell it? The poet answers: "Let them speak for themselves." […] Witness, in this light, is problematic: even if one has witnessed atrocity, one cannot necessarily speak about it, let alone for it. ("Introduction" 36-37)

Viewed in this context, Glavin's poem may also be considered problematic. He did not directly witness the atrocity of Hiroshima, and indeed, was not even alive when it happened. For an alternative viewpoint, I refer to Eoghan Ó Tuairisc, who asserted that the poet had a moral duty to witness and to respond to world events. He believed "i ról an fhile mar fhinné, mar dhuine a léiríonn freagracht i leith gníomhartha daonna, agus a bhfuil cumas freagartha ann" [in the role of the poet as a witness, as a person who shows responsibility regarding human actions, and for which he possesses the ability to answer] (Nic Eoin, "Scéal an Tuirimh Nua-aoisigh" 213). Perhaps, similarly, Glavin feels an ethical responsibility to "answer" for the bombing of Hiroshima and the events of the twentieth century in his poetry. It may be that, for Glavin, the imperative to account for the atrocity of the bomb is of greater import than the potential ethical issues raised by his own secondary or tertiary accounting of the events.

While Ó Tuairisc and Glavin may have felt a similar imperative to write about the bombing of Hiroshima, "Aifreann na Marbh" and "Living in Hiroshima" diverge in terms of the spatial positioning of the works to the event itself. Ó Tuairisc's response to Hiroshima, while forthright in its ethical stance regarding the bomb, stands at more of a distance from Hiroshima, even as it implicates all of humanity – including the Irish themselves – in the act of the bombing, and its aftermaths; the Irish are simultaneously the bombers, and the bombed. The events of the poem occur chronologically as the narrator journeys through Dublin city, with the aftermaths of the bomb being superimposed onto the city of Dublin itself:

> Sinne na mairbh fuair bás
> In Áth Cliath is in antráth
> Lá gréine na blaisféime
> Shéideamar Hiroshima. (*Lux Aeterna* 29)
>
> [We are the dead who died
> In Dublin in an evil hour
> The sunlit blasphemous day
> We blasted Hiroshima.] (Kearney 173)

The narrative stability, linear chronology, and relative spatial distance of Ó Tuairisc’s sequence is in stark contrast with Glavin’s fragmented work. The poems of “Living in Hiroshima” witness events in Hiroshima, in the B-29 aircraft that dropped the bomb, in the narrator’s own life, in concentration camps, and so forth, with unstable and shifting viewpoints, topics, voices, perspectives, and chronology, and with an emphasis on the brutal aftermaths of war on individual minds and bodies:

> ***Lovers***
>
> They crawl through charred bamboo to the river’s edge.
> The water is hot to touch, but they slither in
>
> And stroke and hold. At each caress, the skin
> Dries instantly, then glows, then splits like porcelain. (Lines 57-60)

Unlike “Aifreann na Marbh”, which ponders the ethical stance that the artist must take in relation to human rights violations, the shattered narrative of “Living in Hiroshima”, in its staccato presentation of vignettes of stark brutality and suffering, leaves little space for the poet’s own ethical manifesto to be considered. Each sequential poem displaces the reader anew within the narrative, as the narrative itself strains under the weight of trauma. This contrasts with the careful framing of “Aifreann na Marbh” around the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass. Also of note is that the main narrator of “Living in Hiroshima” (although the number of narrators in the sequence is in question due to the fragmented perspectives therein) is coded as being Glavin himself. The historian Dominick LaCapra’s insights into the issue of positioning and transference are instructive here:

> I think one begins investigation already inserted in an ongoing historical process, a positioning toward which one may attempt to acquire some transformative perspective or critical purchase. A crucial aspect of this positioning is the problem of the implication of the observer in the observed, what in psychoanalytical terms is treated as transference. (36)

Glavin undertook extensive research into the Hiroshima bombing for this sequence, as noted by his friend and fellow poet Mark Granier (2007). Perhaps because of his engagement with writings, diaries, testimonies, and imagery from Hiroshima (and from other extreme events of the twentieth century as a whole), Glavin may have experienced a transference of trauma with the victims of the bombing that rendered psychic distance from the victims of the bomb impossible. The circumstances of his birth, as will be discussed, may also play a role in this. As Glavin, unlike Ó Tuairisc, did not publish any accounts of his writing or research process, this can only be speculated. Psychic transference with the Hiroshima bomb victims is described by Japanese philosopher and scholar Akiko Naono, whose descriptions of transference as a result of studying drawings made by Hiroshima survivors are uncannily similar to the macabre imagery of the “Living in Hiroshima” sequence. While she is Japanese, Naono, like Glavin, did not live through or witness the bombing directly. Nevertheless, she is deeply affected by testimonies and artwork of those who did:

> Sometimes I was the one trapped in the flames. Occasionally I felt disoriented, pursued by the stench of death, and even struck by the 'flashbacks' of corpses floating, as I walked along the river of Hiroshima. I was captured by the traumatic force of the drawings, the visual representation of the memories of original trauma, as if the force of other's trauma was being transmitted to my body. ("Transmission of Trauma")

Returning to LaCapra, he advocates not for complete identification with the victims of historical disaster, but for "empathic unsettlement" on the part of the researcher and writer: "Being responsive to the traumatic experience of others, notably of victims, implies not the appropriation of their experience but what I would call empathic unsettlement." (41)

This essay speculates that Glavin, through the narrator of the sequence, is forced beyond "empathic unsettlement". Like Naono, he overly identifies with the victims of Hiroshima due to the transference of their trauma, likely because of his research for "Living in Hiroshima". However, the sequence clearly shows the narrator's awareness of this overidentification with the trauma of the Hiroshima victims. The narrator's references to undergoing psychoanalysis at several points in the poem, as well as his attempts to explain and overcome his trauma, or "Metempsychosis" as he calls it, with his analyst, indicate Glavin's recognition of his own transference with those who suffered.

Any problematic conflations with the victims of Hiroshima aside, the sequence effectively portrays the fragmentation of the traumatized psyche and the struggle of the human mind to overcome the severity of twentieth-century warfare, and of extreme events which may yet come. On this point, Paul K. Saint-Amour, referencing Susan Sontag, has argued that the trauma of the modern Nuclear Age is not solely founded upon events that have happened, but events that may happen:

> Sontag seems to have been among the first to posit what we might call the hysteron proteron of the nuclear condition: the literally preposterous phenomenon of traumatic symptoms – denial, disassociation, fragmentation, repression, the compulsive repetition of extreme violence – that exist not in the wake of a past event, but in the shadow of a future one. (61)

In this sequence, the reader is forced into a close engagement with the brutal effect of nuclear bombings which, while uncomfortable in their imagined proximity to the events, forestalls the averting of the reader's eyes from the reality of Hiroshima, at least how Glavin has perceived it. This sequence may overstep "empathic unsettlement", in LaCapra's terms, but Glavin's drive to witness the effects of the bomb on Hiroshima, and on his own psyche, have led to the creation of a compelling poetic account of the extremities of twentieth-century warfare. Like Ó Tuairisc, who stated that "an dualgas sóisialta atá […] ar an Fhile ach go háirithe, fírinne an tsaoil a lorg agus a léiriú don saol" [the social responsibility of (…) the poet in particular, is to search for, and show to the world, the truth of life] (*Religio Poetae* 17), Glavin feels an ethical imperative to present his own truth of the bombing of Hiroshima in "Living in Hiroshima".

Descriptions of Trauma in “Living in Hiroshima”

The opening poem of the sequence, “Everybody Lives in Hiroshima – *Time*, August 1985”, indicates the disjointed chronology of the sequence’s trauma narrative. While subsequent poems anticipate the bomb’s detonation, this verse describes the physical and psychological aftermaths of the bomb as already having transpired, with the long-term detrimental effects of radiation indelibly imprinted in the human body and psyche. The long-standing effects of the nuclear bombing are described here, before the bomb itself even appears in the poem:

> ***Everybody Lives in Hiroshima* – Time*, August 1985***
>
> By now it’s in the blood and nobody’s immune –
> T-Cell amnesia, a kind of lightstain
>
> Whiting-out memories and the memory of memories,
> A video shimmering after the picture’s gone. (1-4)

This poem opens the sequence, even as it foreshadows its end. In this, this opening poem may be read as a “displaced conclusion to the text itself”, as Lyn Marven writes in relation to the opening section of another trauma narrative, *Herztier*, Herta Müller’s novel about living in Ceaușescu’s Romania (182). Like the unnamed narrator in *Herztier*, who is coded with the author’s own life experience in Müller’s genre of ‘autofiction’, the narrator of “Living in Hiroshima” is indicated to be Glavin himself. The poem “A Month Early”, for instance, describes Glavin’s own premature birth the day after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima:

> ***A Month Early***
>
> Even then I must have raged at being confined.
> But to push for freedom that Bank Holiday weekend!
>
> My father homing from Youghal in his chrome V8
> To hold my mother, then me, then celebrate… (85-88)

Mark Granier gives valuable insight into Glavin’s own mindset about his birthdate, underlining the sense of historical misfortune that he believed had plagued his birth:

> Anthony was haunted by the fact that his birth date, the 7th of August 1945 (a bank holiday in Ireland), was just one day after ‘Little Boy’ was dropped on Hiroshima; that his coming into the world coincided with an event that abruptly altered the world’s “historical velocity”. (30)

The use of the term “haunt” in Granier’s piece is significant. Whether intentionally included by Granier or not, his use of the word to describe Glavin’s uncanny connection to the bomb is notable, as haunting and ghosts are concepts closely associated with trauma in trauma theory literature, in direct witness testimonies from Hiroshima, and, indeed, in the sequence itself. For instance, consider how Caruth describes the process of becoming traumatized by an originating event:

> trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on. (4)

Since Glavin's own birth and the bombing of Hiroshima almost coincide, he appears to view the bombing as an original trauma which forced his premature birth and continues to haunt him. The short article "Hiroshima and Ourselves", by American psychologist and scholar Robert J. Lifton, includes notable testimony from Hiroshima directly after the bombing, highlighting the ghostliness of the scene:

> People were literally uncertain of whether they were dead or alive. A grocer described the strange, slow gait of severely burned people, their arms held out in front of them, many dying along the road. To him, "they didn't look like people of this world", but rather, "like walking ghosts". (631)

Glavin's sequence uses strikingly similar imagery, such as in the poem "Not There", which describes the uncanniness of Hiroshima, in which the "haunted" and "haunting" survivors now struggle to understand their surroundings:

> ***Not There***
>
> Haunted, haunting, those eyes that stare and stare,
> Their freeze-frame half-lives shimmering on the air –
>
> They are searching for their loved ones in the streets
> But the once familiar streets are no longer there. (133-36)

In an attempt to deal with his trauma, the narrator undertakes a process of Freudian psychoanalysis, as referenced in the poem "Metempsychosis". Again, the macabre imagery of haunting is utilized, yet inverted: the narrator, though haunted by the voices of the victims of the bomb, is described as "their ghost". The analyst doubts the narrator's claims of being haunted, instead ascribing it to the narrator's improper "identification" with the victims of the bombing, which could be read as relating to LaCapra's idea of "appropriation of experience" (41):

> ***Metempsychosis***
>
> A myth, according to my analyst –
> "Projective identification. An ego mechanism."
>
> But all these voices shrieking in my ear –
> If I write as I hear them, I'm their ghost. (185-88)

The shrieking voices in the narrator's ear are reminiscent of an acting out of his trauma, in which he is "haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes" (LaCapra 21). Haunting is also referenced again in the poem "Grief". The ion-burst of the bomb continually haunts the narrator:

> ***Grief***
>
> An ion-burst of rage that haunts me always
> Like an all too elegiac word or phrase
>
> That sighs a million sighs like ricochets
> And dies away and leaves an empty space. (149-52)

From the poem "Sky High" onward, the poet creates tension as the moment of the bomb's detonation looms. The precise time given in the poem's title, "8.16 am", as well as the staccato sentences in the third line of the same poem, cause the reader to

anticipate the impact of the bomb in the next poem, “Ground Zero”, the title of which describes the area beneath the nuclear bomb’s explosion. However, the immediate aftermath of the explosion in Hiroshima is elided, and the next poem in the sequence comprises a scene in which the narrator himself “snaps awake” as he is photographed from above by a companion. The reader’s anticipation for witnessing the immediate aftermath of the bomb is thwarted, as the poet circumvents the direct impact of the bomb on the city by describing the narrator’s sudden awakening under a different, innocuous, flash of light – not the bomb’s explosion, but a camera. The brilliance of the flash is conflated with a break in the narrator’s own psyche, incited by the unexpected light. Indeed, his reaction to a mere camera flash – “I freak” – appears hyperbolic.

Sky High

B-san, lightened, screamed in a 60’ dive
To clear the “All-Clear” delta, to watch and wait.

The tail-gunner put on his special-issue glasses.
No one knew quite what to expect. No one.

8.16 am

A fleeing Nazi skis across an Alpine glacier.
Pius XII bows low to intone the Agnus Dei.

Heartbeats. Lifetimes. Seconds ticking away.
The sky blurts open like a Morning Glory.

Ground Zero

Morbid incandescence. I snap awake.
A warhead, sky high? No, you’re standing there,

Flashing your instamatic, grinning. I freak.
How should I ever bring home to you the horror? (9-20)

The antecedent verses of “Ground Zero” are portrayed as a nightmare or re-imagining of the event of the bomb by the poet himself, similar to the scenes repeatedly witnessed in Akiko Naono’s dreams: a traumatic hallucination from which he is woken by the innocuous camera flash. The sudden change from the use of the past tense in “Sky High” to the present tense in “8.16 am” also alters the narrative’s temporal relation to the event, as the bomb’s detonation appears imminent. The missed moment of the impact of the bomb, in both the narrator’s nightmare and in the layout of the sequence itself, and the narrator’s adverse reaction to his forced awakening, gain significance in the light of Caruth’s description of the fright caused by a belated recognition of threat:

> It is not simply, that is, the literal threatening of bodily life, but the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind one moment too late. The shock of the mind’s relation to the threat of death is thus not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the missing of this experience, the fact that, not being experienced in time, it has not yet been fully known. (62)

This might lead the reader to interpret Glavin's premature birth – one day after the bomb dropped – as a belated result of the bombing, which "miss[es] the experience" of the true immediate aftermath. His abrupt awakening here from his vision of Hiroshima *again* misses the aftermath of the detonation. Marven, in discussing the traumatic narrative of Müller's *Herztier*, notes that "trauma […] is defined primarily by the fact that it cannot be integrated into a narrative memory; it exists only as a gap and cannot be articulated" (Marven 181). In describing traumatic nightmares, Caruth connects the traumatic neurosis with not the vision itself, but the abrupt awakening, and the knowledge that one has survived without understanding this gap in the narrative:

> the trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist in the experience within the dream, but in the experience of waking from it. It is the experience of waking into consciousness that, peculiarly, is identified with the reliving of the trauma. […] What is enigmatically suggested, that is, is that the trauma consists not only in having confronted death but in having survived, precisely, without knowing it. (64)

The narrator of the poem, it is implied, only awakens to the full horror of the bomb upon the "morbid incandescence" of the camera flash, which has interrupted his vision of the dropping of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. In describing Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, or belatedness, Bistoen et al. posit that it is a subsequent event (i.e., the harmless camera flash) which awakens the full "pathogenic power" of the initial event: that is, in Glavin's case, the bombing of Hiroshima:

> Essential to this notion [of *Nachträglichkeit*] is that an initial event only becomes traumatic, in the sense of exerting its full pathogenic power, at a later stage in psychical development, when the initial event to which the subject was unable to react adequately is revived by a subsequent encounter. (672)

As this awakening occurs in poem five of the sequence, this could be interpreted as an early turning point in the narrative. It is after this awakening that the sequence describes the full effects of the bomb's detonation on the city of Hiroshima, employing the use of imagery of radiance and the macabre to call back to the "morbid incandescence" that was the narrator's own belated awakening to the horrors of Hiroshima:

> ***The Scream***
>
> A sudden scald of sun melts through the room.
> Would Saul have recognised it? Or the heat?
>
> You try to blink. No eyelids. You try to scream.
> Fishtails of windowglass blither in your throat. (25-28)
>
> ***Aioi Bridge***
>
> Slime-strips of skin that flapped like seaweed,
> No mouths, no noses, eyeless, faceless, screaming,
>
> They dived in hundreds off the twisted girders.
> The river was warm and merciful. It killed quickly. (45-48)

In these verses, the radiance of the bomb is compared with the blinding of Saul on the Road to Damascus, a significant event in Christian theology which led to his

conversion and new identity as the apostle Paul. The bomb – the pinnacle of human scientific endeavour – appears as omnipotent as God. The theological reference here leads to macabre descriptions of the ruined bodies of the citizens of Hiroshima, throwing themselves into the river, possibly an allusion to the river Styx of Greek mythology. The contrast between the "warm and merciful" river and its action of "killing quickly" is stark, further highlighting the hellish scenes of the bombed Hiroshima. There are notable similarities between Glavin's macabre imagery and the psychological studies on the citizens of Hiroshima conducted by Robert J. Lifton. In this excerpt, one of Lifton's subjects, a young university professor, recounts the long-lasting effects of the bomb on his psyche, as he tells of the hellish scenes he witnessed:

> Everything I saw made a deep impression […] the most impressive thing I saw was some girls, very young girls, not only with their clothes torn off but with their skin peeled off as well… My immediate thought was that this was like the hell I had always read about. ("Psychological Effects" 467)

Glavin appears to have been aware of Lifton's research into the psychological effects of the atomic bomb, and to have drawn upon his writings for the material of "Living in Hiroshima". This supports Granier's assertion in his obituary for Glavin that the sequence was "diligently researched" (31). This is also apparent from the clear parallels between the descriptions of Hiroshima in the sequence and in the volume 126, issue 7 of *TIME Magazine*, of August 1985, which contained many articles and writings on the bomb. The title of the sequence is even derived from an article in this edition, "What the People Saw: A Vision of Ourselves". Returning to Lifton's psychological research, Glavin's poem "Magic!" contains a specific phrase uttered by a psychoanalyst, which appeared in Lifton's *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*, first published in 1967. This poem describes the deity-like power of the bomb, which engulfs Mount Fuji, melts bicycles, and causes stones to bleed.

> ***Magic!***
>
> Thunder like Mt. Fuji swallowing itself alive.
> A bicycle sagged and melted in its own shadow.
>
> Stones bled. Birds fell roasted out of the sky.
> We just stood there, helpless. You can't hate magic. (41-44)

Compare this with the following excerpt from Lifton's study, which refers to the lack of vitriol directed towards the Americans by the Japanese after the bomb:

> Such relative absence of hostility is consistent with the 'stunned' conditions of victims of any disaster, which has been termed the 'disaster syndrome' and with what I have called psychic closing-off. More than this, the special dimensions of Hiroshima would seem to have created a holocaust too vast and incomprehensible for locating object of hate. As one psychoanalyst put it after listening to a description of the event: "You can't hate magic." (52)

The narrator's own implied psychic "closing off" has been halted with the "morbid incandescence" of the camera flash, awakening his latent trauma. The macabre and unsettling imagery of the poem, often contrasted with images of heat and radiance,

implies a disturbing transference of trauma on the part of the narrator with the victims of Hiroshima:

> ***Vertigo***
>
> Heat-buckled girders. Alive with bodies. No choice.
> Fistfuls of skin and tissue slimed each palm.
>
> A squelch of something yellow where stepped-on eyes…
> She sickened, steadied herself, continued to climb. (101-104)
>
> ***Fire Child***
>
> She knelt to cover her suppurating nakedness
> As the men raced past with water, not noticing.
>
> Flame licked her thighs, then climbed and immolated.
> Her arms unfolded in a gesture of beseeching. (109-12)

Glavin's "Living in Hiroshima" has never been finished. However, the final poem of the sequence in *The Wrong Side of the Alps* ends with the narrator grappling with visions of Hiroshima during a session of psychoanalysis. The title of this last poem, "In Plato's Cave", is significant. Plato's Cave is a philosophical allegory questioning the nature of reality and truth. What is most relevant to this discussion, perhaps, is how one of the cave's prisoners, who has existed in complete darkness, escapes into the real world and is initially blinded by the glare of the sun. This reference, also echoed in the poem in the "contamination" of the sunlight itself, recalls the "scald of sun" which burns through Hiroshima in "The Scream", as well as the "morbid incandescence" which similarly forced the narrator awake in "Ground Zero":

> ***In Plato's Cave***
>
> "Our present historical velocity…" Godspeed!
> Can there be sunlight now without contamination?
>
> My analyst sighs – no comment, he can wait…
> The ceiling flickers like a video screen. (228-32)

The sequence ends with the narrator in a supine position, gazing up at the ceiling in the classic pose of Freudian psychoanalysis. The psychoanalyst in the poem appears frustrated, echoing his previous dismissal of the narrator's Hiroshima ghosts in the poem "Metempsychosis": "A myth, according to my analyst – / 'Projective identification. An ego mechanism'" (185-86). The positioning of this poem at the end of the sequence implies that the traumatic imagery of the individual poems, particularly those after the awakening in "Ground Zero", has emerged during the narrator's psychoanalytical session, as he attempts to work through his traumatic transference with the victims of history. Indeed, the final line of the poem, "the ceiling flickers like a video screen", implies a fragmented visual experience of the working through of trauma, as though the frenetic imagery of the poems has flashed upon the ceiling as he recounted them to the analyst.

This provisional conclusion to the poem, however, is haunted by the opening poem of the sequence. The contaminated sunlight of the final poem echoes the “lightstain” of the first poem, and the flickering video of the narrator’s traumatic memories is foreshadowed in the “whiting-out memories and the memory of memories, / A video shimmering after the picture’s gone” (3-4) at the very beginning of the sequence. This belies any satisfactory conclusion to the narrative. The conclusion recalls the beginning, and the beginning foreshadows the conclusion, in a cyclical fragmented narrative that underlines the narrator’s repeating experience of trauma.

Conclusions?

The fragmentary conclusion to the sequence is reminiscent of the nature of the sequence itself, whose many poems describe vignettes from varying locations, presenting disjointed snapshots of the bombing of Hiroshima and of the extreme events of the twentieth century. In the introduction to the volume *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*, Forché describes the fragmentation of literary form in the modernist tradition, as well as the urgency of the fragmented narrative in the wake of extremity: “Extremity, as we have seen, demands new forms or alters older modes of poetic thought. […] Fragmentation is a standard feature of literary modernism. But the fragment gains urgency in the wake of extremity” (“Introduction” 42).

Glavin’s fragmented sequence of twentieth-century trauma is rendered more fragmentary still by its own lack of conclusion or definitive publication, owing partly to Glavin’s illness and perfectionism: “it demanded all his energy to redraft small sections, then, eventually, single poems, attempting to salvage as much as he could from the project” (Granier 31). Further poems from the sequence have seen publication in *Poetry Ireland Review*, and yet more material exists, unexplored and unpublished to date. This sequence may be interpreted as reflecting the fragmentary nature of postmodern existence, as noted by Forché:

> Our age lacks the structure of a story. Or perhaps it would be closer […] to say that narrative implies progress and completion. The history of our time does not allow for any of the bromides of progress, nor for the promise of successful closure. (“Introduction” 43)

Despite its fragmentary state, and the uncomfortable questions of positioning, transference, and trauma at the heart of any poetry of witness written by those who did not witness, this sequence succeeds in describing the narrator’s struggle with what Gene Ray has called “collective trauma”, a product of the extreme twentieth century: “since no one is unaffected by the violence of the last century, it is necessary to speak of collective trauma and social damage” (136).

The fragmentation and trauma which are some of the central themes of the “Living in Hiroshima” sequence have been borne out in the fragmented materiality of the sequence itself. Anthony Glavin’s “Living in Hiroshima” stands as an uncanny metaphor for the haunting aftermaths of twentieth-century wars and conflicts, whose ongoing traumatic effects upon the human psyche, among survivors, victims, and those who live in the realities of a post-Hiroshima world, are far from fully resolved or understood.

Works Cited

Alexander, Jeffrey C. “Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma.” *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka. Oakland, CA: U of California P, 2004. 1-30.

Bistoen, Gregory, Stijn Vanheule, and Stef Craps. “*Nachträglichkeit*: A Freudian Perspective on Delayed Traumatic Reactions.” *Theory & Psychology* 24.5 (2014): 668-87.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Dawe, Gerald, ed. *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914-1945*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2009.

De Angelis, Irene. *The Japanese Effect in Contemporary Irish Poetry*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Ellis, Conleth. “Introduction.” *Eugene Watters*. Special issue of *Poetry Ireland Review* 13 (1985): 5-22.

Forché, Carolyn. “Introduction.” *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness*. Ed. Carolyn Forché. New York: Norton, 1993. 29-47.

-----. “Reading the Living Archives: The Witness of Literary Art.” *Poetry* 198.2 (2011): 159-74.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. New York/ London: Norton, 1961.

Glavin, Anthony. *The Wrong Side of the Alps*. Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 1989.

Granier, Mark. “Anthony Glavin: ‘Living in Hiroshima.’” *Poetry Ireland Review* 89 (2007): 30-31.

-----. “Guest blog post: A Mentor: Anthony Glavin.” *Anthony Wilson: Lifesaving Poems*. 26 Feb. 2016. 7 Apr. 2021. <https://anthonywilsonpoetry.com/>.

Johnston, Maria. “Reading Irish Poetry in the New Century: *Poetry Ireland Review* 2000-2009.” *Poetry Ireland Review* 100 (2010): 35-46.

Kearney, Colbert. “Mass of the Dead.” *Leabhar na hAthghabhála: Poems of Repossession*. Ed. Louis de Paor. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2016.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2001; repr. with a new preface, 2014.

Lifton, Robert Jay. “Psychological Effects of the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima: The Theme of Death.” *Daedalus* 92.3 (1963): 462-97.

-----. “Hiroshima and Ourselves.” *JAMA* 254.5 (1985): 631-32.

-----. *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*. Capehill, NC/London: U of North Carolina P, 1991.

Longley, Edna. “Wild and Tame.” *The Irish Review* 8 (1990): 126-29.

MacCraith, Mícheál. “Aifreann na Marbh: Oidhe Chlainne Hiroshima.” *Léachtaí Cholm Cille XVII: An Nuafhilíocht*. Ed. Pádraig Ó Fiannachta. Maigh Nuad: An Sagart, 1986. 61-94.

Markus, Radvan. “‘Níl an Focal Sin Againn’: Orality, Literacy, and Accounts of the 1798 Rebellion.” *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 14.1 (2010): 112-26.

Marven, Lyn. “Herta Müller’s *Herztier* (The Land of Green Plums).” *The Novel in German since 1990.* Ed. Stuart Taberner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. 180-94.

McCabe, James. “Hiroshima: Eoghan Ó Tuairisc and World War II.” *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 9.1 (2005): 117-40.

Naono, Akiko. “Transmission of Trauma, Identification and Haunting: A Ghost Story of Hiroshima.” *Intersections: Gender and Society in Asia and the Pacific* 24 (2010). 11 Dec. 2021. <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue24/naono.htm>.

Nic Eoin, Máirín. *Eoghan Ó Tuairisc: Beatha agus Saothar*. Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 1988.

-----. “Scéal an Tuirimh Nua-aoisigh: Téama na Cogaíocht i Nuafhilíocht na Gaeilge.” *Aistí ag Iompar Scéil: In Ómós do Shéamus P. Ó Mordha*. Ed. Breandán Ó Conaire. Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 2004. 207-28.

O’Leary, Philip. “Reasoning Why after Fifty Years: The Easter Rising in Eoghan Ó Tuairisc’s *Dé Luain* (1966).” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*. Vol. 31. Cambridge, MA/London: Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, 2011. 253-81.

Ó Tuairisc, Eoghan. *Lux Aeterna*. Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1964.

-----. *Religio Poetae agus Aistí Eile*. Ed. Máirín Nic Eoin. Dublin: An Clóchomhar Teoranta, 1987.

-----. “Aifreann na Marbh.” *Leabhar na hAthghabhála / Poems of Repossession*. Ed. Louis de Paor. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2016.

Pope, Alan. “The House of Being Still Stands: Nuclear Holocaust and Human Meaning.” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 46.3 (2006): 303-22.

Ray, Gene. *Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory: From Auschwitz to Hiroshima to September 11*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

-----. “HITS: From Trauma and the Sublime to Radical Critique.” *Third Text* 23.2 (2009): 135-49.

Watters, Eugene. *The Week-End of Dermot and Grace*. Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1964.

“What the People Saw: A Vision of Ourselves.” *TIME Magazine* 126.4 (1985): 54-62.

THE EPIDEMIC AND THE CARNIVALESQUE: Ó CADHAIN'S UNPUBLISHED PLAY *TYPHUS*

Radvan Markus

A particularly germane perspective on Máirtín Ó Cadhain's masterpiece, the novel *Cré na Cille* (1949), is opened by the concept of encyclopaedic narrative, developed by Edward Mendelson. Accordingly, we can see *Cré na Cille* as a text that, through the use of synecdoche, irony and parody, encompasses the Gaeltacht, Ireland, and, in a sense, the world itself (Markus, *Carnabhal na Marbh*). Another possible instance of such an encyclopaedic narrative is the famous Czech novel, *The Good Soldier Švejk* (1921-1923) by Jaroslav Hašek, about which has been said: "V bibli je téměř všecko, ve Švejkovi je úplně všecko." [In the Bible, there is almost everything, but there is everything in *Švejk*.][1] (Senková) If there is really "everything" in *Cré na Cille*, we should expect that the novel refers in some way even to the current Covid-19 pandemic. And indeed, we are not disappointed in our search: in the novel, one can find multiple mentions of the so-called "drochthinneas Leitir Íochtair" [bad illness of Leitir Íochtar] (230), an epidemic that, according to the main character Caitríona Pháidín, threatens to "fatten" and "deafen" the graveyard (*Cré na Cille* 176; *Graveyard Clay* 148). This particularly contagious and severe illness is specifically mentioned as the cause of death of three of the graveyard's inhabitants, Stiofán Bán, Tom Rua, and Colm Mór's daughter (*Cré na Cille* 198, 226, 230).

Ó Cadhain interweaved much from local history and personal experience into the novel, which seems to be true in this case as well – we can plausibly assume that the fictional epidemic in *Cré na Cille* is based on a typhus outbreak that took place in the author's native area of An Spidéal, west of Galway, in November 1942. The epidemic was far less severe than what the novel implies – merely fourteen cases were recorded, out of which only one patient died (McConn 536). Yet, the authorities considered the outbreak alarming, as it threatened many casualties were it to spread beyond the area (Wills 258). Moreover, it was feared that the occurrence of such a dreaded disease in Ireland could create trade difficulties with Britain, which already suspected migrant workers from the area to have caused typhus outbreaks in England and Northern Ireland ("Typhus Epidemic Dwindling" 3). The British government even temporarily introduced medical examination for Irish passengers landing at British ports ("Typhus in Eire" 3).

To counter the spread of the illness in and around An Spidéal, strict anti-epidemic measures were adopted by Dr Charles McConn, Galway's acting county medical officer at the time. He explains the mode of combatting the epidemic in his article for

1 All translations from Irish or Czech in the essay are my own, unless stated otherwise.

the *Lancet* from 1943: “Our plan of campaign was to do a Weil-Felix test on every contact, every child suspect in the area, and the occupants of all houses in which there was a history of illness within the previous two months or in which the state of cleanliness did not conform to average standards.” (McConn 535) This applied to a substantial share of the population, 535 persons out of the overall 2 222 inhabitants of the area (535). Those suspected of carrying the disease were removed to a special hospital established in the Spiddal Irish College for “cleansing, disinfesting and disinfecting” and in the case of a positive test, for observation (536). But even if they tested negative, “their houses, clothing and goods” were “thoroughly treated during their period of detention” (536). Moreover, the whole district was isolated and nobody was allowed to enter it or leave it “except those who were certified [...] as being non-contacts [...] and whose clothing was subjected to steam disinfection” (536).

McConn’s detached, professional description does not, however, reveal what the anti-epidemic measures, necessary as they were, implied for the lives of the local population. Some information can be gleaned from newspaper reports, such as the following one from the *Irish Times*: “Next Monday’s Spiddal Fair is banned: all schools are closed, public meetings prohibited, no migratory labourers may leave the area without they first obtain a clean bill of health, no lorries are allowed to draw turf from the infected area and all buses passing through are disinfected and vacuum-cleaned.” (“Typhus Outbreak in Spiddal” 1) This mid-twentieth century version of lockdown was bound to have serious economic consequences in an area where many of the inhabitants were destitute and dependent on sources such as the income of the migratory workers.

A *Connacht Sentinel* report shows us what exactly the disinfection of homes entailed:

> All their bed clothes are soaked in a disinfectant; feather mattresses and other things which sometimes cannot be dealt with otherwise have to be burned; the whole family must be kept overnight in the disinfecting station while their clothes are being dis-infected in Galway; and when they return home next day they often have no beds to sleep on that night. There has been one case where a man had to make a bed of heather after returning from the station. (“Spiddal P.P.” 1)

Clearly, little effort was made by the authorities to explain the situation to the affected or to compensate them for their discomforts and economic losses. Moreover, the illness had been affecting the area since September 1942 and the locals tended to regard it as an instance of influenza, particularly as the first cases were diagnosed as such (“Spiddal P.P.” 1; McConn 535). Therefore, they doubted the seriousness of the outbreak and the appropriateness of the anti-epidemic measures. For these reasons, McConn and his colleagues encountered considerable, and at times, violent opposition in their efforts to subdue the epidemic. On Thursday 19 November, the police forces dispersed a demonstration of about 200 people in An Spidéal (“Spiddal P.P.” 1). The following day the Gardaí, who had received reinforcements from the larger Galway area, were called to clear large boulders (“Spiddal P.P.” 4), placed by

some locals on the road near Derryloughlin to prevent the ambulance from removing cases to the special hospital (1). Even McConn himself became an object of attack:

> The doctor was superintending the disinfecting of homes in Polleena village, near Furbo, and, accompanied by two Gardai, he was about to enter a house when he was observed to fall in the doorway with blood gushing from his forehead. Garda Tierney immediately rushed past him into the house and took into custody a woman named Mrs. Annie Keane. The Gardai also took possession of an iron bar similar to a hoop of a bucket which had been straightened out. ("Spiddal P.P." 1)

The injury, however, was not very serious, as "Dr. McConn recovered from the blow almost at once, and rendering first aid to himself he carried on with his work as if nothing had happened." ("Spiddal P.P." 1) The attacker was subsequently sentenced to a £3 fine with £3 costs ("Sequel to Typhus Scenes" 1). The local opposition ceased only after the intervention of the parish priest N. Donnelly, who, in his Sunday sermon in St Enda's church, condemned the obstructive tactics as unchristian and urged the population to cooperate with the authorities ("Spiddal P.P." 4).

During these turbulent events, Máirtín Ó Cadhain was interned in the Curragh prison camp for his republican activities, but he learned about the epidemic and the accompanying incidents from the newspapers (Ó Cadhain, *As an nGéibheann* 111), as well as through the letters from his sister (Ó Néill 8). In his letter to Tomás Bairéad dated 26 November 1942 he also mentions that he saw some of the typhus patients in hospital when he visited his home area while on parole in the summer, before the doctors recognized the illness (Ó Cadhain, *As an nGéibheann* 111-12). The wording of the letter shows that the local resistance to the hygienic measures made a definite impression on him: "The locals have gone wild and this time the blame cannot be put on my shoulders. [...] This is the Gaeltacht revolution – 'barricades being put up' – Le premier Brumaire [...]" (111).[2]

The impression apparently lasted and inspired one of Ó Cadhain's rare dramatic attempts – the two-scene play *Typhus,* which he wrote around May 1943 and submitted to the Abbey Theatre shortly after (Ó Néill 8). On 16 January 1944, the Abbey director Earnán de Blaghd (Ernest Blythe) returned the play to the author with a letter of rejection, stating the following reasons: "We think that it would not suit the stage here for while it contains fine powerful speech, it often happens that one of the characters speaks for too long without other people interfering with them. Another thing, the play is too short to fill the whole evening and most of the people don't like to see two or three short plays instead of a single long one." (de Blaghd)[3] We may

2 "Tá muintir na háite sin le dúchas, is cosúil, agus ní féidir a mhilleán a bhualadh thall ormsa an iarraidh seo. [...] Sé múirthéacht na Gaeltachta é – 'na barracáidí' curtha suas – Le premier Brumaire [...]."

3 "Is dóigh linn nach n-oirfeadh sé ró-mhaith do'n stáitse annseo mar gidh go bhfuil cainnt bhreagh bhríoghmar ann is minic a bhíonn duine de na carachtair ag cainnt ró-fhada gan na daoine eile ag cur isteach air. Rud eile, tá an dráma ró-ghairid le h-oíche a líonadh agus ní maith le furmhór na ndaoine a dó nó a trí de dhrámaí gearra in ionad dráma fada amháin."

count the difficulty of language among the possible reasons of rejection as well – few members of the Dublin audience at the time would have been able to appreciate Ó Cadhain's rich Connemara Irish and the differences in language registers on which the play's effect largely hinges.

The existing script, preserved among Ó Cadhain's papers at Trinity College, Dublin, shows that the writer acted on de Blaghd's advice and made revisions that interrupted longer monologues with short sentences by other characters. Nevertheless, the play has never been staged, apart from two partial productions in the new millennium. In 2006, the opening part of the first scene was read at Féile Náisiúnta Drámaíochta [National Drama Festival] by Aisteoirí na Tíre and broadcast on Raidió na Gaeltachta, and in 2017, a shortened version of the same scene was staged by Scoil Éigse Chamais as part of the event entitled "Máirtín Ó Cadhain – Ómós ar an Stáitse" [Máirtín Ó Cadhain – A Tribute on the Stage], held in Ionad Cultúrtha an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc.

In *Typhus*, the events of the epidemic are transposed to the fictional town Coill an Bhogáin and its vicinity. The main character is Siobhán, a handsome young woman who takes pride in her long curly hair, as well as a new dress that she has recently acquired from the local seamstress. At the same time, she is one of the strong, forceful female characters that Ó Cadhain's work abounds in, sharing some notable features with the main character of *Cré na Cille,* Caitríona Pháidín. Siobhán invests a lot of effort into making her house, which she shares with her brother, clean and spotless, and just like Caitríona, has prodigious speech capacities, especially when it comes to reviling her opponents. In general, her portrayal in the play oscillates between a humorous (and slightly stereotypical) image of an obstinate female and that of an outspoken and perceptive voice of the community.

When a doctor, accompanied by a squad of policemen, enters her home, we are provided with a dramatic example of how the hygienic measures impacted the local population: Siobhán learns that the new dress that she had just bought has to be burned as a carrier of disease, the house has to be disinfected, and her curly hair cut off in the special hospital. The burning of clothes by the authorities is an important detail, implied in the above-quoted report from the *Connacht Sentinel* and explicitly mentioned in the notes to *As an nGéibheann*, the edition of Ó Cadhain's letters from the prison camp: "Tomás Bairéad says that the most conspicuous feature of the disinfecting process was the burning of clothes. This is what made the people angry." (190)[4]

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault discusses the seventeenth-century methods of handling plague, featuring a total control of the population by the authorities, as a model for strict disciplinary projects later:

4 "Deir Tomás Bairéad gurbh é an chuid ba shuntasaí den chóras díghalraithe na héadaí a dhó. Sin a chuir olc ar na daoine."

> This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all the events are recorded, [...] in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism. (197)

And indeed, the reason for the locals' resentment, according to the play, is exactly the fact that the typhus epidemic was dealt with in a purely authoritarian manner without taking the people's concerns into account or compensating them for their losses. Siobhán vehemently protests against the fact that the locals, by virtue of being poor, are automatically regarded as dirty and unhygienic – this is actually acted out in the play when the doctor enters her spotless house covering his nose (*Typhus* 8). She also points out the economic problems caused by the quarantine measures. Her following remark could be easily uttered by someone in a disadvantaged area affected by a Covid-19-induced lockdown: "This is some trickery devised in order to deprive the people of the only way of making a living: to stop them going to England and to snatch from their hands the few miserable pounds that they make on strangers and Irish learners." (10)[5] In reprimanding the doctor, Siobhán also mentions that the illness being dealt with by the doctor is merely one of many dangerous diseases that affect the area and that if poverty was reduced, the people's health would improve as well. She specifically criticizes dishonest practices of shopkeepers during the Emergency:

> You know in your hearts that it was and it is only an outbreak of cold that spreads because of bad food, bad flour and bad coffee that people get if they manage to buy it at all. Don't you belong yourself to those that make knights out of themselves on tea, flour, sugar and all sorts of other things: selling it for ten times its value to those who can afford to buy it and leaving the poor with nothing? Stop that lot and you'll see how little illness there will be. Stop them. (10-11)[6]

Very provocatively, Siobhán accuses the Irish Free State establishment of acting in a similar way to the English at the time of the Great Famine, during which typhus was, along with starvation, a major cause of death: "The English permitted them to die in the ditch. The likes of you will permit them to die on a bare floor without leaving them even a shroud or a winding sheet." (10)[7] This comment subtly connects with Clair

5 "Seo aisiléaracht eicínt leis an t-aon-slighe bheatha amháin atá ag na daoine a bhaint dhíob: a mbacadh ón a dhul go Sasana agus na cupla puintín gágach a dhéanas siad ar strainséaraí a's ar 'lucht na Gaedhilge' a sciobadh as a láimh."

6 "Tá fhios ag 'ur gcroidhe isitigh, nach raibh ann agus nach bhfuil ann ach ruaig shlaghdáin atá aithmhéalach ingeall ar an droch-chothughadh, ar an droch-phlúr, ar an droch-chaifí agus eile atá na daoine a fhaghail, an uair a eirigheas leob a bhfaghail ar an gcaoi sin féin. Nach tusa an dream atá ag déanamh ridirí díobh féin ar tae, ar phlúr, ar shiúcra agus ar chuile shórt eile: dhá ndíol ar a ndeich luach leis an té atá in acmhuinn a gceannacht agus ag fágáil daoine bochta gan Murrchadha gan Maghnus. Bac an dream sin agus feicfidh tú féin air gur beag an galra a bhéas annseo. Bac iad."

7 "Thug na Sasanaigh cead báis dóibh chois an chlaidhe. Tiubharfaidh tusa a's do leithide cead báis dóibh ar an urlár lom gan oiread a's an scaoilteog ná'n taiséadach a fhágáil acab."

Wills's account of the year 1942 in Ireland: "[...] the ghosts of the famine of the 1840s were also raised by the sudden return of diseases associated with poverty and malnutrition" (257). The link that Ó Cadhain made between the authoritarian attitude of the Irish Free State towards the epidemic and the previous English regime is reinforced by the fact that in the play, an old Royal Irish Constabulary barracks (*Typhus* 4), instead of the Spiddal Irish College used in the real epidemic ("Spiddal Typhus Cases" 1), is converted into a provisional hospital and a disinfecting station.

Equally provocative is Siobhán's attack on the Catholic Church, which she undoubtedly sees as a participant in the conspiracy of the powerful to harass her community. When her brother doubts her resolution not to give up the dress, "wait until the doctor and the priest come" (*Typhus* 5),[8] she reminds him that she has stood up to the priest in the past: "The priest already came when we had the little céilí here and which of us faced him –" (5).[9] In her argument with the police sergeant, she makes use of a subversive Irish proverb, conflating the institutions of police and church: "'Let the priest first baptise his own child.' Burn the clothes that are in your own house, sergeant [...]." (10)[10]

Apart from the authoritarian methods of dealing with the plague, Foucault also points out the festival, carnivalesque mood that the disease engendered in the past:

> A whole literary fiction of the festival grew up around the plague: suspended laws, lifted prohibitions, the frenzy of passing time, bodies mingling together without respect, individuals unmasked, abandoning their statutory identity and the figure under which they had been recognized, allowing a quite different truth to appear. (197)

While in Foucault's model, the carnivalesque aspect of the plague is subdued by order and discipline, in Ó Cadhain's play an opposite process takes place in which the government's approach is ridiculed and proved ineffective. This can be related to other works by Ó Cadhain in which the carnivalesque is used to undermine authority, entirely in keeping with Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the principle in *Rabelais and His World*.[11] It is likely that the figure of Siobhán was inspired by Annie Keane, the woman who struck Dr McCann with an iron bar in the above-quoted report. In the play, Siobhán acts similarly, but her behaviour is exaggerated in a slapstick comedy manner. When threatened with force to give up her dress, she steals a baton from the police sergeant and strikes him and two other guards unconscious, while pushing the doctor into the wardrobe (*Typhus* 15). She is finally overpowered by Garda Jim Lavelle, who also happens to be her fiancé (16). In the trial that follows in the second and final scene, the pomposity of the sergeant is revealed, and Siobhán is sentenced

8 "fan go dteagaidh an dochtúr a's an sagart".

9 "Tháinig an sagart cheana an t-am a raibh an céilidhe beag annseo agus cé againn a thug aghaidh air –".

10 "''Sé a leanbh féin a bhaisteas an sagart ar dtús.' Dóigh an t-éadach atá i do theach féin i dtosach a sháirsint [...]."

11 See Markus, "The Carnivalesque against Entropy".

to three months of imprisonment (24). However, the ensuing entreaties of Jim Lavelle to be allowed to serve the punishment instead of her (25, 28) gradually bring about a total breakdown of the court proceedings, with the judge frantically searching through lawbooks and eventually throwing them at the sergeant in desperation (29). The whole play then ends in a kind of carnival with the judge, and eventually most of the actors, dancing and singing a nonsensical song (29).

The movement in the play from the authoritarian to the carnivalesque is reflected in the language as well. The official use of Irish is mocked throughout, starting with the initial conversation between Siobhán and her brother, who struggles with the official Irish term for disinfecting ("dísbithughadh") and mispronounces it in various ways while evidently being more comfortable with the more natural hybrid coinage "disinfectáil" (3). The frequent speeches of the pompous sergeant are full of exaggerated legalese:

> Well, Miss Ó Tuathaláin [...] within the powers of the Act and as I represent the law, I am supplied with all the power to enforce the Act, that is to take possession of the item of clothing entitled "dress" in this case, and in order to achieve this aim I am permitted to use all the methods in the Act including as much force as is needed to gain the aforesaid possession. (14)[12]

The officialese is opposed by informal speech used by Siobhán in her altercation with the police and the judge, as well as her mockery of the language of her opponents – she announces to the court, for example, that she made "a temporary corpse of the law" when the police entered her house (23).[13] Indicative of the carnivalesque turn of the play is the shift that occurs in the judge's language when he is flabbergasted by Jim Lavelle's requests. This is one of the play's most hilarious moments, just before the total breakdown of the court proceedings and the final dance and song. After reacting to a pompous speech of the sergeant by the curse, "may the true son of God throw you to the bottom of hell, you flat-footed person" (28),[14] the judge threatens his own clerk by shoving his law books down his throat: "Shut your gob or I'll give you mashed Halsbury as an hors d'oeuvre. I'll make a temporary library of your mouth." (29)[15]

Despite never being published or fully staged, *Typhus* holds a remarkable position in Ó Cadhain's oeuvre, with multiple links to his more famous works. It shares some

12 "Bhuel, a Inghean Uí Thuathaláin [...] taobh istigh de bhrigh na h-Achta is arna de'n dlighe mé, agus tá mé soláthruighthe le iomlán cumhachta leis an Acht a chur i bhfeidhm eadhón seilbh a ghlacadh ar bhall éadaigh dar tiodal 'feisteas' sa gcás seo, agus chun an aidhm sin a chur i gcrích is ceaduighthe dom úsáid a bhaint as slig-heanna iomlána na h-Achta go fuí's an oiread fórsa agus a mbeidh gábhadh leis chun na seilbhe réamhráidhte a bhaint amach."

13 "marbhthán sealadach de'n dlighe".

14 "go gcartaidh Mac dílis Dé síos go tóin Ifrinn thú a bhas – a bhasacháin".

15 "Dún do chlab nó tiubharfaidh mé brúightín à la Halsbury mar hors d'oeuvre duit. Déan-faidh mé leabharlann sealadach de do bhéal."

specific motifs with *Cré na Cille* – apart from the epidemic itself, these include the attack on dishonest shopkeepers and the reference to the American actor Mae West, who plays a role in the carnivalesque dénouement of the play (*Typhus* 26, 30; *Cré na Cille* 166-67). *Typhus* is also one of the first examples of Ó Cadhain shifting between various registers of Irish, a skill that he applied with considerable mastery in *Cré na Cille* and his later urban stories, especially "An Eochair" (1967) (*An tSraith ar Lár* 205-60). A link between *Typhus* and "An Eochair" may also be established through the satirical portrayal of the state as a quasi-religious institution. In "An Eochair", the civil service is shown as a mock version of the Catholic Church with its scriptures, commandments, tradition and catechism, and the same idea, in essence, is presented by the judge in the play: "the legitimate will of the state is the will of God" (24).[16] *Typhus* therefore puts into question the established chronology of Ó Cadhain's themes and settings – it is clear that the seeds of his later stories, which take place in the city among civil servants, were already sown in his early period, when he focused more on female characters in a rural environment.[17]

The play also deserves attention in relation to other works of the author which take illness as their theme. Illness is treated as an innate condition of man in "An Seanfhear" (1953) (*Cois Caoláire* 64-72), and presented as a sign of entropy, of the slow decline of the world, in the novels *Cré na Cille* and *Athnuachan* (1995). In the latter two texts, it also becomes the target of carnivalesque mockery. *Typhus* foregrounds another aspect of the theme: the institutional response to illness. This is later picked up in a passage in *Cré na Cille* where various characters relate absurd stories about doctors (307-12), and the late story "Ag Déanamh Marmair" (1977) (*An tSraith Tógtha* 22-26), in which the main character imagines that the depersonalizing environment of the hospital turns patients into marble.

Typhus ultimately criticizes authoritative methods of protecting public health, the arrogance of knowledge, as well as the inherent class prejudices contained in anti-epidemic policies. It does not put in question the need to counter dangerous diseases, but implies that the cooperation of the local community and the improvement of their material conditions is key to any such effort. In this respect, it retains its relevance in relation to more recent instances of epidemics. This is apparent already in the introduction to the 2006 radio production of the play's opening, which mentions avian flu as a possible parallel, and the recent effort to subdue the Covid-19 pandemic presents, of course, a number of obvious resonances. After some adjustment by a skilful director, the play would certainly merit a new, full production – apart from its topicality, it features much vivid language and ample possibilities for action on the stage.[18]

16 "'sé toil Dé toil dlisteanach an stáit".

17 For the discussion of the periodization of Ó Cadhain's work, see Nic Eoin 635-42.

18 I am indebted to Seán Ó Morónaigh of An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta, to Caoimhe Ní Ghormáin of Trinity College Library, and to Václav Hampl and Vít Jakoubek

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1984.

de Blaghd, Earnán. Letter to Máirtín Ó Cadhain. 16 Nov. 1944. Trinity College, Dublin: TCD MS 10878: Páipéir Mháirtín Uí Chadhain. K/3/4.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1995.

Markus, Radvan. "The Carnivalesque against Entropy: Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*." *Litteraria Pragensia* 28.55 (2018): 56-69.

-----. *Carnabhal na Marbh:* Cré na Cille *agus Litríocht an Domhain.* Indreabhán: Leabhar Breac, forthcoming in 2022.

McConn, Charles F. "Observations on a Typhus Epidemic." *The Lancet* 6270 (30 Oct. 1943): 535-37.

Mendelson, Edward. "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon." *MLN* 91.6 (1976): 1267-75.

Nic Eoin, Máirín. "Athnuachan agus Athghabháil Shaothar Liteartha Uí Chadhain." *Léachtaí Uí Chadhain.* Ed. Liam Mac Amhlaigh and Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith. Dublin: Cló Léann na Gaeilge, 2020. 633-66.

Ó Cadhain, Máirtín. *Typhus*. Unpublished play, 1943. Trinity College, Dublin: TCD MS 10878: Páipéir Mháirtín Uí Chadhain. K/3/2: 1-27; K/3/3: 28-31.

-----. *As an nGéibheann: Litreacha chuig Tomás Bairéad*. Baile Átha Cliath: Sáirséal agus Dill, 1973.

-----. *An tSraith Tógtha*. Baile Átha Cliath: Sáirséal agus Dill, 1977.

-----. *Athnuachan*. Baile Átha Cliath: Coiscéim, 1995.

-----. *Cois Caoláire*. Baile Átha Cliath: Sáirséal Ó Marcaigh, 2004 [1953].

-----. *Mír as an Dráma Typhus*. Read by Aisteoirí na Tíre at Féile Náisiúnta Drámaíochta 2006. Broadcast by RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta on 27 April 2006. CD. Archive of An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta, Camas, Conamara.

-----. *An tSraith ar Lár*. Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2009 [1967].

-----. *Cré na Cille*. Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2009 [1949].

for enabling access to materials necessary for this study. I am also grateful to Iontaobhas Uí Chadhain for granting me their kind permission to use Ó Cadhain's unpublished work in my research. Work on this essay was supported by the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

-----. *Graveyard Clay.* Trans. Liam Mac Con Iomaire and Tim Robinson. New Haven, CT/London: Yale UP, 2016.

-----. *Typhus,* Scene One. Produced by Scoil Éigse Chamais, Conamara in the Ionad Cultúrtha an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc, 30 Sept. 2017. DVD. Archive of An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta, Camas, Conamara.

Ó Néill, Maitiú. "Faoi Ghlas ag Gaeil." *Comhar* 30.10 (1971): 5-9.

Senková, Zita. "Jak to vidí Zdeněk Mahler." Interview. *Český rozhlas*. 1 Jan. 2013. 26 July 2021. <https://dvojka.rozhlas.cz/jak-vidi-zdenek-mahler-1-ledna-7471339>.

"Sequel to Typhus Scenes." *The Connacht Sentinel.* 5 Jan. 1943: 1.

"Spiddal P.P. Condemns Obstructionists." *The Connacht Sentinel.* 24 Nov. 1942: 1, 4.

"Spiddal Typhus Cases." *The Irish Times.* 7 Nov. 1942: 1.

"Typhus Epidemic Dwindling." *Connacht Tribune*. 28 Nov. 1942: 3.

"Typhus in Eire." *Belfast Newsletter.* 23 Nov. 1942: 3.

"Typhus Outbreak in Spiddal." *The Irish Times.* 14 Nov. 1942: 1.

Wills, Clair. *That Neutral Island*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007.

"TIES CONSTITUTE WHAT WE ARE": HAUNTED GENDER AND CLASS IDENTITIES IN POST-CELTIC TIGER NARRATIVES OF COMMUNITY

Alessandra Boller

> But maybe when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something […] that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us.
>
> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*

Introduction

When the world financial crisis of 2008 ended the Celtic Tiger, it did not only stop this "spectacular growth of the Irish economy in the 1990s" (Battel 94) but also disrupted the manifold promises of the boom. As a "powerful cultural signifier for progress and newness" (Buchanan, "Living" 300), the Celtic Tiger had appeared as a possibility to sever modern Ireland's ties to a past shaped by colonialism and austerity. However, especially towards the end of the boom, which was marked in its later phase by a real estate bubble and an overheated building sector, Irish society had to face the shallow newness of the Celtic Tiger which conflated "economic growth with communal well-being" (Buchanan, "Ruined Futures" 51).

Even before 2008, Post-Celtic Tiger literature[1] had started to question Ireland's new identity as a wealthy nation, challenging the idea of absolute re-invention and the belief in the "necessity of orienting the nation towards the future rather than towards the past" (Smyth 135). Spectres of Irish history, which emerged as a threat to the nation's 'modern' identity, pervade Gerard Donovan's *Country of the Grand* (2008) and Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (2012). Both of these texts explore the ideological significance of the Tiger years by focussing on the place of individual, often male, characters within communities haunted by the spectral presence of Irish history. In these works, individual identities and communities, which both appear as complex networks of ties and bonds, are shown to be affected by the disruption and dislocation of time and space first created by the Tiger and then by its sudden end.

In regard to spatial and temporal dimensions of Irish identities, the narratives invite a reading from the vantage point of hauntology, meaning the "logic of haunting" (Derrida 10) that deconstructs the boundaries between past, present, and future. The microcosms constructed in Donovan's and Ryan's texts appear to be haunted by the idea of a unique Irish identity composed of the experiences of conflict, colonialism,

1 Declan Hughes's play *Shiver* (2003) can be considered one of the earliest harsh diagnoses of a society believing in a false promise.

and poverty. These aspects seem to originate in the past, invade the present, and simultaneously represent a possibly recurrent threat in the future; a temporal aspect that is particularly relevant to Derrida's concept of hauntology.[2] Derrida's original French term *hantise* furthermore incorporates the sense of a constant fear, obsession, or nagging memory (4n2) and thus includes a further aspect of the continued presence of the past. Spectres that haunt Irish individual and community identities thus throw into doubt borders between present reality (Molloy 140) and the past, and they are linked to the re-emerging idea of Irish exceptionalism and traumata, which seemed to have been overcome with the Celtic Tiger but re-emerged with the world financial crisis.

While the rampant capitalism and neoliberalism – regarded by various critics as the core of the Celtic Tiger – invited a focus on individualism, the notion of community provides an interesting lens through which questions of entwined gender and class identities in the wake of the massive social and economic ruptures of the early twenty-first century can be explored. In contrast to classic narratives of community, *Country of the Grand* and *The Spinning Heart* do not construct particular, preindustrial spaces (Zagarell 499) in need of protection and preservation but accentuate negotiations of identity in different forms of communities, placing particular emphasis on aspects of gender and class. Zagarell sees a close relationship between nineteenth-century women's culture and the structure of narrative of community, as such texts were linked to middle-class domestic spheres and rhythms of life (507) whereas the "public, male world [was] reorganized around requirements of market economy" (508).[3] The notion of market economy figures strongly in the texts chosen for discussion here, especially as they foreground how masculinity and male gender roles are inseparably connected to class issues and economic aspects and were thus particularly affected when the financial crisis hit Ireland. In this context, spectres of stereotypical ideas of exceptional Irish identities are rendered visible by Donovan's and Ryan's male characters. As Magennis and Mullen argue, moments of shift can reveal dominant modes of masculinity that are in operation and provide opportunities to debate whether or how such modes "should adapt and change" (3-4). While unresolved issues of history, also in terms of nation and gender, were mostly glossed over during the Celtic Tiger, the moment of disruption in Donovan's and Ryan's narratives invites a much-needed critical engagement with legacies of the past. It thus allows for introspection, providing a chance to revisit the effects of quick-paced change through the exploration of a literary microcosm.

2 Haunting spectres have been identified in a number of famous Irish literary works. Leerssen, for instance, highlights how the spectre of Michael Furey "is conjured up out of the past to trouble the present" in Joyce's "The Dead" (228). Leerssen here identifies the past as undead and as a nightmare from which Irish history cannot escape.

3 Nevertheless, Zagarell stresses that aspects of narrative of community, such as negotiations of class, have also been present in male authors' writings (512). She mentions, for example, how Sherwood Anderson or Charles Dickens "mediated between the tasks of representing an individual-based, contractual society and expressing a community-based vision" (512).

This essay takes as its points of departure Derrida’s concept of hauntology as well as the purposes and structures of narrative of community to analyze how Ryan and Donovan engage with the spectral presence of stereotypical legacies of Irish (gender) identities in the context of Ireland’s recent socio-economic history. This contribution thereby maintains that the notions of community and spectrality help us understand how different discourses of male gender and class identities were affected by the economic crash that signified a failed attempt to escape from Irish history. The community in crisis exposes bonds and ties between its individual members, but as a concept it also enables us to contemplate connected identity categories. Particularly regarding masculinity and class, Ryan’s and Donovan’s texts provide counter-narratives to dominant cultural narratives, such as the narrative of newness and departure from the past during the 1990s and early 2000s. Their stories thus question this cultural signifier by highlighting spectres of the Irish past and shedding light on the shallowness of this promised newness, on harmful stereotypes of working- and middle-class masculinities, and on relations between changing paradigms and identity constructions within fragile communities. In this regard, they focus attention on the continuous endeavours needed to construct and maintain identities in the liminal spaces between individual and community, self and other.

Irish Masculinities and Imagined Communities

In his article on Irish masculinity in life and literature, Foster explains how redefinitions of Irish masculinity during the Literary Revival were “bent on […] redefining masculinity so that nationhood could be achieved more decisively, […] it was no time for any serious undermining or diffusion of the integrity of the Irish male” (15). The “feckless, ineffectual peasant male and the roistering, irresponsible Big-House male of English and Anglo-Irish fiction” were thus replaced “with an Irish virility” that was oriented towards heroic, mythical males such as Cuchulain (Foster 15). Therefore, although the nation has traditionally been perceived as a woman, most visible in the trope of Kathleen Ni Houlihan, Magennis and Mullen also identify a correlation between nation and gender in terms of masculinity (4) while Foster asserts that female roles, in life as well as literature and legend, were merely “auxiliary” (15). The image of comradeship-in-arms as masculinist did not only become a foundation for a male-dominated imagined community[4] but also impacted on an image of masculinity that excluded emotional ties and all roles related to family and love, according to Foster (15).

4 Anderson introduced the term ‘imagined community’ to trace the origins and developments of nationalism; in his definition, the nation is an “imagined political community” (6). However, he also emphasizes that “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” (6). Anderson offers a detailed discussion of the role of communication, print media, symbols, and rituals. Throughout this essay, I use a simplified idea of imagined communities to refer to communities of different scopes – be they national or local, for example – which share a history, social structures, and any further aspects that are essential to their self-image as part of a community.

Instead, masculinity was evaluated in terms of heroism and patriotism, turning the self-sacrificing soldier and patriot (Foster 15) into the default Irish male.[5] Thereby, strength, the will to fight for Ireland, and a certain idea of aggression were important elements of hegemonic masculinity, defined by Connell as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees […] the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (2).

Shifting modes of hegemonic masculinity were thus related to the re-creation of the Irish nation as an imagined community. They eventually figured in the political, social, and economic foundations of the Irish Free State. The first years of Irish independence exemplify how economical aspects, hegemonic masculinity, gender roles, as well as notions of national identity are closely interconnected phenomena. According to Magennis and Mullen, the Irish male can be regarded as a "central battleground in the maintenance and dominance of certain codes of identity" (4-5) in this respect. Therefore, the decolonizing endeavours of the early Free State economy can also be considered in relation to modes of masculinity: on the one hand, the patriarchal order of the new Irish nation has to be taken into account here, as the "Free State was founded on a masculine ontology of hierarchical oppositions. The Irish State, by its very nature, gives way to binary understandings of the world" (Magennis and Mullen 4). On the other hand, the presentation of masculine identities as a "succession of martyrs, heroic, defiant, subversive but ultimately vanquished by colonial forces" (Singleton qtd. in Magennis and Mullen 4) also provides a perspective on the relation between gender, economy, and ideology.

Such relations become most visible in the early 1930s, when the Fianna Fáil government under Éamon de Valera arrived in power (Battel 96). The vision of Ireland de Valera's government sought to turn into reality was a highly "conservative rural idyll" (Battel 96). Their means to attain this goal included, on the socio-political level, a sharp gender division that was anchored in the constitution in 1937 and that relegated women to the home while reserving the public and economic sphere for men. After an initial attempt at reformation and stabilization that also relied on the UK as trading partner in the post-war years, the protectionism of de Valera's Ireland can be considered part of a decolonizing strategy that should have created and eventually strengthened an independent economy. This framework may have provided a "strong national self-image", according to Battel (96), but was economically unsuccessful and worsened the weak state of the Irish economy. While masculinity may not have been bound up with martyrdom and heroism anymore in the Free State, it was still connected

5 This essay can only highlight certain aspects of the connection between (hegemonic) masculinity and the values of the Revival and the Free State. See Foster for an in-depth discussion of the entanglements of the "imperatives of nationalism and its associated versions of masculinity", for instance in relation to literature and the "cultural demands made on" writers (17-18).

to the nation via conservative values and gender roles as well as partially class-specific roles in the economy (see Foster 24-25).

The Death of the Celtic Tiger: Hauntology and Spatio-Temporal Aspects

More than fifty years after the establishment of the Free State, the Celtic Tiger and its effect on gender and class identities should still be regarded against this foil. After the failure of different economic strategies,[6] the Celtic Tiger introduced new possibilities on the basis of the improved economic status of the Republic of Ireland as a wealthy global player in the 1990s. In this context, Ireland tried to leave behind the concept of national identity as based on alterity and shaped by the island's colonial past, famines, the struggle for independence, and the conservative values dictated by the Catholic Church (Battel 101). The widespread desire to turn away from history, in combination with the idea of Irish exceptionalism, had already been partially responsible for the birth of the Celtic Tiger as an economic event and signifier, which eventually "came to be understood as the culmination of, or escape from, Irish history" (Buchanan, "Living" 303). Newness promised a departure from the spectres of the past that reminded of famines and emigration, hard labour in the agricultural sector, and the dire situation of often large families. However, the rapid change hit a country still marked by rurality and seemingly left no time to reflect on its extensive possible effects not only on the economy but also on notions of identity, including dominant modes of masculinity.

The Celtic Tiger finally introduced Ireland to the paradigm of modernity, which rather centres on the individual subject than the community and is connected to grand narratives. These "[d]iscourses of science, religion, politics and philosophy which are supposed to explain the world in its totality, and to produce histories of the world as narratives of progress" (Wolfreys et al. 47) rely on linearity through development and growth that appears without alternative. The notion of development also relates to increasing diversity in regard to identity, a trend from which gender identities are no exception. Cosmopolitan middle-class masculinities, modelled on successful US-American entrepreneurship, as well as working-class masculinities that took pride in their share in building the country, both literally and metaphorically, are exemplary of the sudden changes in Ireland. The year 2008, however, came "to signify a clear moment of demarcation […] when the so-called New Ireland of the Tiger collapsed under the weight of speculative global capitalism" (Buchanan, "Ruined Futures" 50).

Although the Irish workforce was far from being all-male, the traditional ties between the public realm, economy, and masculinity still invite a particular view on the economic crisis that also appeared as a defeat. The self-confidence of 'new' middle- and working-class masculinities, which seemingly profited from modernization, was

6 See Battel for a more detailed discussion of the difficult economic situation in the early years of the Free State and during the 1970s and 1980s (94-95).

affected by the economic crisis due to renewed unemployment, for instance because of the crash of the building sector and the threatening separation of Ireland from the realm of global players that middle-class entrepreneurship relied on. The economic crisis thus not only disappointed expectations, but also affected diverse identity issues and deepened social divisions (see Battel; Smyth).

When the crisis disrupted linear narratives of growth as well as progress, it opened the gateway to haunting, in Derrida's sense of the term. The invasion of the imagined community by national spectres thus highlighted circularity instead of linear progress. Taking into account the connotations of the French term *hantise*, the breakdown re-evoked fears and nagging memories of more dire living conditions inscribed in the national psyche. Moreover, it seemed to disrupt the border between present 'modern' reality and the colonial past. In this context, hauntology relates to a violence that interrupts a new order and that is central to the "national imaginary" (Molloy 143).[7]

Recourses and apparent anachronisms come to the fore when considering the modern individual subject in relation to its surroundings, i.e., by taking into account the "ties or bonds that compose us" (Butler 22).[8] As shown above, "[m]odes of masculinity must always be in shift/crisis/flux in order to redefine and be appropriate to the demands of a changing society" (Magennis and Mullen 3). Thus, masculinities, no matter if conceived of as ideals or negative types, need to be considered in relation to the expectations ingrained in family, community, and overall societal structures. Connections between gender and class – with the latter essentially linked to religion, at least before the second half of the twentieth century – traditionally manifest in stereotypes such as the patriot, the hard-working farmer, the desperate emigrant, the stern father of a large family, or the wealthy landowner in Ireland. Such connections highlight, once again, that masculinity cannot be considered "a coherent object" but is always to be viewed as an "aspect of a larger structure" (Connell 67).

While such stereotypes were apparently left behind with the transition of the Tiger Years, they resurfaced with a rising unemployment rate and the return of economic difficulties and mass emigration (Cardin 4). The rupture that the end of the Tiger came to signify can be regarded as a chance to confront the persistent modes of masculinity that may have still been lurking below the surface before 2008. As a moment of shift, then, the end of the Tiger also revealed "the dominant modes which are in operation" (Magennis and Mullen 4) and especially highlighted the liminal state of male identities between traditional expectations and the promise of newness of the Celtic Tiger. The return of the legacy of the past in form of spectres of Irish hegemonic

7 Molloy here talks about the "haunting of the national imaginary" (143) by the experience of death and mourning which resurfaces with spectres of poverty and emigration in times of economic crisis.

8 Butler wrote the essays published in *Precarious Life* as a response to US policies after 9/11, but despite this entirely different context, the fundamental truth of these words connects them to the dispossession of communal identity.

masculinity highlights the lack of a critical examination of such stereotypes during the Celtic Tiger. Post-Celtic Tiger literature eventually attended to such matters and thereby critically revisited the dominant cultural narrative of the Tiger years which relied on the severing of ties to the colonial and violent past.

Post-Celtic Tiger Literature: Donovan’s and Ryan’s Narratives of Community

Post-Celtic Tiger literature increasingly highlighted the impact of the world financial crisis on the country as a whole, on local communities, and on individuals when the disillusionment with the Celtic Tiger, its shallowness and false promises reached its climax in 2008. In this context, issues of gender and class (for example in regard to social division) and the legacy of Irish history were once again foregrounded in stories such as those collected in *Country of the Grand*. Such literary texts highlight how economic success and its promise of newness never resolved lasting issues: the “Celtic Tiger years merely covered up a past of suffering and victimhood that has never really been gone” (Haekel 26). When Post-Celtic Tiger literature concentrates on shock and caesura, it often critically deals with the neoliberal turn and the collective identity issues brought about by the (end of the) Celtic Tiger. The changed landscape is one visible marker of the collapse and soon, the “vocabulary of ‘ghostlands’, ‘ghost estates’, ‘zombie hotels’ and ‘haunted landscapes’ came to dominate the narrative of post-Celtic Tiger Ireland in the national news media, as well as in academic scholarship” (Cronin 80). The idea of the nation being haunted thus quickly re-emerged as an essential aspect of the national narrative and of Irish literature. As Haekel stresses, “[many] of the topics of Irish fiction have their roots in […] centuries-old history. First, there are general topics that haunt Irish fiction: questions regarding identity formation, nationalism, and religion” (22). While the theme of religion is mostly absent – and it is possible to interpret this lack as a comment on the erosion of the authority of the Catholic Church –, the texts discussed here illustrate that other dimensions of identity figure prominently in Post-Celtic Tiger literature. It does not only capture the moment of crisis, the shock, and the atmosphere of the time, but also highlights how the death of the Tiger disappointed national expectations and engendered the return of atemporal spectres of masculinity. Since these spectres relate to the temporal disjunction signified by the disruptive moment of the crisis, they invade discourses that informed diverse constructions of male identities during the Celtic Tiger period. As explained above, the crisis and its aftermath thus become a lens through which modes of masculinity can be critically revisited.

The texts discussed in this essay sharpen the view on a nation and on masculinity/ies in crisis due to multi-layered conflicts. When we regard the Irish nation, with Anderson, as an imagined community, and view families and small communities as microcosmic time-spaces, the focus on communities and their narratives is particularly worthwhile. The communities depicted in *Country of the Grand* – which centres on the area around Galway on the West coast, conventionally interpreted as the ‘real’ and

authentic Ireland – or in *The Spinning Heart*, set in a village in the West, do not signify premodern or preindustrial spaces. Therefore, the generic label only serves as a point of departure for a discussion of Donovan's and Ryan's narratives here. According to Zagarell, narratives of community

> take as their subject the life of a community […] and portray the […] ordinary processes through which the community maintains itself as an entity. The self exists here as part of the interdependent network of the community rather than as an individualistic unit. […] Narrative of community thus represents a coherent response to the social, economic, cultural, and demographic changes caused by industrialism, urbanization, and the spread of capitalism. (499)

Donovan's and Ryan's texts are no reactionary tales turning against modernity, but they dissect communities and identities by focussing on (the severing of) ties and the disruption of identities in moments of (looming) crisis, thereby highlighting connections between individual and collective or local and global, and drawing attention to intra-community roles and expectations. Hence, they still focus on everyday lives of small communities and on struggles of individuals to be part of a network in times of crisis. In addition to the thematic focus on reactions to a crisis that causes uncertainty regarding societal positions and identities, the form of these narratives contributes to their effect. Both texts can be classified as short story cycles, although *The Spinning Heart* was marketed as a novel.[9] The short story cycle is a particularly interesting form as it can be considered a hybrid genre oscillating between the "lonely voice" that marks the Irish short story according to Frank O'Connor, and the more encompassing view of the novel. The central characteristics of the short story cycle, such as "simultaneous self-sufficiency and interdependence" (Ingram qtd. in Brouckmans 87) of its parts and "a tension between unity and fragmentation" (Brouckmans 87), actually define the form of *The Spinning Heart* and *Country of the Grand* as well as the communities they depict. By establishing "diversity within unity" (Cardin 3), these short story cycles underline the dissection of (comm)unity through various subjective viewpoints and simultaneously allow for tracing connections, further highlighting how ties are severed or at least damaged through moments of haunting.

Spectres that disrupt linear history appear to Ryan's and Donovan's characters and take various forms, belying the belief that Ireland has successfully escaped from history and traditional roles or types of Irish masculinity. That such an escape from history is impossible without reprocessing becomes most visible in the male characters: they are increasingly insecure about their identities, roles, and their communities' expectations when haunted by diverse spectres that represent stereotypical forms of masculinity still inscribed in societal structures. These works thus exemplify the above-established connections between masculinity, economy, and dominant cultural

9 There are, however, good arguments for classifying the text as a composite novel (see D'hoker). Nevertheless, I will treat it as a cycle due to its structure and unification by a shared setting.

discourse (Magennis and Mullen 3). Although they apparently centre on personal crises, these narratives frequently foreground connections between individuals' and communities' insecurities and conflicts on the one hand, and between economy, class identity, and the legacy of the Irish past on the other.

Country of the Grand: The Shaky Foundations of New Middle-Class Masculinities

Donovan's thirteen stories capture the mood towards the end of the Celtic Tiger by depicting a society made insecure by wealth and economic boom. The stories are connected by this mood and by motifs that, for instance, relate to movement and paralysis in the wake of disruptions of personal life that affect the characters' self-images and identities. Both the ironic title and the epigraph – "Frailty, Thy Name Is Man" – of the cycle prepare readers for stories that do not praise Ireland's economic prosperity as successful departure from austerity and alterity.

The centre of Donovan's imagined community is located in the West of Ireland, which "came to represent an idealized Irish cultural past and a wellspring of inspiration for its future" (Cronin 84). Heinz et al. emphasize the prevalence of the image of Ireland as a nation that had "succeeded in keeping its unique cultural self and traditions that value the community, family and solidarity" (4). The notion of a preserved value system is particularly interesting with regard to narrative of community, as Zagarell emphasises that this form was used to express and maintain community values (503, 513). However, as Cronin also argues, the Celtic Tiger years effected a sense of displacement and disorientation that also affected traditions and values in many ways. In this regard, the liminal temporal and spatial positions of Donovan's characters allow for a further discussion of spectral presences in Ireland with regard to class-specific masculinities.

Temporality plays an essential role in this context: since the stories were written before the collapse of the economy, Cardin calls Donovan's short story cycle a "chronicle of a collapse foretold" (4). The sense of a collapse of a society that has already ceased to be a community permeates these stories, evoking a pervasive feeling of mourning and loss that the characters find difficult to pinpoint. Even though Donovan's characters continuously claim that all is well, or "grand", the feeling of an ungraspable threat persists and is underlined by Donovan's frequent use of hetero-diegetic voices and internal focalizers. This narrative situation evokes a feeling of closeness to the characters while simultaneously maintaining a distance. Since many of the stories collected here feature male protagonists[10] and their struggles with insecurities in a "new" Ireland, the narrative situation emphasizes the male character-focalizers' wilfully limited access to their own thoughts and feelings. The lack of

10 Not all of the thirteen stories focus on male middle-class protagonists, but these are clearly in the majority. For a discussion of the ironic paratexts, see Cardin.

introspection[11] on the part of many of Donovan's middle-class characters often results in hurtful epiphanies that are immediately pushed away. Insecure about their roles and identities and looking for membership in (imagined) past or present communities, they fantasize about belonging through wealth and social position, and thus gloss over the lack of rootedness. Many of these characters deny the problems in their private lives; they refuse to recognize the loss of connection to their surroundings. For instance, Jim, in "Morning Swimmers", only acknowledges the failure of his marriage when he accidentally overhears his friends discussing his wife's presumptive affair with an archaeologist.[12]

Jim is only one example of Donovan's male characters whose insecurity about their own position in relation to other people connects to the stereotype of male refusal and inability of introspection (Middleton 2, 10) on the one hand, and to the whole nation's belief in the empty signifier of the Celtic Tiger on the other. Their personal lives mirror how the dominant discourse of newness could only be upheld by the refusal to accept the present reality and the threat of invasion of glossed over issues and spectres from the past, which simultaneously threatened to shape the future. While linear temporality appears to have no alternative within the framework of (grand) narratives of progress, Derrida's theory of haunting hinges on temporal disorder and the spectre's capacity to expose the non-linearity of time (18-22). That haunting does not follow linear trajectories becomes apparent in Donovan's short stories as well. Pondering if the comings and goings of a spectre are ordered according to the linear succession of the past, present, and future, Derrida states: "If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general" (39). When we read Irish history as a linear narrative, the collapse of 2008 seems to mark a short break of progress only. However, it can also be seen as part of a narrative of change, as Morash argues in "Spectral Ireland": "Irish writing is still grappling with a more profound, existential crisis whose origins go back to the middle of the last century, but which took an acute form in the mid-1990s" (18). In addition, the dividing line between actual present reality and the spectre (Derrida 38) is never safely drawn and was certainly not safely drawn by the Celtic Tiger, as progress is not irreversible. Moreover, the spectres that invade Donovan's characters' lives also relate to spectres possibly lurking in the future, which is marked by insecurity and the dreaded loss of community in its smallest form – marriage and relationship.

Lost connections between married people prevail in the cycle. "How Long Until" revolves around Brenda and Peter, a married couple in their early thirties, and part of

11 For a detailed discussion of the lack of introspection and self-conscious writing, see Middleton.

12 Archaeologists feature frequently in several stories, highlighting the presence of the past.

“an upward class of *nouveau riche* whose major concern is the accumulation of wealth” (Cardin 165). The “substitute identity” (Buchanan, “Living” 300) of consumption in the Celtic Tiger years (Smyth 132) does not effect happiness and stability but rather presents Peter with a challenge. He and Brenda are on a symbolic journey West, from Dublin to Galway, when an advertisement for life insurance prompts him to ask Brenda how long she would wait until she slept with someone else if he died tomorrow. He immediately regrets his question and feels foolish but remains silent rather than talk about his feelings and his fear that he might already be competing with a rival without his knowledge. Peter longs for reassurance as a form of insurance (the word is repeated in different situations) but his insecurities are triggered and eventually reinforced by Brenda’s admission that she prefers a man who does not always present a “neat appearance” or who is not “so nice at all times” (Donovan 27). Peter’s job in the real estate sector requires a certain neat appearance, however, and he is not able to deal with Brenda’s wish for a man who is a “little bit of everything” (27).

Peter symbolizes a form of masculinity in a state of in-betweenness and is thus made insecure by the contrasting demands of his professional, public life on the one hand, and his private life in which he should perform a different role, on the other. He signifies a ‘modern’ type of man, the successful entrepreneur that stands in stark contrast to the traditional Irish stereotypes of, for instance, the hard-working farmer in the agricultural sector or the patriot fighting for his country. Despite Peter’s contribution to their sophisticated lifestyle and his embodiment of the ‘new’ Irish man of the Celtic Tiger, he cannot live up to his wife’s expectations that bear witness to more traditional modes of masculinity based on a strong binary understanding. The virtual impossibility of fulfilling both the expectations of his customers and Brenda’s wish for a stereotypical ‘manly man’ further highlights Peter’s insecurities, which were only glossed over by his adoption of a cosmopolitan male identity. While the ideological connection between modern masculinity and economy is rendered visible when Peter tells Brenda that he knows the type of man she wants him to be – “One who doesn’t have a job” (Donovan 27) – her wish exposes the instable foundation of their marriage and makes room for uncertainties and the threat of a spectre that is already waiting in the future. Following Eibhear Walshe’s argument that a form of masculinist nationalism, which originated in the Irish Literary Revival, suppressed counter-discourses, Magennis and Mullen state that the “male subject, in any way feminized, is troubling to the national consciousness” (4). The refusal to face insecurities, also with regard to his virility and sexual open-mindedness, and complex emotions, which are typically depicted as female problems, is poignantly emphasized when Peter wishes never to have said anything, “to have let it go and thought about it instead at three in the morning like anybody else” (Donovan 23). The spectral presence of hierarchical and heteronormative dichotomies highlights the lack of a nuanced debate over the adaptation of modes of masculinity (Magennis and Mullen 3) that would be accompanied by a deconstruction of these very binaries.

Just as “Ireland’s great economic miracle was built upon very, very shaky foundations” (Smyth 133), so is Peter and Brenda’s marriage and their individual sense of identity. “[B]oth working with their own careers, doing well, money in the bank, shopping trips to New York” (Donovan 24), they try to live up to an imagined “true” modern Irish identity, which is not marked by alterity but modelled on an American cosmopolitan consumer culture and thus threatens to become a simulacrum. Their reliance on consumer culture as the modern ideal shows how Brenda and Peter mistake financial well-being for happiness: when Peter asks Brenda “We’re speaking the truth here? We’re happy, aren’t we?” (Donovan 26), the very need to voice this question exposes the couple’s happiness as illusionary. This orientation towards consumer culture does not only contradict the established representation of Irish people “as the antithesis of materialistic values” (Heinz et al. 4). It also alludes to the shaky foundations of an overall new Irish identity, and especially of middle-class masculinity as presented by Peter, highlighting the shallowness of Irish society’s modernization and the instable performativity of new masculinities.

Both Jim and Peter are afraid of loneliness and long for companionship. The longing for belonging is also foregrounded by the character of Frank Delaney in “Country of the Grand”. The solicitor is overwhelmed by his sense of disbelonging and retraces his steps to the past only to find the house where he grew up inaccessible and altered: extensions have been added to the once familiar house that is now inhabited by somebody else. At the same time, his wife wants to buy property in Westport that, according to her, is the “next Galway” (55) and thus the next boom town. The idea of a “society that tried running before it had learned to walk” (O’Connor) is highlighted when Frank decides to participate in a race to beat the daughter of a colleague against whom he had lost in his youth. Trying to keep up with the better prepared runners, Frank does not only ruin his expensive tailor-made suit that symbolizes his wealth, he also eventually collapses. The character Frank appears as a synecdoche for the whole nation (see also Cardin 4-5) and thus “Country of the Grand” can be read as a bitterly ironic, allegorical comment on the Celtic Tiger period.

Unable to attend his wife’s dinner party in such a state, Frank walks even further until he arrives at the farm where he grew up, only to find it altered and unwelcoming as well. Frank’s nostalgia is no mere longing for the past; it also affects his sense of himself as a successful man. Eventually, sitting at the now empty dinner table after the guests have left, he imagines a rival competing for the company of his wife and wonders if he could tell his wife that this morning, “he had cried, suddenly and with great force” (Donovan 67) while sitting in his car in front of the house he once lived in: “Was that what a successful solicitor does?” (67). His inability to amalgamate his needs and emotions with his image of a successful (male) solicitor can be traced back to the persistence of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, the story not only ties in with the spectral presence of stereotypical masculinity in a changing society and with Derrida’s haunting in the sense of *hantise*, understood as an obsession, fear, or nagging memory (4n2), but also with the modernization of the ‘authentic

West' as a time-space. The character Frank, with his longing for any kind of connection to the past and for a community that he seeks but does not dare to enter, thus exemplifies that the "fabric of the Irish experience of space and time as a culture that was in some respects pre-modern came into collision with modernity" (Morash 13).

The Spinning Heart: Haunted Working-Class Masculinities

The ties constitutive of a community and its individual members become particularly evident in times of loss and mourning. While established ideas of Irishness styled the community as an antidote to the frequent political and socio-economic caesuras of Irish history, the Celtic Tiger and capitalist ideology affected imagined ties in local communities by offering new models that were again disrupted by the collapse in 2008. As Butler says, "[i]t is not as if an 'I' exists independently over here. When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do." (22) The impossibility of an independent "I" is emphasized in Ryan's polyphonic narrative, which consists of twenty-one monologues narrated by twenty-one different characters. While the form of Ryan's narrative does not allow for a classic protagonist, Bobby Mahon emerges as its central character who is referenced in all the monologues and whose fate is entangled with the country's and the community's development. *The Spinning Heart* here seems to follow an inverted principle of the narrative of community which "typically exemplifies modes of interdependence among community members" (Zagarell 503). In *The Spinning Heart*, the members' narratives constitute the community as a network. Relations and interdependence are revealed on various levels and via different motifs. One of these is Bobby's performative masculinity that only hides his insecurities but still turns him into a role model, until rumours about his affair with the "blow-in" Réaltín – one of the only two inhabitants of Pokey's "disaster area" (Ryan 122) – and the accusation that he murdered his father lead to his fall from the position as saviour-like figure and effect his exclusion.

Set in a village in the West in 2010, the narrative focuses on a microcosmic space to highlight the tension between the image of a stereotypical rural village space and the altered Irish land- and mindscape. It imagines how the village community as microcosm focusses attention on (performative) endeavours to maintain class and gender identities in relation to a community falling apart in times of "deepening social divisions" (Battel 105). The glocal[13] collapse comes to signify a rupture in time that allows for the entrance of spectres of Irish history and of its connected forms of dominant masculinity discourses. The different generations' struggles with masculinity exemplify the lasting effect and influence of such discourses and types. The narrative begins with Bobby Mahon's monologue, which sketches the dire situation of the village. Due to the bankruptcy of the local building company owned by Pokey Burke, who de-

13 The term "glocal" designates the interconnectedness of global and local levels as well as their reciprocal influence.

frauded his employees of social security benefits and fled the country, many of the villagers are left without employment but with a ghost estate and anger at a man whom they never respected but who was still able to betray them: they were "[r]obbed [...] not even by a man, but by a little prick." (Ryan 11)

While space and time are integral to such struggles again, hegemony features all the more heavily in this microcosm. In a different context, Derrida asserts that "[a]t a time when a new world disorder is attempting to install its neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism, […] hegemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony" (37). In the context of neo-capitalism and new disorder, hegemonic masculinity emerges as the structuring principle of a haunted community. The concept of hegemony applied by Connell derives from Gramsci's analysis of class relations and refers to cultural dynamics; it is a "historically mobile relation" (Connell 77). For Connell, "the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity" are not always "the most powerful people" (77) because wealth or institutional power also play into such hegemonies. "Nevertheless", continues Connell, "hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual" (77). While Bobby's insecurities relate to his endeavour to be the "manly man" (Ryan 98) that others see in him and thus to live up to their expectations, the struggle for 'real' masculinity even propels the plot when characters strive to adhere to the economic and power-related aspects of masculinity. Suddenly unemployed, many of Ryan's male characters suffer from stereotypical gender roles and ideals, making them "victims of societal expectations that failed as a whole" (Altuna-García de Salazar 91). Such stereotypes become increasingly harmful to intra-community relations, leading to the kidnapping of Réaltín's son by the Montessori teacher Trevor and to the murder of Frank Mahon by Denis, who is shunned by his economically successful wife.

At the same time, Bobby's monologue evokes classic motifs of Irish literature, such as the dysfunctional family and the violent father, by providing insights into his own insecurities that spring from a childhood marked by the despotic behaviour of his father Frank. Together, Bobby's and Frank's monologues provide a perspective on the transmission of violence across generations. They simultaneously highlight the prevailing silence of Irish men in the face of crisis. Bobby suffered from his tyrannical father who verbally abused and psychologically injured his son, despite the fact that he was a victim of his own father's physical violence. Frank wonders "how it is that [he] was able to do to Bobby exactly what was done to [him]" (Ryan 145) without ever being able to tell him that he is a "good man" (Ryan 140). The "spectre of violence" (Magennis and Mullen 2) eventually forcefully invades, and thereby connects, the lives of Denis, Bobby, and Frank. The notion of aggressive masculinity was integral to traditional models of hegemonic masculinity (Magennis and Mullen 7) and re-surfaces when Denis fails to cope with his new situation – at home without work where his wife is "only barely tolerating [him]" (Ryan 120) – after the collapse of the Irish building sector. Taking into account Butler's and Connell's seminal work on

performativity and hegemonic masculinity, Magennis and Mullen ponder how dominant discourse in the twenty-first century sees masculinity as vulnerable and perpetually in crisis. They claim that, instead of a "nuanced debate over whether modes of masculinity should adapt and change" (3), the idea of emasculation of a generation is present in the popular press, for instance. Within this framework, Denis is relegated to a 'feminized' position of powerlessness and financial dependence on his wife, who perpetuates the neoliberal turn. While Denis is unable to obtain the "near a hundred grand" (Ryan 121) owed to him by former contractees, his wife maximizes profit by exploiting the employees of her crèche. Denis thus suddenly fails to adhere to the dominant discourse of productive and proud (working-class) masculinity of the Tiger period and actualizes the stereotypical male aggression potential instead. When his anger and aggression increase, he first damages a car and starts thinking about hitting his wife (Ryan 122), but eventually loses control when, while in search for Bobby, he meets Frank. Frank's insults and laugh remind Denis of his own father and the abuse he suffered from during his youth. The trauma of transgenerational violence makes Denis lose control and, thinking he is killing his own father, he beats Bobby's father to death.

Even though Bobby himself breaks this circle of violence when he becomes a father, the dominant image of masculinity he performs lasts, also in the code of silence he seems to follow. Unable to answer for himself in the face of false accusations, Bobby even remains silent in front of his wife Triona and his friends, letting the community condemn him rather than speak for himself, which results in Triona's despair. The traditional connection between masculinity and the trope of silence, also evoked in the case of Donovan's middle-class characters Peter and Frank, seems to anticipate the impossibility of profound and stable bonds between men as long as stereotypical Irish masculinities prevail.[14] As Madden argues, traditional hegemonic masculinities foreclose male intimacy (78), rendering "structures of affect and feeling [unavailable] to self-consciousness and self-reflection" (Magennis and Mullen 8). While Donovan's characters shy away from self-analysis through introspection (see Middleton), the structure of *The Spinning Heart* allows for a different view. The deep insights the characters offer in their monologues provide a stark contrast to the silence that prevails in their relationships, particularly when they are confronted with problems and emotions.

While the time of the boom suppressed competition between the men in the village, the collapse provides a time-space for the return of such struggles. Bobby was respected by his working-class colleagues and the wealthy Burkes, but when Pokey loses his and his employees' money through speculation and financial crisis, such respect between men can only be voiced in the monologues, which allow for more direct access to the characters' thoughts than Donovan's mediated stories. This is exemplified by Pokey's father Josie Burke: "I snapped [at Bobby] out of crossness

14 For a discussion of heteroglossia and silence, see Altuna-García de Salazar.

with myself. I was too ashamed to look the man in the eye. [...] Pokey was more than half-afraid of Bobby Mahon. He wished he *was* Bobby Mahon" (Ryan 22). This wish is shared by some of the male members of the village community, as Brian's monologue reveals. The young man tries to live up to an imagined masculine essence he sees in Bobby, whom he regards as a "proper man" to whom "[t]hings come easy" even though he thinks Bobby is not the "brightest star in the firmament" (Ryan 60). Brian's longing to "be Bobby Mahon" appears ironical because they already share hidden insecurities. Furthermore, Bobby has worked hard to hide his intelligence in order not to be praised by his English teacher, for instance (14-15) – the same teacher whose praise Brian can hardly stand since it does not correspond to his idea of 'real' masculinity (Ryan 59). While Brian envies Bobby for his assumed virility, an image evoked by Bobby's marriage to Triona and his alleged affair with Réaltín, Bobby is convinced that Triona "let herself down when she married [him]" instead of one of "them smart boys that got real money out of the boom: the architects, solicitors, auctioneers" (Ryan 12-13). Bobby thereby again highlights how issues of class and wealth figure in hegemonic masculinity and power relations between men in general.

Masculinity and class are also emphasized through a spectre that seemed to be absent from Celtic Tiger Ireland but that is re-introduced by Brian before his work-and-travel trip to Australia. Trying to ironically distance himself from the situation, he asserts that he is "going to Australia in the context of a severe recession, and therefore [he is] a tragic figure, a modern incarnation of the poor tenant farmer […] forced to choose between the coffin ship and the grave" (Ryan 57). Brian thus evokes an idea of ongoing crisis in a quickly changing environment that unavailingly attempted "to separate old from new, local from global, and past from present", as Buchanan states ("Living" 300). The impossibility of such a separation is also emphasised by Derrida's assertion that spectrality throws into doubt borders between "the reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it" (39), such as absence. The spectre hence "challenges the present in the name of both the past (that returns) and a future yet-to-be" (Molloy 140) and thus implies a breakdown of the boundaries between apparently different temporalities. The seeming anachronism of the poor tenant farmer in a time of "newness" relates to time "out of joint" particularly "when 'things are going badly'" (Derrida 22); Brian's recourse to the past thus alludes to a strange simultaneity of discourses and paradigms. Drawing on Derrida, such a reading of *The Spinning Heart* allows for seeing how presence is ordered and distributed in two directions of absence – what is no longer and what is not yet (25). This insight also appeals to masculinity and inheritance of spectres of masculinity, and it pertains to the question if future change is even possible for a younger generation. Brian symbolizes a generation positioned in a liminal space between real and imagined borders, between conservative ideals and longing for new experiences. However, his orientation towards a role model who shares the same insecurities can be seen in the light of the simulacrum. At the same time, his

turn towards the past, in terms of traditional masculinity and Irish history, seems to prefigure the impossibility of change as healing as long as harmful ideals of masculinity prevail.

Conclusion

In *The Spinning Heart* and *Country of the Grand*, the characters’ feelings of disappointment as well as of spatial and temporal displacement relate to the emergence of spectres from Irish history that again threatened to shape their present and future when the Celtic Tiger was disclosed as a sham. Suffering and bleak prospects are connected to the severing of interpersonal connections, especially when the expectation of male strength prevents Ryan’s and Donovan’s characters from voicing their struggles and fears. As Altuna-García de Salazar states, “it is silence that reigns, a silent dialogising discourse. Ryan’s characters need a way to represent the move from affluence to bust, but cannot find a collective voice.” (99) The inability to find a voice is most obvious in the case of Frank Mahon, whose monologue in *The Spinning Heart* comes from the mouth of a ghost, now a spectre whose haunting presence had already shaped his son’s life when he was still alive.

Although the “social and psychological matrices of real-life Irish masculinity are obviously complex” (Foster 24), the texts discussed in this essay succeed in engaging with these complexities as well as with the stereotypical legacies of Irish masculinities. The different subjective viewpoints of Ryan’s and Donovan’s narratives hold up a mirror to society, forcing readers to reflect on the loss of values and the refusal to acknowledge problems that the Celtic Tiger years covered up with consumption instead of attempting to solve them. National and communal issues are unveiled in these stories when the logic of haunting, as a violent act, interrupts a new order by deconstructing the boundaries between past and present and allowing spectres of Irish history and identity to invade ‘modern’ Ireland. Both works highlight the complexity of societal structures and the intricate connections between, for instance, gendered expectations, class issues, and the economy. Although *The Spinning Heart* and *Country of the Grand* present a mostly homogeneous society – they hardly feature immigrants or homosexual characters, for example – they emphasize the need to critically examine stereotypes and expectations that relate to hegemonic masculinity in a moment of disruption and shifting paradigms. This moment of shift allows for recognizing the still dominant stereotypes and ideologies that masculinity, as “an unfixed signifier” (Magennis and Mullen 3), is tied to. By highlighting and, to some extent, countering stereotypes and dominant cultural narratives, Ryan’s and Donovan’s works offer the possibility to account for both the past and the future through an exploration of the ties or bonds that compose communities and individual identities.

Works Cited

Altuna-García de Salazar, Asier. "Polyphony, Provincialism, Nostalgia and Involution in Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland: Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (2012)." *English Studies* 100.1 (2019): 90-107.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London/New York: Verso, 1991.

Battel Ní Mháille, Róisín. "Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' Economy." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 28.1 (2003): 93-111. 15 Jan. 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1558024>.

Brouckmans, Debbie. "Bridging Tradition and Modernity: George Moore's Short Story Cycle *The Untilled Field.*" *The Irish Short Story: Traditions and Trends.* Ed. Elke D'hoker and Stephanie Eggermont. New York: Peter Lang, 2015. 85-103.

Buchanan, Jason. "Living at the End of the Irish Century: Globalization and Identity in Declan Hughes's *Shiver*." *Modern Drama* 52.3 (2009): 300-324.

-----. "Ruined Futures: Gentrification as Famine in Post-Celtic Tiger Irish Literature." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 63.1 (2017): 50-72.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.

Cardin, Bertrand. "Country of the Grand by Gerard Donovan, or the Chronicle of a Collapse Foretold." *Journal of the Short Story in English. Les Cahiers de la nouvelle* 63 (2014): 1-10. 1 Dec. 2016. <https://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1517>.

Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2005.

Cronin, Nessa. "Archaeologies of the Future: Landscapes of the 'New Ireland' in Gerard Donovan's *Country of the Grand*." *The Irish Review* 54 (2018): 80-93. 18 Jan. 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48564059>.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

D'hoker, Elke. "A Continuum of Fragmentation: Distinguishing the Short Story Cycle from the Composite Novel." *Constructing Coherence in the British Short Story Cycle.* Ed. Patrick Gill and Florian Kläger. New York: Routledge, 2018. 17-31.

Donovan, Gerard. *Country of the Grand.* London: Faber and Faber, 2008.

Foster, John Wilson. "Corrigibly Plural? Masculinity in Life and Literature." *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture*. Ed. Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011. 13-34.

Haekel, Ralf. “Post-National Literature? Post-Celtic Tiger Fiction and the Canon of Irish Literature.” *Anglistik* 31.2 (2020): 19-33.

Heinz, Sarah, et al. “Recent Ireland: Visions and Revisions of Irishness from the 1990s to Today: Introduction.” *Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English*. Vol. 34. Ed. Sarah Heinz et al. Trier: WVT, 2012. 3-19.

Leerssen, Joep. *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century.* Cork: Cork UP, 1996.

Madden, Ed. “Exploring Masculinity: Proximity, Intimacy and *Chicken*.” *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture*. Ed. Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011. 77-88.

Magennis, Caroline, and Raymond Mullen. “Introduction.” *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture*. Ed. Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011. 1-11.

Middleton, Peter. *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture.* London: Routledge, 1992.

Molloy, Edward. “Racial Capitalism, Hauntology and the Politics of Death in Ireland.” *Identities* 28.2 (2021): 129-46.

Morash, Christopher. “Spectral Ireland: After the Celtic Tiger.” *Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English*. Vol. 34. Ed. Sarah Heinz et al. Trier: WVT, 2012. 11-19.

O’Connor, Joseph. “Riding the Celtic Tiger.” *The Guardian.* 9 Aug. 2008. 24 Jan. 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/aug/09/fiction1>.

Ryan, Donal. *The Spinning Heart*. London: Doubleday Ireland, 2014.

Smyth, Gerry. “Irish National Identity After the Celtic Tiger.” *Estudios Irlandeses* 7 (2012): 132-37.

Wolfreys, Julian, et al., eds. *Key Concepts in Literary Theory.* 2nd ed. Edinburgh UP, 2006.

Zagarell, Sandra A. “Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre.” *Signs* 13.3 (1988): 498-527. 31 Aug. 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174170>.

POST-AGREEMENT BORDER INFRINGEMENTS AND LISTICLE FRAMING IN MICHELLE GALLEN'S *BIG GIRL, SMALL TOWN*

Jessica Bundschuh

Establishing an Episodic Frame

Michelle Gallen's debut novel, *Big Girl, Small Town* (2020), belongs to a growing body of novels with neurodiverse protagonists – like Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) or Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* (2018) – who discover paths for navigating stagnant localities and model these escape routes for readers. To structure this potentially tricky interaction with Majella O'Neill, a twenty-seven-year-old autistic protagonist burdened by a sensory over-responsivity, Gallen's novel mediates the encounter through a structural frame.

What makes this example of post-Agreement literature so remarkable is how adeptly Gallen materializes the hyper-sensitivities of her protagonist in the very form of her novel itself. Prior to the first vignette – situated in the hypothetical Northern Irish border town of Aghybogey approximately six years after the Good Friday Agreement – readers may pause over a listicle-key that frames the entire narrative: "The full list of things Majella wasn't keen on extended to ninety-seven items, with subcategories for each item" (Gallen 1). This act of framing has great import for what is ahead. As Irish poet Vona Groarke explains in her book-length essay *Four Sides Full* (2016), a "frame concentrates the eye; it homes in and accentuates", and, as a result, it prevents a subject from being "overwhelmed by too much detail" (47). This applies equally to the protagonist and the reader of *Big Girl, Small Town*, such that instead of meditating on "the totality of human suffering", a frame provides the taxonomic structure to isolate "one take, one experience" (Groarke 47). Thus, Gallen's reader would find it helpful to pause at the transitional threshold of this opening listicle-key, following Groarke's lead – "[p]repare yourself, there will be a crossing. So draw breath" (12) – and, thereby, acknowledge it as a concentrated site of empowerment:

> A frame is a practical thing (for protection) […]
> A frame is magic (it transforms)
> A frame makes itself clear. […]
> A frame defines. A frame encloses.
> A frame completes.
> A frame declares that what's inside
> is worthy of a frame. (Groarke 12)

In *Big Girl, Small Town*, Gallen enlists the grounding device of the listicle, above all, as a coping strategy for a protagonist to better meet challenges she faces on a daily basis. With great precision, Gallen's schema of time and date-stamped episodic vignettes demarcates, values, and protects Majella, as Groarke describes above. The temporal compression of one week in November of 2004, the same week in

which the Bloody Sunday Inquiry concludes, is also of significance. Herein, Gallen's episodic structure replicates geographic and psychic borders in Northern Ireland, but on a small scale: "*2.22 p.m. Item 40.6: The political situation: Commemorations, marches and flag waving*" (53). Readers co-inhabit within this ordered and compressed space as a means to interact with a neurodiverse protagonist otherwise difficult to reach. That is, for Majella, visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory stimulations trigger in her a response of sensory defensiveness. Thus, Gallen's gift of a frame enables Majella to more nimbly navigate her spatial, social, and linguistic interactions within the novel. Readers, too, may experience in bite-size bits the exposures and vulnerabilities of being immersed in a community in which Majella finds few sites of safety.

On a larger scale, Gallen's neurodiverse narrator prompts a profound re-evaluation of the act of bordering. Indeed, through the techniques of listing, repetition, ordering, and fragmentation, the novel focuses on assets innate to autistic language, namely, "the startling creativity inherent in the list form and its potential to upend or destabilize the categories it purportedly inscribes"; in this way, Gallen challenges "notions of autistic discretion as inorganic, robotic, or computer-like" (Rodas 26) and this provocation transfers to other forms of discretion, as well. That is, *Big Girl, Small Town* questions the stereotypes shaping various manifestations of borders (or the lack thereof), both in the microcosm and the macrocosm. For instance, in the claustrophobic setting of Post-Agreement Aghybogey, a disabling and *negative* liminality threatens the forward-looking growth of a locale where the loosening of its borders has not, correspondingly, expanded its population's mindset. Here, an emergence of *positive* liminality becomes thwarted (at least for the time being), undermining the chance to set aside long-standing and divisive ideologies, like the sectarian violence inflicted upon Majella's own family.

This argument proposes reading Gallen's listicle frame as a permeable and double-edged border in which narrator and reader may dwell in a site of shared contact situated porously both inside and outside of the narrative action. Of significance here is the fact that the listicle allows readers to approach a potentially marginalized subject *relationally* and without judgment. Thus, a repositioning of identity as relational and network-driven not only deflects the hierarchies and tribalisms that diminish a hypothetical border town, it also deliberately undermines the mechanical pigeon-holing of subjects (and localities): dividing those some may perceive as 'impaired' and 'challenged' from those some may perceive, by contrast, as 'able-bodied' and 'healthy'. With delicious irony, Gallen carries out this provocation to 'boxed-in' thinking via a grid-like structure. Ensconced within this frame, Majella becomes a keen interpreter of a post-Agreement border experience for those readers willing to join her in a detailed taxonomy of her discomforts and occasional pleasures.

Hiding in Plain Sight

The front cover blurbs on the paperback first edition of *Big Girl, Small Town* in the UK and Europe immediately alert readers to its kinship with Troubles fiction: "*Milkman* meets *Derry Girls*. A cracking read", as does the fact that the actress, Nicola Coughlan, who plays Clare on the Netflix series *Derry Girls*, reads the audio book version. Gallen, herself, also contributes to this genre designation with an epigraph selection from Anna Burns's *Milkman* (which appears in italics in the original):

> *What if we accept these points of light, their translucence, their brightness; what if we let ourselves enjoy this, stop fearing it, get used to it; what if we come to believe in it, to expect it, to be impressed upon by it; what if we take hope and forgo our ancient heritage and instead, and infused, begin to entrain with it, with ourselves then to radiate it; what if we do that, get educated up to that, and then, just like that, the light goes off or is snatched away?* (90)

Burns's penetrating representation of an unnamed subject who endures the Northern Ireland conflict establishes an apt historical context for Gallen's post-Good Friday Agreement border narrative. Here, in the form of a hypothetical question, Burns makes an appeal for a transparent and open acceptance of those brave enough to radiate light from the inside out, despite the community-endorsed surveillance in effect. This appeal applies equally to the "beyond-the-pales" (Burns 91), or marginalized figures, lighting up a gossipy Aghybogey. That is, in relation to our neurodiverse protagonist, Burns's call for acceptance becomes doubly pronounced. The inclusion of this *Milkman* epigraph, enclosing the listicle frame, enables Gallen to appeal *directly* to readers in petitioning for patience for the idiosyncratic, the irregular and the extraordinary; further, Gallen asks readers to avoid an automatic privileging of the comfortable and conforming position, since the implications of such a preference are vast: "*the light goes off or is snatched away?*" (Burns 90; emphasis added). This final question mark is important because the decision to set aside judgement remains before the reader, who now has a chance to enter the listicle frame more thoughtfully and sympathetically.

In a personal interview in Berlin in February 2022, Gallen disclosed an additional personal and political context for her selection of this *Milkman* epigraph, namely, the death of twenty-nine-year-old Northern Irish journalist Lyra McKee on 18 April 2019. Thus, this passage from Burns becomes a literary stand-in for McKee herself, since it had been Gallen's initial wish to dedicate *Big Girl, Small Town* to McKee, a close friend who had been sending her own manuscript to publishers at the same time as Gallen. McKee's aspirations, tragically, were disrupted by a stray bullet from the New IRA that killed her during a riot she was observing on the eve of the annual Easter Rising commemorative parades in Derry. And McKee's murder – like that of Majella's grandmother – remained initially unsolved, until four individuals were attested under the Terrorism Act in September 2021.

In an interview for *The Irish Independent*, Gallen likewise establishes this direct connection between McKee and *Milkman*: "'[Lyra] was one of your bright shiny lights', [Gallen] says, quoting Anna Burns" (Armstrong). Interestingly, not only had McKee and Burns shared the same editor at Faber and Faber, but they had both attended (decades apart) the same North Belfast high school. Most importantly, Gallen's invocation of Burns's Troubles novel at the opening of her tale set in 2004 suggests an eerie synchronicity, wherein an innocent bystander in 2019 (yet again) could be killed by sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. That is, this state of nervous agitation that characterizes a great deal of Post-Agreement literature reveals an anxiety that brutality could erupt at any time anew, striking down individuals like McKee – named by *The Irish Times* as one of the rising young Irish writers to watch in 2019 – who might represent the bright future of Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement. Still, despite the continued vulnerability of fictional and nonfictional subjects alike, both Burns and Gallen ultimately appeal to hope, and this sentiment was even felt in the weeks following McKee's death when "[t]he graffiti in Creggan was replaced with community paintings based on lines from Lyra's work" (McKay).

To tell the story of Majella, a subject wholly different from Lyra McKee, Gallen opts for narrative distance. That is, as opposed to the first-person address in *Milkman*, Gallen's novel employs third person. Thus, the facilitator of access to Majella, arranging the interactions within the boundaries of a listicle grid – "Tuesday. *6.49 p.m. Item 20.1: The security forces: The Brits*" (62) – never leaves readers alone with the protagonist. In this way, readers remain cognizant at all times of the larger temporal and social context in which Majella's minutiae resides. Still, Gallen takes care to not make Majella into a cipher, akin to an autistic riddle to unpack or a case study to simplify and diagnose. As Gallen explains in a *Kirkus* interview,

> I kept being asked this question, *What's wrong with Majella?* I knew she was kind of unusual. […] I decided to read up a bit more on the female presentation of autism, and when I started even the most basic reading of it, I was like, *Oh my God. OK*. I realized that I created a portrait of an autistic woman. […] *What's wrong with Majella?* There's nothing wrong with Majella. She's an undiagnosed autistic woman. And she's fascinating. (Beer)

With the novel's inception in mind, we might approach Majella in relation to autism-centred literature, which Julia Miele Rodas argues in *Autistic Disturbances* (2018) reveals a set of "descriptors of autistic expressive practice" (4). A number of these qualities (selectively collected below) would likely be treated dismissively in their presentation in the individual subject: "*abrupt, adept, circular, creative, eccentric, fragmented, hermetic, hiding, inflexible, listing, literalness, mimicry, narrational gaps, nonsocial, oddness, private, puns, repetition, rigid, self-sufficient, stereotyped, systemizing, and wittiness*" (4). In contrast, these same qualities would likely be prized in a literary context. Thus, although it is difficult to develop a theoretical approach to autistic practice without pointing out and naming in a manner that might objectify Majella's refreshing ability to act as a perceptive guide to her own border

experience, this investigation intends to recognize Majella's strengths as broadly as possible, just as Gallen herself has done.

In contrast to Majella's ironic distancing from the events at hand, the media within Gallen's temporal frame persists in its alarmist coverage carried over from the Troubles, and those characters surrounding Majella are also reeled in: "Majella's ma first sucked up the misery on BBC Northern Ireland before switching to UTV for a slightly different angle and camera footage" and "[t]hings only got worse after peace broke out". On top of this, Majella's personal tragedy has become part of the news coverage: "*the death early last week of eighty-five-year-old Mrs Margaret O'Neill is being treated as murder*" (7-8). As one might anticipate, the death of Majella's grandmother, "the first notorious death in the town since the Ceasefire was declared in 1994" (192), leaves Majella feeling vulnerable and exposed "in a town in which there was nowhere to hide, so people", Majella explains, "hide stuff in plain sight" (14). The irony here is that while Majella might be viewed as private and hermetic by those around her, readers recognize that she, unlike most of the residents of Aghybogey, actually hides nothing.

The mystery of *Big Girl, Small Town* is not *who* killed Majella's grandmother. Indeed, Gallen does not privilege a conventional build up before exposing the guilty party; rather, towards the end of the novel, two characters casually mention in passing, and without any sense of closure, certitude, or motive, that the potential murderer, Jimmy Nine Pints, has been arrested. Interestingly, it is the sheer magnitude of Majella's minutiae-driven listicle of preferences and dislikes that buries information likely to garner more space and pause in a conventional mystery. It is here – in a closed and splintered community – that Majella can neither escape her six-year, six-nights-a-week interface with Jimmy Nine Pints, nor avoid his obnoxious joke that concludes every interaction:

> Majella snapped the till shut, which was the trigger for Jimmy's joke.
> Jimmy shifted his weight, then leaned in closer to the counter. – D'ye want a bit of my sausage? […] Majella waited for the usual five seconds before replying with the line Marty'd given her six years ago.
> – I'll batter yer sausage if you're not careful, now. (19-20)

This tired joke is performatively acted out multiple times over the course of the novel until Jimmy Nine Pints is finally lifted by the police on suspicion of murder; in each occasion, it acts as stinging reminder of Majella's precarity in a landscape of sublimated violence. Yet it shows us, too, that Majella's seemingly rote response has become the *real* punchline for which everyone waits: "Then Marty joined in with the laughter for boysadear [oh my goodness] it was some joke now" (20), and Majella herself is definitively not the butt of this joke.

Challenging a Pathological Reading of Structure

Powerfully, Majella becomes an interlocutor who offers readers an unfamiliar vantage point from which to view a post-Agreement Northern Ireland; in effect, she grants readers a heightened sensitivity to forced change. As a subject with sensory over-responsivity, Majella constructs her day-to-day existence with *minimal* sensory stimulation. For instance, on multiple occasions over the course of the novel, Majella checks her phone, pleased – rather than disheartened – by the static affirmation of "[n]o new messages" (308). Outside of her compulsory interactions at work, Majella prefers isolation, since it is "people who switched on lights, made noise, sweated and fought, wept and shouted" (2). For many years, her interactions have remained narrow and predictable. But the death of Majella's grandmother, one of the few persons she cherished, presents an opportunity, if an uncomfortable one, for a new perspective.

Aside from limiting her interactions with others, Majella also controls her sensory 'diet' as much as possible, from avoiding the tactile experience of rough or "clunky" textures, like the way jewellery "cut[s] into her flesh" (46), or the "way the carpet scratched her knees", to restricting her gustatory pleasure to the same meal each night: "Majella had reached the bottom of the pack, where the chips and fish were mushed together. This was her favourite bit, with salt and vinegar in each mouthful." (32) As this description makes clear, Majella savours selective sensory pleasures on her own terms; after all, the opening listicle-key of what Majella likes includes "[e]ating", Smithwick's Irish Ale, and sex (2).

Majella's self-protection focuses, in particular, on her spatial physicality, like the "too-tight envelope of her overalls" (247) and the nest-like enclosure of her bedroom: "Majella locked her bedroom door, plugged in the fan heater, and then climbed into bed to eat" (30). Fittingly, Majella's biggest expenditure in the novel is a "double duck down duvet" (104), a new duvet cover, and a down pillow. Encased in feathers, Majella fabricates a literal nest where she gathers the "duvet up into a cave around herself before going still so she could feel the feathers settling back down" (106). Ultimately, working the nightshift and isolating herself to a darkened and locked bedroom during daylight hours relegates Majella, both literally and metaphorically, to the shadows and margins. Thus, despite the benefits inherent to this coping strategy, Majella's preference for containment ensures that she remain in a perpetual state of waiting, like Northern Ireland itself in the immediate years following the Good Friday Agreement.

It is important to note, however, that Majella's reliance on routine is not a pejorative state of second-best; it is her preferred temporality. And it is what enables her to act as a figure of stability for those around her, like her mother, mostly drunk on the couch, or her co-worker, Marty, who relies on her skill of perfecting golden chips in the fryer: "Marty wasn't as particular about the chips being done evenly, which bugged her" (13). Above all, what Majella appreciates most about temporality is her gift for precisely engineering and then measuring moments of synchronicity: "The

kettle switch flicked up and the toaster popped at the same time, sending a surge of pleasure through Majella." (6) Thus, while subjects with autism may "have difficulty grasping abstract concepts, like envisioning the future, such as where they see themselves in 5 years' time" (Favis), the upside is their ability to relish in the present.

As Majella's temporal precision and nesting behaviour suggest, Gallen chooses to duplicate the novel's listicle structure in its subject matter. This is warranted by the fact that the list as a trope is rich in its applicability, longevity, and variety. While readers today may primarily encounter the listicle as a contemporary phenomenon ideal for digital content divided into nuggets easy to digest, Umberto Eco contends that the "list is the origin of culture", making "infinity comprehensible" through its drive for order, and its calculated embrace of an anarchy it tames. From Homer, to Joyce's *Ulysses*, a list – akin to one guiding curators in an exhibit at the Louvre – has, Eco argues, "an irresistible magic" as a "mark of a highly advanced, cultivated society" willing to "question essential definitions" (Beyer and Gorris). It is worth noting that the term 'listicle', a portmanteau derived from 'list' and 'article', is rooted in the German word *Leiste*, meaning strip, edge, or border.

The overarching effect of Gallen's listicle – like in any collection, from Homer's ships to the Louvre's Italian sculptures – is that each item nestled in a subcategory of the list ultimately foregrounds the borders of the larger structure of which it is part, as already discussed in terms of Gallen's third-person narration. In analogous fashion, the list also reinforces liminal interconnections *across* borders and categories. Indeed, the novel's title, *Big Girl, Small Town*, places a great deal of weight on the solitary comma that connects the protagonist *to* her locality. Additionally, the title signals the snugness of this cramped relationship, carrying symbolic resonances beyond the literalness of Majella's heft, or the number of residents in Aghybogey. This "inclination toward verbal ordering and listing is associated with what is typically identified as systemizing or, within the traditional pathologizing framework, as 'hyper-systemizing'" (Rodas 13-14). That is, the craving for order and structure that has defined autism since its inception, has "also set the tone for a broader cultural dismissal, casting autism's recursive idiosyncratic activities, interests, and gestures in negative terms" (Rodas 14).

When we recast such ordering as relational, however, we may appreciate the way in which it broadly serves a valuable function, in addition to being reciprocal. Accordingly, Gallen, in line with her title, establishes Majella's materiality in direct relation to the immediate and enclosed setting of her bedroom:

> Majella stretched herself underneath her lumpy wee duvet and yawned, her feet straining against the bottom board of the bed. She had a notion that one of these days she'd push too hard and pop the foot board off. Majella'd spent years getting bigger while her room and everything in it stayed the same size. It felt like a bum deal. (47)

Majella, here, acknowledges the mismatch between setting and self and, thereby, prepares for the possibility of future transformation, if and when she feels ready.

Herein, we may recall Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), viewed by many critics as embodying traits of childhood autism, and Alice's frequent shapeshifting in relation to food ("Eat me"): "She ate a bit, and said anxiously to herself, 'Which way? Which way?,' holding her hand on top of her head to feel which way it was growing." (Carroll 23) Thus, Alice comes to measure herself against her relatively static surroundings, like that of the White Rabbit's house unable to accommodate Alice's expanded size. Majella, too, sees herself ironically as a giant Alice: "She opened the fridge and grabbed a tiny bottle of yogurt. It felt comedically small in her hand as she shook it." (Gallen 49) Here and elsewhere, Gallen's framing device – operating mutually on the levels of plot and discourse or form – honours Majella's personal need for structure with good humour, and in the absence of any pathologizing judgement. Gallen's rubric also signals that the list as an organizing trope is more flexible and transformative than it initially appears, just like our neurodiverse protagonist.

Becoming a Drawbridge

While Homi Bhabha's 'third space' and 'hybridity', introduced in *The Location of Culture* (1994), celebrate liminality as expansive and spatially fluid, Birte Heidemann contends, in *Post-Agreement Northern Irish Literature: Lost in a Liminal Space?* (2016), that the geopolitical framework of Post-Agreement Northern Ireland constitutes "an unfinished colonialism" that devolves into a "conflict of contested identities" (18). Hence, instead of a *positive* liminality, which sets aside divisive sectarian ideologies, a *negative* liminality persists and threatens beneficial change. This "potentially disabling" (106) offshoot of truth and reconciliation results in

> a space occupied by contesting orthodoxies that leave the two camps in a collective indeterminate state that cannot be transformed into, or transcended by, a liminal space of iteration or re-identification. Northern Ireland's negative liminality, in this sense, can also be described as […] a "claustrophobic reality". (Heidemann 40)

The "contesting orthodoxies" of which Heidemann speaks are readily apparent in the confined fictional space of Aghybogey where repetitive habits abound. On the small scale, we witness this in the predictable script of Majella's dialect-driven chip shop interactions, which begins with "What canna get chew?" (12) or "What d'ye want?" (81), and ends with "Salt an vinegar on yer chips?" (16). On a larger scale, the very naming of the chippy, "A Salt n Battered! Food Worth Fighting For!", reinforces the long-standing ideology of discordant opposition in Northern Ireland. For instance, Majella's chippy competes with the "Prod rivals on the other side of the bridge", "The Cod Father – A Family Business", where Majella has never been, nor has she ever "knowingly tasted a Proddie chip" (74-75), even though this Protestant takeaway slyly undermines division in its named reference to *The Godfather*, an allusion to the most ostentatious Catholic family of them all. This communal preference for tribalism nourishes a disabling framework carried over from the past, such that the Good Friday Agreement ushers in neither resolution, nor closure for the residents of

Aghybogey. Gallen savvily echoes this social fragmentation in the novel's vignette form of repeated and proximal openings and closings.

In such a fractious locality, Majella goes unnoticed as a sly 'bridge-like' subject who may usher in change slowly and gingerly at the margins. It begins with Majella's mediation on bridges in the form of Agnes Ferguson, a resident of Aghybogey whose house was bombed on April Fool's Day years prior, but who returned to "build bridges" (55). Agnes regards Majella as a project in need of 'bridging'. Once Marty clarifies to Majella that Agnes is not speaking of "literal bridges", Majella muses that establishing "bridges across community divisions" is "a much more difficult engineering project, one complicated by the fact that although most people could see the need for rebuilding the literal bridges, no one had an eye for invisible bridges" (55-56). Interestingly, it is Majella, a literalist, who becomes the advocate here for metaphorical or "invisible" bridges: "Majella herself did wonder why no one had considered drawbridges in the whole scheme of things, which could serve as bridges when the need arose." (56) Unfortunately, Majella "suspected that [this suggestion about drawbridges] was a rare thought", so she "didn't share it with anyone" (56).

In fearing dismissal, Majella keeps her insights about bridges to herself. This is a shame because the idea of a drawbridge is a wonderfully apt metaphor for tapping into Aghybogey's long history, and into its bright Post-Agreement future, potentially feasible through a more nuanced vision of change. A drawbridge, after all, is a variable structure in operation only when it serves those in charge of its transformation; that is, it is a *tentative* bridge, which would likely suit an autistic subject like Majella: she may invite interactions when she wishes and may, likewise, retract from exchanges whenever she prefers. This recalibrated version of 'communal bridging' is active and engaging, rather than empty and unchanging. For instance, in a vignette on her birthday (a liminal rite-of-passage), Majella stands in "view of the castle ruins" at "the halfway point" on the bridge she recalls from history class had been refashioned into stone, since the early wooden bridges had been "repeatedly burnt down during battles" (40). At this exact spot, with "one foot on the Prod side, one foot on the Taig side, *an ironic symbol of a town divided*, giving a monologue on the Troubles" (41), Majella had seen numerous international TV crews leverage Aghybogey into the prototypical stereotype of an estranged post-conflict community. However, what sets Majella's equally literal and metaphorical position apart, standing at the *same* high-point of the bridge as the reporters amid the low-simmering antagonisms on either side, is Majella's ability to remain a part of her community, while also regarding it askew. Within the context of the novel, then, Majella's role is doubled: she is an actualized liminal subject whose literary potential extends to the metaphorically liminal objects of drawbridges and invisible bridges. Further, while Majella may be misunderstood by the townspeople and her mother, unrecognized for the strengths she embodies (except by her dead grandmother and her absent, potentially dead father), readers have the privilege of witnessing, via the listicle frame, her wit and perception.

Naming the Foxy O'Neills

The real mystery of *Big Girl, Small Town* is not so far really from that of a generic whodunit. In this world where punned monikers abound (e.g., Jimmy Nine Pints, Cabbage McAteer, or Red Onions), the mystery is "hiding in plain sight" (14), in the act of naming itself, like that of *Milkman*. Thus, Majella's late recollection on her first and last name becomes the turning point of the novel. In response to a year seven assignment "to find out why they were called what they were called", Majella asks her father to share her (and his) origin story. It is worth noting that this information can only be accessed *as* a memory, since Majella's father disappeared fifteen years prior to the action of the novel; in the parlance of the time, 'disappearance' was a euphemism for having been murdered, in this case, shortly after the death of Majella's Uncle Bobby, who died for the 'Cause' while building a bomb. Majella's father proudly tells her, "we're known as the Foxy O'Neills". In surprise,

> Majella blinked. She'd heard her Uncle Bobby being called Bobby the Fox. She hadn't known why.
> – Why are we the Foxy O'Neills?
> – We can't be sure. Some say it's because red hair runs in the family. Some say it's because we're so smart. Some say it's coz we're hard to catch.
> Majella nodded. Bobby'd been a red head. And she knew the O'Neills had brains to burn. She'd heard bits and pieces about her family's history of smuggling, the way they'd dodged the law on both sides of the border. (277-78)

Majella realizes that her kinship with the liminal foxes "loping into the shadows at the side of the house" and dining on "a piece of fish" from her supper is no mere accident (83). While such an affinity might seem fruitful, it is important to keep in mind the tragic fates of Majella's father, uncle, and grandmother, the three dead O'Neills who bear the surname that may die out with Majella. Similarly, the fate of the foxes Majella's father also fed is not a happy one:

> She remembered the week before her da'd disappeared, the week the foxes were found dead around the estate. Poisoned, her da'd said – foxes were too fly to be trapped. He'd been disturbed by the dead foxes. (90)

Without a doubt, these estate-encroaching foxes represent a violent and unsustainable state of *negative* liminality. Still, Majella concedes that her father left too early "to see the fox population recover in the years after" (90). Hence, even in this tragic instance, there is a potential path out of a stagnant past. It begins with the willingness to assume an anterior position, which is buried in her given name, the first word of the narrative, called repeatedly by her mother " – Majella? […] – Ma-jell-ah?" (3). That is, Majella's alignment with her father even extends to his middle name, drawn from the Italian Saint Gerard *Majella.* Interestingly, Saint Majella is believed to have had the ability to bilocate, namely, to be in *two* places at the same time.

By the end of the novel, Majella is finally brave enough to follow the saintly namesake of herself and her father by bilocating, in a matter of speaking, to the residence of a famous oil baron in Texas. That is, Majella sustains her protective nest through her daily habit of viewing *Dallas* reruns on DVD, a show she watched live with her

father in the 1980s on UK Gold (listed as one of the few liked items in her listicle-key). However, up until the novel's final paragraph, when "something had shifted inside her" (309), she had only "listened to" the "lessons" contained therein, without having truly "learned from" their instructions. Once Majella allows herself to inhabit the space of "J. R. Ewing smiling at her from under his Stetson" (309), she decides to sell the land she inherits from her grandmother, which the family has "clung to for generations" (309). In her willingness to give up the strip of border land, she gains a sudden sense of freedom *in* it, without necessarily engaging in a blind endorsement of the capitalist villain J.R. Ewing.

Just prior to her pivotal decision, Majella remembers the childhood experience of "criss-crossing the border, passing the barricades and skirting around the craters" (291) on bikes with a friend in whose car "they'd [later] go up the border and sit in the darkness of the bombed-out roads"; this same car was "blown up by the army at the border crossing in Pettigo" (292), recalling an intersected town that jointly occupies County Donegal and County Fermanagh, and is also the subject of Paul Muldoon's famous poem, "The Boundary Commission", where "the butcher and baker [are] in different states" (80). Majella's profound memory here foretells the novel's 2004 Post-Agreement border zone, currently engaged in a process of unsteady transformation. Instead of being blown up, the cars in Majella's present speedily zip across the Irish border in close proximity to the property Majella inherits; unfortunately, this accelerated motion has yet to yield any economic or psychic benefit to those who reside in this border frontier.

Majella's willingness to depart from her safe cocoon (and exit the listicle) may, ultimately, allow her to find a piece of literal common ground with those who eat "Proddie chips" across the (draw)bridge. The result might be a less caustic form of liminality, allowing Majella to understand, like Saint Majella, how to exist simultaneously on *both sides* of the border, when one feels ready to do so. Granted, this might result in a taxonomy that may veer into an *imperfect* demarcation. That is, in the single instance Gallen reveals not just the time or the day of the week, but also the full date of a particular vignette, it appears imbedded in the receipt Majella receives from a banking ATM: "DATE: 21/11/04" (99). In our personal interview, Gallen explained that this literary ATM receipt is a near replica of a receipt she had been keeping for many years because of the oddity of the capital B in "Banking" appearing mid-sentence: "*Thank you for Banking with us*," which likewise "upset Majella, as it always had" (99). In a novel fixated on establishing, maintaining, and drawing attention to temporal and typographic precision (and a discomfort resulting from accidental imprecision), one might hypothesize that such a 'mistake' is deliberate. Based on an earlier time stamp, readers know it is a Wednesday, but 21 November 2004 falls on a *Sunday*. Thus, in this moment, the listicle form subtly and temporarily breaks down for those willing to pause and engage in its details. Herein, this factual 'error' suggests a buried flexibility, even in a structure that appears static and fixed on its surface. Ultimately, Gallen formally constructs in *Big Girl, Small Town* a literary text wherein

readers, in tandem with Majella, learn how to co-inhabit sites of relationality, becoming aligned with the agile and shadowy fox, hiding below a Stetson. As a result, the novel makes an important contribution to post-Brexit meditations on the Irish border, cutting across geographic, temporal, ableist, and political differences to propose a path towards a dynamic and *positive* liminality.

Works Cited

Armstrong, Maggie. "After the Brain Injury, They Told Me to Do an Aromatherapy Course and Find a Man." *The Irish Independent.* 15 Feb. 2020. 10 Mar. 2022. <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/books/after-the-brain-injury-they-told-me-to-do-an-aromatherapy-course-and-find-a-man-38950010.html>.

Beer, Tom. "The Long Road to *Big Girl, Small Town*." *Kirkus.* 30 Nov. 2020. 10 Jan. 2022. <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/michelle-gallen-big-girl-small-town-interview/>.

Beyer, Susanne, and Lothar Gorris. "*Spiegel* Interview with Umberto Eco: 'We like lists because we don't want to die.'" *Spiegel International.* 11 Nov. 2009. 10 Jan. 2022. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/spiegel-interview-with-umberto-eco-we-like-lists-because-we-don-t-want-to-die-a-659577.html>.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Burns, Anna. *Milkman.* London: Faber and Faber, 2018.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass.* London: Wordsworth Classics, 1993.

Favis, Elise. "Understanding Autism Through Stardew Valley." *Game Informer.* 28 Apr. 2016. 10 Jan. 2022. <https://www.gameinformer.com/b/features/archive/2016/04/28/understanding-autism-through-stardew-valley.aspx>.

Gallen, Michelle. *Big Girl, Small Town.* London: John Murray, 2020.

-----. Personal Interview. 25 Feb. 2022.

Groarke, Vona. *Four Sides Full: A Personal Essay*. Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2016.

Heidemann, Birte. *Post-Agreement Northern Irish Literature: Lost in a Liminal Space?* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

McKay, Susan. "The Incredible Life and Tragic Death of Lyra McKee." *The New Yorker.* 26 July 2019. 10 Mar. 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/postscript/the-incredible-life-and-tragic-death-of-lyra-mckee>.

Muldoon, Paul. "The Boundary Commission." *Poems 1968-1998*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. 80.

Rodas, Julia Miele. *Autistic Disturbances: Theorizing Autism Poetics from* DSM *to* Robinson Crusoe. Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 2018.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Jochen Achilles is Emeritus Professor of American Studies at the University of Würzburg and Adjunct Professor at the University of Mainz. His authored book publications include studies on the development of Sean O'Casey's plays and on the interface between the gothic tradition and psychological fiction, focusing on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. He has co-edited books on Irish drama, global challenges and regional responses in modern drama, representations of evil in fiction and film, and on liminality and the short story. His research interests and numerous articles focus on cultural identities, African American and Irish drama, and the American short story.

Rachel Andrews is a writer, journalist and creative-critical PhD candidate at the University of Galway. Her doctoral dissertation, "Landscapes of Memory and Forgetting: The Psychogeography of Unmarked Burial Sites in Contemporary Ireland", examines the effects of unmarked burial sites in Irish memory and culture. It also employs a creative non-fiction response to explore the meaning of such sites in contemporary Ireland.

Alessandra Boller is currently working as a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at the University of Siegen, Germany. She is the author of *Rethinking 'the Human' in Dystopian Times* (2018) and co-editor of two collective volumes: *Dystopia, Science Fiction, Post-Apocalypse: Classics – New Tendencies – Model Interpretations* (2016) and *Canadian Ecologies Beyond Environmentalism – Culture, Media, Art, Ethnicities* (2020). She has published many articles and book chapters on her different research interests, which include feminist and new materialist approaches to speculative fiction, bioethics, science and technology studies, as well as Irish literature. She is especially interested in Irish short fiction, with a particular focus on gender and narratives of community and on short narratives published in early nineteenth-century magazines.

Marion Bourdeau, agrégée in English studies, teaches literature, stylistics, translation, and grammar at the University of Lyon 3, France. She completed a PhD in Irish Studies at the University of Caen Normandy under the supervision of Professor Bertrand Cardin. Her research focuses on contemporary Irish literature and stylistics, and in particular on the writing of space and ethics in Colum McCann's novels and short stories.

Jessica Bundschuh is a Lecturer in English Literatures and Cultures at the Universität Stuttgart. She has a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Houston and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. Her publications have appeared in *Review of Irish Studies in Europe*, *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature*, *Culture and Environment*, *Poetics Today*, *The Paris Review*, *Columbia Review*, *The Los Angeles Review, The Honest Ulsterman,*

Long Poem Magazine, The Moth Magazine, and *Poem Unlimited: New Perspectives on Poetry & Genre.* She has a forthcoming chapter on Irish poetry in performance in a volume on *Poetic Forms* and an article forthcoming in *Literary Matters.* In the past year, she has participated in three different podcasts: *The Poetry Pod*, *The Irish Itinerary Podcast*, and *Made in Science*. Her current project is on the Irish prose poem.

Seán Crosson is Associate Professor of Film in the Huston School of Film & Digital Media, Leader of the Sport & Exercise Research Group, and Co-Director of the BA Performance and Screen Studies programme at the University of Galway. His research interests include Irish cinema and literature, and the relationship between film, the media, and sport. His publications include the monograph *Gaelic Games On Film* (Cork UP, 2019), the edited volume *Sport, Film, and National Culture* (Routledge, 2021), and the co-edited collections *Towards 2016: 1916 and Irish Literature, Culture & Society* (Irish Studies in Europe, Vol. 7; WVT, 2015), *Crisis and Contemporary Poetry* (Palgrave, 2011), *Contemporary Irish Film: New Perspectives on a National Cinema* (Braumüller, 2011), and *The Quiet Man ... and beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford and Ireland* (Liffey Press, 2009). He is a past President of EFACIS and current General Editor of *Review of Irish Studies in Europe* (RISE) journal.

Susan Curley Meyer graduated with a first-class honours BA in Art History and Archaeology from University College Dublin (2016), and was awarded the Françoise Henry Memorial medal in Art History. She received a scholarship from the National College of Art and Design Dublin (2016), from which she graduated with a first-class honours MA in Design History and Material Culture (2018). Susan's MA thesis focused on the development of Dublin's flower trade, from street flower selling to the establishment of accredited floristry training, recognized on the National Framework of Qualifications. In 2019 Susan was awarded an advanced UCD fellowship under the supervision of Dr Emily Mark-Fitzgerald to complete her current PhD research, which examines the visual and material culture of Dublin street trading (1871-1926). Susan's long-standing experience as both a florist and art gallery manager inspired her MA and current PhD research.

Anna Falkenau is a recipient of a Freyer-Hardiman scholarship from NUI Galway (now University of Galway), currently conducting doctoral research on micro and macro flows in the development of Irish traditional music in Galway city between 1961 and 1981. She previously received her Master of Arts in Music from Wesleyan University, Connecticut (2004) and graduated from University College Cork (BMus, 2002). She is a contributor to the forthcoming book *Hardiman & Beyond: Arts and Culture in Galway, 1820-2020* with a core chapter entitled "'It was in the Air': Irish Traditional Music in Galway, 1960-1979", edited by John Cunningham and Ciaran McDonough.

Vojtěch Halama is a PhD candidate at the Department of World History, Charles University, Prague. He has also studied with Erasmus+ programme at various Irish

universities: NUI Galway (2015 and 2018), Maynooth University (2016), and University College Dublin (2019). His academic interests lie in modern and contemporary history of the island of Ireland, with particular focus on commemoration of the Irish revolutionary decade. His dissertation analyzes the shift in official commemoration of the Easter Rising between the fiftieth anniversary in 1966 and the centenary in 2016. He teaches and co-teaches modules on modern Irish history.

James Little is a Postdoctoral Researcher on the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" at Charles University, Prague, and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at University College Dublin, where his research maps Ireland's literatures of coercive confinement from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. He is the author of *Samuel Beckett in Confinement: The Politics of Closed Space* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020) and *The Making of Samuel Beckett's* Not I / Pas moi, That Time / Cette fois *and* Footfalls / Pas (UP Antwerp and Bloomsbury, 2021), for which he co-edited the online genetic edition (see www.beckettarchive.org). Together with Christina Morin and Cóilín Parsons, he co-edits the Bloomsbury Academic series Global Perspectives in Irish Literary Studies.

Michael Lydon is a Lecturer in Popular Music Studies and Gender and Irish Music at the Centre for Irish Studies at the University of Galway. He is also the current Reviews Editor for *Ethnomusicology Ireland* and a Research Associate for the Contemporary Music Centre (Ireland) and Sounding the Feminists. Dr Lydon is a former Communications Officer and Student Representative for the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS). His research areas include popular music studies, contemporary music, popular culture studies, sound studies, and Irish studies.

Radvan Markus is Senior Lecturer in the Irish language and literature at Charles University, Prague. He is the author of *Echoes of the Rebellion: The Year 1798 in Twentieth-Century Irish Fiction and Drama* (2015). He has published numerous articles and essays on Czech–Irish relations and various Irish-language authors of the twentieth century, including Pádraic Ó Conaire, Flann O'Brien, Micheál Mac Liammóir, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, and Breandán Ó hEithir. His new monograph on Máirtín Ó Cadhain, *Carnabhal na Marbh:* Cré na Cille *agus Litríocht an Domhain* (The Carnival of the Dead: *Cré na Cille* and World Literature) is to be published by Leabhar Breac in 2022. Markus's Czech translation of Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* (2017) received the prestigious Magnesia Litera award; his other translations from Irish include Ó Cadhain's novella "An Eochair" (2021) and the novel *L'Attaque* by Eoghan Ó Tuairisc (2007). He is a Junior Researcher in the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World", and the current Secretary of EFACIS.

Mary McAuliffe is a historian and Director of Gender Studies at UCD. Her latest publications include, as co-editor with Miriam Haughton and Emilie Pine, *Legacies of the Magdalen Laundries: Commemoration, Gender, and the Postcolonial Carceral State* (Manchester UP, 2021), and as sole author, *Margaret Skinnider: A Biography* (UCD Press, 2020). She is currently researching and writing on gendered and sexual violence during the Irish revolutionary period, 1919-1923, for publication in 2023.

Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha is a PhD researcher in the University of Galway. Her doctoral research focuses on modern Irish-language poetry and the era of the Anthropocene. Other research interests include poetry that engages with issues of human rights and of nuclear disaster, such as Chernobyl. Previously, she worked as Irish Research Council Laureate Scholar on the *Republic of Conscience: Human Rights and Modern Irish Poetry* project from 2018-2021.

Ondřej Pilný is Professor of English and American Literature and Director of the Centre for Irish Studies at Charles University, Prague. His publications include *The Grotesque in Contemporary Anglophone Drama* (Palgrave, 2016), *Cultural Convergence: The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960* (ed. with Ruud van den Beuken and Ian R. Walsh; Palgrave, 2021), and a chapter on "Irish Theatre in Europe" in the *Oxford Handbook of Irish Theatre* (Oxford UP, 2016). He is the translator into Czech of works by J.M. Synge, Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, Brian Friel, Martin McDonagh, Enda Walsh, Mark O'Rowe, and others. Ondřej Pilný is a Key Researcher in the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World", a former Chairperson of IASIL (2016-2022) and past Vice-President of EFACIS (2013-2019).

Daniela Theinová is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures and a member of the Centre for Irish Studies at Charles University in Prague. She is the author of *Limits and Languages in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) and has contributed to several edited volumes, including *A History of Irish Women's Poetry* (Cambridge UP, 2021), *Post-Ireland? Essays on Contemporary Irish Poetry* (Wake Forest UP, 2017), and *Bone and Marrow: Poems from the Irish* (Wake Forest UP, 2022). Since 2021 she has been member of the editorial board of *RISE* (*Review of Irish Studies in Europe*), and has recently edited a special issue of the journal dedicated to the poetry of Medbh McGuckian.

Gavan Titley is Senior Lecturer in Media Studies in Maynooth University, and a Docent in Media and Communications in the Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki. His books include *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (with Alana Lentin, 2011, Zed Books), *After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism and Free Speech* (ed., Zed Books, 2017), *Racism and Media* (Sage, 2019), and *Is Free Speech Racist?* (Polity, 2020). He is currently working on a new book on freedom of speech in the digital media environment. He has written for and contributed to numerous media, including *The Guardian* and *LA Times*.

Clare Wallace is Associate Professor at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Charles University in Prague. She is currently a Key Researcher in the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World". She has written widely on Irish and British theatre. Among her recent publications are a chapter on Stella Feehily in *The Golden Thread: Irish Women Playwrights, 1716-2016,* eds. David Clare, Fiona McDonagh, and Justine Nakase (2021); "Ambivalent Attachments, Catharsis and Commemoration: David Ireland's *Cyprus Avenue* at the Abbey Theatre in 2016" in *Scene* 8.1&2 (2020); and "Marina Carr's *Hecuba*: Agency, Anger and Correcting Euripides" in *Irish Studies Review* 27.4 (2019). Her latest project is a volume of essays titled *Crisis, Representation and Resilience: Perspectives on Contemporary British Theatre*, co-edited with Clara Escoda, Enric Monforte, and José Ramón Prado-Pérez (Bloomsbury, 2022).

IRISH STUDIES IN EUROPE

Seán Crosson, Katharina Rennhak, Hedwig Schwall (eds.)

10 Paul Fagan, Dieter Fuchs, Tamara Radak (eds.): **Stage Irish. Performance, Identity, Cultural Circulation**

Selected Articles: *Paul Fagan*: Groves of Blarney: Fake Songs, Mock-Hoaxes, and Stage Irish Identity in William Maginn and Francis Sylvester Mahony · *Elke D'hoker*: Staging Irishness in Ethel Colburn Mayne's "The Happy Day" · *Michael Connerty*: "Beguiling Shenanigans": Ireland and Hollywood Animation 1947-1959 · *Eimer Murphy*: 'Wear Something Green': The Re-Invention of the St. Patrick's Day Parade

ISBN 978-3-86821-919-7, 282 pp., paperback, € 35,00 (2021)

09 Daniel Becker: **On the Threshold of Memory. National History and Liminal Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Poetry**

Whether in the form of idealised ancient times or the representation of more recent political events, Irish national history often obtained a central position in the work of many Irish. In more recent years, however, these strong ties between poetry and history appear to have been severed. Yet, this impression is misleading, as the present book will show by analysing selected poems by Iggy McGovern, Tom French, Vona Groarke, Martina Evans, Leanne O'Sullivan, Paul Perry, Lorna Shaughnessy, Paula Cunningham, Paula Meehan and Paul Durcan.

ISBN 978-3-86821-893-0, 188 pp., paperback, € 28,00 (2021)

08 Hedwig Schwall (ed.): **Boundaries, Passages, Transitions. Essays in Irish Literature, Culture and Politics in Honour of Werner Huber**
ISBN 978-3-86821-742-1, 274 pp., paperback, € 32,50 (2018)

07 Katharina Rennhak (ed.): **Narrating Ireland in Different Genres and Media**
ISBN 978-3-86821-652-3, 184 pp., paperback, € 24,50 (2016)

06 Seán Crosson, Werner Huber (eds.): **Towards 2016. 1916 and Irish Literature, Culture & Society**
ISBN 978-3-86821-622-6, 258 pp., paperback, € 27,50 (2015)

05 Scott Brewster, Werner Huber (eds.): **Ireland: Arrivals and Departures**
ISBN 978-3-86821-598-4, 134 pp., paperback, € 19,50 (2015) (out of print)

04 Werner Huber, Sandra Mayer, Julia Novak (eds.): **Ireland in / and Europe – Cross-Currents and Exchanges**
ISBN 978-3-86821-421-5, 284 pp., paperback, € 27,50 (2012)

03 María Losada Friend, José María Tejedor Cabrera, José Estévez-Saá, Werner Huber (eds.): **Dreaming the Future – New Horizons / Old Barriers in 21st-Century Ireland**
ISBN 978-3-86821-327-0, 124 pp., paperback, € 18,00 (2011)

02 Britta Olinder, Werner Huber (eds.): **Place and Memory in the New Ireland**
ISBN 978-3-86821-146-7, 168 pp., paperback, € 20,00 (2009)

01 Werner Huber, Michael Böss, Catherine Maignant, Hedwig Schwall (eds.): **Ireland: Representation and Responsibility**
ISBN 978-3-88476-998-0, 180 pp., paperback, € 20,00 (2007)

Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier · Bergstraße 27 · D-54295 Trier

Tel.: 0651/41503 · Fax: 0651/41504 · wvt@wvttrier.de · www.wvttrier.de · www.facebook.com/wvttrier