

Hedwig Schwall (ed.)

BOUNDARIES, PASSAGES, TRANSITIONS

ESSAYS IN IRISH LITERATURE, CULTURE AND POLITICS
IN HONOUR OF WERNER HUBER

Irish Studies in Europe

Volume

8

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IN HONOUR OF WERNER HUBER**

 **Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier**

**Boundaries, Passages, Transitions:
Essays in Irish Literature, Culture and Politics
in Honour of Werner Huber /**

Hedwig Schwall (ed.). -

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Tel.: (0651) 41503, Fax: 41504

Internet: <http://www.wvttrier.de>

E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

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This volume starts and ends with gratitude. First of all to Werner Huber, founder of ISE which he firmly anchored at Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier who have been extremely helpful, precise and quick in the production of each issue.

Werner was active on all levels in Irish studies: publishing, teaching, spreading culture, networking, or simply helping out wherever needed. He was a truly European bridge builder, and one, I am glad to say, with a soft spot for Leuven. This started in 1978 when he met my predecessor in Irish Studies at an Irish Summer School organized by NUI Galway; the next year the two young Turks went together to the Yeats Summer School where they advocated new approaches. Werner was always keen to open up new horizons so at IASIL in Goteborg I invited him to join EFACIS and ever since he was a pillar of each and a hyphen between both organisations. When invited to be a lecturer at the first European Intensive Programme in Irish Studies in 2000 he generously spent the fortnight in Leuven inspiring the students who came from fifteen universities, some of whom are now professors in Irish Literature across Europe. Ever since Werner was a yearly visitor to our university, giving guest lectures and coming over for EFACIS meetings. In 2010 we were delighted to welcome him at the opening of our Leuven Centre of Irish Studies where he represented the German-speaking countries in a Round Table discussion on Irish Studies in Europe. While he described the situation as a sad one then, it is not so now. When we launched the Irish Itinerary in 2013, Werner was the ideal user of the programme and one of the mainstays of the initiative, making Irish culture visible throughout Central Europe as he coordinated musical, literary and film festivals with colleagues in Prague and in several places in Hungary and Germany. Everyone loved his friendly and efficient approach, as we hear from Ondřej Pilný, Csilla Bertha, Mária Kurdi and many others.

That this volume of ISE is one of the biggest ever reflects Werner's popularity. But ISE 8 also reflects on the success of the 2015 conference on "Boundaries, Passages, Transitions" Chiara Sciarrino organized in Palermo. This was a highlight in the history of EFACIS in terms of numbers, academic standard and style. It was wonderful to experience how Sicilians have been practicing the art of life for over twenty-five centuries, leading to the unforgettable hospitality Chiara and her colleagues showed us. We also thank her and her institution, the University of Palermo, for their financial support of this volume.

Thoughts have to incubate and papers have to be collected and corrected: my sincere thanks to all involved, the inspired contributions of the authors and the conscientious comments by the referees. In its last phase the process was accelerated by two EFACIS interns, Rebecca Jackson and Vera Gonskaya. It is thanks to their quick and thorough processing the volume can be offered to the whole EFACIS community, one year after Werner's passing. May this tribute bid him godspeed in his existence among us.

BOUNDARIES, PASSAGES, TRANSITIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

Hedwig Schwall

This eighth book in the series *Irish Studies in Europe (ISE)*, co-founded by Werner Huber, is dedicated to our dear friend, who died on 28 April 2016, only sixty-three years old. Part of the contributions come from colleagues who were present at his last conference, the Tenth International Conference of EFACIS on *Beyond Ireland: Boundaries, Passages, Transitions* which took place at the University of Palermo from 3-6 June 2015; further contributions were sent in answer to a call for papers to celebrate the work of Werner Huber.

Werner was a staunch EFACIS supporter and Palermo was the last place where he met his friends, Irish scholars together from all parts of Europe, from Tromsø to Malta, Brittany to Cluj, and of course from all Irish universities, North and South. Werner kicked off the Palermo conference together with Seán Crosson with the book launch of ISE 5. The next day Werner gave a talk on “‘Monty Python in the Viennese Woods’: Flann O’Brien in Austria”. This title was characteristic of his interests: film and drama were his favourite genres; sports and Irish culture were favourite topics in his search for identity in (de)mythologizing representations; and his favourite mode was that of humour, especially of the kind evident in the work of Beckett, Flann O’Brien and James Stephens, moving in later years to the grotesque as he found it in Martin McDonagh. Werner also wrote on women writers as diverse as Elizabeth Bowen and Marie Jones, interests which will find their echoes in this book.

Declan Kiberd sets the tone when he opens his contribution “Going Global?” launching the idea that maybe expressions of a national idea are like baby Moses in his basket, which may be rescued by some Pharaoh’s daughter in a different dispensation. Going back to De Valera’s radio broadcast on St Patrick’s Day in 1943, Kiberd draws a sweeping picture of the last century in Ireland, showing how “Unity of Being” has always been out of reach, partly because the powers that be – politics, economics and culture – failed to work together. Worse: between them, politicians, the banks and the Church destroyed the country to a level that there is no obvious value system from which to build it up again, hence the need for a rescuing outsider. While the ecclesiocracy destroyed itself by the numberless instances of child abuse – “the ultimate betrayal of trust” – economics did not help the country either: 150 years after the Famine, Ireland moved to another disastrous monoculture, that of houses. Further, as lawyers started to outnumber priests the country opened itself up to “predatory kinds of capitalism”.¹ Yet according to Kiberd, rescue may come, as it has happened in the past, from culture, from artists and writers. These are responsible for the “worlding” of Irish culture while exploring alterity, as either they or their work moved abroad

1 Claire Kilroy’s modern allegory, *The Devil I Know* (2012), is a hilariously striking satire on the dark globalized aspect of the Celtic Tiger years.

and back.² This influx of fresh value systems may contribute to a kind of “considered lay theology”, a “civic republicanism” – one in which, one hopes, women writers will be prominent. As Kiberd himself indicates, the Abbey Theatre has been criticized for overlooking women playwrights. We were delighted to welcome contributions on Nancy Harris and (further afield) on Marie Jones and Elizabeth Bowen; and while women writers are not in a majority in this collection, female contributors are.

In good EFACIS fashion not all articles focus on a literary questioning of boundaries: there is also the approach of political sciences and sociology. In the case of Katherine Side’s scrutiny of the *Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)* this leads to the conclusion that, rather than integrating and pacifying, the scheme divided and polarized. People seeking assistance had to face two kinds of problems: on the one hand they were besieged by paramilitary organizations, on the other they had to endure a long and complicated application process in which the RUC was involved, which did not guarantee objective assessments. About today’s situation Side observes three things: first, the *SPED* administrators accept that the scheme exacerbated community-segregated housing; second, anno 2017 there is still no comprehensive examination of loyalist and paramilitary involvement in housing issues in Northern Ireland; and third, the scheme which had mainly aimed at curtailing emigration ended up “bolstering state securitization”, which led to closing off perspectives rather than opening them up. The effects of conflict-instigated housing displacement are now visible in its peace walls and public art displays, as well as in the elevated highways which connect the industrial growth poles implanted on Belfast’s periphery, but which bypassed or destroyed mixed-community neighbourhoods.

While Side focuses on the maintenance of physical and social boundaries in Northern Ireland, with focus on Belfast, that same city’s boundaries are dematerialized in Stefanie Lehner’s analysis of Stewart Parker’s *Northern Star* and *Pentecost*, the plays which start and end his triptych *Plays for Ireland*. The fact that each of Parker’s plays are ghost-haunted indicates that boundaries are not simply physical limits – they are also emotional, charged by experiences of people long dead, which keep vibrating, creating a cityscape still pulsated by its past. Like Kiberd, Parker believes that politicians, “visionless almost to a man” must be rescued by artists who “construct a working model of wholeness by means of which this society can begin to hold up its head in the world.” Here, boundaries are deconstructed in different ways. First there is the symbol of the liminal setting: the first play takes place in a semi-ruined cottage on Cave Hill where Belfast is said to have originated, the other in the kitchen of the last inhabited house between the sectarian lines in East Belfast. Second there is the meta-theatrical aspect: in one performance, the action is set in the wings of the theatre. A third way of questioning boundaries is in the dialogue, like when one of Parker’s protagonists, the leader of the United Irishmen at the end of the

2 For detailed illustrations see the excellent book *Literary visions of multicultural Ireland: the immigrant in contemporary Irish literature*. Ed. Pilar Villar-Argáiz. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2014.

eighteenth century, warns his fellow citizens (and the audience) that perspectives may not be what they seem: "you (play) ... your chosen parts ... except that maybe they're really playing you". But there is hope: though the *Northern Star* shows how sectarian moulds from the past cannot contain their negative energy and so continue to haunt the living the characters from *Pentecost* "dander" their way into more redemptive forms of interaction, finding Bhabha's "third space", celebrating the feast of common languages in a final jazz session.

The tone of Stephanie Schwerter's article on "'Beyond the Troubles': Parody and the Northern Irish Thriller in Ceasefire Cinema" is, considering the topic, much lighter. The author finds that the first ceasefire declaration by the IRA in 1994 brings a new mood of optimism in the subgenre of the 'Troubles Thriller' and she illustrates this with *Divorcing Jack* by David Cafferty (1998) and *An Everlasting Piece* by Barry Levinson (2000). While the thriller genre is said to scrutinize a society in its own particular way (via the representation of its criminal networks) the parodic aspect humorously subverts this picture. In *Divorcing Jack*, the male and female stock characters of paramilitary fighters, soldiers or policemen, mothers and seducers are replaced by a clumsy journalist and a woman who is part-time nurse and part-time stripper, "more Armalite than Carmelite", getting involved in the obligatory car-chase. *An Everlasting Piece* (a pun on the Peace people, founded in 1976) does not have a criminal as its protagonist but two civilians, the Catholic Colum and Protestant George. Together these barbers in a psychiatric hospital in Belfast decide they want to branch out providing wigs and thus they want to "cover the whole of Northern Ireland" but they become involved in ludicrous forms of violence.

The combination of film and sports, Werner Huber's absolute favourite, is covered by Seán Crosson's "Gaelic games and the films of John Ford", where the author focuses on the layered ways in which this Irish-American filmmaker referenced hurling in his films, particularly in his Irish-set productions *The Quiet Man* (1952), *The Rising of the Moon* (1957) and *Young Cassidy* (1965). As Crosson indicates, a further major interest of Werner Huber's, Flann O'Brien, was an outspoken defender of Ford's work, including against attacks by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), an organisation concerned with the depiction of its games in the great director's productions. The article shows how Ford realized what Stewart Parker urged people to do: to "exploit ... the performative potential of Irish stereotypes", though these performative aspects were not recognised by the GAA. Ford in particular exploited the comic potential of hurling (a process also evident in earlier American cinema) to "diffuse anxieties regarding the Irish", and to help integrate Irish-American culture into mainstream American life.

Jochen Achilles, another close friend of Werner Huber, focuses on our colleague's core business as he writes about the ways in which "Intermedial Drama and the Commodification of Irish Identities" are connected. He starts from two articles by Huber, "Contemporary Drama as Meta-Cinema: Martin McDonagh and Marie Jones" (2002) and "(De-)Mythologising Ireland on the Screen" (2003) and asks questions

similar to Kiberd's when, with Fredric Jameson, he wonders whether American film and media industries have so much suffused Ireland that it cannot imagine "radically different social alternatives" any more. This question is answered by Marie Jones' *Stones in His Pockets* in a tragicomic way. The metacinematic concept is a perfect metaphor for the mutual exploitation that is going on between the Hollywood filmcrew and the Irish locals; yet in the end the (surviving) locals understand that they have to become more active to reclaim a "viable self-image." A second question asked in this article is what the word "Irish" means these days, as the word has become "deterritorialized" and merely functions "as a brand – a commodified abstraction." This point is further complicated by McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* as it avoids contrastive comparisons and instead focuses on the constructedness of each identity, whether "californicated" or made in the West of Ireland.

Martin McDonagh's *Hangmen* (2015) is treated extensively in the next two contributions. Both Ondřej Pilný and Joan FitzPatrick Dean admire McDonagh's ability to "nail the vernacular" – this time that of Northern England – and the playwright's ability to summon up a local sense of place via the rhythms and turns of phrase of the idiom. Both critics also agree that McDonagh's manipulation of both characters in the play and audience is central to his vocation as a writer, which aims at radically questioning the human being's ability to find truth. Considering the fact that the play is about capital punishment, the meticulously twisted plot is part and parcel of the play which does not lead to any clear truth and hence to a final lynching which implicates everybody in a communal guilt. While both critics stress the fact that McDonagh stated that *Hangmen* is not a message play they both look at different passages to weigh this idea. Pilný agrees with Werner Huber that the grotesque is a category central to McDonagh's work (Werner was the first critic to see this): as the value system "appears in constant flux and in a state of destabilization", "satire loses sight of its targets"; as Huber observed, all the playwright wants to do is to shunt the audience between different emotions without letting them land on a clear set of values. This happens by stringing together an intricate series of shocks and inconsistencies: the play is about celebrity and hanging, charm and horror; it stages grim situations with a humorous turn; it is realistic in technical details while magnifying the brutality of an execution.

FitzPatrick Dean too takes her cue from Werner Huber who observed McDonagh's "art of 'coddling'", which she further specifies as "his manipulation of an audience's gullibility" in which he (ab)uses "the conventions of confidence-building", illustrating "life's epistemological uncertainties." Further she pinpoints how the power structures, grounded in the knowledge of secrets, are built on an elaborate hierarchy of male positions which are constantly negotiated via "microaggressions". These make up the "comedy of menace" which, in *Hangmen*, grips a bigger cast than in other McDonagh plays – a metonymy of society at large. It looks like the playwright offers a textbook example here of René Girard's theory of the scapegoat, where society is reigned by ignorance and rivalry, the victim is a cryptic person and everybody denies responsibility.

With Mária Kurdi's analysis of Nancy Harris' *No Romance* (2011) we move from a masculine to a more feminine kind of grotesque. Like many other prominent female Abbey playwrights Harris sees laughter as a vital tool to undermine the "oppressive effect of patriarchy on both women and men". In order to map post- (or inter-)Celtic crisis Ireland Harris develops a "postdramatic theatre" in which increasingly divergent stories illustrate the growing isolation of individuals and the confusion of values this brings with it. This isolation is said to have been caused by Ireland's quick move to cash and next to crash. Both movements led to a loss of solidarity and gain of consumerism; but, as *No Romance* shows, when the crash brought mass unemployment the "beset, recession-impacted man" remasculinized himself and is inspired to do this via the internet. So, instead of developing the hard-won prestige of Irish women, global consumerism makes couples revert to traditionalist views on gender. This regression oppresses both men and women to the extent that they miss out not only on contact with each other but also with themselves. As a result, groups of individuals, families and generations fall apart, so that the miraculous human relationships which defined the genre of Romance are now replaced by transgenerational alienation which hollows out Irish society.

The next section deals almost exclusively with fiction and starts off with Joyce, as he was one of Werner Huber's great favourites. Gerry Smyth's "Another Listen to the Music in Joyce's 'A Mother'" follows the feminist lead admiring Mrs Kearney for standing up for her rights in a society dominated by (hardly openly articulated) male values, imposed by Catholicism, a self-colonializing nationalism and familialism. Yet Mrs Kearney has the guts to be anti-stereotypical by taking the initiative, by her discreet steering of the amateurish committee, her dealing with the financial side of matters and her standing up for her rights in public life. Smyth suggests that Mrs Kearney may be inspired by three women who were active on the Dublin music scene around 1904, when Joyce was active there himself: Eileen Reedy, Máire nic Shiublaigh and Dr Annie Patterson, the first woman in Ireland with a doctorate in music. All three are represented as committed to but critical of nationalism, republicanism, feminism and socialism. Backed by these models, Smyth makes a positive case for Mrs Kearney.

Paul Fagan's article "Out of Joint: James Joyce and 'Irish Time'" opens with the image of the Dublin GPO clock which stopped during the fighting of the 1916 Easter Rising, turning it into the symbol of a paradigmatic modernist concern with living in a time that is "out of joint." Moving from *Dubliners* via *Ulysses* to *Finnegans Wake*, Fagan illustrates how Joyce stages discrepancies between 'clock time' and 'lived time', referring to aesthetic, political, and legal disputes in Ireland, where several time systems vied for prominence: GMT, which facilitated interactions on a global level, DMT (the Dublin variant of the Greenwich norm) and DST, Daylight Saving Time. First Fagan describes the way in which Irish literary revivalists, political and economic forces responded to this complication. Second, he shows how Joyce picks up the death-in-life rhetoric and the corresponding figure of the revenant in *Dubliners*, such as Father Flynn in the opening story and Michael Furey in the closing one.

Ulysses stages further discrepancies in time with Bloom's stopped clocks and in the Stephen-Hamlet configuration, where the Danish prince introduces the motifs of hesitancy and recurrent betrayal, which in turn are connected to Parnell and to the pre-history of the Rising which goes back to the misremembered Phoenix Park Murders. In *Finnegans Wake* the scene where HCE is "accosted" by one whose "watch was bradys" illustrates Joyce's blending of discrepancies again as he mixes languages (*bradus* being Greek for "slow") and situations of suspension and betrayal in Irish politics. Throughout the article Fagan highlights Joyce's sensitivity to Irish temporal paradoxes: he echoes the allochronic fieldwork of Synge but realizes that it is recorded by modernist techniques; he engages Yeatsian faery aesthetics as an "opportunity for experimental fiction" and fashions his remythologized Dublin from the very inconsistencies of the politics, economics and aesthetics of his day.

From here on Tamara Radak takes us further into *Finnegans Wake*, where she traces Freud's influence. Though Joyce made it clear that he liked neither Freud nor Jung he peppered many of his writings (especially the Notebooks and the *Wake*) with references to their work. These references do not limit themselves to a borrowing of quaint lexical elements, or an inspiration to puns as in Joyce's reference to the "dablinganger"; the author argues that Joyce develops some Freudian principles into the very poetics of *Finnegans Wake*. Like Anna O., who coined the English term of the "talking cure" and often, in her cure, mixed "four or five languages", *Finnegans Wake* relishes the mix of languages and registers. Further Radak argues that Issy is modelled on Lucia Joyce, diagnosed with schizophrenia and other illnesses; but *Finnegans Wake* transforms and positively reevaluates Issy's affliction by making it part of the aesthetics of the text. This, the critic argues, is especially clear in "night lessons" (II.2) which breaks the mould of the traditional novelistic form and replaces it with an extra dense set of references to psychoanalysis. Again, these references are not just puns, as in "the law of the jungerl"; the "cycloannalism" of *Finnegans Wake* also reflects its whole riverrun poetics, practicing a never-ending process of free association.

In the next five contributions we move chronologically through a series of writers who try out boundaries to shock themselves, via their personae or protagonists, into new positions. The first in the series is Anthony Trollope. Of the fifty novels of this prolific writer, five are "Irish novels", and John McCourt focuses on three of these. McCourt sees him as a typically Victorian figure, full of self-reliance, duty and thrift, but a "reluctant colonialist", one who wanted a fairer economic union between the two islands, and who is scandalized that "men in Parliament know less about Ireland than they do of the interior of Africa". As he introduces his views on Ireland to his countrymen in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, Trollope deplores the lack of justice. *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* is more optimistic, though Trollope makes it clear that he was against the Repeal movement. *Castle Richmond* is the most shocking of the three: written in 1859, only twelve years after the Famine, the British administration is fervently defended, partly on the grounds that charity should be limited – an observation that rings painfully familiar in the current refugee situation in the EU. Though

Trollope seems to have sympathized with the Irish peasant, his loyalty lay with Britain. Finally McCourt mentions one story, "The Turkish Bath" which he counts among Trollope's "counter-hegemonic tales" as he stages a feminized Irish man much liked by his English friend, thus ambiguously presenting a homosexual friendship in a positive light.

The ways in which Oscar Wilde used Italy to explore possible constructions of himself is explored by Donatella Badin Abate in "'The soul within me burned / Italia, my Italia, at thy name': Wilde's Early Poems and his Fascination with Italy". Though the author distinguishes three factors in Wilde's interest in Italy – the aesthetic impulses influencing his early poetry, the sensationalism of the plays set in Italy, and the charm of a society that seemed more permissive, Badin only focuses on a dozen poems on Italy which Wilde wrote early in life. These are pulsing with Turneresque light and either represent Pre-Raphaelite ecstasies in a "marble-throated lily girl[s]" or languishing "lovely brown boy[s]" à la Guido Reni's Saint Sebastian in Genoa, or they stage a reanimated Ovidian world as in "Ravenna", where "goat-footed" creatures dally with "Dryad maid[s]". The long poem "Ravenna" is central to this article as it fully illustrates Ellmann's characterization of Wilde: "contradictoriness was his orthodoxy". Indeed, Wilde wavered between embracing Catholicism and refuting it, calling the pope in one poem the "Holy One", "a vile thing" in another. As a result, a reviewer of the 1881 volume of his poems noticed that those who unified Italy were execrated in one poem and panegyricized in the next. Clearly, Wilde was less concerned with Home Rule or Rome rule, his principle was Role rule: one lives properly as long as one assimilates new roles.

Elizabeth Bowen's links with Italy were limited: *A Time in Rome* is "her only travel book". In Bowen's development of herself the boundaries she negotiated ran more between the perceived grandeur of her own Anglo-Irish past and the flux of the times she so painfully experienced after her seventh year. In order to map these negotiations Elena Cotta Ramusino studies Bowen's *Seven Winters – Memories of a Dublin Childhood*, an autobiographical account of the writer's early winters in Dublin. This Dublin is condensed in the sheltered Bowen home at Herbert Place and the area encircled by the Canal, the rest is "*terra incognita*", as scary to the child as "any swamp or jungle", and though she knows the "poverty-rotted houses" only from hearsay she feels the "canyon-like streets" they form "might at any moment crumble over one's head". As Cotta Ramusino shows, the fact that Bowen's childhood was abruptly terminated by her father's mental illness and the child's banishment from him deeply formed her writing. Ever since she tries, with "withstood emotion", to seek her way back to that time of harmony by exploring the possibilities of self-writing. On the one hand this makes her realize "the closeness of a minority world", on the other hand she wants to rescue that world by reanimating it in its authentic intensities, and household objects seem to be powerful conductors to help her back to the "semi-mystical topography of childhood", as Bowen calls *Seven Winters*. As Cotta Ramusino indicates, autobiographical representations of places of stability to Bowen were

a vital way of coping with the destruction of houses in wartime London and later of her own Bowen's Court.

Houses and dwelling spaces are also at the heart of Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper's overview of Dermot Healy's work, but where Bowen seemed to want to bolster the past, Healy wants to explode it. Since Healy's untimely death in 2014 this writer's complete works have finally been published; Healy is a key figure in this volume as he is not only versatile in many genres, but he crosses the boundaries between them, combining the abilities of the short story writer, novelist, poet, playwright, screenwriter, director, actor, essay writer, editor and teacher. In this article the authors do not merely want to sketch the width of Healy's "creative eclecticism" but also show how, over a period of forty years, key formal strategies changed within his short stories, as he moves from an "O'Faoláin-esque realism" to a "counterrealist aesthetic". Focusing on two versions of one short story, Murphy and Hopper illustrate how Healy progresses in his imagistic mode as he replaces realist description, third-person narration, linear cause-and-effect plot and other hierarchizing structures by phenomenological observation mediated in free indirect discourse, juxtaposition and montage, which deconstructs the idea that sense impressions are an individual matter, while highlighting how states of mind are a matter of floating interactions. Healy tries to reach out to characters who find themselves in panic and despair, whether in the London Irish diaspora or in a rural context, simultaneously honing and checking his empathy, in what Eoin MacNamee called "an orchestra of the withheld".

The volume closes with Sylvie Mikowski's analysis of Colum McCann's *Transatlantic*, Sebastian Barry's *On Canaan's Side* and Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn*, three novels which focus on women crossing boundaries. All three protagonists (Lilly, Lily and Ellis) are "Lilies", innocent women oppressed and sent out to the US by an exclusionary (sectarian or nationalistic), male discourse. The three novels illustrate in fiction form what Parker showed in drama: that inward-looking ethics only reap further division, whether racist, religious, social, economic or other. As each of the novels is embedded in historical contexts the mimetic narcissism of the nation-building discourse is illustrated with examples of existing figures, such as the freedom fighter John Mitchell who, on the one hand, insisted that the Irish were treated like the American slaves, but on the other hand encouraged Irish Americans to keep slaves. The three novelists' protagonists, however, break through conspiracies of family and Church, through barriers of culture and colour, so that after a physical emigration they start on their psychological migration. To each of them, America's contrasts help them recognize the racist principles which upheld their Irish identities; and, taking the brunt of self-perpetuating patterns of violence, their resilience sometimes leads to real emancipation.

As we look at Ireland and Europe in 2017 we may think (once again) that things fall apart and the centre cannot hold, but maybe the notions of "centre" and "apart" have to be rethought. Certainly, under the onslaught of global predatory capitalism which takes over our agricultural acreage, industrial production and our internetted minds, it is no luxury to think about the darker sides of ourselves and our society, as much as

about the creative potential of difference between ourselves. Writers and artists see boundaries as building blocks, strands to weave always new patterns with; contradiction can be a motor out of stereotype; discrepancies are to be used as passages from which a new breath can originate; physical and social boundaries are to be mapped in their emotional impact so as to filter out, or morph the negative effects into positive ones. Indeed, boundaries are not just marking differences in spatial aspects but also in styles, rhythms, degrees of epistemological certainty: if you are not as convinced as the next man, you are excluded. This volume of ISE practices alterity, offers models of heterogeneity and inclusion, reminds us to be alive, alert and kicking, questioning certainties imposed as truth.

TRANSITIONING BOUNDARIES

GOING GLOBAL?

Declan Kiberd

No movement in painting, said W.B. Yeats, ever outlasts the impulses of its founders. He felt much the same about the Irish nation-state. Two of his great poems about the founding acts, “Easter 1916” and “Leda and the Swan”, are heavy with a sense of loss: the action which marks a birth also leads directly to war and death. If “the painter’s brush consumes his dreams” (Yeats, “Two Songs from a Play”, *Collected Poems* 240), and “our love letters wear out our love” then the very expressions of a national idea, once uttered, can never be fully recaptured by their authors. They might, however, be taken up, like baby Moses in his basket rescued by some Pharaoh’s daughter, in a different dispensation. Or they might, like the future worlds of Derek Mahon, lie dormant for years in a disused building or an abandoned technology.

In previous phases of Irish culture, a near-death-experience had often led to new vitality: the sense of an ending helped to suggest that something else might be beginning. In the cryptic words of Samuel Beckett: “Imagination dead. Imagine.” Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill’s figuring of Irish as the corpse that won’t stay dead but sits up to deliver one more final utterance is a recent variation

But it was Beckett who became the model for a culture that fed on abstinence. The less he had to say, the more wonderfully it was said. The shorter his texts, the richer the commentaries they evoked, like some famished Third World country which was the subject of endless international investigations. He was the author whose imagination was vivified by failure. It was success which he found difficult, as when he fled his home in Paris on the announcement of his Nobel prize in 1969 with the comment “quelle catastrophe” (Cronin 543). Tiger Ireland, likewise, never fully evolved literary forms for coping with affluence. That reluctance was due to many factors: the difficulty in photographing a still-moving object; an unsureness as to whether the prosperity was real and lasting; a desire first of all to look in the rear-view mirror and take the measure of that landscape which people were leaving behind (Kiberd 269-88).

It was the more popular forms of romantic fiction and crime novel which engaged with the bright lights and shiny surfaces of Tiger Ireland, as did a small but growing number of films.¹ Strictly literary artists continued to deal mainly with aspects of the recent or remote pasts. The more that international finance broke up old cultures, the more

1 Editor’s note: As Seán Crosson pointed out to me, some examples would be *About Adam* (Gerry Stembridge, 2000), *Goldfish Memory* (Liz Gill, 2003) and John Boorman’s *The Tiger’s Tail* (2006). For a good survey of these films see the chapter “Between modernity and marginality: Celtic Cinema” by Ruth Barton in *From prosperity to austerity. A socio-cultural critique of the Celtic Tiger and its aftermath*. Ed. Eamon Maher and Eugene O’Brien, Manchester UP, 2014.

necessary its sponsors in New York and London found it to celebrate writers who could supply vivid accounts of what had been erased. A major play such as *Dancing at Lughnasa* was both analysis and symptom of the underlying process, offering a myth of self-explanation to the diaspora in those cities, but some of Friel's earlier works on such themes had had nothing like the same success on these circuits. The brilliant books of McGahern also remained, outside of Ireland, a rather minority taste. His last great novel *That They May Face the Rising Sun* had its title altered by the US publisher to *By the Lake*, lest readers might think it a tour guide to Japan.

In so far as such versions of national culture triumphed abroad, they tended to offer simplified versions of Irishness. Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, with its storyline suggestion of a land as desperately interesting and as interestingly desperate as ever, fell on receptive ears. McGahern's inflected narratives never made it anything like as big. Whereas McCourt heightened colours to the point of caricature, McGahern took the view that Irish life was inherently so extreme that the artist must tone them down, if only to make them credible.

Yet, through the nineties and noughties, as Ireland became the most globalized economy in Europe, there was much talk of the worlding of Irish writing. More writers were living abroad and writing about 'abroad' than in the seventies or eighties. Emerging novelists made a point of setting entire works in New York, Berlin or Central America. The finest of all was, arguably, Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*, an account of the international members of a cricket team in New York. It would take some straining to read its plot in terms of an occluded 'Irish' narrative, such as might be found in Banville's *Doctor Copernicus*. O'Neill, before it, had written a study of his mingled Irish and Turkish ancestry, *Blood-dark Track*, but as a long-committed New Yorker has long treated nationality as a sort of post-modern joke: "for years I was under the impression that Flannery O'Connor was Irish – a Kerryman, perhaps" (O'Neill 88). Early in *Netherland* the protagonist's wife discusses members of a tribe up the Amazon river who do not know that they live in a country named Colombia: but the same may be true of many of the novelist's fellow New Yorkers.² The minds of many Irish writers resident in that city were moving well beyond the national idea, yet most of them, as soon as they featured in a colour supplement, were renationalized as fast as any bank: "the Irish writer X."

Dozens of poets, as well as novelists, had chosen to set parts of a work in some overseas place, for purposes of comparison and contrast with Ireland. The contrapuntal narrative was all the rage in lyric sequences by Harry Clifton, Derek Mahon, Thomas MacCarthy, Paul Muldoon or Medbh McGuckian, as in novels by Joseph O'Connor or Hugo Hamilton. At the same time, the 1990s was the decade in which it became fashionable to be Irish across the world, as people used the post-modern pub, the spectacle of Riverdance, the music of Enya or the memoirs of McCourt to

2 For a brilliant analysis of the book in this light, see Stanley van der Ziel 60-76.

connect with their inner Paddy. Many overseas authors began to turn to Ireland, as Borges and Pinget had done in the era of high modernism, for setting and for theme. In the subsequent decade, Vargas Llosa wrote a novel about Roger Casement and Enrique Vila-Matas wrote a Joycean homage in *Dublinesque*.

By 2010 the immigrants who had been arriving in numbers since the affluence of the late 90s started to appear in novels, plays and films – but most often in rather restricted roles, as examples of what were condescendingly termed “the new Irish” (i.e. those who had learned enough Hiberno-English to tell customers in pubs and restaurants “you’re grand!”). There was, nonetheless, a sense of expectancy: as if it could only be a matter of time before the fusion-food of restaurants would be accompanied by inflections of hybridized poetry or experimental narratives produced by the immigrants themselves.

Ireland, as it approached the millennium, was indeed a multicultural place. Even the *Evening Herald* found it profitable to issue an enclosed newspaper in Polish on Tuesdays. Evangelical churches for Nigerians opened in many places, as did mosques for Muslims (in the rural west as well as in Dublin). The capital city came to a standstill for celebrations of the Chinese New Year. And a grand-daughter of one of the Vietnamese boat people took first place in Irish in the country’s Leaving Certificate examination.

There were new kinds of writing addressed to the question of hybrid identity in poetry by Heaney and McGuckian, in plays by Friel and Doyle, in stories by Maeve Binchy and Claire Keegan; but in the novel, the form in which one might have expected to find subtlest explorations of the encounter with the Other, there was little enough. Many talented younger novelists had abandoned the attempt to describe a whole society (despite that society still being rather small) and preferred to focus on this or that sub-group: a cluster of graduates from a college class, the workers in a single restaurant, the members of a rock band, and so on. One of the best of these, Keith Ridgway, summed up the technical problem in titling one of his books *The Parts*. It was as if writers now focused novels, as once they had short stories, on outsiders and on the “submerged population groups” beloved of Frank O’Connor. Within Dublin, nobody was trying to write a ‘Wandering Rocks’, let alone a full-blown panoptic portrait in the style of James Plunkett’s *Strumpet City*.

Even more remarkable was the disinclination of novelists to deal with the culture brought to Ireland by the newcomers themselves. The concentration was, rather, on making these people “more Irish than the Irish themselves” – as happened to the Normans of the 1300s – by offering them crash-courses in Irish Studies. Irish novelists who had been educated in the revisionist years after the 1970s, during which so many elements of the national narrative had been erased, were seizing on new arrivals as pretexts for teaching themselves what they should have known anyway.

In her book *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva says that we encounter the stranger in others in order to uncover the hidden, 'untransacted' parts of ourselves. In countries like France, she observes, right-wing parties are forever projecting the national culture as the one which newcomers should embrace, whereas leftists care more for the culture which incomers bring with them. Modernity works best, of course, when cultures receive such equal attention from all parties as to permit a genuine possibility of newness and fusion. Something like that process was observable in the early years of the Celtic Tiger from 1996 up to 2002. Many who arrived in Ireland showed a deep interest in traditions still quite new to them, but they also carried the memory of their own pasts and a willingness to share them. After 2002, there was less fusion and less thoughtfulness. The country fell in thrall to a heedless consumerism, while many of the incomers showed little interest in the lore of their ancestors or in the traditions of Ireland. With eyes only for the main chance, many people (in the most repeated phrase of the time) "lost the run of themselves."

By 2002 the old currency had made way for the Euro. All banknotes which had once borne images of writers from Scotus Eriugena to Joyce disappeared. They were replaced by featureless bridges and buildings which already had the look of the Lubyanka about them. The loss among many Irish people of a confident sense of who exactly they were made it more difficult for some to deal confidently with the Other. The shyness of novelists to deal directly with the immigrant experience stands in telling contrast with the classic works of the literary tradition: *Gulliver's Travels* (a study in defamiliarisation), *Castle Rackrent* and *Ulysses* (which consider the experience of being Jewish in Ireland), Beckett's trilogy and McGahern's stories (both authors constantly exploring alterity).³ These writers all came out of a monocultural land and yet somehow – perhaps because of that – they managed to explore Otherness. *Ulysses* comes, after all, to a grand climax when a thirty-eight-year-old man of eastern aspect invites a twenty-two-year-old graduate back to his kitchen for cocoa. It is hard to imagine any student accepting such an invitation now. The capital city in Joyce's time allowed people to dice with their own strangeness, but now in the age of *The Parts* it is filled with suburbs and shopping-malls, designed to protect people from those very chance encounters which are the life-blood of most good stories.

By 2000 the sources of that provincializing effect were New York and London, whose editors nonetheless remained ravenous for 'Irish copy'. This had long been the case. Exactly a century earlier, W.B. Yeats had warned writers that they were faced with a choice between expressing Ireland or exploiting it.⁴ The expression of a country to its own people could be fraught with excitement and risk, while the exploitation of that material for overseas audiences could bring rapid cash rewards. Yeats, accordingly, sought to bring the centre of gravity back home, by establishing not just a theatre but

3 For a caustic and amusing analysis of this contrast see the unpublished doctoral dissertation by Doljanin, "The Figure of the Outsider and the Immigrant."

4 W.B. Yeats, Letter to the Editor, *The Leader*, September 1900.

publishing houses in Dublin. For all his charisma as a cultural leader, his efforts in the area of publishing were not hugely successful. Even in the 1960s, a quarter-century after his death, there were few publishing houses, except for some gathered around coteries of poets; and the work of leading novelists was displayed by Dublin bookshops in alphabetical sequence alongside that of overseas authors – O'Brien next to O'Hara, McLaverty beside Mailer. Although the first chair of Anglo-Irish Literature was founded at University College Dublin in 1964, the booksellers of Dublin for the most part had not yet decided that Irish writing in English was a distinct category.

All that would change in the seventies and eighties, as 'Irish Studies' came into their own. But some of the cooler, more hip young writers wanted things both ways: they wished to appeal to a national constituency, even as they questioned its underpinnings. *Paddy No More* was the title of a successful collection of their writings from a Dublin publishing house.⁵ Many of the writers included sought an international style. They mocked the Abbey theatre's annual revival of a play by Synge or O'Casey for the busloads of summer tourists. They wanted to be counted one with Borges, Broch and Benjamin – not Davis, Mangan and Ferguson. Yet, even in their impatience with the national idea, they somehow gave it continuing recognition, density, gravitas. And, of course, their ability to tell a good story won them deserved audiences overseas, as well as at home.

Irish writing remained high-fashion in subsequent decades. At one point in 1998, there were seventeen Irish plays being staged in the Greater London area. These plays allowed English audiences to address, at a safe remove, their own unresolved national question, and the fear that they were late-comers to the fashion-parade of nations.⁶ (Their National Theatre, after all, had opened only in 1978, three-quarters of a century after that of Ireland). 1998 was also the year in which the Cross of Saint George replaced the Union Jack at many sporting events; and when the Belfast agreement sketched the prospect of devolved home-rule parliaments not just for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales but also for England itself.

The lure of national cultures seemed to have been rediscovered after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. The collapse of the communist project led the radical analyst Tom Nairn to remark on how few people, through the twentieth century, had proved willing to die for a social class compared with the millions who had died for country (Nairn 59 ff.). The richness of Marxian philosophy had come to a dead end. What was needed, Nairn suggested, was a commensurate sophistication in the literature of nationalism, so that its more positive potentials might be explored. Social democrats began to talk up the need for some form of nation-state, not only to project identity as

5 William Vorm was the editor, the short stories were published by Wolfhound Press in Dublin, including writers like Juanita Casey and John Montague but also Neil Jordan, Dermot Healy and Lucille Redmond.

6 This interpretation was first suggested to me by Harold Fish, who served for some years as Director of the British Council in Dublin.

a counter-weight to globalization, but also to express values of the decolonizing world. They noted rather wistfully that the transnational ideals, which had animated the United Nations upon its foundation in 1945, had not been fully developed, as that organization itself became a mechanism for recognizing newly-independent nations. Less than fifty existed in 1945 but by the century's end there were more than two hundred. Yet all through those intervening decades, while nation-states blossomed, languages had continued to die. As had been the case with Ireland, nations were what filled that empty space which lost languages left behind. In an era of rapid globalization, they exercised much less economic and political power than their leaders liked to believe, being often little more than devices for the psychological compensation of dispossessed peoples. Nevertheless, in the eyes of some more radical commentators, the nation-state had its uses. In its early days it had assisted peoples in containing and controlling the catastrophic onset of modernity; now, in its venerable age after 1989, liberal social democrats such as Tony Judt hoped that it might act as some sort of brake on the depredations enacted by global capital.

Such hopes soon appeared naïve. By the time affluence (of a sort) came to Ireland, the ethical programme of the nation had been all but exhausted. The theory of national revival seventy-five years earlier had been based on the understanding that culture, politics and economics would all work together to promote freedom in conditions of decent self-sufficiency; but these three forces never quite coincided. There was no economic lift-off in the early decades of the state and the weakness of the political elites after the Civil War led to a brokerist, clientelist politics, in the conduct of which various sections of society were 'bought off'. The sub-groups so courted did not include intellectuals or artists: rather these were driven out of the public sphere by censorship and belittlement. They never fully re-entered that sphere to create a more thoughtful type of nationalism or a considered lay theology.

The result of this, over time, was a denigration of national tradition by many intellectuals. By 1969, when a tax-holiday was proclaimed for artists, and by 1981, when the government offered artists an annual stipend in Aosdána, the corrosiveness had passed from artists into the mass media. Weak and uncertain politicians now often buckled under pressure from journalists as once they had blanched under the influence of the Catholic Church. The lack of a strong lay theological tradition made it difficult for many to process the liberal doctrines of the Second Vatican Council; and the steady erosion of older religious practices (pilgrimages, pattern days, stations of the cross) led to a privatization of everything from religious practice to consciousness itself. There was no longer an ethical language available for use in the public sphere (other than that employed by artists). Most politicians who talked, as Patrick Pearse had once done, of a patria to be served, would have been laughed to scorn by journalists; and the Irish Republican Army helped to discredit the language of 'patriotism' by their casual slaughter of civilians.

In September 1997, it had been announced that there was not a single postulant registered that year to study for the priesthood in the Dublin archdiocese (Twomey 142); and a couple of years later it emerged that the number of lawyers in the country now surpassed that of priests for the first time since records began⁷. "Money is the new Irish religion" proclaimed a feature in the *Sunday Times* of 2000 (Kenny 176). The old religion, though hierarchical and repressive in many ways, had provided some of the social glue which held communities together. Although commentators often complained of the state being used by church authorities for their own purposes, the truth was that from its uncertain beginnings an impecunious government had used the Catholic Church as a sort of alternative welfare system in everything from education to health care. The older religion of popular devotionism had helped people in conditions of adversity "to preserve an inner detachment from worldly success and from personal tragedy" (Twomey 176); but in the new state a moralistic Catholicism reduced religion to a civil ethic, stripped of most of its visionary majesty.

That rule-bound Catholicism underwent its final collapse in the years of the Celtic Tiger; but in fact the scandals of clerical child-abuse dealt a knock-out blow to what were already enfeebled institutions. Vocations to the religious life began to fall, as we have seen, as early as 1967; and between 1971 and 1991 the average number of children in most families dropped from four to two, as the papal teaching on contraception was increasingly flouted. The commitment of even the more conservative sort of Catholic was eroded by the scandals, since the abuse of children for many constituted an ultimate betrayal of trust. The problem for the wider society, however, was that it had evolved no satisfactory liberal humanist code with which to replace that of the exploded religious institutions. One dire consequence was that, as Catholicism weakened, the more predatory kinds of capitalism began to triumph; and there were few voices, apart from those of artists and some independent-minded reporters, to offer any probing criticism of the new materialism.

The financial crisis which beset the global system after 2008 demonstrated just how ill-fitted the legal frameworks of even the more powerful states were to cope with predators. Yet leaders tried as best they could to cope in a national way with a transnational challenge, regulating the degrees of pain experienced by many vulnerable groups. Nobody, however, found a satisfactory way of curbing the ultimate authors of the affliction. Things hadn't been intended to pan out like this. Those in Ireland who had abandoned nationalist pieties and religious practice in the later years of the twentieth century had believed that they were getting something valuable in return: individual freedom and material well-being. By 2010, as unemployment rose to almost half a million and the economy was micro-managed by the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund, these promises rang a little hollow.

7 *The Irish Times*, 2 April 2002, 12.

Sometimes, when a people are about to surrender a culture, outsiders come to its rescue. It was T.S. Eliot, a young man from St. Louis, Missouri, who saved English poetry in the 1920s, abetted by other outsiders such as Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats. In the previous generation, the English novel had been reconfigured by the American Henry James and the Polish Joseph Conrad, as it would be by Joyce in following years. All cultures which survive well do so because they are open to injections of life from without.

Migrants into a new country often expend their deepest energies on adjusting to the new place; and it used to be left to their children or grandchildren to create an art which explored fusions between the family's older traditions and those of the new country. These days, however, things can happen much faster. It would not be altogether surprising if immigrant writers from Africa or Eastern Europe reopened a dialogue with figures such as Cuchulainn or Deirdre. They may well find new meanings in those mythological characters who exist still as buried memories of that landscape in which their people are choosing to live. The model of what Eliot did in 1922 is clear enough: in *The Waste Land* he described a fallen, jaded city, emptied of serious human encounter; but by invoking *The Faerie Queene* and *The Tempest*, the Fisher King and Brahma, he showed how seemingly lost traditions could flow like tributaries back into a resacralised landscape. The fate of the land – with fewer crops being grown every year, but endless ranches being created in a mode of big-farmer pastoralism – suggests a people who no longer feel themselves married to rock and hill. What they desire, at best, is a pleasant view of 'scenery'. Land ownership has become even more important than land use, in ways which would still not be true in France or Italy, whose farmers take pride in bringing home-grown fruits and vegetables to local markets. It is interesting that younger entrepreneurs, many of them women, have drawn a lesson from visits to these countries of continental Europe, setting up successful franchises in artisan foods.

Reviewed against that wider context, Eamon de Valera's radio broadcast of 1943 extolling rural values takes on an insurrectionary intensity. It insisted, in effect, that leaders such as he were not content simply to manage rural decline but were intent on reinvigorating the land. At a time when tens of thousands were leaving every year, and when many who remained showed a disinclination to reproduce themselves, this was a defiant rather than sentimental speech. Many bishops in their pastoral letters of the 1940s warned communities against selfish bachelors, cautious maids and elderly parents blocking the marital hopes of the young – these were the very images used in de Valera's speech in a more positive key, but they could be employed in a more negative mode by bishops as warning rather than vision (Kenny 177). Some cultural critics even wondered whether there might be a link between the censorship of creative art (lamented by Beckett) and the growing refusal to procreate (which his art seemed to endorse). By the 1950s, in a book titled *The Vanishing Irish*, a priest named John O'Brien said that if the decline in population continued, "the Irish will virtually disappear as a nation and will be found only as an enervated remnant in a

land occupied by foreigners" (Kenny 176). One bishop predicted that the people would "vanish like the Mayans, leaving only their monuments behind." The exclusion of most intellectuals and artists from the national project, under conditions of censorship, robbed de Valera and the bishops of potentially influential allies in his debate.

The state had been established after decades of dire uncertainty, but the cultural domain, in whose name the separatist agitation had been mounted, often seemed marginal. Yet major art-work, as we have seen, continued to lament that most elements of the promised Gaelic revival had never been achieved. *Amongst Women* ends when a man, an apologetic and furtive Fionn after the Fianna, drapes a tricolor over a dead comrade's coffin. *Dancing at Lughnasa* shows just how little the old fire-festival now means to ordinary people. By the time these texts were written, the Irish had ceded most of their sovereignty – a subject of central value in Gaelic vision-poems long before it became a basis of their wars of independence. Like other European peoples, they were ruled by decrees as often as by traditions or by national codes. The Dáil lost much authority, not only to unelected administrators of the European Union but also to the requirements of multi-national companies.

Against that backdrop the vote by 94% of the people of the Republic in 1998 to ratify the Belfast Agreement seemed sensible. With so much sovereignty lost in a globalized economy, how much really remained to be surrendered in the Agreement? The old territorial claim on the six counties – which nationalists had once considered a force of nature on an island destined to be one, indivisible place – was now withdrawn. It was recognized that a county such as Antrim could be British or Irish or both at the same time. Clearly the British, in advancing the very notion of Ireland as an administrative unit, had been among the chief inventors of its modern version of nationhood, so it was reasonable to admit that there was a significant British element in the people's identity.

It may well be that the Irish, having confronted their national question for well over a century, can more easily say farewell to the nation-state than the English, whose identity has been drained away first by the British and then by the European structures. But the English may well be arriving at the fashion-parade of nations at just that moment when the show is starting to close down. Nations will continue to exist for many decades as shells, and in even greater numbers, but they will be divested of real economic or political power. They will be increasingly regarded as anachronisms by people for whom a phrase such as "After Ireland" may represent an opportunity to move forward rather than the utterance of an adverse judgement. In its day, the national idea created many good things – a welfare state; a belief that virtue is social as well as individual; a conviction that something in us can survive our own deaths. But it also did serious harm, creating over-centralisation, bureaucracy, distrust of local culture and, sometimes, a real hatred of other peoples. The grand renaissance of culture known as the Irish Revival occurred in those decades just before the nation was embodied in a new state. There may well be a second cultural flowering in com-

ing years, as the political nation called Ireland dies and culture is once again seen to be the site and stake of all meaningful struggles.

Its prestige is still very high. The community believes that many kinds of leader have betrayed the public trust, but nobody says that about artists. Even in the years before the centenary celebrations of the Easter Rising, as young people left in their thousands and shop fronts were boarded up, there was a willingness to look to artists for pointers. As once again a rather innocent people's trust in a monoculture (this time houses) proved disastrous, they turned to artists for inspiration, as figures who might embody the popular longing for form far more successfully than the state had managed to do. Economic collapse, as in the 1890s and the 1980s, had proven one thing – that unemployment in a population educated to relatively high levels can be the very foundation for a revival of the arts. The Dublin of the 1980s had contained a thousand garage bands and the country as a whole nurtured many of the literary talents whose work has been explored in this book.

The children of the 1980s had inherited a strong sense of Ireland, even if many of its elements distressed them mightily. The generation which began to leave after 2008 had a more globalized sense of Ireland; and the prospect of decades spent servicing a debt they did not themselves create led many to opt out: instead of protesting in the streets, like their Greek or French counterparts, they simply emigrated to other parts of the English-speaking world. But, once outside, many learn in a sharpened way what it is to be Irish. They are now part of a worldwide conversation about their country's cultural meaning, much as was the Revival generation of exiles in London, Paris and New York. It may be doubted, however, whether all that many of the current wild geese will choose to "bring it all back home" as did the followers of Yeats and Gregory. More likely they will follow the example of Joyce and Beckett. Yet they still feel an investment in their country: the number of young Irish intellectuals who attended a meeting in New York in autumn 2015 to protest against the commemoration programme of the Abbey Theatre for the following year is proof enough of that.⁸

In Ireland, traditions often appear to die, while in fact being reborn in some new mode. The Irish language never really vaporized, despite O'Faolain's claim in 1926 that Gaelic was over; and it is probably stronger now than it was when the Gaelic League was founded in 1893. But it did die out in many places, only to be replaced by that Hiberno-English which, deriving much of its energy from the syntax of the native language, made writers like Synge and Joyce world-famous. In the aftermath of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, nationalism of the old-fashioned kind consented to abolish itself; but it has been reborn for many in subsequent years as civic republicanism. In the same way what is dying in the spiritual life of the people is not religion but religiosity. The practices of a rule-bound ecclesiocracy are surrendering to the yearnings

8 The Abbey programme for 2016 was titled "Waking the Nation" but was retitled "Waking the Feminists", by writers and critics who objected to the fact that there was only one work by a female author projected for production in the year.

of ordinary people. Despite legislation permitting divorce, familism is still strong, so much so that 62% of the population chose to endorse gay marriage in a referendum on 22 May 2015 of a kind which might not so easily have won such levels of support in other countries of Europe. Ireland remains a place where ancient and modern ideas can often overlap. There is clearly a disconnect between the religious convictions of the people and official church institutions, as there is a disconnect between the population and its political structures (which lag decades behind).

Nature abhors a vacuum. It is likely that entirely new, unimaginable institutions will emerge, just as the Abbey Theatre and Gaelic League (and ultimately a free if flawed state) filled the gap left some decades earlier by the collapse of the old Ireland. The history of a people moves always in cycles. One hundred years ago a cultural revival led – often against the wishes of its very originators – to economic, political and even military assertions of autonomy.

As the country in the spring of 2016 celebrated a centenary since the Proclamation of the Republic, many were struck by analogies between the two Irelands. The fear of a lost political and economic sovereignty had troubled Patrick Pearse and Constance Markiewicz. Trepidation about being inundated by publications of the yellow press assailed Douglas Hyde and Maud Gonne, just as global networks of social media seem to overwhelm people today. But the Revival generation turned those challenges into opportunities, offering a confident diagnosis of its situation. Then, as now, people concluded that sovereignty in an era of growing internationalism might be limited, but that it was nonetheless important for Ireland to play a role in building a better, kinder world. Then, as now, culture was at the centre of all human struggles for self-recognition; and the one domain in which an unfettered kind of sovereignty might yet be enjoyed.

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“UNGENEROUS THOUGH NOT MEAN”: THE SCHEME FOR THE PURCHASE OF EVACUATED DWELLINGS, BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

Katherine Side

In early May 1972, a Catholic fruit vendor on the Shankill Road was confronted by a crowd of protestors. Unable to enter the street, he could not sell his fresh produce. His plea for monetary compensation, made a few days later on Northern Ireland's *It's Your Line* radio programme, led to an unanticipated, although not unprecedented outcome. The government of Great Britain, supported by international efforts, devised an assemblage of financial schemes to compensate individuals for property loss in the hope of ending a climate of unravelling civility, including sectarian threats, intimidation and violence.¹ Government schemes were intended to provide limited financial compensation to individuals during a difficult, conflictual period.² This scheme would eventually be applied to the circumstances of the fruit vendor, in the form of a one-time *ex gratia* payment. Initially, the *Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)* was a British government-funded programme, administered in Britain and Northern Ireland, for the purpose of providing, on evidence of proof, limited financial compensation to home owners and residents who lost their houses due to conflict.

The Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)

In 1973, a Working Party of Representatives of Agencies, convened by the Minister of State, Home Office, was struck to deal with issues of financial compensation along the lines requested by the fruit vendor.³ Convened when intimidation levels were relatively low, the Working Party unveiled *SPED* as a temporary policy response. *SPED*

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- 1 After March 1972, and apart from the Sunningdale period in 1974, Northern Ireland was ruled directly by the British Secretary of State. In Northern Ireland, intimidation is contrary to s1 of *The Protection against the Persons and Property Act (Northern Ireland), 1969*.
 - 2 Separate schemes were devised to compensate individuals for the loss of farms, land and livestock, businesses and employment, and housing. In this analysis, I undertake a close examination of the development, administration, and operation of the *Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)*.
 - 3 The Minister of State for Northern Ireland was Lord Windlesham. Working Party members included: Minister of Community Relations; Down County Welfare; Royal Ulster Constabulary; (British) Army Representative; Belfast Council of Social Welfare; Coordinating Centre for Relief; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Antrim County Welfare; Belfast Corporation Welfare; Ministry of Health and Social Services; and Community Relations Commission (CREL, *Working Party on Intimidation*).

drew on existing legislation to establish an applicant-based scheme for monetary compensation, including a system of appeal.⁴

SPED had tight eligibility criteria, a dense bureaucratic process, and provided low levels of financial compensation.⁵ Under *SPED*, financial compensation was only available to owners or occupiers of residential dwellings who experienced property loss. Businesses were exempt from *SPED* eligibility. Applicants must have vacated their houses at least six months prior to their application, and their houses had to be classed as unsaleable. For instance, in the case of Application No. 1911, the house was purchased by the owners for £1,000 in 1955. It was vacated in 1973 and classed as unsaleable because “the bar next door is a target for gunmen” (DED). Attacked on four separate occasions, bullets had struck the house.⁶ The application process for *SPED* was onerous. Applications had to be made through solicitors, and necessitated an extensive knowledge of the property, a Certificate of Verification of Intimidation from the Chief Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) or British security forces, and confirmation of inclusion on the Emergency Housing List (DED *SPED*). Successful awards were made at levels significantly below the property values. Under *SPED*, a maximum purchase price, by the Northern Ireland House Executive, of £5,000 was payable to the head of household. In cases of house purchases, the

4 Relevant legislation included: The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875; the Criminal Injuries to Persons Act (Compensation) (c.9, N.I.) 1956; the Criminal Injuries Act to Property (Compensation) Act (Northern Ireland) 1973; the Protection of the Persons and Property Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, (amended under the Northern Ireland (Modification of Enactments No. 1) Order 1973, and the Northern Ireland (Modifications of Enactments- N.I.) Order 1973.

5 Historically, financial compensation was sought by Southern Loyalists who moved North of the border after partition, Southern Loyalists who relocated to Great Britain, and Catholics from the North who moved to the Free State and to Great Britain, many of whom alleged personal injury in various forms and/property loss. A range of compensatory schemes acknowledged losses resulting from “violence targeted deliberately at particular groups, identified by their religion, political allegiance, economic status and gender” during the 1916 Rising and the Irish War of Independence (Clark 197). Individuals were compensated financially under *The Criminal Injuries Act* 1919, 1920, and the Shaw Commission, (also the Compensation (Ireland) Commission 1922) established jointly by the United Kingdom and the Irish Free State governments (Clark 20, 23). Brennan exposes financial compensation provided to individuals, (Protestant and Catholic), by the British-based Irish Grants Committee (I.G.C.), 1922-1931 as a “political minefield.” Despite political accusations about blame, the I.G.C. was careful to maintain diplomatic relations with Northern Ireland’s Prime Minister, James Craig, and the Free State Government. The I.G.C. shared many features with what was later to be *SPED*: it was established as a temporary programme; it accepted applications from members of all communities; it provided limited financial compensation for losses; its administrators were similarly worried about fraudulent claims; eligibility required extensive documentation (i.e. medical certificates, banks and account books, valuations); its claimants formed their own association to protest low valuations; and, it included the establishment of a Special Hardships Committee, which “paved the way for the provision of *ex gratia* payments” (Brennan 416).

6 Special Hardship Cases referred to the Minister, DED.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive could refurbish and re-sell houses, although inter-government correspondence specified that “incidental improvements should be minimal and should be geared to the general level of housing in the area” (*Rehabilitation Working Party*). It may have been assumed that applicants receiving low levels of financial compensation would be enticed to move from conflict-ridden Belfast, to outlying towns with lower housing costs. Additional funds, as small resettlement grants, were made available for relocation from Belfast to Antrim, Bangor, Carrickfergus, Craigavon, and Newtownards (CREL Intimidation).

Administering SPED

SPED’s operation was, at best, uneven. Some Catholic residents were hesitant to contact the RUC or British security forces to obtain the required Certificate of Verification of Intimidation, especially after the introduction of the policy of internment on 9 August 1971. This tension was unacknowledged in advice provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (NICRC) to threatened and intimidated residents.⁷ The NICRC’s official position was that intimidated residents should visit their local police station in person, ensure their complaint was registered by the desk sergeant, and request police protection to secure their personal possessions.⁸ This advice was directly contradicted by the Association for Legal Justice, which advised intimidated Catholic residents to inform the Coordination Relief Centre on the Falls Road, West Belfast, to register the incident with the Association for Legal Justice, and to consider returning to their house because, they contended, “there is no [financial] compensation for what you might lose.”⁹

Mutual distrust characterised relations between some SPED administrators and applicants. Applicants’ eligibility was questioned, with some officials suggesting that SPED created “an atmosphere or even a mental impression of intimidation” (FIN, *Compensation for Losses Due to Intimidation* 12) where none existed, and that “such a programme would encourage people to leave their homes” (FIN, *Compensation for Losses Due to Intimidation* 16). In a letter to the Director, Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission, Chief Constable, [Edward] Graham Shillington of the RUC questioned the veracity of some applicants:¹⁰

I think it must be accepted that many of those who complained of intimidation did so in the knowledge that their allegations of threats were difficult to refute and that many grants under such circumstances could be easily obtained. (CREL, *Intimidation* 1)

7 The Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission existed from 1969 until 1975; the current Community Relations Council was established in 1990.

8 See, *Intimidation: What to Do and Where to Go*.

9 The Association for Legal Justice monitored justice and security issues and the treatment of Catholics (Thompson 82).

10 (Edward) Graham Shillington was Chief Constable, RUC from 1970 until 1973.

RUC Officer, Bruce Davison, stationed at the Mountpottinger Road Barracks in East Belfast also questioned the presence of intimidation. Asked by the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide his first-hand impressions of an area reputed to be a conflict-ridden interface, he responded,

There is much more talk of intimidation than there is actual intimidation. Many people feel intimidated by the general situation. And often take advantage of the provisions by the public authorities to move to areas where they feel among their own. Others also react...to specific events, [which] at other times would only be classified as normal Saturday night rowdiness...at present, about half a dozen cases are known, but it is doubtful that these are much more than bad-neighbour relationships." (CREL, *Civil Disturbances* 1)

The formation of the Association of Former Owners/Occupiers, whose members demanded a change in housing valuation rates used by *SPED* indicated collective dissatisfaction with the levels of financial compensation awarded.

An examination of appeal cases provides further evidence of *SPED*'s inconsistent application. Appeals were referred to the Independent Advisory Committee for Special Hardships Cases for decisions. However, exceptions were made often. Exceptions related to compassionate grounds, including: vulnerability determined by age; medical condition, including nerves; handicap; mixed marriage; the presence of young children; and/or, conflict-related injuries. For example, Applicant No. 2074 was made by a 62-year-old, Protestant woman who reported no incidents of intimidation and resided in her house at the time of application. She received compensation under *SPED* based on the fact that "although she is of the same religious beliefs as her neighbours, she does not share their political sympathies" (ENV, *Special Hardship Cases* 1).

Official correspondence about *SPED* illustrates inter-jurisdictional cooperation in the administration of an intentionally restrictive compensatory scheme.¹¹ *SPED* provided

11 Government documents are historical artefacts and contemporary building blocks in official narratives about the conflict. They reinforce the legitimacy and power of governments to secure particular versions of the conflict (Burton 66). John Coakley and Jennifer Todd remind researchers that archival documents "tell us what officials choose to minute, and what élites choose to circulate in writing" (8). Among the documents examined between January and June 2015 were 53 archival files in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). These included: government reports; policy documents; recorded discussion of legislation; minutes of working committees; inter-departmental committee reports; secretary's reports; records for compensatory programmes, schemes and hardship cases; compensatory tribunal records and appeals; inter-governmental communiqués, communication with security forces and peace groups; housing organisation records; emergency housing lists; personal correspondence; open access criminal reports and criminal injury reports; print leaflets with guidelines for intimidated families; scholarly reports; press releases; and, intentionally assembled collections of press clippings. The form of these documents normalises their content (Partner 162), although David Miller argues that official documents are not uniform in their thoughts, agendas, and responses (386, 387). Spread across various government departments, agencies, and bodies, accounts of housing displacement and govern-

limited financial compensation for property loss, but it undervalued individual and/or household need. In the words of one official, “an argument in favour of avoiding generosity is that it is an additional test of genuineness” – *SPED* was devised to be “ungenerous, though not mean” (FIN, *Letter* 1). Necessity and opportunism were also integral aspects of the scheme’s operation. *SPED* became a tool to avert a population exodus from Northern Ireland to England, to bolster state efforts for securitisation by re-establishing patterns of community-specific, residential segregation in Belfast, and to facilitate urban regeneration. Consequently, *SPED* also facilitated the illegal practice of squatting, temporarily taking up residence, and paramilitary vigilantism, both of which were antithetical to state efforts to ensure public safety, and promote conflict alleviation.¹²

Housing Displacement, Charitable Relief, and Financial Compensation: Belfast, The 1970s

The British government was caught off guard by the escalation of conflict. Initially, short-term, non-monetary assistance was provided to affected households charitably as a temporary form of relief. For instance, displaced residents used volunteer removal services to leave their houses and neighbourhoods. One particular furniture service was staffed by volunteers and operated, from the late 1960s until the mid-1970s, as a removal service and source of second-hand furniture (Voluntary Service Bureau 28). By 1974, the service’s two vans had travelled in excess of 3,000 miles per month transferring household possessions, mostly among Belfast’s residentially segregated neighbourhoods (Voluntary Service Bureau 28). Two organizations, the Belfast Charity Organization Society and the Citizens Advice Bureau were also staffed mainly by volunteer labourers. Displaced residents who appealed to charitable bodies for non-monetary assistance could expect to have to travel, including into the city centre which was often a dangerous location (HSS, *Removal* 1). John Darby and Geoffrey Morris, in a report about intimidated households, noted “some families have visited 8 or 10 offices without relief” (108). The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the British Army were identified by Darby and Morris as delaying and/or refusing assistance to some households. In their 1974 report, Darby and Morris claimed that charitable efforts operated on “shoestring budgets” (108), staff in emergency centres

ment responses in Northern Ireland are fragmented. Official documents are often typed by staff whose initials render the gendered politics of employment invisible. Classification codes convey restrictions, and the exchange of documents among individuals and departments and inconsistencies in address to individuals, in webs of correspondence, limit their transparency. The coherence and accessibility of documents are also limited due to draft copies, corrections, redaction, embargoes, and censorship. For example, parts of the fruit vendor’s file are embargoed until 2081.

- 12 To date, there is no comprehensive examination of loyalist and paramilitary involvement in housing issues in Northern Ireland. In the past, and present, paramilitary organizations instigate housing displacement and offer protection from it.

were poorly trained, assistance was compartmentalized, and cooperation amongst agencies existed on paper only.

Needs for financial assistance and long term housing were intended to be met through Belfast Housing Aid, which operated an Emergency Housing Purchase Scheme with only one full-time manager and “necessary ancillary staff” and through *SPED* (DED, *Brief History* 4).¹³ The government’s view that financial compensation should be made available, and that the Shankill Road fruit vendor’s loss should be compensated by *SPED*, despite his circumstances being outside of the scheme’s guidelines, were expressed in a letter from E. Barry, Minister of Home Affairs Northern Ireland to C. Darling, Minister of Finance:

[The] Secretary of State is keen on giving [*name redacted*] some assistance to alleviate his loss, even if it involves an *ex gratia* payment, as indeed it most probably would. This could mean treating this case as one of exceptional hardship which is not covered in any existing compensatory scheme. The exceptional grounds is [*sic*] the goods for which the compensation is sought are perishables and their loss arose because [*name redacted*] was denied access to his premises. (FIN, *Joint Memo* 1)

This assertion solidified the ability of *SPED* programme administrators to operate with considerable discretion, and may have foreshadowed the British government’s inability to curtail the conflict through other means, including military intervention.

Threats, intimidation, and violence encompassed a range of behaviours including anonymous telephone calls, threats scrawled on gates and gable walls, the receipt of bullets (and for Catholics Mass cards) in the mail, broken windows, and arson and/or physical attacks (Darby 86). Knowledge that those who resided nearby had received threats heightened distrust and instigated relocation (Darby 88). Population relocation resulting from displacement could involve the eviction of a minority group, the territorial expansion of another group, and/ or the evacuation of all residents (Black, Pinter, and Overly). Housing displacement acquired its poignancy because housing and politics were closely related issues. Housing quality was poor, particularly in Belfast. Housing availability was limited and there was a long-standing practice of inequality in post-World War II housing allocation between Protestant and Catholic communities.¹⁴

Government officials acknowledged that conflict-instigated property losses were substantial, although there is no reliable figure to indicate the total number of affected

13 Belfast Housing Aid was established to encourage home ownership. When high unemployment rates, low wages, and difficult financing made this work untenable, it shifted its services to providing loans. The receipt of loans was subject to approval by the joint decisions of an estate agent, solicitor, and member of the agency’s Management Committee (DED, *Belfast Housing Aid* 1).

14 In Belfast, Catholics were underserved, receiving only 17% of all allocated corporation houses in 1961 (Connolly 287). In Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, there was a twenty-year period during which no public housing was allocated to Catholic families. John Whyte argues that complaints about housing allocation rose with the availability of public housing.

households (Side 490).¹⁵ The Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (NICRC) estimates that in summer 1969, 8.8% of all Catholic households, and 5.3% of all Protestant households were vacated because of perceived or actual threats, intimidation, and/or violence (Darby 58). By February 1973, this number rose to 11.8% and 6.6% respectively, with between 8,000 and 15,000 households affected (Darby 58). Bombay Street, in West Belfast is an often-cited example of displacement. In August 1969, sectarian attacks by loyalist groups, referred to by some Catholic residents as “Paisleyite mobs” (Brady 2) and “Orange mobs from the Shankill Road” (Brady 3), rendered forty-four of sixty-five houses uninhabitable. Bombay Street resident, John Cullen was reportedly burnt out of his house on nearby Cupar Street three times: once in 1920, again in 1921, and again in 1969.¹⁶ From 1969 onward, the intensity of threats, intimidation, and violence in Belfast peaked and waned. Although protection was offered to households by paramilitary organisations, this assistance was often unwelcome because it could instigate further conflict (Darby 107; Voluntary Service Bureau 61).

Consequences of SPED

SPED’s operation was intended to meet the long-term needs of displaced residents of Belfast, and it accommodated government plans. However, some house owners and occupiers, by virtue of their access to private finances, could bypass the scheme through emigration (Darby 89; Terchek 369). The British government regarded emigration unfavourably and its concerns were two-fold: it wanted to avert a mass migration of one community over another, resulting in further demographic and power imbalances; and, it wanted to minimize migrant resettlement costs for Britain. Inter-jurisdictional communiqués between officials at Westminster and in Northern Ireland state, “it is undesirable that assisted cases should become a welfare liability for Welfare Authorities in Great Britain” (HSS, Newell 1). They outline financial assistance for emigration as limited because, “no one wants to encourage an exodus to G.B. [Great Britain] and G.B. doesn’t want that either” (FIN, *Letter* 9). However, by 1972, net outward migration from Northern Ireland was already underway.¹⁷ The Central Secretariat estimated that 12,000 individuals in 1971, and another 12,000 in 1972, had emigrated as a result of the conflict and its related, poor economic situation (CENT 1).

Protestant community members tended to relocate to England, in a process referred to in a government document as “a creaming off of an area’s natural leaders” (CREL,

15 Government documents indicate scale by noting “hundreds of houses in the Springfield Park area [in West Belfast] have been vacated by their owners, and [which] are deteriorating through vandalism” (*SPED Scheme* 1).

16 Bombay Street was redesigned by architect Seán Mac Góil. Thirty-one of sixty-five houses that were destroyed were re-built with donations to the Bombay Street Housing Association, including £14,000 in donations received from the United States (n.d.).

17 See Johanne Devlin Trew, *Leaving the North* (2013).

Civil Disturbances 1). In a few cases, this relocation was state-assisted. A 1974 scheme provided transportation costs to households threatened because they offered assistance to security forces. The Northern Ireland Office notes, “this particular scheme is not widely known and we would not want it publicised” (NIO 1). Catholic community members tended to relocate to the Republic of Ireland. Between 1969 and 1972, “thousands of Northern Irish residents fled across the border” (Rahaleen 22) instigating a political and humanitarian crisis. In the Republic, Jack Lynch’s Fianna Fáil government established a civil relief system centred on non-monetary charitable provision, excluding housing allocation. ‘Northern refugees’ were accommodated temporarily in poorly equipped church properties, army barracks, airport hangers, and tents in counties Cork, Donegal, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wicklow (Ralaheen 31; Cochrane 2014). Schoolchildren, members of religious orders, the Irish Countrywomen’s Association, (which established the Women’s Voluntary Emergency Service), the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Irish Red Cross, the Civil Defence, Gardaí, and the Army assisted the ‘refugees’ (Rahaleen 31). But, mis-handled government funds resulted in political resignations in the Republic, and many ‘refugees,’ who struggled in the absence of housing provision returned North, with governments tracking their returning numbers closely (Ralaheen 24, 31).

Segregated residential patterns did not originate with *SPED*, but their continuation proved insufficient to address existing policy deficits (Darby 206).¹⁸ Local habits, practices, and folklore solidified existing physical, spatial, and social boundaries, and inter-community tensions and pressing housing needs made *SPED* an easy target of criticism (Murtagh 835). Darby and Morris argue that housing segregation exacerbated a “polarisation of attitudes and a lack of positive contacts with other communities,” and hindered conflict alleviation efforts (4). *SPED* administrators accepted the fact that the scheme exacerbated community-segregated housing, “we regret that these schemes encourage further polarisation of the communities, but we feel that this is inevitable if the risk of confrontation is to be avoided” (ENV, *Housing Improvement in Belfast* 1). This arrangement, however, benefitted state and security forces’ efforts to try to manage the conflict. Some residents also accepted housing segregation as the price of security. For instance, Protestants acknowledged the limitations of resettling only other Protestant households in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast, but accepted this practice as the only viable option under the circumstances (*Belfast Newsletter* 2). Single-identity neighbourhoods were recognised as important sites of “ontological security, defence and cultural enhancement” (Murtagh 835). Resident surveys indicated strong preferences for re-housing within the city’s most segregated

18 Residential segregation persists today. Shuttleworth and Lloyd argue, “in 2001 we [NI] were living in a more residentially-segregated society than in 1971, but not markedly more segregated than in 1991” (223). Brendan Murtagh and Peter Shirlow argue that the post peace accord period has re-designed Belfast’s class-based “consumer landscape” but has not significantly altered the landscape of inter-community perceptions or interactions (10).

areas, largely regarded as “defensible” (Darby 91). *SPED* administrators’ willingness to meet residents’ demands enhanced perceptions about inter-community differences. Those who opposed housing segregation were in the minority and calls for experimental mixed housing efforts went unheeded.¹⁹ The result, Darby and Morris argue, was the reinforcement of insular and introverted communities with expectations of conformity:

There is pressure against any non-conformist in the area – the man who criticizes the IRA, or the family which refused to pay its UDA dues, even the drug addict or the sexually promiscuous...In a desperate search for security, anyone who is not completely conformist...is at risk. (2)

In some instances, residents simply abandoned houses. Abandoned houses vexed government officials. Supplementary legislation, which gave the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) power to purchase abandoned houses, permitted them considerable latitude in terms of embarking on urban regeneration, in response to Belfast’s already declining industrial base.

Security considerations in Northern Ireland distinguished urban regeneration plans in Belfast from those being implemented elsewhere in Great Britain. Belfast’s derelict houses were characterized as unsafe, “convenient positions for gunmen,” and allegedly “used as hides for weapons and ammunition” (ENV, *Bricked up Houses* 1).²⁰ Various strategies were undertaken to address abandoned houses. Some neighbourhoods were classified as “rehabilitative” (ENV NIHE 1); in these neighbourhoods, houses were repaired and sold. Two examples include Maryville Street, near Donegal Pass in South Belfast, where almost half of the houses (129 of 273) were vacated, and Clifton Park Avenue, near the Crumlin Road in North Belfast, where one third (113 of 369) of houses were vacated. Today, both are sites of rebuilt houses. Houses in other areas were bricked up to be made inaccessible to squatters. In April 1972, there were 1,732 bricked up houses in Belfast (ENV, *Bricking-Up of Houses Policy* 1). Darby suggests some areas of Belfast “had an atmosphere of suspended development, but without any compensatory hope of improvement” (38). In other locations, houses were demolished to facilitate urban regeneration and securitization. Demolishing houses was an unpopular practice in a situation of pressing housing need. In Belfast, urban regeneration involved “creating growth poles on the periphery of Belfast and linking them to the city (and to each other) with an elevated highway system” (Gallaher 60). The construction of an elevated highway system was reported to have affected residentially mixed-community neighbourhoods disproportionately,

19 There is no consensus about what constitutes mixed housing in Northern Ireland. As noted by Jonny Byrne, Ulf Hansson and John Bell, definitions vary: Frederick Boal, Russell Murray and Michael Poole suggest that to be mixed, the total population from minority communities must exceed 10%; Paul Doherty suggests a higher threshold – at least 20%; and, Brendan Murtagh and Patrice Carmichael argue at least 30% is required (15).

20 In Belfast, houses were bricked-up at the request of security forces and health authorities (ENV, *Bricking-Up of Houses Policy* 1).

as both a symptom and cause of housing segregation. An often-cited example of a 'mixed' neighbourhood is the area of Magnetic Street, Clifford Road, and Roden Street in West Belfast; the area was demolished for the construction of the Westlink Roadway. From a security perspective, the dual carriageway provided an effective physical barrier for community segregation (Voluntary Service Bureau 62; Etchart 34).

Darby argues that housing displacement had the effect of compression in areas with "a fortress-like mentality and create[d] confrontation lines" (102). Squatting and paramilitary control of housing were problematic. *SPED's* requirement that houses be vacant prior to application was difficult for those in rent arrears or with no means to relocate, some of whom chose squatting.

SPED administrators discouraged squatting, but the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission worked with squatters to locate other options, and instituted a "use and occupation payment" in return for providing houses and their upkeep (ENV, *Control of Rents* 2). Squatting could be difficult. In at least one case, "alternative accommodation was arranged and furniture was loaded onto a van. When they [the occupants] arrived at the new house, they found squatters in possession; so, they returned, only to find it [the previous accommodation] occupied as well" (CREL, *Emergency Situation* 1).

Official responses to *SPED* eligibility and compensation also created space for paramilitary involvement in housing (Darby 116). Some paramilitary organizations demanded weekly payments from squatters to "safeguard the householder from death, injury and homelessness" (CREL, *Emergency Situation* 1). In Belfast, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was identified as benefitting from extortion payments in the Lenadoon Avenue and Twinbrook estates and in West Belfast neighbourhoods, and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) was identified as benefitting in the Shankill Road, Rathcoole estate and in East Belfast neighbourhoods (CREL, *Intimidation in Housing*). Paramilitary actions, which included threats, intimidation and violence as tactics, provided further justification for segregation, securitization, and/or emigration.

Conclusion

The effects of conflict-instigated housing displacement are marked indelibly on Belfast's streetscapes. They are evident in its rebuilt houses and neighbourhoods, in its peace walls, motorways, public art displays, and in the maintenance of physical and social boundaries.

Their permanence is also recorded in archival documents that recount particular versions of the conflict and record *SPED's* development and its opportunistic operation to curtail emigration, bolster state securitisation, and rebuild a Victorian-age city. A continued presence of intimidation and conflict-instigated displacement is also evident in textual, visual, and folkloric representations (Side 486). *SPED* continues to

operate, although a September 2017 Court of Appeal decision denied the ability of scheme administrators to devalue house costs in interface areas (*Belfast Telegraph*).²¹ *SPED* compensates owners and occupiers in response to housing loss due to sectarian, inter-community conflict, intra-community disputes, and presently for racist and xenophobic acts against resettled ethnic minorities and workers who are imbricated in the persistence of Northern Ireland’s opposing, two-community model (McKee).

SPED continues to be shaped by political and financial concerns. While its costs were estimated as running “into untold millions of pounds,” it operated in compassionate, yet ungenerous, ways, with the fruit vendor’s *ex gratia* compensation payment as an example (FIN, *Compensation for Losses* 4). With an undisclosed amount, his payment was made almost a year after his appeal for monetary compensation. Despite hesitations that “once the principle of compensation is extended in this field, it opens up a very wide door” (FIN, *Joint Memo* 1), it was noted that “the payment does not pretend to be 100% reimbursement, but merely to meet the brunt of the loss” (FIN, *Intimidation Memorandum* 12). The realities of persistent housing displacement and loss due to threats, intimidation, and violence, and the continued existence of *SPED* sustain Northern Ireland’s physical and social boundaries, even in the face of its contemporary peace accord.

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21 The 2017 legal case involved the Mountpottinger Road interface, East Belfast, the same area about which RUC Officer Bruce Davison had commented about, in 1973.

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DRAMA AND FILM

PERFORMING BELFAST: STEWART PARKER'S *NORTHERN STAR* (1984) AND *PENTECOST* (1987)

Stefanie Lehner

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, Belfast remains a starkly divided city. Despite the promises of reconciliation and tolerance contained in that landmark accord, much of what constitutes everyday life in Belfast takes place against the backdrop of sectarian division. Among the most visible expressions of that division, peace-lines continue to grow in number, but segregation is also much in evidence across a number of other variables – attacks on police, fire and ambulance crews, religiously divided housing and education, and intra-bloc competition that is framed along the lines of ethnic tribune tropes. Violence remains a key element in these forms of division. However, individuals continue to negotiate, navigate and even subvert and transcend those divides in many ways. Although cultural practices remain salient indicators of division (parading, commemoration, mural painting and drama are often framed according to 'community' rubrics), they also provide a means of traversing division. This paper looks back to how two of Stewart Parker's plays, *Northern Star* (1984) and *Pentecost* (1987), address the problem of staging this divided city, and argues that in foregrounding civic identity as a performance, they put a utopian space of futurity onto the mapping of Belfast, opening it up to a different future, where identity can be performed with a difference, which is of immediate relevance for the present.

Performing the City: "Theater of Social Action"

In "What is a City?", his 1937 talk to an audience of urban planners, Lewis Mumford, one of the champions of progressive urban planning in the twentieth century, explains the cityscape as "a theater of social action":

The city fosters art and is art; the city creates the theater and is the theater. It is in the city, the city as theater, that man's more purposive activities are focused . . . The physical organization of the city may . . . through the deliberate efforts of art, politics, and education, make the drama more richly significant, as a stage-set, well-designed, intensifies and underlines the gestures of the actors and the action of the play. (Mumford 93)

I want to suggest that this notion of the city as a form of social drama, the site for social action, is a productive way to understand how Stewart Parker's work addresses the problem of performing and staging the divided city of his hometown, Belfast. To understand the city not just as a text but as theatre, an urban stage, emphasises its actively performative elements: the urban stage becomes a creative space that is constituted through performances of all kinds – ranging from cultural or symbolic performances, such as rallies and demonstrations, marches, parades, commemorations

and celebrations – to everyday performances, such as flaneuring (or, as one would say in Belfast: dandering) through the streets, meeting friends, shopping, window-shopping, chatting, eating, drinking, and so on. The city is the urban stage upon which urbane citizens practice their “everyday life”, as Michel de Certeau (1988) would put it – upon which they perform their sense of self and belonging – both to themselves and beyond.

The citizens thus take on the double role of being both performers in the urban drama and spectators of it. There are thus active and passive elements to it – and we can extrapolate this to the way in which identity can be both more passively interpellated, that is inscribed, and actively performed. This dialectic is emphasised in Parker’s play, *Northern Star*, in which Henry Joy McCracken, leader of the United Irishmen at the end of the eighteenth century, addresses his fellow citizens – and the audience – in these terms:

Citizens of Belfast – you rehearse all of your chosen parts and you play them with the utmost zeal – except that maybe they’re really playing you. Think about it. They costume themselves in your flesh and bones, borrow your voice, strike your poses, and at the end they move on (Parker, *Northern Star*, in *Plays*: 2 29-30).

McCracken raises here questions of agency and power: are Belfast’s citizens mere puppets, their chosen roles their puppet masters, thus taking on an identity of their own? Who plays who here? This notion that individual actors no longer have agency and flexibility over their roles suggests their congealed nature. As John Harrington and Elizabeth Mitchell note, “Northern Ireland’s charged atmosphere of sectarian division encourages a considerable amount of dramatic political performance within, and about, its borders” (Harrington & Mitchell 1). Rather than transformative and fluid, these repeated dramatic political performances can work to solidify identity: that is, fix it into a form that makes it appear to have been there all along, unmodified throughout history. However, resonant of Judith Butler’s notions of gender performativity (1999), Parker emphasises that they do not need to be ‘repeated’ in the way they have been for so long – namely, marked by sectarian divisions. When McCracken addresses the “Citizens of Belfast”, he tries to make them aware of the fact that their congealed “playacting” has taken on an agency beyond their own: “Think about it”, he demands. What Parker via McCracken seems to suggest here is that this awareness opens up the potential to repeat their ‘parts’ with a difference – to perform a different, more fluid and inclusive identity, which, in turn, gives shape to a different and more inclusive city. In *Northern Star*, I suggest, Parker makes us aware of the performative nature of identity and the city without yet being able to break away from their construction by History. *Pentecost*, by contrast, actually performs the image of an alternative, hybrid identity that can give rise to an inclusive, redemptive image of the city.

Performing Belfast: Stewart Parker

Stewart Parker was born in Sydenham, East Belfast, in 1941 into a Protestant working-class family. This background provided him with ample material as a playwright, as he writes in the foreword to his *Three Plays for Ireland*:

The ancestral wraiths at my own elbow are (amongst other things) Scots-Irish, Northern English, immigrant Huguenot . . . in short the usual Belfast mongrel crew, who have contrived between them to entangle me in the whole Irish-British cat's cradle and thus to bequeath to me a subject for drama which is comprised of multiplying dualities: two islands (the 'British Isles'), two Irelands, two Ulsters, two men fighting over a field. (Parker, *Plays*: 2 xiii)

Parker importantly emphasises here the hybridity of his origins. While the term hybridity had negative connotations in colonial discourse, its connotation has changed within the field of postcolonial studies, mainly through the work of Homi Bhabha, who uses the notion to argue that claims to the inherent purity and originality of cultures are "untenable." Bhabha proposes the notion of the "Third Space" of culture as a quasi-utopian space in which "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (Bhabha 56).

Parker studied at Queen's University, Belfast, and then moved to the United States where he taught and became interested in American civil rights politics of the 1960s. In August 1969, during a period of intense violence which caused the British government to send in troops to restore 'law and order', Parker moved back to Belfast and stayed there for nine years, involving himself in a variety of different projects, ranging from writing a pop music column for the *Irish Times* to a novel (just recently posthumously published), but largely fixing his attention on drama. When he died in 1988 of cancer, aged only 47, he had written over 20 plays for radio, television and theatre.

Parker believed in the capacity of theatre to instigate social betterment and change; a belief that is fundamentally Brechtian, as Parker notes in his 1986 John Malone memorial lecture. As Shaun Richards remarks, for both Bertolt Brecht and Parker – if for different historical-political reasons – "society... is deeply flawed and in need of theatre to aid it along the path of correction" (Richards 355). In *Dramatis Personae*, Parker asserts: "The politicians, visionless almost to a man, are withdrawing into their sectarian stockades. It falls to the artists to construct a working model of wholeness by means of which this society can begin to hold up its head in the world" (Parker, "Dramatis Personae" 26). This didactic impulse is, at the same time, complemented and countered by an emphasis on fun and entertainment, which Parker picks up from Brecht's "A Short Organum for the Theatre." Parker believed that theatre should be pleasurable and playful: "Play is how we test the world and register its realities. Play is how we experiment, imagine, invent, and move forward. Play is above all how we enjoy the earth and celebrate our life upon it" ("Dramatis Personae" 12). This is, for instance, demonstrated in his first play *Spokesong* (1976), in which music and bicycles take centre stage against the backdrop of the violence and bigotry of the Troubles. As Terence Brown suggests, the play makes a gentle plea for a city to concern

itself with less dangerous and more joyful activities, such as singing and bicycling (Brown 120).

To understand the ongoing conflict, Parker widened his dramatic canvas to explore Belfast's present through the prism of his past. In so doing, he hoped to uncover and locate alternative ways for staging his native city. In the 1980s, Parker wrote his three 'triptych' *Plays for Ireland*; three historical plays that deal with the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth-century, respectively. The first and the last of these three plays are *Northern Star* (1984) and *Pentecost* (1987). As Terence Brown notes, the plays "share a sense of Irish history in its local, regional and national manifestation as fated and doomed. Each is a ghost-haunted play, as if the energies of the past cannot let go of the present and that present is in thrall to the ancestral demands of the tribe" (Brown 121). This is emphasised by Parker in his "Foreword" to these plays:

Plays and ghosts have a lot in common. The energy which flows from some intense moment of conflict in a particular time and place seems to activate both. Plays intend to achieve resolution, however, whilst ghosts appear to be stuck fast in the quest for vengeance. (Parker, *Plays*: 2 xiii)

Northern Star and *Pentecost* are both set during or in the immediate aftermath of such "intense moments of conflict": whereas the former focuses on the activities of the Belfast Presbyterian and United Irishman Henry Joy McCracken, as he awaits arrest and execution, from the point of view of the 1798 Rebellion's failure, the latter play is set during the Ulster Workers' Council Strike of May 1974 against the short-lived devolved Executive, established following the December 1973 Sunningdale Communiqué as a first effort to establish a form of power-sharing. If the 1798 United Irishman Rebellion and the 1974 power-sharing Executive were events that brought hope for change and a resolution of the conflict, the aftermath, with which both plays are concerned, suggests a sense of despair, doom and stasis – giving rise to a sense of history repeating itself in a cycle with no resolution or escape, as described in Joep Leerssen's "traumatic paradigm" (1998).¹

This notion of history leads to a sense of Belfast as a kind of ghost city. This is emphasised in *Northern Star*, as McCracken turns towards death, he beseeches his native city:

Why would one place break your heart, more than another? A place the like of that? Brain-damaged and dangerous, continuously violating itself, a place of perpetual breakdown, incompatible voices, screeching obscenely away through the smoky dark wet. Burnt out and still burning. Nerve-damaged, pitiable. Frightening [...] we can't love it for what it is, only for what it might have been, if we'd got it right, if we'd made it whole. If. It's a ghost town now and always will be, angry and implacable ghosts. Me condemned to be one of their number. (Parker, *Plays*: 2 81)

1 Joep Leerssen suggests that the turmoil and violence of 1798 gave rise to a "sense of Irish history as a series of defeats, injustices and mortifications" as in a "traumatic paradigm", expressing a sense of historical stasis or paralysis whereby history seems to revolve in a nightmarish, repetitious cycle and "no longer progresses" (44-45).

While the play itself is haunted by the failure of 'lived' history, it also sports the character of a ghost: the Phantom Bride, whose freethinking lover was murdered and who hanged herself on her wedding day. As Eva Urban notes, she "dramatizes the endless quest for vengeance between the opposing sides in Northern Ireland, as the symbol of an incomplete soul" (116).

In *Pentecost*, the immediate stage-set similarly seems to suggest "the frozen stasis of a society" held in the grip of a congealed tradition (Brown 121): the *mise-en-scène* is the kitchen and parlour room of the last inhabited house between the sectarian lines in the East Belfast working-class area of Ballyhackamore. The stage direction emphasises the sense of constriction and frozen stasis that Brown notes (122):

The rooms are narrow, but the walls climb up and disappear into the shadows above the stage. The kitchen in particular is cluttered, almost suffocated, with the furnishings and bric-a-brac of the first half of the century, all the original fixing and fittings still being in place. (Parker, *Plays*: 2 171)

The house functions as a microcosm of the Belfast described by McCracken in *Northern Star* as a "ghost town", and is repeated in the form of the ghost of Lily, who formerly lived in the house and now haunts it.

Yet, despite these images of despair, both plays imagine alternative ways to perform both identity and the city. Although *Northern Star* ends on a notably more tragic note with McCracken's imminent execution, it offers a redemptive dream-sequence of McCracken imagining himself, "to be able to walk freely again from Stranmillis down to Ann Street ... cut through Pottinger's Entry and across the road for a drink in Peggy's ... to dander on down Waring Street and examine the shipping along the river, and back on up to our old house" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 81). As Shaun Richards notes, Oscar Wilde's famous quote that "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at" seems certainly to reflect the credo of Parker's two plays considered here (Richards 363), and attests to his desire to stage his native city with a difference.

Parker's *Northern Star*

Northern Star opens with the following stage direction: "*Ireland, the continuous past. A farm labourer's cottage on the slopes of the Cavehill outside Belfast. [...] The cottage is a semi-ruin, half-built and half-derelict*" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 3). For the recent Rough Magic production of the play in May 2016 at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast, directed by Lynne Parker, the stage directions were read aloud by members of the cast for the audience, which together with a set that reflected the backstage area of a theatre, foregrounds the meta-theatricality of the play. While the time suggests the previously mentioned static conception of History, it is also a history in which the past haunts the present, thus emphasising its importance and relevance to the present. This relevance resonates with McCracken's envisioned address to the "Citizens of Belfast", based on the historical legend that McCracken planned to make a speech

from the gallows, during the actual performance. As Richtarik notes: "In the theater, the citizens addressed by McCracken merge into the present-day citizens of Belfast in the audience" (Richtarik, "Living in Interesting Times" 20), reminding them of the legacy that his visions bequeathed them and their responsibility towards future generations, in turn.

The main action of the play is set in a dilapidated cottage on Cave Hill, where the original settlement of Belfast in the Bronze Age began. The location is one of distinct liminality: a threshold space, in-between city and country; half-built and half-derelict. This liminality is foregrounded in the stage design of the above-mentioned 2016 production by Stewart Parker's niece and artistic director of Rough Magic Theatre Company, Lynne Parker, who affirms its importance: "It's set in the wings of the theatre [...] Not the stage of the theatre, but the wings; the liminal space. It makes total sense for these peripheral ghosts" (Crawley). Foremost amongst them is the "Phantom Bride", who guards the house; but liminality is also reflected in McCracken's claim to a hybrid identity, which directly echoes Parker's:

My great-grandfather Joy was a French Huguenot, my great-grandfather McCracken was a Scottish Covenanter, persecuted, the pair of them, driven here from the shores of home, their home but not my home, because I'm Henry Joy McCracken and here to stay, a natural son of Belfast, as Irish a bastard as all the other incomers, blown into this port by the storm of history, Gaelic or Danish or Anglo-Norman, without distinction... (Parker, *Plays*: 2 7-8)

McCracken invokes Belfast here as a place that is imprinted with a hybrid identity, and this hybrid identity should, in turn, shape a hybrid city. This conception mirrors the vision of the United Irishmen of an egalitarian and non-sectarian society, a vision to which Parker was specifically drawn.

The play was originally commissioned by the Lyric Theatre, which hoped it would make a political difference in Northern Ireland, "because it would show a time when Catholics and Protestants worked together to reform" (qtd. in Murray 197). However, this utopian possibility is, to some extent, counteracted by the form of *Northern Star*: by setting the action in the aftermath of the failed rising as McCracken awaits arrest and execution, practicing his "positively last appearance" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 9), Parker's play critically examines the utopian hopes of the United Irishmen with the benefit of hindsight. What this perspective allows Parker to do is to foreground the irony of the whole affair, which – among other elements – foregrounds its histrionic qualities. The idealistic leaders of the United Irishmen in the North, mainly middle-class Presbyterians, joined with the Catholic Defenders in what they conceived as a united battle against a common enemy, with McCracken becoming their commander.² Unfortunately, however, as Richtarik notes, these idealistic Northern Protestants "never comprehended the depth of sectarian animosity in the rest of the country" (Richtarik,

2 The Defenders were a Catholic agrarian secret society in eighteenth-century Ireland, originally founded in County Armagh, who participated, though not always harmoniously, in the insurrection of 1798 (see Swift 139).

Stewart Parker 254). The dramatic outcome was that the Rising failed because the Defenders did not turn out in any force to support the republican dream of the Protestants, and the rebels were defeated because they took the army's retreat as an attack.

The play takes the form of seven flashback scenes of the years leading up to the Rising, interspersed with McCracken's present situation in his hide-out at Cave Hill. As the United Irishmen movement lasted seven years, each of these sequences represents one of the seven 'ages' of mankind, detailing the movement's development from innocence, through idealism, cleverness, dialectic, heroism and compromise, to knowledge. Each scene is written in the style of a famous Irish playwright, chronologically organised – starting with George Farquhar (1677-1707), Dion Boucicault (1820-90), Oscar Wilde (1856-1900), George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), J.M. Synge (1871-1909) and Sean O'Casey (1880-1964); to the last episode being written in imitation of Brendan Behan (1923-1964) and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) (see Murray 198). Parker calls this method "pastiche" and told an interviewer that the association with James Joyce's technique in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode in *Ulysses* was deliberate. The subject matter of the "Oxen of the Sun" episode is childbirth and Joyce recapitulates the history of English language to illustrate "embryonic development" (Richtarik, *Stewart Parker* 256; Murray 198). In turn, Parker's play is about the "birth" of a nation, even if it ends up "stillborn", as McCracken and his men "botched the birth" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 81). But *Northern Star* enacts stylistically what failed historically: his "theatrical ventriloquism", as he calls it (cited in Richtarik 256), nosily performs a hybrid nationality and a hybrid nation. Through his "pastiche" of different Irish playwrights, Parker positions himself as part and also inheritor of an Irish literary tradition of hybrid heritage: like Parker and McCracken, the majority of the playwrights he mimics are Protestant but consider themselves Irish. Breaking the realistic framework of the play, this self-conscious theatrical device draws attention to the constructed nature not only of the play itself, but also of history, identity, and the nation. This opens them up to the possibility to perform them differently, to repeat the performance with a difference.

But rather than just celebrating this utopian hybrid identity, the play importantly foregrounds divisions along the lines of religion, gender, and class. The seven flashback scenes are punctuated by dialogues between McCracken, his lover Mary Bodle, his sister Mary Ann, and "the future ghost" of his working-class comrade, Jimmy Hope (Parker, *Plays*: 2 54). The challenge these discussions pose to McCracken's vision are foregrounded in Act Two: firstly, the character of Mary Bodle undercuts the construction of McCracken as a national hero by reminding him of his responsibilities towards her and their child. Her plan to escape to America is yet dismissed by the leader, who considers his primary responsibilities to remain "in my own country" and "play out your allotted roles until the curtain falls" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 55). Mary exposes his desire to set himself up as a national martyr as a form of irresponsible egotism:

[Y]ou're more in love with that rope than you are with me and the child ... [...] The love of your family isn't enough. My love isn't enough. You want the love of the whole future world and heaven besides. All right, go ahead, let them love you to death, let them paint you in forty shades of green on some godforsaken gable-end! (Parker, *Plays*: 2 53-5)

Whereas Mary's viewpoint offers a female critique of the endeavours of the United Irish movement, Jimmy Hope's perspective emphasises divisions along the lines of class as well as religion. He recognises that "The condition of the labouring class was the fundamental question at issue [...] We couldn't reform a system that was rotten at the core. Known activists had been stripped of their livelihood" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 54). But he also realises that "Without the Protestants of the North, there'll never be a nation. Not without them as part of it" (58). The characters of Mary and Jimmy offer important counterpoints to the idealistic vision of hybrid identity that McCracken propounds, emphasising the importance to take into account class and gender issues, which limit the ways in which identity can be performed as they are restricted by material conditions. This is an aspect that is too often ignored or overlooked by critics that emphasise the liberating effects of performing a hybrid identity, such as Bhabha, for instance.³

Parker's *Pentecost*

While *Northern Star* testifies to the limits of performing new forms of identity, *Pentecost* closes with performing a utopian image of harmony and community, thus realising in embryonic form McCracken's dreams while being aware of its failures (Richards 362). At the opening of the play, Lenny's estranged wife Marian comes to seek refuge in the house that was last occupied by Lily Matthews, whose furnishings and possessions are still in place, making the home a kind of museum of her life and times. Marian describes the "house eloquent with the history of this city" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 192) – a fact that is emphasised by the active presence of the ghost of Lily in the play. Having died at the age of 74, Lily is as old as the century and, as Anthony Roche notes, "in many ways representative of the history of the Northern Protestant community over that period" (Roche 162). Lily's refusal to be evicted reflects McCracken's sense of the city as full of "angry and implacable ghosts" (Parker, *Plays*: 2 81). However, in the play, this cycle of retribution is broken as the inhabitants transform the haunted house into an inclusive space that allows for both past and present as well as the representatives of different communities to co-exist. While Marian at first wants to preserve the house as it was, she realises that this attempt to fossilise the past would also mean to petrify the cycle of hatred and retribution that marks the history of Belfast. As Marian remarks: "It would only have been perpetuating a crime . . . condemning her to life indefinitely. I'm cleaning most of this out. [...] What this house needs

3 For a detailed critique, see Ahmad, *In Theory* and "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality."

most is air and light.” (Parker, *Plays*: 2 238). Opening up the house to air and light is to also open it up towards a more forgiving and inclusive future.

Over the course of *Pentecost*, the house becomes a sanctuary for a group of hurt and damaged people (Brown 125). Marian and Lenny have lost a child in his infancy, which is the source of their estrangement. They are then joined by Marian’s friend Ruth, seeking refuge from her abusive husband, who works for the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and frequently beats her, as well as Lenny’s university friend, Peter, who returned home from Birmingham, feeling alienated from his own roots, and needs a place to stay during the strike. Providing both roof and shelter for these different people, their new home also gives shelter to the frictions between them that reflect those of the wider community. The two Protestant characters, Ruth and Peter, disagree about the Ulster Workers’ Strike: Ruth, who listened with fury to British Prime Minister’s Harold Wilson’s speech on the radio, sees the strike as a kind of democratic people’s movement, whilst Peter condemns it as fascist: “We’re at the mercy of actual real-life fascist jackboot rule!”, he proclaims (Parker, *Plays*: 2 215). In the end, they “kiss and make up”, as Peter proposes (221) – unintentionally re-enacting history by making love in the same room in which Lily had her one-time affair which resulted in her getting pregnant with a child that she felt compelled to abandon on the porch of a Baptist church. Notably, Lily’s abandoned baby links her to both Marian, who lost her child in infancy, and Ruth, who had several miscarriages. In this play, just as the personal and the political are intertwined, so too are the past and the present.

The ending of *Pentecost* finds a means to not only to redeem the past but also to actualise the promises of the past, as suggested in *Northern Star*, as Richards suggests: McCracken’s stillborn nation, which echoes the death of Marian and Lenny’s child, is redeemed in an image of community performed by the inhabitants of the house who stand as “an Irish little family”, as Peter ironically names them (Richards 362; Parker, *Plays*: 2 242). This last scene has been often criticised as Parker imposing an overly religious and didactic conclusion onto the play, but, along with Richards and Eva Urban, I want to foreground its importance in performing a utopian image of an inclusive identity, which in turn gives shape to a different and more inclusive city. The play ends with Catholic Marian and Lenny, and Protestant Ruth and Peter celebrating Pentecost Sunday together, performing McCracken’s belief in “nurturing a brotherhood of affection between the Catholics of this town and my fellow Protestants” (Richards 362; Urban 223-39; Parker, *Plays*: 2 4). Following the Pentecostal injunction to “speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Parker, *Plays*: 2 240), the last scene comprises what could be called a mythic storytelling session, in which each character speaks for and through an ‘other’. This storytelling offers a means of healing, “a ritual enactment of forgiveness and personal transformation which draws on the mythologies, traditions and cultural forms of the dramatist’s own background in Protestant east Belfast”, as Brown acutely describes it (126). After Marian imagines Lily alone in her house during a World War II bombing raid,

Lenny tells a fantastical story of nuns bathing, playing in the sea. Their performances invoke a sense of pagan celebration of sexuality and spirituality, suggesting alternative ways to perform religious identities, which are here associated with a time “Before Christianity” – that is, before sectarian divisions (Parker, *Plays*: 2 239). An alternative image of Christianity is provided by Ruth and Peter who start to recite texts from the Acts of the Apostles when “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance” (Parker, *Plays*: 2 240). Marian responds to this by invoking her lost son, Christopher, who, she suggests, was “a kind of Christ to me, he brought love with him . . . the truth and the life. He was a future” (Parker, *Plays*: 2 244). Marian’s confession of her pain and anger at the loss of her child enables her to absolve the past and open herself up to the future. She reaches the conclusion that:

Personally, I want to live now. I want this house to live. [...] We don’t just owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our dead too ... our innocent dead. They’re not our masters, they’re only our creditors, for the life they never knew. We owe them at least that – the fullest life for which they could ever have hoped. (Parker, *Plays*: 2 244-45)

Embracing life, she stresses the generational debt, which commits them to the creation of a better future.

Remapping Belfast: “New Forms of Inclusiveness”

In his 1986 John Malone Memorial Lecture, Parker emphasises the challenge for the Northern Ireland playwright “to find a belief in the future, and to express it with due defiance in the teeth of whatever gory chaos may nevertheless prevail” (“*Dramatis Personae*” 26). This is what the ending of *Pentecost* does: as a play about redemption and reconciliation, it defiantly imagines a utopian future of inclusiveness. While the final scene opens with a sense of impending danger with circling army helicopters and rioting sectarian mobs impinging on the safety of the house, it ends with a redemptive vision of an alternative form of community. The stage directions read as follows:

... Lenny has started to play a very slow and soulful version of “Just a Closer Walk With Thee.” After some time, Peter picks up his banjo ... he starts to pick out an accompaniment to the tune. Ruth reaches across and opens the window. As the music swells, the lights fade, very slowly, to blackout. (Parker, *Plays*: 2 245)

The ending creates a “communal jazz session” – a popular musical form that has its origins in the music of the excluded – which stands as a “metaphor for a reconciled community”, as Urban suggests: “It is a musical genre that is based on independent individual improvisations contributing to the same coherent piece of music” (Urban 239). The action of Ruth opening the window suggests an opening out of this microscopic community to the wider outside community of Belfast. The scene invokes an image of “international urbanism,” which Parker described in his review of the band Osibisa, a Ghanaian Afro-pop band, founded in London in 1969, as follows: “There’s Nationalism and there’s international urbanism. While the first continues to motivate

real politics, the second has long since dominated real culture. So far as vital forms of expression go, from sport to the higher mathematics, the global village is a fact of life" (Parker, *High Pop* 122).

Parker concludes his Memorial Lecture with a call for "new forms of inclusiveness", which, in turn, reinvents theatre in this process: "New forms are needed, forms of inclusiveness. The drama constantly demands that we re-invent it, that we transform it with new ways of showing, to cater adequately to the unique plight in which we find ourselves" (Parker, "Dramatis Personae" 27). As a performance art, theatre needs to be kept open to the transformative performative processes, keeping it in a state of constant 'becoming'. The same holds true for the processes of performing the self within the city. In *Northern Star*, Parker makes us aware of the performative elements of both identity and the city; in *Pentecost* he concretely enacts it, offering us Belfast in an image of reconciliation and redemption. The process of re-imagining history works to expose the loopholes in the seeming cycle of historical repetition; finding these allows us to repeat things with a difference, as Butler wanted. In his "Foreword", Parker wrote of *Pentecost* as a play appropriate to his own generation, "making its own scruffy way onto the stage of history and from thence into the future tense" (Parker, *Plays* 2 xiv). That future tense implies the utopian hope for the not-yet in which it is possible to perform things differently. Parker's plays put this utopian space of futurity onto the mapping of Belfast, opening it up to a different future, where identity can be performed with a difference, so that, as Bhabha suggests, "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (Bhabha 56).

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“BEYOND THE TROUBLES”: PARODY AND THE NORTHERN IRISH THRILLER IN CEASEFIRE CINEMA

Stephanie Schwerter

The Troubles Thriller Before and After the Ceasefire

After the outbreak of the Northern Irish conflict in 1968, a large number of cinematographic works depicting the consequences of political violence have been produced. Feature films such as *Angel* (1982) and *The Crying Game* (1992) by Neil Jordan, *Cal* (1984) by Pat O'Connor, Jim Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* (1993) or Thaddeus O'Sullivan's *Nothing Personal* (1995) spring to mind among many others. Most of the films made in the 1970s, 1980s, and even at the beginning of the 1990s, render a rather grim picture of Northern Ireland, focussing on paramilitary fighting, the British Army, imprisonments or the Hunger Strikes. One of the most popular sub-genres of films dealing with the Northern Irish conflict is the so-called Troubles Thriller. It is not surprising that the tense political climate has made Northern Ireland a “thriller writer's dream” (Pelaschiar 19). Belfast became one of the main thriller settings due to its urban space divided into numerous Catholic and Protestant areas. Boundary markers such as peace lines, murals, flags and kerbstone paintings literally transformed the city into the „adventure playground *par excellence* for the urban terrorist” (Seymour 57). Bill Rolston states that thrillers lend themselves to transposition into different socio-cultural contexts, as long as their distinctive features are maintained: “whether the hero chases the villain and gets the girl in Belfast, Beirut or Moscow is irrelevant as long as all the elements of the thriller are present” (41). As its political situation provides the essential ingredients for a thriller action, Northern Ireland is naturally chosen by writers and filmmakers as a convenient setting for their works. Hinting at James Bond, Alan Titley argues that the region has even managed to replace the Soviet Union as an important thriller location: “since the melting away of the worst icicles of the cold war – Northern Ireland has come as a boon to the thriller writer” (25).

However, after the first ceasefire declaration by the IRA in 1994, a new tendency towards a humorous depiction of the Troubles can be observed. The more relaxed atmosphere generated a “new mood of optimism” (Kennedy-Andrews 189), which encouraged an intellectual and emotional distance towards the committed violence. The change in the region's political climate, as well as the emergence of new forms of financial support for local cinematographic productions encouraged innovative film-making activities. In the 1990s, the newly-established Northern Irish Film Council (NIFC) and the National Lottery started funding local cinema (Hill, “Divorcing Jack” 228). Many of the resulting films are considered as “ceasefire cinema.” The term suggests that these films have not only been enabled by the ceasefires, but also are engaged in exploring the new situation in Northern Ireland shaped by the peace

process (Hill, "Divorcing Jack" 229). In this context, a young generation of producers started to shoot films undermining conventional power structures ingrained in Northern Irish society. In line with Mikhail Bakhtin, who argues that laughter is vital in order to see the world realistically, they aim at the derision of established authorities and tackle received visions of the Troubles (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 1). John Hill states that only after the ceasefires it became possible to turn the conflict into "a comic matter" (*Cinema* 210). Examples of films with a humorous take on the remaining political tensions are among others Colin Bateman's *Cycle of Violence* (1998), Dudi Appleton's *The Most Fertile Man in Ireland* (2003), Adrian Shergold's *Eureka Street* (1998) – a BBC television series in four episodes – Steven Butcher's television film *Two Ceasefires and a Funeral* (1995), as well as *Give my Head Peace*, a popular TV series running on BBC Northern Ireland from 1995 until 2005. The latter being produced by Tim McGarry, Damon Quinn and Micheal McDowell, a group of filmmakers calling itself the Hole in the Wall Gang.

The following analysis focuses on two ceasefire films: *Divorcing Jack* by David Caferty (1998) and *An Everlasting Piece* by Barry Levinson (2000). I shall argue that both films function as parodies of the Northern Irish thriller. On the basis of a choice of characteristic scenes, I shall explore the different ways in which the two films not only subvert form and content of the traditional Troubles thriller but also mock received perceptions of the political situation in Northern Ireland.

According to Margaret Rose, parody is created through the comic incongruity between an original and its new form or context. In parodies, humour is generated when the "serious" becomes contrasted with the "absurd", the "high" stands out against the "low" and the "ancient" is compared to the "modern" (33). In *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece*, traditional thriller features are deconstructed through their comic distortion. The spectators' expectations become disrupted through the films' humorous tone, which stands out against the gloomy atmosphere dominating conventional Troubles thrillers.

Kelly defines the thriller genre as a "radical form, wherein crime functions as a connective fabric through which an otherwise increasingly meaningless and shadowy society may be not only mapped, but also investigated and judged" (170). This statement applies as well to *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece*, however, in a slightly different sense. Through the very parody of the thriller genre, contemporary Northern Ireland becomes at the same time scrutinised and humorously subverted.

Concerning the thriller genre, Rubin argues that its most distinctive features are "suspense", "fright", "mystery", "exhilaration", "excitement", "speed" and "movement" (5). These elements are particularly central to conventional Troubles thriller, where violent scenes frequently involve riots, car chases, shootings, bomb explosions, as well as abductions. In this way, the audience gets drawn into a frightening and exhilarating plot. Apart from that, the rapidity of the action creates suspense and contributes to an exciting atmosphere. In conventional Troubles thrillers, the events commonly take place in obscure settings such as the backrooms of pubs, derelict no-man's-

lands or territories, which are clearly marked out as Catholic or Protestant areas due to their respective boundary markers.¹

Furthermore, a certain set of reoccurring stereotypical characters can be found. Among those count male heroes depicted as paramilitary fighters, soldiers or policemen, as well as female characters in the role of mothers or seducers. Gerry Smyth describes the Troubles thriller's main "stock characters" as the "terrorist godfather", the "conscientious gunman", the "*femme fatale*" and the "reluctant agent" (114). In most Troubles thrillers, the protagonist is depicted as a strong character, who either becomes involved in criminal action or is fighting against violence which has been inflicted on him. In the two films chosen for analysis, the conventional heroes become either distorted through the comic amplification of stereotypical features, or are entirely replaced by characters, who traditionally do not occur in Troubles thrillers.

Humorous Deconstruction of Northern Irish Power Structures in *Divorcing Jack*

Divorcing Jack is based on Colin Bateman's eponymous novel, focussing on the comic misadventures of the journalist Dan Starkey. Bateman himself provided the screenplay and the young Irish director David Cafferty was recruited to direct his first feature film (Hill, "Divorcing Jack" 229). *Divorcing Jack* is set in the future during an imaginary election campaign, in which the Alliance Party, a supposedly "neutral party", promotes Michael Brinn as the new first Minister of Northern Ireland. The latter presents himself as the ideal candidate – neither Catholic nor Protestant – only a man devoted to peace. Hill rightly describes the film as "black comedy that has few 'no go areas' in what is prepared to turn into a joke" ("Divorcing Jack" 231). One of the most striking features of *Divorcing Jack* is the fact that its protagonist is precisely the opposite of the habitual Troubles thriller hero. Played by David Thewlis, Dan Starkey is depicted as a hard-drinking clumsy journalist, who unwillingly attracts one catastrophe after another. Through the character's unkempt appearance and his thin stature, Cafferty illustrates the protagonist physically as an anti-hero. Starkey's main occupation is to write humorous columns on Northern Ireland as well as poking fun at politicians and paramilitaries from both communities. The fact that Catholics and Protestants are mocked to the same extent is a typical feature of ceasefire film. This approach stands out against the customary one-sided representation of the Troubles in film and fiction.

Divorcing Jack begins with Starkey being summoned to the office of his boss in order to be admonished for his satirical writing. Choosing a situation in which the protagonist is criticised and shamed as an opening scene, Cafferty represents Starkey as laughable character, who diverges from the usual paramilitary hero, soldier or po-

1 As examples of typical Troubles thriller are among others *Resurrection Man* by Marc Evans (1998), *Nothing Personal* by Thaddeus O'Sullivan (1995), *Harry's Game* by Lawrence Gordon (1982) and *The Crying Game* by Neil Jordan (1992).

liceman in the main role of Troubles thrillers. Palmer argues that in order to excite or entertain, a thriller must persuade the audience to accept the hero's point of view. In *Divorcing Jack*, however, the spectator is discouraged from identifying with the protagonist, as Starkey's erratic and unpredictable behaviour rather confuses the audience. Rose explains the function of parody as "raising an expectation for X and giving Y, or something else which is 'not entirely X'" (33). Concerning the protagonist of *Divorcing Jack*, an audience tuned into the functioning of traditional Troubles Thrillers would expect an imposing hero, who leads the action. Nevertheless, in *Divorcing Jack*, the spectators are confronted with its opposite, that is an individual at odds with the world around him, who merely becomes the victim of a chain of grotesque events. In this sense, the spectators are presented with a character, who does not coincide with the thriller protagonists they are used to see.

In the opening scene, Ian Woods, the chief editor of the journal, dismisses Starkey's latest article as "bollocks" and furiously quotes the following lines from it: "If elected, Brinn is gonna swapp West Belfast for the Guinness Brewery in Dublin – they can have our Troubles and we can drink theirs." Starkey's statement does not only undermine the authority of the promising candidate, but also questions the seriousness of the region's politicians. With "West Belfast", Starkey refers to the Republican stronghold of the city. Exchanging this particular part of Belfast against the Guinness Brewery in Dublin – seen from a Protestant perspective – would mean to eliminate a substantial source of trouble. Starkey's farcical comment ironically hints at the impossibility of peace: substituting political "trouble" with beer seems to be as absurd as the possibility of solving the conflict. In this way, Northern Irish politicians from both sides are subversively represented as powerless in face of the current situation.

A further line from Starkey's article criticised by his boss is the following: "My girlfriend is going to sponsor paramilitary coffee mornings with an Armalite in one hand and a package of Jaffa cakes in the other." This sentence functions as an ironic intertextual reference to an often-quoted statement made by Danny Morrison. In 1981, the notorious IRA member declared: "Who here really believes we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in this hand and an Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?" (English 224-25). Doubting the politicians' capacity to reach a peaceful solution of the conflict through democratic elections and diplomatic negotiations, Morrison expresses his support of violence in order to attain political aims. With the images of the weapon and the ballot box, he suggests to bribe the population into supporting the Republican movement by voting for Sinn Féin. Thus, Starkey's article can be seen as a carnivalesque subversion of Morrison's declaration.

The ballot box is humorously replaced by biscuits, which deconstructs the serious tone of the original. However, through the intertextual reference to Morrison's proclamation, the political subtext of the initial message is maintained. Once again, the impossibility of obtaining a peaceful solution to the conflict is suggested, as a non-violent meeting between Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries seems to be impos-

sible. On a more abstract level, the remark derides the two political camps and underscores their unwillingness to cooperate. The fact that not a single community but both sides are blamed for the political tensions is one of the major features of cease-fire cinema.

Starkey defends himself against the criticism of his boss by pointing out that his writing is meant to be satire. Rejecting Starkey's articles as unacceptable, Woods underscores the new editorial line of the journal: "We are talking happy! Joyous! Optimistic! We are throwing our weight behind Michael Brinn, Dan!" Pronounced with emphasis and exaggerated gestures, the chief editor's statement does not appear convincing. It rather suggests manipulation and corruption, as the journal's false pro-peace attitude seems to be influenced by the Alliance Party. Furthermore, the fact that Starkey's satire is not allowed in a supposedly peaceful Northern Ireland implies a restriction of the freedom of speech, while at the same time questioning the role of journalism as an instrument of criticism. Starkey's ironic writing exposes traditional power structures of Northern Irish society, which become attacked through the created laughter. According to Bakhtin, the deconstruction of received perceptions and value systems gives rise to new worldviews (*Rabelais* 16). In this sense, it could be argued that through the humorous illustration of Dan's behaviour, the spectators are encouraged to perceive the malfunctioning of contemporary Northern Irish society in a new light.

In the course of the film, the audience understands that Brinn is not as neutral and harmless as he pretends to be. In the past, he had planted a bomb for the IRA, which killed a number of innocent civilians. Through a sequence of coincidences, Starkey comes in the possession of a tape comprising a recording in which Brinn confesses his deeds in a drunken state. As the incriminating material would help to cause the candidate's fall, the IRA, the UDA, the RUC and the British army are eager to come into the possession of the tape. Ignoring its content, the innocent Starkey is chased by the paramilitary organisation of both sides as well as the state forces of law and order. The ironic twist in the story is that the official institutions and the counterhegemonic organisations are interested in tracking down Brinn not with the intention of punishing him for his crimes, but in order to prevent him from establishing peace in the region. None of them is interested in a quiet Northern Ireland, as peace would question their *raison d'être*: the paramilitaries' existence would be as irrelevant as the presence of the British army and the police in the region. Through a humorous depiction of the different organisations, their political pretensions become mocked so that the Northern Irish conflict is depicted as a war carried out for war's sake. The organisations' comic representation stands out against their intimidating illustration as "forces of right and evil" (Seymour 56) in conventional Troubles thrillers.

Apart from the politicians, the paramilitary organisations, the RUC and the British army, a further instance of power ingrained in Northern Irish society is derided. The Catholic Church becomes the target of mockery in a key scene of the film, where Starkey is chased by the paramilitaries before being saved by Lee, an alleged nun, played by Rachel Griffith. The director enhances the comic tone of the scene by giv-

ing the journalist a grotesque outfit, which at the same time serves as a disguise. Apart from a wig, which he is about to lose, Starkey wears a jacket and pair of trousers far too small for him. His ludicrous outward appearance diverges from the serious, mostly threatening looks of the protagonists of conventional Troubles thrillers.

When Starkey is wounded by a bullet, he flees into a car driven by Lee, wearing a headpiece, lipstick and suspenders. In the course of the scene, the audience learns that Lee is not a sister but an NHS nurse, who makes ends meet thanks to a part time job as a stripper. Seductress and religious sister at the same time, the character of Lee functions as a parody of the "*femme fatale*" (Smyth 114) frequently occurring in Troubles thrillers. Noel Carroll argues that religion is "a serviceable topic" for humour as it provides occasions for "gods, angles, priests, rabbis, ministers, nuns, and so forth to act irreligiously or to misbehave" (8). In the case of *Divorcing Jack*, Lee's behaviour violates the code of conduct prescribed by the Catholic Church. When Starkey enters her car, she is on her way home from a priest's retirement party where she performed. Through Lee's job as a stripper in a nun's outfit and the priests' eagerness to employ her, the film undermines the Church's authority and reduces it to a derisory establishment.

Apart from her unusual appearance, Lee's rough language does not conform to the way of articulation expected from a nun. The scene in which Starkey enters Lee's car is characteristic of the subversive use of language throughout the film. Simultaneously, it can be seen as a parody of the car chases occurring in conventional Troubles thrillers. In the given scene, irony and humour are expressed through word plays and a frequent change of registers. According to Carroll, the key to comic amusement is a deviation from a presupposed norm. The incongruity created through the digression from an assumed standard has the intention of generating laughter (17). In *Divorcing Jack*, this incongruity is reached through Lee's departure from an expected linguistic register. Apart from that, the dialogue between Starkey and the nun takes on a carnivalesque tone due to a considerable gap between the language used by the two characters. Whereas Starkey employs a polite and respectful register, Lee expresses herself in a colloquial, almost vulgar way. Entering the car, Starkey exclaims: "In the name of God, help me!" With his reference to God, Starkey appeals to Lee's supposed devotion to saving lives in her role as a nun. Instead of the expected understanding behaviour, Lee shouts at Starkey "Fuck your way off!" When two bullets hit the car, Lee drives off furiously in her old Citroen 2CV. In traditional Troubles thrillers, the protagonist is persecuted or persecutes other characters in exhilarating and frightening scenes, in which tension is created through physical violence. In *Divorcing Jack*, however, the car chase scene does not generate tension but humour. The fact that the car is perforated by bullets does not prevent Lee and Starkey from engaging in a witty conversation, which in the light of the given circumstances appears entirely absurd. Through the comic use of language, Cafferty trivialises the surrounding violence.

When Lee starts the engine of the car in order to escape, Starkey gratefully answers: "Thank you sister." Reverentially calling Lee "sister", he respects the sanctified status conferred to her through her tunic. Despite her religious rank and her moral obligation to act as a helper, Lee merely scolds Starkey because of his blood dripping on the car seats: "You can stick 'your sister' up your hole. And you are bleeding all over my frigging car." Taken aback by the nun's coarse speech, Starkey asks: "May I ask you from which particular order you are? You strike me as more Armalite than Carmelite." Playing with the phonetic similarities a subversive connection between terrorism and the Catholic Church becomes established, which questions the credibility of the institution. The scene particularly parodies the idiom of the gangster milieu, which is usually employed by Troubles thriller heroes. According to Rose, a parodic attack on language can be determined when changes in sociolect, idiolect or other elements of the lexicon emerge (37). In *Divorcing Jack*, the nun's idiolect as well as Starkey's sharp wordplays mock the sociolect employed by the habitual Troubles thriller characters. In the sense of a Bakhtinian carnivalisation, the established divisions between "high" and "low", "sacred" and "profane" are dissolved by mockery and irony (*Rabelais* 16). Here, the distinctions between religious conventions and sacrilege become blurred and thus the religious institution is represented in a grotesque light.

Subversive Humour in *An Everlasting Piece*

The script of the film was written by Barry McEvoy, who also plays the main character. Similar to *Divorcing Jack*, *An Everlasting Piece* is shaped by irony and humour. The subversive use of language is equally one of the film's main features. Different from *Divorcing Jack*, the action of *An Everlasting Piece* takes place in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the film can be considered as ceasefire cinema as its humorous tone is created by the emotional and intellectual distance generated by the more relaxed atmosphere after the IRA's ceasefire declaration in 1994. *An Everlasting Piece* concentrates on the Catholic Colum and the Protestant George, who work together as barbers in a psychiatric hospital in Belfast. The two colleagues decide to set up a hairpiece selling business covering the whole of Northern Ireland. The fact that the protagonists spring from different communities is one of the salient features of post-ceasefire cinema.

In *An Everlasting Piece*, Colum's and George's friendship stands in sharp contrast to the habitual antagonism between characters from opposing political camps, occurring in traditional Troubles thrillers. Their ambition of doing business together does not only imply a reconciliation of the two communities but also subversively suggests that in a contemporary Northern Ireland, materialistic values have become more important than political ideals. Similar to *Divorcing Jack*, the protagonists of *An Everlasting Piece* are not drawn from the criminal world, but are civilians who unwillingly become involved in violence. As Troubles thriller characters, the two ambitious barbers are as unusual as the false nun and the alcoholic journalist in *Divorcing Jack*. Furthermore,

the film's setting in a psychiatric hospital considerably differs from the conventional Troubles thriller locations, such as pubs, no man's lands or derelict factories.

One of the most striking characteristics of *An Everlasting Piece* is the use of witty language which at times takes a poetic tone. According to Carroll, the key to comic amusement is a deviation from a presupposed norm, that is a certain framework governing the ways "in which we think the world is or should be" (17). In the context of *An Everlasting Piece*, this means that humour is generated through the disruption of the audience's expectations. The language employed in *An Everlasting Piece* does not conform to the spectators' viewing habits and stands in sharp contrast to the crude gangster slang of traditional Troubles thrillers. Considerably diverging from the lingo of the gangster milieu, it functions as a parodic attack on the conventions of the Troubles thriller genre.

A particularly subversive use of language can be found in the title of the film as well as in the name of the two protagonists' company. Colum and Georges baptise their business "Piece People", which is a carnivalesque pun on an eponymous Northern Irish peace organisation founded in 1975 by Betty Williams and Máiread McGuire (Feeney 57).² While "Piece People" refers to the two hairpiece-selling barbers in a literal sense, the reference to the peace movement of the 1970s also suggests a business transgressing ethno-religious boundaries. Colum explains their company to his girlfriend Broughna as "non-sectarian" and "pacifist." Broughna cleverly states: "Pacifists make good money. Have you ever heard of a broke pacifist?" This comment ironically implies the importance of profit over ethical considerations, letting the "pacifist" dimension of the Piece People appear as mere marketing.

The title of the film playing on the homonymy of "piece" and "peace", humorously alludes to the quality of the wigs, which are presented as "everlasting." This can also be read as an implicit criticism of the region's political situation as in the context of the film, an "everlasting peace" seems not yet to be in reach. Furthermore, the pun also implies that the sold hairpiece might last longer than peace in Northern Ireland. Thus, Northern Irish politicians become indirectly mocked, being presented as unable to cope with the current situation.

The way the two barbers meet their first customer amounts to an ironic subversion of sectarian animosities. In order to help them starting their business, Bronagh arranges an appointment with a certain Mr Black, a Loyalist paramilitary, persecuted for having killed a Catholic. Having seen Black's picture in the newspaper, Bronagh deduces from his baldness that he might be a potential customer, as he would have to change his appearance in order to deceive the police. However, Colum and George ignore that Black is wanted for murder. The meeting of the two barbers with Black is characteristic of the humorous play with language throughout the film. When they knock at

2 This interdenominational initiative was taken by a local group of people in order to protest against the on-going violence in Belfast. It turned into an internationally supported peace movement for which Williams and McGuire received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 (Feeney 57).

Black's door, Georges introduces them with the following jingle: "From Ballymuck to Ards – from chapel to steeple – be sure and bet your cards on the old Piece People." As Ballymuck, a village in the Republic of Ireland, is situated on Catholic ground and the Ards Peninsula in the vicinity of Belfast on Protestant territory, Georges underlines that both communities are treated by their company equally. And indeed, the two barbers will do business with paramilitaries from both sides.

In the scene taking place on Black's doorstep, humour is created through a series of misunderstandings between the two barbers and their potential customer. When Black asks them about the reason of their presence, Georges explains that they have come for a "hairpiece demonstration." The incredulous Black inquires whether the "hairpiece demonstration" would be "a kind of government thing." His grotesque question mocks the general atmosphere of suspicion in Northern Ireland. Yet again, the politicians deciding on the region's fate are presented as undependable.

The conversation turns into an absurd dialogue as the two barbers and Black keep on talking at cross-purposes. Black's answer appears to be entirely out of context: "I don't know whom you have been talking to, but she's a fucking liar. I'm a good Christian man, a man who avoided the sins of the flesh. My body is a temple." The fact that Black denies everything before having understood the reason for the barbers' visit implies a guilty conscience. The audience would expect Black to be afraid of being tracked down because of the previously committed murder. However, Black rather seems to be eager to reject a supposed accusation of having cheated on a woman, potentially his wife or girlfriend. According to Bakhtin, laughter liberates from the fear of "the sacred", of "prohibitions", of "the past" and of "power" (*Rabelais* 94). In the light of the given scene, this means that through comic amusement, the authority of the paramilitaries as counterhegemonic instances of power and control becomes subverted. As a paramilitary fighter, Black is more concerned about his sentimental life than the consequences of his crime. His nonsensical utterances let the organisation appear in a grotesque light.

The scene ends with Black finally buying a wig. Colum compliments him on his choice with the comment: "Sheds years of your appearance." Aesthetic and political motifs interact here: comic amusement is created through "an anomaly or an incongruity relative to some framework governing the ways in which we think the world is or should be" (Carroll 17). The irony of the scene becomes heightened through the fact that Colum innocently makes a deal with a member of the UDA, an action, which would be judge as a betrayal by his own community.

Similar to *Divorcing Jack*, Levison's film contains a key scene which functions as a parody of the typical car chase in conventional Troubles thrillers. After having sold the wig to Black, Colum and George discover that the check they received from their customer is not covered. Accidentally, the two friends come across Black on his way to work place, the shipyard Harland and Wolff in the east of the city. Colum manages to snatch the wig from Black's head and runs off with it. Taking the shipyard as a starting point for the chase, the director consciously increases the tension of the

scene, as for the Catholic Colum, East Belfast's Protestant heartland represents dangerous ground.

Again, unconventionally, the chase does not happen by car but by foot. Running off with the wig, Colum is followed by the furious Black and his Protestant colleagues. Wigless and enraged, Black's appearance renders a comic image of a UDA combatant. Colum manages to leave his persecutors behind as the latter are held up by a number of obstacles. The first one is a gate which Blake and his friends try to break while Colum dances on the other side of it, waving the wig at them. The chase is accompanied by joyous Irish fiddle music which contrasts with the chilling soundtracks of traditional Troubles thrillers. Black and his colleagues continue hounding Colum but are held up by a passing train. Colum finally manages to shrug off Black and his friends by wading through a river up to his chest in water. As his persecutors are unwilling to overcome the final obstacle for fear of cold water they limit themselves to threatening Colum from the other shore of the river. In the context of the analysed scene, we could argue that the authority of the paramilitaries becomes undermined through a comic exaggeration of their faint-hearted conduct. Though Blake is able to kill a Catholic, he is not courageous enough to cross a cold river. The paramilitaries are all the more ridiculed as in the end a dog snatches the wig from Colum's hand and runs off with it. Thus, a dog is subversively portrayed as more intelligent and successful than Black and his friends. Yet again, the paramilitaries are illustrated as laughable characters. In the same way, the surreal fight about a wig, presents Colum and George, the money-seeking "peace makers" in an ironic light.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can state that the films *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece* combine a metafictional parody of the Northern Irish Troubles thriller genre with a parody of the remaining political tensions of the region. Denith claims that in particular "social situations" or "historical moments" parody is likely to flourish and "to become the medium of important cultural statements" (31). In the context of the Northern Irish conflict, the IRA's ceasefire declaration of 1994 could be regarded as such a "historical moment", as the less tense political situation generated a more optimistic atmosphere. This new condition demanded innovative ways of artistic expression in order to come to terms with the past. As parody possesses a range of subversive possibilities such as "attacking the official world" and "mocking the pretensions of authoritative discourse" (Denith 20), it is not surprising that a number of directors have chosen parody as a subversive means of communication. In this way, Cafferty and Levinson attempt to make their personal "cultural statement" concerning contemporary Northern Ireland (Denith 31). Michael Storey claims that humour and laughter cannot actually liberate people from repression, but help expressing the desire to be so liberated (91). In this sense, it could be argued, that the parody of the Northern Irish situation communicates the wish of eliminating received interpretations and explanations of the Troubles.

In *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece*, habitual thriller elements such as car chases and shootings reappear in burlesque forms in order to generate carnivalesque scenes. The two films particularly stand out against conventional Troubles thrillers through a subversive use of language. Whereas in most of the thrillers the characters employ the lingo of the gangster milieu, the language in *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece* is shaped by witty world plays, humorous neologisms, rhymes and comic puns.

Apart from a metafictional parody of the traditional Troubles thriller, both films provide a comically distorted vision of Northern Ireland. The defamiliarising light shed on the animosities of the two communities gives rise to innovative readings of the political situation. Contrary to conventional Troubles thrillers, *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece* attempt to deride state and counterhegemonic institutions to the same extent. According to Linda Hutcheon, parody does not serve to destroy the past but to "enshrine" and question it (126). Concerning *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece*, we can state that by means of a comic presentation of the present, both films engage with the past in an indirect way, as they shed a new light on the events having lead to the current political situation.

According to Bakhtin, laughter is the first step in the deconstruction of repressive hierarchies ("Epic and the Novel" 23). In this sense it could be said that through a carnivalesque depiction of the region, *Divorcing Jack* and *An Everlasting Piece* plead to go beyond the Troubles. In their films, Levison and Cafferey challenge conservative Northern Irish power structures shaped by the Churches, the British government, as well as the paramilitary organisations of both political camps. Thus, they attempt to incite their audience to adopt new ways of thinking to encourage the creation of a less atavistic society.

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GAELIC GAMES AND THE FILMS OF JOHN FORD

Seán Crosson

Fun was in the air. Kilkee talent gave us songs and dances. Kevin Casey cleverly rattled off a sort of "Irish Calypso", bringing in everybody's name. Mike Duffy sang lovely songs and John Cowley started a dramatic recitation to be broken up by the entrance of Ford, Killanin, Potter and Trubshaw doing a very funny turn in the hurley boys' jerseys. (Sharp-Bolster 7)

This description was given in the *Irish Independent* of Tuesday, April 30th, 1957 of the wrap party for John Ford's film *The Rising of the Moon* (1957). Unfortunately, no photographs survive of Ford outfitted in one of the 'hurley boys' jerseys' though the depiction does invite speculation as to why the major Hollywood director of the day, along with others involved in the production, should enter the party so attired. In this essay I will examine the references to Gaelic games, and in particular hurling, in Ford's films and contend that the description just provided offers a significant pointer to their role in his work.

Though sport could not be included among the most prominent themes found in his films, John Ford had a considerable personal interest in sport which was apparent at least from his high-school years. According to Ronald L. Davis in his biography of Ford, when John Feeney (Ford's birth name) entered Portland High School in 1910, "His consuming interest was football" (25) by which Davis of course refers to the American variety rather than the sport played in Ireland. Apparently, Ford was a versatile and aggressive football player (see fig. 1), playing in halfback, fullback and defensive tackle and earning the nickname "Bull Feeney – the human battering ram" for his tendency to put "his head down and charge" while playing (Davis 25). As teammate Oscar Vanier remarked some years later "It didn't matter if there was a stone wall there, he'd drive right for it" (Davis 26).

Ford also played baseball and, as the fastest runner in his school, made the track team (Davis 26). However, American football was always his favourite sport. Ford's reputation on the football field may have appeared to affirm a prominent stereotype of the Irish in the period – what Joe McBride describes as "a battling lout" (McBride 61). However, sport simultaneously had an important role for the young aspiring Irish American; as "a means", in Davis' words, "for an Irish youth to win acceptance by the Yankee majority" (Davis 26). This essay contends that the references to hurling in Ford's films can be viewed comparably to the role football played for the young Irish American. On one level Ford was certainly aware of the stereotypes and prejudices concerning the Irish, and the role that hurling might play for some in their affirmation. However, as commentators such as Lee Lourdeaux and Martin McLoone have noted, Irish American filmmakers, including Ford, were also engaged in a project of exploiting the performative potential of Irish stereotypes in film while contributing to the assimilation of Irish-America into mainstream American life (Lourdeaux 87-128; McLoone

44-59). McLoone remarks on the “role of ethnic filmmakers in both allaying the fears of the Anglo-American audience and in inducting this audience into the virtues of ethnic culture” (McLoone 48) and I would contend that this is also relevant to the references to hurling in Ford’s films. Furthermore, in a feature noted by Luke Gibbons (200) and others, Ford’s films also repeatedly, and cleverly, undermine such stereotypes (including in their references to hurling) – as part of a process whereby what might be called “functional performative violence” is employed to facilitate processes of social cohesion and assimilation.



Fig. 1. Portland High School 1913 State Champion's football team of which Ford was the star fullback [pictured on the far right of the back row]. (Source: Joseph McBride, *Searching for John Ford*. St. Martin's Press, 2001)

From the 1930s onwards, Gaelic games began to feature occasionally in American cinema. Hurling in particular, by far the most common Gaelic game portrayed, or alluded to, in these productions, seems to have provided an authentic and ‘primitive’¹ contrast to the presumed modernity of American sports such as American football, while also apparently containing the violence so often associated with the Irish. As Rockett, Gibbons and Hill in *Cinema and Ireland*, have noted, “Whether it be rural backwardness or a marked proclivity for violence, the film-producing nations of the metropolitan centre have been able to find in Ireland a set of characteristics which stand in contrast to the assumed virtues of their own particular culture” (Rockett, Gibbons and Hill xii). Hurling’s association principally with rural Ireland, and the ap-

1 Indeed, this view was encouraged by the Gaelic Athletic Association itself in asserting hurling’s antiquity.

parent violence of the game particularly to those unfamiliar with it, seemed to encapsulate both of these elements, providing a shorthand for a familiar Irish stereotype and it is these traits that are often to the fore in depictions, descriptions and references to the sport in American productions.²

Indeed, in the first American productions to focus on hurling in the 1930s we find a recurring emphasis on the alleged violence associated with the game as evident in fig. 2, a poster for the 1936 MGM short *Hurling* in which hurling is described as Ireland's "athletic assault and battery" (see figure 2).

American film more generally in this period often featured the recurring stereotype of the violent Irish. As Stephanie Rains observes of representations of the Irish-American male,

his overt masculinity was largely connected to lawlessness and violence, particularly during the 1930s era of gangster films. James Cagney, among other stars, was a vehicle for such representations of urban, modern Irish-American masculinity. (Rains 148)

However, these more threatening characters were offset and balanced by the equally ubiquitous figures of the Irish priest or policeman (associated in particular with actors like Pat O'Brien or Spencer Tracy) in this period. While representations in film of Irish America were undoubtedly building on established stereotypes, these stereotypes were evolving into more positive representations as the Irish American community moved from the margins to the centre of American life as the twentieth century progressed. In the process suspicion of, and the threat of violence associated with, the Irish was assuaged by balancing established stereotypes of 'the fighting Irish' with more positive characters or placing such violence in a non-threatening or comic context. Furthermore, sport as featured particularly in short films from the 1920s and up to the 1950s was frequently exploited primarily for its comic potential. Indeed, several prominent films from this period, including Harold Lloyd's *The Freshman* (1925), Buster Keaton's *College* (1927), Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931) and the Marx Brothers' *Horse Feathers* (1932) all used sport, from American football, to boxing and

2 This paper is not suggesting that the game of hurling cannot involve occasions of violence. However, violence is no more a part of the sport than any other physical contact team game. Indeed, as Patrick McDevitt has noted right from the codification of Gaelic games in the 1880s, the GAA sought to encourage "scientific play" by reducing the number of players per team from 21 in the beginning to 15 by 1913 and working "to heighten the value of quickness and finesse and to lessen the worth of brute force" (McDevitt 276). Gaelic games commentators in the formative years of the GAA stressed the need for discipline in games, with one observer identifying "the creation of proper control as the first and most important task" of the GAA (Devlin 12). Furthermore, McDevitt argues that "Irish codes went further than other contact sports at the time in curbing violence", by legislating for sending off players for retaliation and the replacement of injured players. In rugby, by contrast, players were expected to play 'hard' and to play on through the pain of injury. Gaelic games, he adds, "not only allowed but stressed compassion for others; men must play unafraid of injury but receive prompt and proper treatment if injuries occur" (McDevitt 276).

field sports, for primarily comic purposes. It is within this context that we find references to hurling appearing in John Ford's film.

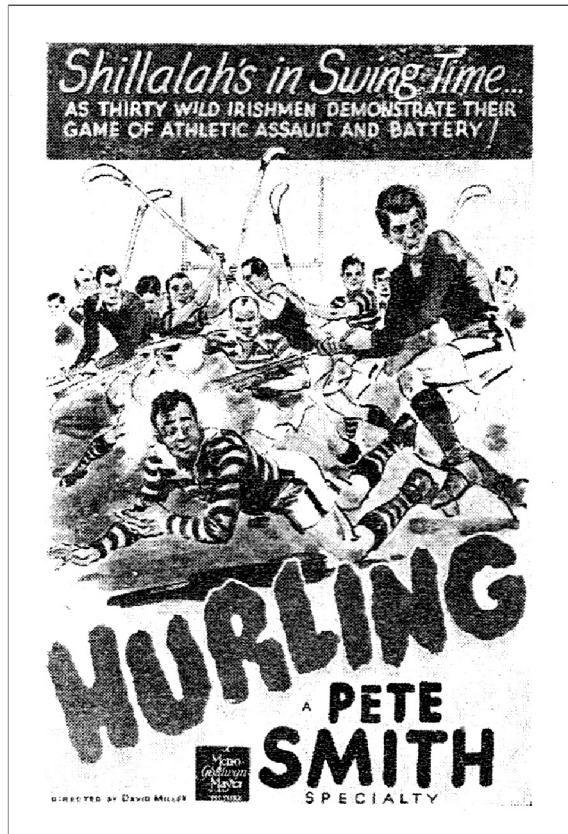


Figure 2. Poster for *Hurling* (MGM 1936)

When referred to in Ford's films, hurling always proceeds or suggests an occasion of violence, though placed within a comic rather than threatening context. While we don't actually witness a game of hurling in Ford's biggest commercial success *The Quiet Man* (1952), significantly the mere mention of the game, during a dispute between the engine driver, Costello (Eric Gorman), the train guard, Molouney (Joseph O'Dea) and the stationmaster, Hugh Bailey (Web Overlander), seems to inspire violence in those discussing it:

Costello (from the train engine): Well we're off.

Hugh Bailey (shaking a pocket watch): And might I suggest Mr. Costello, the train already being four and a half hours late ...

Costello: Is it my fault, Mr. Bailey, that there's a hurling match at Ballygar and that the champions of all-Ireland are playing ...

Molouney (pointing his flag in a threatening manner at Bailey): If you knew your country's history as well as you claim to know it, Mr. Bailey, you'd know that the Mayo hurlers haven't been beaten west of the Shannon for the last twenty-two years...

[May Craig, described in the credits as "Fishwoman with basket at station", interjects here and shouts "true for you Mr. Molouney" only to be cut off by Bailey]

Bailey: That's a lie, that's a lie Costello!

[At this point there is silence as Costello removes his hat, followed by Molouney, who also removes his glasses. Bailey responds by removing his hat, and begins to remove his jacket for the impending fight only for proceedings to be interrupted by the arrival of Sean Thornton to bring his wife Mary Kate from the train.]

I would contend that this scene is a great example of Ford's use of what might be called 'performative acting' in the Brechtian sense of a style that acknowledges the audience and "thus aims to deconstruct the fourth wall realism of both the Stanislavskian stage and Classical Hollywood film" (Zdriluk 2004). The actions and wind up to the almost fight here are an elaborate display that cues the audience for the following lengthy performative fight sequence between Sean Thornton (John Wayne) and Red Will Danaher (Victor McLaglen) that facilitates Thornton's eventual acceptance into the Inisfree community. Indeed, Irish audiences in particular are cued to this performance by the dialogue within the scene itself. The suggestion that the Mayo hurlers hadn't been beaten west of the Shannon for the previous 22 years would have been just as ludicrous to followers of Gaelic games in 1952 as it is today. In actual fact, Mayo has rarely won a senior hurling game west of the Shannon, with the exception of one senior victory over the Galway hurlers in 1909, a feat that has not been repeated subsequently. Indeed, for the 22 years prior to *The Quiet Man*'s release Galway hurlers were awarded the Connaught championship unopposed such was their dominance then – as now – in the province. The performative features apparent here would be all the more evident in Ford's subsequent Irish set film, *The Rising of the Moon*.

Though a commercial failure on release in 1957, *The Rising of the Moon* was important as part of Ford's ongoing attempts to promote the establishment of an Irish film industry that would partly encourage others to set up Ireland's first designated film studios at Ardmore (county Wicklow) the following year. In terms of representations of hurling, however, the film included one of the most controversial depictions that resulted in considerable press coverage during the film's production and a staunch defence of the film and Ford's work by *Irish Times* columnist Myles na Gopaleen.

This three part work called *Three Leaves of a Shamrock* during production and on release in the United States, included a central segment 'A Minute's Wait', filmed in Kilkee, Co. Clare, which featured shots of a victorious hurling team led by its piper's band arriving for the Ballyscran to Dunfaill train. On Tuesday May 1st, 1956, both *The Irish Press* and *Irish Independent* reported the shooting of this scene in which some players were filmed "on stretchers", after "an encounter which," the *Independent* cor-

respondent related “from the appearance of the players, must have been bloody and very rough, and hardly played according to the rules of the Gaelic Athletic Association” (Anon., “Film makers”). Unsurprisingly, the GAA responded with some alarm to the reports the following day with a statement, published in both papers, from the General Secretary of the Association Pádraig Ó Caoimh declaring that he was “deeply concerned lest there should be any substance in this report.” The statement went on to note that Ó Caoimh had been “in touch with Lord Killanin, one of the directors of Four Provinces Productions [the production company behind the film]. He has assured me that the report referred to is exaggerated and completely out of context; that there are no stretcher-carrying scenes, and that in fact there is nothing offensive to our national tradition in this film” (Anon., “Filming of hurlers”). The controversy rumbled on nonetheless and by Friday of that week it was on the front page of *The Irish Times*, where it was announced that the shooting of the scenes “resulted in an official deputation from the Clare County Board of the GAA making a strong protest yesterday in Kilkee to Lord Killanin.” A statement was issued by the board which said it was a matter of “grave concern to the GAA that the national game of hurling should, or would, appear to be held up to ridicule [...] the matter of 15 players returning home all suffering injuries would be calculated to give the impression that instead of a national sporting game that they were casualties returning to a clearing station at a battlefield.” While noting that such violent incidents and injuries were extremely rare in GAA games, chairman of the Clare county Board, Father John Corry “pointed out that the scene as depicted was completely derogatory to the Gaels of Ireland and to the hurlers in particular. The scene if placed on the screen as filmed would bring the association into disrepute and would be calculated to hold up the national game to ridicule both at home and abroad” (Anon., “G.A.A. Protests”).

These final remarks were quoted at length by *Irish Times* columnist Myles na Gopaleen – better known today as acclaimed author Flann O’Brien – some weeks later while referring to what he called the “farcical drool emitted by the GAA.” Na Gopaleen, apparently at that time a regular reader of the provincial papers, “the only true mirrors” he observed “of Ireland as she is”, was quoting the Clare County Board’s statement not from *The Irish Times* but from *The Clare Champion*. He went on to note a report on the same page of the *Champion* of a local hurling game between Ruan and St. Josephs where the game was described as “probably one of the worst exhibitions of bad sportsmanship ever seen on a Gaelic field.” There was “literally a procession to the Co. hospital from the match” the report continued, while “One, a spectator from Ennis, had survived the war in Korea but he almost met his Waterloo in Cusack Park” (“GAATHLETES”). Na Gopaleen was dismissive of the GAA’s criticisms of the film and while extolling the virtues of Ford (apparently a close friend, the article suggests), remarked that “To many people, the possibility of vital injury is part of the attraction of hard games [...] The non-belligerent spectators regard absence of such occurrences as an attempt to defraud them. They have paid their two bobs to see melia murder. Failure to present it is, they feel, low trickery” (“Ford-Proconsul”).

Whether or not one agrees with Na Gopaleen's interpretation of supporters' expectations at hurling matches, and despite Lord Killanin's assurances, the scenes remained in the film, including images of several hurlers being carried on stretchers to the train after successfully winning their match. Indeed, it seems the reactions of the GAA were not taken seriously among those involved in the production. Records of correspondences with Lord Killanin held in the Lord Killanin Collection in the Irish Film Institute reveal that the film's producers collected newspaper clippings and correspondences, both for and against the depiction, and would appear to have been more amused than alarmed by the response (see Figure 3).

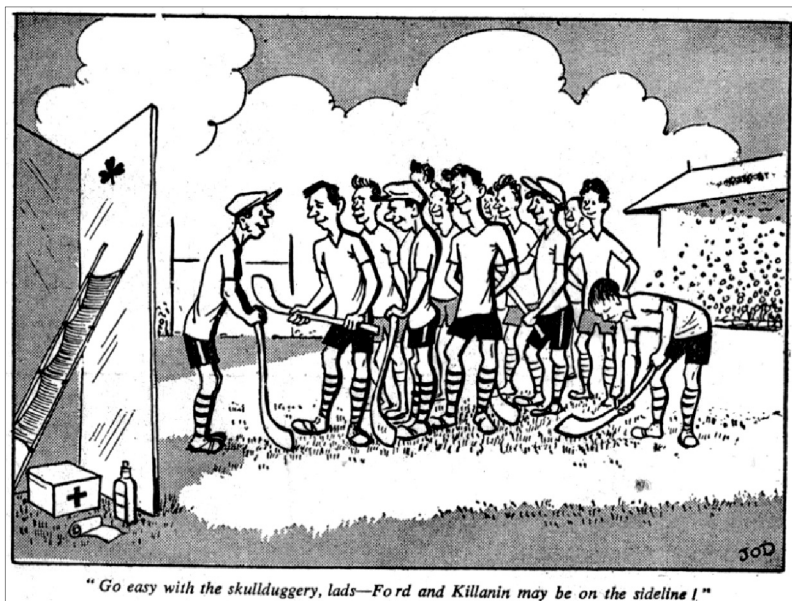


Fig. 3. This cartoon was published in the June edition of *Dublin Opinion* Magazine, 1956, p. 106. Included in the Lord Killanin Collection in the Irish Film Institute.³

Ford also appeared in a small part in an Abbey Theatre Irish language play shortly after the film's production in which a "short passage of Gaelic dialogue was improvised for him." When asked if "he was going back to Spiddal" (the birthplace of his parents) he said he was not as he was "afraid of the GAA".⁴

However, as with *The Quiet Man* these scenes of injured players are ultimately not primarily about hurling. It would appear that Na Gopaleen, a commentator whose

3 I want to thank Charles Barr for bringing this collection to my attention and providing me with copies of materials from it, including this cartoon.

4 *Evening Press*, 8 May 1956. Included in the Lord Killanin Collection in the Irish Film Institute.

own contributions to *The Irish Times* were often tour de force performances in themselves, including his celebrated *moniker*,⁵ admired the performative elements within Ford's work while also being highly critical of the hypocrisy he sensed in the reactions of the GAA. Indeed, Na Gopaleen may also have recognised the "self-interrogation" Luke Gibbons has identified in Ford's *The Quiet Man* (200), within *The Rising of the Moon*, which seems more concerned with ridiculing the reactions, and lack of familiarity, of tourists to Ireland to the game of hurling than any particular critique of the potential for violence in the sport itself. As the wife of the recently wed English couple on the train remarks on seeing the hurlers pass her window, "Charles, is it another of their rebellions?", remarks that poke fun more at the tourist than the hurler.

John Ford co-directed one further film that features hurling players, *Young Cassidy* (1965), an adaptation of Seán O'Casey's autobiography. Though Ford was originally attached to direct, British Cinematographer Jack Cardiff eventually directed most of the film after Ford fell ill. However, among the few scenes that Ford did direct was one bar scene that features Cassidy meeting a group of hurlers (Gallagher 543). In this scene, Cassidy is heading out for a drink with his brothers Archie and Tom to celebrate Tom's recent return on leave from the British army when they meet in a bar with a local hurling team returning victorious after a game, an encounter that begins with some of the hurlers taking offence at Tom's uniform and ends in a fistfight with members of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

We have in this scene what might be regarded in Lewis Coser's terms as an example of "functional conflict" (Coser) – that is "conflict that takes place within the clearly defined parameters of traditional and populist community values and that ultimately works in the interest of social cohesion" (Hill 191-92). This form of conflict is found elsewhere in Ford's work including the lengthy fight sequence referred to above in *The Quiet Man*. In *Young Cassidy*, the hurlers quickly get over their argument with Cassidy and his brothers and support them in their subsequent fight with the Royal Irish Constabulary. In this regard, what may at first appear to be a stereotype regarding the reputed violence of hurling and hurlers functions, ultimately within the narrative brings hurlers Cassidy and his brothers together, heading off merrily as the scene closes on the back of a cart into the distance.

I began this chapter with a description by Anita Sharp-Bolster of the wrap party for John Ford's *The Rising of the Moon*. The description of Ford, along with others involved in the production, "doing a very funny turn" in hurley jerseys offers a fascinating insight into the role of hurling in the great director's work. Much as Sharp-Bolster clearly describes a performance by Ford and others, the Irish-American director exploited the performative potential of Irish stereotypes – including those concerning the gaelic game of hurling – in his films to diffuse anxieties regarding the Irish while facilitating their assimilation and acceptance as a central part of American society and culture. Followers of hurling may rightfully question and reject the recurring sug-

5 The name Flann O'Brien was itself a pseudonym for the author, born Brian Ó Núalláin in 1911 in Tyrone.

gestions of violence associated with their sport in Ford's work and that of other American directors of his era. However, these depictions ultimately have less to do with either the sport of hurling or Irish life than with engaging with aspects of an emerging and evolving Irish American identity in the mid-twentieth century.

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INTERMEDIAL DRAMA AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF IRISH IDENTITIES

Jochen Achilles

I

In “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue” (1998), Fredric Jameson devastatingly critiques the dissemination of the American way via mass media.¹ He describes globalization primarily as “a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings” (Jameson 55). Jameson believes that the colonization of people’s minds by television programmes is worse than earlier and perhaps more tangible forms of imperialism and exploitation:

American mass culture, associated as it is with money and commodities, enjoys a prestige that is perilous for most forms of domestic cultural production, which either find themselves wiped out – as with local film and television production – or co-opted and transformed beyond recognition, as with local music. (Jameson 59)

The American film, television, and music industries are economic factors of the highest order, from which enormous profits can be reaped. And they are, at the same time, cultural factors of highly homogenizing influence, as they propagate American lifestyles, attitudes, and mores all over the globe (Jameson 60). The dominance of Hollywood films and American television programmes in global mass culture is powered by economic advantages of the United States over smaller countries and, in Jameson’s view, also amounts to “an allegory of the end of the possibility of imagining radically different social alternatives” (Jameson 62) to this American hegemony:

The point is therefore that, alongside the free market as an ideology, the consumption of the Hollywood film form is the apprenticeship to a specific culture, to an everyday life as a cultural practice: a practice of which commodified narratives are the aesthetic expression, so that the populations in question learn both at the same time. (Jameson 63)

Contrary to the modernist period, when non-commercial aesthetic impulses could find sanctuary in the cathedrals of high art, in postmodernity “no enclaves – aesthetic or other – are left in which the commodity form does not reign supreme” (Jameson 70).

Such criticism of globalization and commodification reverberates in Irish cultural and theatre criticism. With regard to transformations from national to global paradigms of Irish identity and, more specifically, their theatrical representations, Patrick Lonergan’s study *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (2009) provides the most comprehensive and intense discussion to date. Lonergan emphasizes the outdatedness of a nationalist postcolonial paradigm with regard to Ireland, which is being replaced by the Jamesonian paradigm of globalization as a predatory process (Lonergan, *Theatre and Globalization* 5, 27, 29). Lonergan tries to demonstrate

1 This essay is adapted from Achilles, “Staging the Commodification of Ethnicity”.

that globalization spells total commodification and tends to disperse national concepts such as Nike as a recognizably American brand or, for that matter, Irish identity into deterritorialized notions (Lonergan, *Theatre and Globalization* 21). In Lonergan's view both Irish identity and cultural products such as Irish drama turn into global brands, much like Nike and other globally marketed goods: "[T]he word 'Irish' has become deterritorialized: it may be used to refer to the physical territory of Ireland, but it also acts as a brand – a commodified abstraction that gives meaning to its purchaser instead of signifying the physical territory of a nation" (Lonergan, *Theatre and Globalization* 28).

Lonergan describes globalization not quite consistently as both an inevitable objective process and as a subjective and collective belief, a communal fantasy (Lonergan, *Theatre and Globalization* 19-20). It seems to be something in between: an objective process, largely triggered by global markets, advanced forms of electronic communication, and air travel, which develops an intercultural dynamic that people also register in their minds and which thereby manifests itself in artworks and cultural products. In his analyses of globalization as both Americanization and commodification Lonergan relies on, and is joined by, quite a number of cultural critics who register with regard to individual plays what Lonergan tries to capture as a pervasive phenomenon of Irish theatrical production. Mediatization, intermediality, and questions of authenticity and commodification are in the foreground of these studies. Werner Huber's essays on contemporary Irish drama and film, "Contemporary Drama as Meta-Cinema: Martin McDonagh and Marie Jones" (2002) and "(De-)Mythologising Ireland on the Screen" (2003), are pioneering ventures into this new field, which influenced both Lonergan's book and articles by Jacqueline Bixler, Lisa McGonigle, Karen O'Brien, Susanne Peters, Mark Phelan, and Robin Roberts.²

While Jameson and other critics of globalization may be right in claiming the importance of commodification, this does not necessarily mean that art and, notably, drama have lost their critical function altogether and do not explore the distortions of specific cultural identities, produced and distributed by the machinery of Hollywood films and other mass media, anymore. In the Irish context the colonizing influence of Britain has long been replaced by the United States as the dominant Other (Carlson). In several recent Irish plays, such American appropriations of the language, the spirit and the image of Ireland – commodified narratives of Irishness – are depicted with regard to the portrayal of Ireland and the Irish in film. In the following I will discuss in greater detail the relationship between Irish and American cultural identities, as they are mediated by the mainstream entertainment industry represented by Hollywood movies. Both Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* (1999) and Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1998) focus on the intercultural representation of Ireland and the Irish in Hollywood movies. Both plays are intermedial or metadramas in the

2 For Lonergan's discussion of Werner Huber's position, see Lonergan, *Theatre and Globalization*, 117-18.

sense that they take film productions as their subject matter. My analysis of these plays is unthinkable without Werner Huber's previous exploration of this terrain.³

II

Both Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* and Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* belong to a sizable number of contemporary plays which explore Irish-American relations, among them Brian Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come* (1964) and *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1966); Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming* (1985) and *The Wake* (1998); Anne McGravie's *The Cairn Stones* (2001) and Sebastian Barry's intriguing *White Woman Street* (1992) (Carlson). Both plays also share a concern with the representation of Ireland on screen. This concern is of long standing in Ireland. As early as 1937, Gabriel Fallon, later the Irish film censor, wrote in an article entitled "Celluloid Menace": "We cannot be the sons of the Gael and citizens of Hollywood at the same time" (qtd. in Huber, "(De-)Mythologising Ireland" 351). This coexistence of the disparate is enforced, however, by the overwhelming dominance of American film projects on Ireland as compared with indigenous ones: "While less than one hundred feature films have been made by Irish film-makers in Ireland during the cinema's first century, more than two thousand fiction films have been produced about the Irish outside the country" (qtd. in Huber, "(De-)Mythologising Ireland" [351]. On Hollywood and internationalization in general, see also Wasser). While the title page of *The Cripple of Inishmaan* carries a film still from *Man of Aran*, the semi-documentary whose production the play obliquely discusses, the title page of *Stones in His Pockets* shows an Irish cow against the background of a polaroid green pasture and staring at the beholder from what is obviously a film reel. Another play by Belfast-based, Northern Irish playwright Marie Jones, published together with *Stones in His Pockets*, is announced on the title page like a double bill at a movie theatre as "also featuring *A Night in November*." Werner Huber has drawn attention to the fact that, in the production of *Stones in His Pockets* at the Duke of York Theatre in London, "the rolling title and credits projected at the opening of the play fully turn the theatre into a cinema and suggest the mode or illusion of a feature-film presentation" (Huber, "Contemporary Drama" 18).

In *Stones in His Pockets*, the emphasis on the mediation of realities is heightened by the fact that the main characters, Charlie Conlon and Jake Quinn, who are hired as extras for £ 40 a day for the production of a Hollywood romance of Irish life called *The Quiet Valley*, also play all the other roles in the play.⁴ When the play is read, this obviously very economic foregrounding of impersonation and role-playing tends to be

3 See Huber, "Contemporary Drama as Meta-Cinema." McGonigle's and Roberts's essays also address both Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* and McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan*.

4 On *Stones in His Pockets* and its influence on South American drama, see Bixler; on this play against the background of the Celtic Revival, see Phelan; on its pedagogical ramifications, see Peters.

forgotten, but it must be very prominent in productions (Huber, "Contemporary Drama" 18). Although role-playing and the metacinematic film set situation heighten the virtuality of *Stones in His Pockets*, these features are at the same time also very realistic, as Hollywood's invented Ireland may reach many more people than ever reach the real and tangible Ireland. *The Quiet Valley*, the title of the film within the play, and its nostalgic Irish setting and Chatterleyesque romance plot of peasant boy meeting the daughter of the Big House across the religious and social divide are reminiscent of a number of feature films on Ireland such as *The Quiet Man* (1952), *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), and *Far and Away* (1992) (Huber, "Contemporary Drama" 18-19; Huber, "(De-)Mythologising Ireland" 5-7; MacHale; MacKillop; McLoone 57-58; and McNee). The plot of *Stones in His Pockets* centres upon the actual making of the film in "a scenic spot near a small village in Co. Kerry" (*Stones* 8) and displays what Werner Huber calls the "cinematic colonialism" (Huber, "Contemporary Drama" 19) of Clem, the English director, ignorant of Irish ways; his opportunist, arrogant, and overambitious Irish assistants Simon and Aisling; and Caroline Giovanni, their American star, playing the daughter of the Big House.

The interaction of the Irish characters with the Hollywood film crew demonstrates how complex cinematic colonialism is and that exploitation can be mutual – the exploited exploiting the exploiters as well as vice versa. The relationship of both protagonists to America proves to be more complex and ambivalent than meets the eye at first glance. In the breaks between the shooting of scenes for *The Quiet Valley*, the Irish extras Jake and Charlie discuss their predicaments. Charlie is a bankrupt Irish video store owner who was unable to compete with Extravision, a big video company. Beyond his employment as an extra, he does want to compete with the Hollywood movie production, however, and produce a film of his own (*Stones* 11-12, 14). He obviously tries to exploit the production he is in to further his own film project. Jake makes clear that many locals try to use the filming to their best advantage, renting out all the house space they possibly can (*Stones* 17; see also 20, 21). Ireland may be the victim of Hollywood stereotyping, but Irish landlords and publicans, not to speak of Irish video stores, also profit.

The central issue around which the interrelations of the Irish and non-Irish characters in the play revolve is authentic Irishness. The play highlights in various and hilarious ways that this is a commodity hard to come by, indeed. The climax of artificiality is reached with the shooting of a scene of *The Quiet Valley*, involving the extras in the representation of the quintessential and ultimate Irish stereotype – digging turf. While they are thus engaged, they are to move their heads from left to right and vice versa, following with their eyes the protagonists, Maeve and Rory, who approach each other on horseback from opposite sides. The only problem is that Caroline Giovanni and Kurt Steiner, the Hollywood stars playing Maeve and Rory, respectively, do not deign to be present in person. They will be represented by the hands of Aisling and Simon, the assistant directors. Charlie describes the situation succinctly as the extras looking dispossessed at Aisling's hand, pretending it is Maeve on a horse looking sorry for them (*Stones* 33). As the Irish peasantry was dispossessed by the Protestant ruling

class in the period which the film tries to capture, the extras are visually dispossessed by their ruling class, the film stars, who act as the absentee landlords used to. Add to this Jones's provision that all the roles are played by Charlie and Jake, they will have to follow the movement of their own hands with their eyes to represent all of the above and thus to extend visual deprivation even more radically to the audience. Exploitation and deprivation obviously take on new and different forms in the media age. And so does authenticity. Not only the Irish extras, but also the American stars suffer from their Hollywood-style pursuit of authenticity. The reproduction of an Irish accent by an American tongue is in the centre of the play's discussion of authentic Irishness. Caroline Giovanni trains her articulation with the help of a professional accent coach, who tries to console her for her linguistic imperfection by telling her that "Ireland is only one percent of the market" (*Stones* 13). Charlie argues along similar lines that an authentic brogue is a majority decision: "[B]een that many film stars playing Irish leads everybody thinks that's the way we talk now ..." (*Stones* 14).

The fate of Sean, yet another would-be Irish extra for *The Quiet Valley*, demonstrates that such commodification of human relationships through the influence of media culture is not without serious pitfalls. Sean is the off-centre tragic hero in Jones's tragicomedy. He epitomizes the dilemma of contemporary Irishness, sandwiched as it is between regional specificities and international trends. On the one hand, Sean is inimitably local. When he wants to be hired as yet another turfdigger for *The Quiet Valley* and is rejected, as his impatient harshness clashes too obviously with the romantic never-never Ireland the Hollywood film crew is after, he voices his protest in precisely the authentic brogue Caroline Giovanni will never master (*Stones* 19). Sean is 'the real thing' that would make the fabricated Irishness of the Hollywood screen seem threadbare. Therefore, he cannot be hired. On the other hand, Sean is cosmopolitan. A drug addict, he shares a serious predilection for cocaine with the members of the film crew who happily hand around their ample provisions (*Stones* 24, 27). Contrary to the false local colour which the production of *The Quiet Valley* is generating, the habits of Sean, the Irish rustic, and of the international film crew members converge. As he is also disillusioned by Ireland's loss of agrarian promise and the failure of his original plan of becoming a dairy farmer, Sean represents the identity crisis of a postmodern Ireland, defining itself largely as an alienated site of a computer chip or, for that matter, film production. As he feels ostracized from the film set, which to him is apparently synonymous with the American Dream, he fills his pockets with stones and very really drowns himself (*Stones* 35). The exploitation and deprivation resulting from mediated realities is not in turn virtual but sometimes existential and final. Charlie emphasizes that, with regard to the universal appeal and power of the movie industry based on people's frustrations and dissatisfactions, Sean is an everyman:

No different from me that kid ... like all of us ... like you, don't we dream, do you not fantasise about being the cock of the walk, the boy in the big picture [...] eh? Do you never get carried away into that other world ... we are no different. (*Stones* 43)

After Sean's funeral, Charlie and Jake debate a way out of the alternative between Sean's suicidal depressiveness and the moronic acceptance of Hollywood's pipe dreams. Jake hits upon the idea that Charlie's own private film project, which he has hedged for a long time, could be used to develop an alternative vision, a reversal of the relationship between the power of Hollywood images and the impotence of those exposed to them: "[I]f it was a story about a film being made and a young lad commits suicide ... in other words the stars become the extras and the extras become the stars ... so it becomes Sean's story, [...] and all the people of this town" (*Stones* 54). The story of Sean, the rural admirer of Irish cattle turned would-be emigrant to America, drug and movie addict, and, finally, suicide, will replace the false and irrelevant script of Rory, the Irish peasant, setting right the dispossession of his fellow countrymen by marrying the daughter of the Big House. Irish dispossession is not so much about land possession any more. It is about the possession of a viable self-image in a world dominated by images.

By telling their own stories and producing their own imagery, Charlie and Jake hope to find their Ireland and themselves – even if it is only in the projects of Irish artists such as Charlie and Jake, who produce art films to be called *Stones in His Pockets* instead of *The Quiet Valley*, and, by extension, in Jones's play of the same title. Thereby, this play becomes a plea for a cinematic empire reeling back, for imaginative intervention by pushing an imaginary rewind button, for a self-confident art that opposes the mainstream United States communication industry and is not intimidated by the mega-budgets it will never receive to find its own voice. As weak as this voice may be by comparison, it successfully subverts Hollywood-style prefabricated and stereotypical falsifications of reality.

III

Martin McDonagh's play *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1996/1998) is not as directly concerned with film or theatre representation as *Stones in His Pockets*. It is set in 1934 when Robert Flaherty's semi-documentary *Man of Aran* was filmed on Inishmore (Huber, "Contemporary Drama" 14; and "(De-)Mythologising Ireland" 353-54; see also McMahon; and Mullen). While the play's locale remains Inishmaan, a group of young people, including Cripple Billy Claven, the title figure, goes to Inishmore, the neighbouring and largest Aran Island, by boat, to watch the filming and, possibly, to become part of it (*Cripple* 49). This misfires, as they arrive when the shooting is done and the film crew packs up to leave. Yet unexpectedly, Billy receives an invitation to go to Hollywood: "he's been taken to America for a screen test for a film they're making about a cripple fella" (*Cripple* 61).⁵

5 For assessments of McDonagh's drama, see Chambers and Jordan, *The Theatre of Martin McDonagh*; in particular Christopher Murray, "The Cripple of Inishmaan Meets Lady Gregory" 79-95; and Mária Kurdi, "The Helen of Inishmaan Pegging Eggs: Gender, Sexuality and Violence" 96-115. On *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and the problem of disability, see Connor, Kim, and Meszaros; on questions of globalization, authenticity

With the exception of two of the play's nine scenes (Scenes 7 and 8), one of which shows Billy "shivering alone in a squalid Hollywood hotel room" (*Cripple* 74) and the other the less than gracious reception of *Man of Aran* by the Aran Islanders who are also its subject matter, the play's focus remains with the people on Inishmaan and what they distantly hear about what is going on both on the Inishmore film set and in Hollywood. The focus never really shifts to the film set or Hollywood itself. McDonagh is more concerned with his own view of the Irish West than with its Hollywood representation, which provides only one facet in a more general picture of constructed and mediated realities. McDonagh's personal connection with Ireland is filtered through his experience of England. He grew up in an Irish enclave in London and spent his summer holidays in the west of Ireland. He belongs to the "children of Irish emigrants, growing up with all the accents and attitudes of urban England [who] are finding or making their own connections with Irish culture" (O'Toole x). He "was, and is, a citizen of an indefinite land that is neither Ireland nor England, but that shares borders with both" (O'Toole ix; see Waters 38).

In *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, such dislocations are not only geographical, hovering between London, where the play premièred in the Cottesloe auditorium of the National Theatre, and the Irish and American West. They are also historical, as McDonagh ties his depiction of the society on Inishmore to the production of *Man of Aran* in 1934. But McDonagh's play also harks further back in time than to the beginnings of the construction of the Irish West in film. By implication, *The Cripple of Inishmaan* is a commentary on the image of the Irish West projected by the Celtic Revival and the National Theatre Movement around the turn of the last century, notably, on Synge's ambiguous celebration of the West and the Arans in his plays. The very title of *The Cripple of Inishmaan* sounds like a hilarious deflation by "disability-in-your-face" (Connor) of Yeats's famous advice to Synge to leave symbolist Paris in the eighteen-nineties for the Aran Islands in order to seek creative inspiration and to disclose in his art the essence of the Celtic race lying encapsulated there.

Both geographically and chronologically McDonagh's Inishmaan adopts a strangely shifty quality. It is a virtual island shot through with different traditions and problematics, both Irish and non-Irish, "pre-modern and post-modern at the same time" (O'Toole xi). In McDonagh's drama, "the allegedly postmodern Ireland of Tayto crisps, Kimberley biscuits and Australian soap operas" is fused with "one drawn from theatre mysticism, nostalgia" (Waters 34). Therefore, his plays read like Synge "rewritten by an Irish Joe Orton" (qtd. in Lanthers 212) or "with a postmodern nod in the direction of Sam Shepard" (Waters 50) and "have the qualities of fairytales, of cartoons, but also of TV sit-com" (Waters 50). They have "as much in common with films like Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* as they do with Synge's *Playboy*" (Lanthers 213). McDonagh's Ireland is a vision influenced by the postmodern media culture as much as it is informed by historical and cultural realities, the attempt to reknit oneself to a history

and ecology, see Lonergan, "'Never mind the shamrocks'" and O'Brien, "'Ireland Mustn't Be Such a Bad Place So,'" as well as "Collaborative Ecology."

and traditions only remotely one's own. McDonagh's Ireland has, therefore, the compounded quality of collage or pastiche, reflecting a world of representational crisis in which the image often "*precedes* the reality it is supposed to represent" (qtd. in Lanthers 214-15). In order to highlight the constructed or simulated character of realities, their sur- or irreality, McDonagh thus does not need to depict Hollywood directly on stage. His own and, by extension, his characters' near-absurdist vision is more than a match for the wildest distortions Hollywood script writers might think up. Many of the characters in the play interact in ways which make camouflage and misrepresentation an integral part of their lives – strategies which screen off the repressed that only rarely returns. The images and impressions which their friends and neighbors have of McDonagh's Aran Islanders are therefore as inadequate as is Hollywood's portrayal of ethnic groups.

What has contributed to his drama's unmistakable hallmark flavour after only a few plays is McDonagh's presentation of characters whose tics and antics capture life as in a magnifying lens. All of the characters in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* are branded by their idiosyncrasies and compulsions as near-caricatures. Among these eccentricities are Billy Claven's inclination to spend hours cow-watching (*Cripple* 7, 33, 55), his aunt Kate Osbourne's habit of talking to stones (*Cripple* 55, 67-68, 79, 86, 89) and her sister Eileen's obsession with eating the sweets herself which she and her sister store in the Osbourne country shop for their customers (*Cripple* 56, 63-64). These and other eccentricities make MacDonagh's characters Hollywood-proof, immune to the threat of becoming transformed into spurious stage or movie Irishmen who usurp reality as it is, a problem foregrounded in Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets*. By their mannerisms, they become so highly individualized that they do not fit any stereotype except that of hopeless crankiness. The repetitiveness of their compulsions throughout the play has the function of leitmotifs and makes them recognizable. The often bizarre nature of these traits provides comic relief which temporarily alleviates the brutal insensitivity that goes along with them. McDonagh's humour softens the impression that his characters are victims driven by psychic compulsions, which rule them and which they cannot control (Waters 46). In the last analysis, many of these habits reveal themselves as a second skin which hides these characters' vulnerability and masks their weakness and compassion; in short, their humanity. In their own ways, these compulsive characters are psychologically as crippled as Billy is physically. Billy himself says at one point: "Well, there are plenty round here just as crippled as me, only it isn't on the outside it shows" (*Cripple* 92). These compulsions and idiosyncrasies contribute in various ways to both the unhinging of conventional expectations and the shiftiness of Irish as well as American realities.

The negotiations between Irish realities and their American representations in the shape of Hollywood movies are similarly ambiguous. Johnnypateen presents the shooting of *Man of Aran* as a chance to emigrate to America: "A little exodus Johnnypateenmike foresees to the big island so, of any lasses or lads in these parts with the looks of a film star about them, wants to make their mark on America" (*Cripple* 13). Johnnypateen's comment on film production demonstrates that the Islanders

may be backward, but their credulity and impressionability is far too limited to make them an easy prey of the lure of Hollywood. Their later abrasive comments during the showing of *Man of Aran* in their makeshift improvised church hall cinema bear this out. Helen McCormick – one of Johnnypateen’s “lasses [...] in these parts with the looks of a film star about them” – voices her protest on a feminist note, resenting that she was not cast as the lead: “I think I might go pegging eggs at the film tomorrow. *Man of Aran* me arsehole. ‘The Lass of Aran’ they could’ve had, and the pretty lass of Aran. Not some owl shite about thick fellas fecking fishing” (*Cripple* 72).

Before we see the reaction of its objects to their depiction in *Man of Aran* (Scene 8), Billy’s dying scene in a squalid Hollywood hotel room (Scene 7) plays with both the suspicions of ill health surrounding him and the Hollywood conventions of an appropriately stereotypical Irish death, including invocations to the Irishman’s decent heart, head, and spirit “not broken by a century’s hunger and a lifetime’s oppression” (*Cripple* 74). The reality status of this deathbed scene remains dubious, as Werner Huber points out:

However realistic Billy’s dying may appear to the audience initially, it is only from the following scene that one is made fully aware that he has only been rehearsing a part and that his dying speech is a fabricated stage-Irish lamentation interspersed with snatches of the ballad of ‘The Croppy’. (Huber, “Contemporary Drama” 15)

The Islanders’ reactions to *Man of Aran* are as violent as Billy’s rejection of Hollywood, when he unexpectedly reappears in the church hall turned cinema, as if he were stepping out of the celluloid reality of *Man of Aran* from the other side of the screen (*Cripple* 85). Later, Billy pulls the screen back in place, as if to close himself and Inishmaan off from Hollywood and all it represents (*Cripple* 91). Although the interest of Helen, Bartley, and Billy in Hollywood seemed to betoken their gullibility, this impression dissolves under their acidic comments on *Man of Aran* and on Hollywood film production. The Irish signified revolts against its American signifier, as it were. Especially Helen McCormick does not exactly accept the film as self-representation: “What’s to fecking see anyways but more wet fellas with awful sweaters on them?” (*Cripple* 84; see 85). Helen is sufficiently naive to confuse the film and the reality it depicts. She throws five eggs at the screen to hit the woman in it – the role she probably had in mind for herself. Asked whether this is not enough, she replies: “Not nearly enough. I never got her in the gob even once, the bitch. She keeps moving” (*Cripple* 81). Helen is not fighting the Hollywood representation of Irish life. She is fighting Irish life.

In his reaction to Hollywood, Billy is more knowing and more ambivalent. He glosses over that he was not accepted by Hollywood and had to come back. Billy confesses only to Bobby that he wanted to run away from his marginalized role as village orphan and village cripple and that he would have stayed in America, had he been given a chance: “If they’d wanted me for the filming. But they didn’t want me. A blond lad from Fort Lauderdale they hired instead of me. He wasn’t crippled at all, but the Yank said ‘Ah, better to get a normal fella who can act crippled then a crippled fella who can’t fecking act at all’” (*Cripple* 92). In Hollywood, the signifier replaces the sig-

nified anytime. Whereas Hollywood's fabrications are never a serious threat in the universe of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, the outer-direction by one's own compulsions, psychic as well as physical deformations, which render individuals even more indeterminable than celluloid realities, are of much greater import. These uncertainties may seemingly be overcome, however, by the genuinely human impulses which they cannot entirely destroy. With some conviction, Billy maintains at the end of the play: "I know now it isn't Hollywood that's the place for me. It's here on Inishmaan, with the people who love me, and the people I love back" (*Cripple* 88). A fundamental existentialism shines through McDonagh's concern with constructs of the real. When all these constructs are being deconstructed, only love and death seem to remain.

IV

On the basis of the postmodern absorption of the message by the medium, Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* and Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* blur the distinguishability between the signifier and the signified. *Stones in His Pockets* does not depict the contrast between genuine Irishness and its Hollywood misrepresentations, but rather the power struggle for the access to media expression of two different, more or less commercial perspectives on Ireland. McDonagh goes still a step further by demonstrating that Irish country life is as constructed *per se* as any of its Californications. By implication, the Hollywood movie industry appears as a both financially and technologically enlarged and empowered blow-up of the machinations and manipulations going on in everyday life in the West of Ireland or anywhere. Taken together, these plays both register and illustrate important stages in the history of ethnic stereotyping. In the simulated thirties of Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, physically handicapped Aran Islanders make it to Hollywood screen tests, if not to the Hollywood screen. At the end of the American century, the Irish extras of a Hollywood film production on Ireland turn the tables on it in Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* by trying to express their countervision in a movie of their own. While *The Cripple of Inishmaan* emphasizes the ubiquity of misperception and defective vision both on and off the screen, *Stones in His Pockets* dramatizes a bold gesture of subversion and countervision against all odds. Both these plays are held together by a precarious spirit of independence as an antidote to the threat of global Americanization. This spirit of independence distinctly contradicts Fredric Jameson's sweeping statement that in postmodernity "no enclaves – aesthetic or other – are left in which the commodity form does not reign supreme" (Jameson 70). Their common spirit of independence may well be the most lasting legacy of these plays in a universe increasingly determined by realities which are filtered through media.

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“DID YOU LIKE HOW I MADE THAT TURN, OFFICER?”
MARTIN McDONAGH’S *HANGMEN* AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Ondřej Pilný

Hangmen, a new dark comedy by Martin McDonagh set in the North of England in the early 1960s, premièred at the Royal Court Theatre on 10 September 2015. It marked the return of the playwright to the London stage after twelve years, and was almost universally hailed as a fabulous success. Following its sell-out initial run at the Royal Court, the play transferred to Wyndham’s Theatre in the West End, and eventually was broadcast internationally as part of the NT Live scheme. It won both a Critics’ Circle Theatre Award and a Lawrence Olivier Award for Best New Play, a South Bank Sky Arts Theatre Award, and a further Critics’ Circle Theatre Award, a Lawrence Olivier Award and an Evening Standard Theatre Award went to Anna Fleischle for her accomplished period design. The plentiful reviews applauded all aspects of the production, including the work of the director, Matthew Dunster, and the amazing performance delivered by the cast, particularly David Morrissey as Britain’s second-best hangman Harry Wade, the uncannily insouciant Johnny Flynn as the “menacing” (McDonagh 47, 63, 68-70, 88) stranger Mooney, and Bronwyn James in her superb professional stage debut as Wade’s teenage daughter Shirley.

This essay argues that despite the essential continuities between *Hangmen* and McDonagh’s earlier work, his latest play represents something of a turn in his career in that some of its principal characters are recognisably based on reality and, even more importantly, it seems to maintain its concern with a grave issue until the very end. However, the serious note clashes with the nature of the humour proffered by the play in a way that presents a major challenge for its directors. Following an outline of some of McDonagh’s source material and its use, the essay discusses the nature of the playwright’s engagement with capital punishment, comparing it with the position of ethical and political themes in his previous work for the stage, in order to ultimately focus on the effect of the play’s subject in the UK, long after the last significant debates about the reintroduction of the sentence to death by hanging have taken place there.

Hangmen is unmistakably a McDonagh play: funny, meticulously plotted and built on numerous unexpected twists that make it unrelentingly captivating. It features a dose of brutal violence, but it is at the same time farcical. Moreover, as in his ‘Irish’ plays, McDonagh demonstrates his talent for work with dialects: instead of the unabashed synthetic Hiberno-English of his earlier drama, however, the vernacular of *Hangmen* is that of Northern England, which is contrasted with the speech of a London “spiv” (Craven); similarly to *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1997), McDonagh throws in a dose of anachronisms (see Evans), mostly for comic effect. These aside, McDonagh’s per-

fect ear for language helps him to faithfully convey the atmosphere of the time and place, despite his lack of familiarity with the part of England that provides the play's setting: as Matthew Dunster has testified with admiration, McDonagh "has an ability to summon up this incredible sense of place purely out of his imagination. I'm actually from Oldham and he's never been there, yet Oldham is there" (qtd. in O'Hagan). McDonagh's dialogue has maintained the natural theatricality of his earlier works; in David Morrisey's words, it again has an "incredible rhythm, like you're batting words back and forth" (qtd. in O'Hagan). Finally, another trademark feature of the playwright's work has been the ingenious and often comic recurrence of individual words or remarkable turns of phrase. The extent of such repetitions is significantly increased in *Hangmen*, and creates a fascinating texture within what already is an extremely well-crafted play. In this respect, *Hangmen* represents the perfection of the customary McDonagh formula and is a truly mature play.

However, *Hangmen* involves also an important departure for McDonagh, as the executioners in the play are based on real-life models. Harry Wade's name is an amalgam of those of Harry Bernard Allen, who served as Assistant Executioner in 1940-1941 and 1945-1955, and as Chief Executioner from 1955 until the passing of the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act on 8 November 1965 (see Fielding 217, 260, 281-91), and Stephen Wade, Assistant Executioner from 1940-1945 and Chief Executioner between 1946 and 1955 (Fielding 208, 281-89). Similarly to Harry Wade who is chastised for this in McDonagh's play, Allen performed no hangings from 1942 until 1945 for an unclear reason (Fielding 211-12). It is also from Allen that McDonagh's hangman takes the peculiar habit of wearing bow ties (Allen wore these as a sign of respect for the dignity of the occasion, but also claimed that they helped him to get inside a prison any time there was a demonstration held against the execution, since people then tended to mistake him for a doctor or a lawyer; Fielding 215). Allen was the executioner of James Hanratty, the notorious A6 murderer and rapist, whose contentious conviction resulted in a campaign to exonerate him which lasted long after he was hanged on 4 April 1962; his guilt was finally proved by DNA evidence as late as in 2001 (Fielding 224). Hanratty's case is clearly referenced by McDonagh in his naming of the sentenced man in Scene One, James Hennessy, and indicating that he is to hang for sexual assault and murder (even if the details are different, as is the year of the execution, 1963). The way Hennessy pleads his innocence seems in turn to be informed by stories pertaining to other similar occasions, such as the execution of murderer John Ellwood by Henry Pierrepont (Fielding 94-96) and that of William Palmer, convicted of murder and putting up a fight with hangman John Ellis and his party, who somewhat ironically told him – like Harry Wade in the play – that by resisting, he is only making things harder for himself (McDonagh 12; Fielding 148-50).

Harry Wade's former assistant, Syd Armfield, is based on the Assistant Executioner (1949-1952) Sydney Dernley; like Armfield, Dernley was severely chided by his Chief Executioner for making a tasteless remark concerning the physiognomy of an executed man, and his name was removed from the list of executioners following a con-

viction and brief prison sentence for being involved in trading pornography. However, Dernley never assisted the bow tie-sporting Harry Allen. His superiors on the job included Stephen Wade, and most frequently the best known twentieth-century Chief Executioner, Albert Pierrepoint (Fielding 233, 286-88), who makes a crucial prolonged appearance in McDonagh's *Hangmen*. Last but not least, although it may seem extraordinary that both Harry Wade and Albert Pierrepoint run a pub in the play, McDonagh only reflects the reality here, since many of the actual hangmen were working-class men from the North of England who earned their living as publicans or barmen at some stage of their life, including Harry Allen and Pierrepoint.

All the executioners who provided inspiration for the play's characters drew a degree of macabre public attention in their day, and were often interviewed in the press and/or on television, particularly after the abolition of the death penalty when they presumably did not feel bound as much by the required commitment to secrecy about the details of their 'profession' any more. Harry Allen made several notable public appearances in which he argued for the reinstatement of capital punishment, and became the last hangman to model for Madame Tussaud's, where his wax figure then stood for many years next to some of his victims, including Hanratty; he apparently maintained until his death that he never officially retired as hangman, which is what Harry Wade's wife suspects may become true of her husband (Fielding 227-28; McDonagh 42). Syd Dernley likewise appeared on television and at lectures following the publication of his memoirs in 1989, while Allen became the subject of a 2008 biography.¹ Nonetheless, it was Albert Pierrepoint who enjoyed true celebrity status, triggered by his service as the executioner of a multitude of prominent Nazi criminals at Nuremberg. During his long career, he consistently refused to be put in the spotlight, regarding the details of his job and his views on it as something that is "sacred" to him and must remain secret (in McDonagh's play, the word "sacrosanct" is used; Berlins; McDonagh 56, 60, 96). Pierrepoint resigned in 1956 but his name reappeared in public discourse with vigour following the publication of his memoirs in 1974.² More recently, he has become the subject of a frequently screened TV documentary, *Executioner Pierrepoint* (2006), and a notable feature film released the same year and entitled simply *Pierrepoint*, with Timothy Spall and Juliet Stevenson delivering marvellous performances as the hangman and his wife.

McDonagh has taken considerable liberties with the life stories of these historical figures but his play clearly taps into the lurid fascination that has been steadily engendered by men hired to dispatch those sentenced to death, and McDonagh was able to confidently bank on the British audiences' familiarity with Pierrepoint at least; as he

1 Dernley with Newman, *The Hangman's Tale*; McLaughlin, *Harry Allen*. Shortly after the publication of Allen's biography, his diaries and other belongings went up for sale in an auction which was covered in several newspaper articles that printed samples from the diaries pertaining to technical details of some of the executions that he was in charge of.

2 Pierrepoint, *Executioner*; the book has reappeared in multiple editions since.

stated in an interview, *Hangmen* “is as much about celebrity as it is about hanging” (qtd. in Lukowski). The scrupulous nature of the author’s research for the play is further evidenced by the uncanny accuracy with which the opening scene replicates the reality of executions in the UK: instead of the hangman’s knot that has dominated popular imagery, Harry Wade uses the halter-style noose that was traditionally used in Britain, and the gallows features a trap door with a deep pit into which the convict swiftly disappears after the hangman has pulled the lever (see Fielding 10-15). Moreover, the frame of reference importantly involves some of the most controversial executions of the 1950s and early 1960s (see McDonagh 39-40) that have included two miscarriages of justice and have significantly contributed to the eventual abolition of the death penalty in the UK: Derek Bentley, hanged for his part in the shooting of a police officer (and exonerated in the 1990s); Timothy Evans, falsely accused of murdering his wife and infant daughter (and posthumously pardoned in 1966); Ruth Ellis, executed for the killing of a violent lover; and the case of James Hennessy/Hanratty discussed above.

The exploration of historical sources required for *Hangmen* and the consideration of how to use the material may have contributed to the length of time that it took McDonagh to finish the play. Begun back in 2001, the playwright stated that, apart from getting “sidetracked by other projects”, this drama was long in gestation because it was “about a big subject – capital punishment and miscarriages of justice – and [he] didn’t want it to be a message play. As always, [he] had to find the story and then let the issues just bubble up underneath” (qtd. in O’Hagan). A number of commentators have recently argued that while McDonagh’s work does not necessarily engage with politics or society in a direct sense, it has a moral and often also political foundation. For example, Patrick Lonergan asserts in his accomplished book-length study that “[f]rom *The Beauty Queen* onwards”, McDonagh “has not sought to communicate a message from author to audience, but instead to reveal to the audience the strangeness of their own presuppositions and assumptions” (113-14). This implies that the creation of meaning becomes the responsibility of the spectators, who are encouraged “to question the values that are assumed” in what is presented to them (113-14). Similarly, Eamonn Jordan claims in his detailed treatment of McDonagh’s plays and films that the breaking of social norms by their characters involves a testing of “moral sense or cultural values” (175), and that the defective morality of these characters “is dangled before an audience, where it becomes their responsibility” (212). In contrast, I have argued about McDonagh’s ‘Irish’ plays that the general distancing of the characters from the spectators which results from the overwhelming use of hyperbole on the one hand and the characters’ alienation in terms of social milieu and IQ on the other prevents any ethical concerns from being taken seriously; as regards *The Pillowman* (2003), a comparable effect arises from the unscrupulous manipulation of the audience that is achieved by the multiple use of framing devices. I agree with Lonergan and many others that McDonagh’s plays “force us to laugh at things that shouldn’t be funny” (Lonergan 224) which, together with the confusing and

contradictory genre signals discussed by Jordan (13), makes them fundamentally grotesque; nevertheless, McDonagh's brand of the grotesque aims only to entertain rather than engage the audience in a deliberation of moral or political issues.³

José Lanter's discussion of morality in relation to McDonagh's work strikes me as the most pertinent of the recent commentaries. Lanter's claims that "McDonagh evokes traditional religious and legal concepts and systems of morality only to treat them ironically even as he approaches them nostalgically, and simultaneously makes us question whether what seemed like nostalgia was really meant to be taken as irony or what seemed to be ironic was really meant to be taken seriously." (178) This she describes as the playwright's "postmodern ethical stance" (178). A similar view was in fact outlined in a poignant early article on McDonagh by Werner Huber. Huber – probably the first critic to have engaged with the concept of the grotesque in relation to McDonagh's work (see Huber 20) – has argued that the value system in McDonagh's dramas "appears in constant flux and in a state of destabilization", as a result of which any "satire loses sight of its targets" (22). Nevertheless, Huber opposed the idea that the playwright depicts "a world of postmodern instability, loss of values and general validity", preferring to suggest instead that "McDonagh is restoring an original dimension to the meaning of drama as 'action'" (23-24).⁴

While the notion of drama as action is as central to *Hangmen* as it had been to McDonagh's previous work, the new play represents a departure in the playwright's career in that it sustains the concern with the serious issue of capital punishment and justice until the final curtain. The problem that must be tackled by any director of *Hangmen*, however, is how to reconcile the sombre note with the rather daft humour that characterizes many of the conversations in Harry Wade's pub, including McDonagh's typical politically incorrect quips that are, frankly, not much more than gratuitous in this play.

Dunster's production at the Royal Court was not particularly successful in resolving this problem. The opening scene in which the condemned Hennessy is fighting with prison guards and hangmen and pleading his innocence was rather surprisingly enacted in a stylised manner and was very clearly being played for laughs. At the end of the scene, the set was lifted towards the ceiling and as the action has moved to Harry Wade's pub, the style of the production gave way to meticulous naturalism; however, much of the events in the pub prominently feature a chorus of regulars aptly described by Matt Trueman as "imbeciles" (Trueman), who proffer or incite the

3 For details of my argument concerning *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001) and *The Pillowman*, see Pilný 15-17 and my earlier work on McDonagh.

4 In fact, the apparent discord between Lanter's and Huber's view may pertain merely to the respective use of the term "postmodern" in the context, since Lanter also foregrounds McDonagh's ultimate concern with theatricality in *The Pillowman* when she argues that "'doing the right thing' [is] a function of plot rather than character motivation" (171).

kind of humour that is perhaps the most difficult to harmonize with any potential note of seriousness. An almost cinematic realism dominated the opening scene of Act Two, depicting the conversation of the enigmatic intruder Mooney with Syd Armfield in a local diner and being enacted in a set suspended from the above, where it disappeared again following the completion of the scene. The dark farce that develops from the naturalist action in the pub in the second scene of Act Two had a perfect pitch, flawlessly conveying the grotesque combination of brutal violence and the moral undoing of the 'hero' with exuberant accidental comedy. But the concluding part of the scene that is the play's finale was again slightly disappointing: as the only passage in the production, it seemed to lack clear directorial vision, coming across as a mere fumbling with the corpse, while the touch of nostalgia for the old times with which it was endowed failed to emphasize the obvious irony of such a sentiment in the circumstances. Arguably, the scene calls rather for a mechanistic, matter-of-fact rendering, in which the hangman and his assistant would slide back into their old routine, treating the body of the deceased as an object to be disposed of; this might then intensify the shock caused by the preceding events.

As the reviews of the production amply testify, the London audiences were roaring with laughter every night, with those who saw the play in the West End being perhaps encouraged to do so by the fact that the show was marketed as a comedy (see Letts). Apart from viewing *Hangmen* as exquisitely funny, reviewers highlighted a disparate variety of aspects in the play. Some viewed it as a realistic depiction of early 1960s Britain that critically revised the notion of the Swinging Sixties (Coveney; Clapp; Lawrence; Calhoun). Others regarded it as a satire aimed against the practice of capital punishment (Taylor; Culture Whisper; Evans) or, more specifically, a portrayal of the impact of capital punishment on the executioners (Mountford; Letts; Lawrence). The reviewer for *The New York Times* in turn made a solitary argument concerning McDonagh's apparent demonstration that regardless of the sanctioning of the death penalty by the state or otherwise, violence will always be inherent in humans (Wolf). Significantly, only a single reviewer seems to have related McDonagh's play to contemporary Britain in more than an abstract sense, discussing the display of blatant sexism, racism, homophobia and an absolute faith in a corrupt system as having alarmingly returned in recent days (Trueman); however, in my view (and implicitly also that of the other reviewers), there is little in McDonagh's comedy to substantiate such an interpretation.

Indeed, Lloyd Evans's review in *The Spectator* documents the danger inherent in suppressing the serious note that I would argue is there in *Hangmen*: Evans concluded that the play came across as a "macabre slice of knockabout" and ultimately dismissed it as "good fun, a bit disturbing and ultimately forgettable" (Evans). In this context, the response of Aleks Sierz is similarly indicative. As it is well known, Sierz was an early champion of McDonagh's work, and has expressed admiration also for his later dramas, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* and *The Pillowman*. However, he became the only critic to have decisively panned *Hangmen*. Sierz can hardly be re-

garded as an uptight theatre-goer but in his review, he complained at some length about McDonagh's "senselessly provocative" jokes and criticised the "puerile self-indulgence" of the work. The fact that Sierz described *Hangmen* as a "comedy about 1960s Britain" in the title of his review implies that like the present author, he sensed a serious concern in the play. In his view, this was in part obscured and in part botched not only by gratuitous schoolboy humour but also by a lack of insight into character psychology, which Sierz regarded as the greatest problem of the piece (see Sierz). I have already noted that McDonagh exploits in this play the morbid fascination engendered by hangmen; yet, Sierz is right in that we don't actually learn much as regards Harry Wade's thoughts and emotions, apart from him being worried for the life of his daughter. Despite Wade's central role, McDonagh's "characterisation is so thin" (Sierz): what were Wade's reasons for becoming an executioner, for instance, and what does he really think about capital punishment? And does he really feel displaced, now that hanging has been abolished, as McDonagh seems to indicate by a single nonverbal gesture at the end of Scene Two?⁵

Another matter that must be broached pertains to the nature of the issue that the play is concerned with, or rather its timing. To put it simply, one may wonder why write a play about capital punishment now, long after the reintroduction of the death penalty was last seriously discussed in Britain. A point of contrast in terms of British theatre history may be Joan Littlewood's production of Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow* in 1956, a play that McDonagh actually alludes to a few times.⁶ Vastly different as *The Quare Fellow* is as regards both genre and its focus on prisoners and warders rather than executioners, like McDonagh's *Hangmen* it is hardly a "message play", and particularly in Littlewood's production, it was extremely entertaining and at times hilarious. At the same time, it was perceived as an intervention in the contemporaneous debate concerning the abolition of capital punishment.⁷ The question is whether in 2015 the subject can provide even an approximation of the kind of edge that Behan's play was seen as having in the late 1950s and the 1960s.

Such concerns may certainly be at variance with what Martin McDonagh set out to achieve in the play. For one, he has described *Hangmen* in his interview with Sean

5 The scene ends as follows: "Harry: I won't know what to do with meself! / They all laugh, but in the slight pause afterwards, Harry really does wonder what he'll do with himself. / Blackout." (35)

6 The Chief Warder in *The Quare Fellow* repeatedly voices his exasperation at the incompetence of his subordinates as follows: "Warders! You'd/I'd get better in Wool-worths." (Behan 88, 123) This is echoed in the opening scene of *Hangmen*, where Harry complains about the Guards: "Where'd they get you two? Window as fucking Debenhams?!" (McDonagh 15). Prisoner D's view that "hanging's too good for 'em" (Behan 94) is what Billy emphatically asserts in *Hangmen* (McDonagh 20-21, 55) and Harry subsequently refuses (McDonagh 36).

7 An abolition Bill came before Parliament in November 1955, was approved by the Commons but ultimately rejected by the Lords in 1956. No executions were performed while the Bill was being debated, with the next one taking place only in July 1957.

O'Hagan as his take on a "traditional comedy thriller", and regarded solely on these terms, the play works well enough indeed. Moreover, the author attended virtually all rehearsals for the Royal Court production (see O'Hagan), and presumably endorsed the directorial decisions made by Matthew Dunster. What is as significant is that in the same interview, McDonagh once again voiced the reservations that he has had about theatre as an art form. More specifically, he stated that it is "the snobby, intellectual, political side of theatre that bugs [him]", and indicated that he finds the work of political playwrights such as David Hare revolting. These remarks make it apparent that McDonagh detests what he sees as the elitism of theatre going, together with the hypocrisy involved in the idea that in the theatre, spectators should get to ponder vital ethical and political issues, since they happily fail to translate the experience into their real lives in consequence. If we relate McDonagh's critique to his own work, it provides fitting justification to the way in which the numerous grave issues are foregrounded only to be swiftly dismissed in *The Pillowman*, ultimately to reveal the playwright to be merely entertaining the audience by shunting them to and fro at will. However, I would argue that in *Hangmen*, the concern with capital punishment is not sufficiently undermined in order for McDonagh to communicate the reservations that he has about the "political side" of theatre.

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MARTIN McDONAGH'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL INSTABILITY: THE NOOSE OF *HANGMEN*

Joan FitzPatrick Dean

Just before *Hangmen* opened at the Royal Court Theatre in London in September 2015, Martin McDonagh told Sean O'Hagan of *The Guardian*: "I really didn't want it to be a message play" (O'Hagan). Yet a message play it is, one that argues cogently against capital punishment. In his fullest exploration of the often-intricate power structures of male hierarchy, McDonagh's most recent play realizes what several of his likely surrogates – storytellers like Cripple Billy in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1997) or writers like Katurian in *The Pillowman* (2003) and especially Marty in *Seven Psychopaths* (2012) – had hoped for: "something life-affirming" as Marty puts it.

Reviewers of McDonagh's work, especially of the early plays, sometimes sensed an apparent moral nihilism. In reviewing *The Leenane Trilogy* in 1997, Fintan O'Toole wrote that "the Ireland of these plays is one in which all authority has collapsed" (179). Patrick Lonergan described *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* as "a world in which morality is disturbingly confused" (73). Critical commentary returns to these questions so often because concerns about integrity and morality have never been far from the surface of McDonagh's works. More recent critics are often candid about the moral dimensions of McDonagh's work. In 2002, for instance, Liz Hoggard described *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* as "a fiercely moral play" (Hoggard 11). In reviewing the 2017 Broadway revival of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), the *New Yorker's* Hilton Als referred to McDonagh as "a proper moralist" (Als 74). That questions of morality often remain totally abstract, recondite, and mysterious for many of his characters, especially in his Irish plays, is itself noteworthy. In *The Lonesome West*, Coleman can appreciate the Catholic Church's teaching on suicide only through reference to the death of an actor from the television series *Alias Smith and Jones*. Beyond the many references to the Catholic Church in the Irish plays, McDonagh's films, *In Bruges* and *Seven Psychopaths* are even more laden with religious imagery. His work immediately preceding *Hangmen*, the film *Seven Psychopaths*, contains references to Buddhists, Quakers, Christianity, the afterlife, and even the Amish. *Hangmen* is in this regard unlike his earlier works: not only is it purely secular but its characters are singularly soulless. Its exploration of morality and integrity eschews reference to organized religions or belief systems but compel its audiences to examine what is right, decent, and legal.

Hangmen uses McDonagh's most formidable weapons – his manipulation of an audience's gullibility, the storyteller's narratives, and life's epistemological uncertainties – to specifically moral ends. Because so many of his characters concoct schemes to deceive other characters, the audience is often deceived along with them. Compara-

ble ruses appear throughout Shakespeare, especially the comedies, where they are often called “practices.” Werner Huber used McDonagh’s own Hiberno-English term “coddling” for this pervasive pattern of deception:

the art of “coddling” (Huber, “The Plays” 568-70) is prefigured in the earlier plays [before *The Pillowman*], which begin with cleverly crafted expositions and rely on the conventions of confidence-building, before the “coddling” starts and tricks are played on the *dramatis personae* and the spectators alike. (Huber, “From Leenane” 291)

Beyond these fabrications and ruses, the truth in McDonagh is often neither plain nor simple. When asked if he breaks up disinterred bones and dumps them in the slurry, Mick in *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) answers: “Oh, maybe it’s true now, and maybe it isn’t at all” (*Skull* 13). Katurian similarly asks his brother, “Which particular truth?” (*Pillowman* 51). From his very earliest work, McDonagh has sown and cultivated such epistemological instability; in *Hangmen* it figures even more importantly.

Set in 1963, the first scene of *Hangmen* acts as a prologue that depicts Harry Wade’s execution of Hennessy, a young man who violently resists in a final protestation of his innocence. After a prolonged, agonizing struggle during which Harry strikes the prisoner with a billyclub, Harry’s assistant, Syd, binds the prisoner’s arms with a strap, and two prison guards are needed to subdue Hennessy. Harry finally manages to place a hood and then the noose on the prisoner’s head and levers open the trap door through which Hennessy drops to his death. The entire process of execution is so brutal, degrading, and lacking in dignity that Harry orders the prison governor to say nothing of the struggle in the official report. Then Harry demands his breakfast.

The remaining six scenes play out over twenty-four hours, principally in the Oldham pub now operated by the executioner Harry Wade. With his wife and teenage daughter, Harry lives in an apartment above his pub. Just as Britain outlaws capital punishment two years after the first scene, two strangers seek out Harry. The first is a newspaper reporter, Clegg, whose interview with Harry appears in the local newspaper the next morning. The second stranger is Peter Mooney who is suspected of interfering with (more specifically, abducting and murdering) Harry’s daughter. In the play’s final act, Mooney will be lynched in circumstances that unmistakably link his death to that of Hennessy.

McDonagh’s plays and films typically rely on power structures that are grounded in knowledge – often, the knowledge of secrets. What characters know, how they know it and how certain their knowledge is, all shape, if not determine, their actions. His drama, like most, draws its energy from methodically revealing and refining knowledge; his dramatic irony, like most, is predicated on the disparity between imperfect understanding and what is finally disclosed as the truth. *Hangmen* again demonstrates McDonagh’s formidable gifts in plotting a dramatic piece, but the central concerns of *Hangmen*, including capital punishment and matters of life and death, raise issues that demand absolute certainty and demand an end to epistemological instability. McDonagh very deliberately reveals information incrementally, strategically.

Whereas the opening exposition in an Ibsen play is typically reliable, forthright, and even comprehensive, crucial episodes from the past are not revealed in McDonagh's works until they are most effectively and surprisingly revealed. McDonagh exerts enormous control over the audiences for his plays and films. Most authors do, but McDonagh consistently manipulates what and when his audience learns, knows, or believes. He and his characters are anything but forthcoming, even when, as so often, they are hilariously blunt. What characters as well as the audience know or believe they know is often misguided, unreliable or flat-out wrong.

Other striking continuities exist between *Hangmen* and McDonagh's earlier works. Revenge is a pervasive motive that links McDonagh's works from first to last. In *Hangmen* Syd hopes to take revenge on Harry for "shopping" him to the authorities. Indeed, Syd was arrested, convicted, and sent to prison for importing illegal Danish pornography ("fannies, not cocks" [61]). Now Syd plans "to take that bigshot bastard down a peg or two. Plan to scare the living daylight out of him so next time he'll think twice before shopping his mates to Prison Commissioners over one single cock joke in the heat of the moment" (67). Syd's script for warning Harry about "a skinny fella, short blond hair, London accent, I think, and well enough dressed but with sort of a menacing look" (63), soon gets away from him. In embellishing his story, Syd moves from the vague to the definite. As Mooney explains:

MOONEY: Now, if I walk into that pub right now, what will their attitude toward me be? Not, as planned, that I am a *vaguely* menacing individual who turned up saying some *vaguely* menacing things at *vaguely* the same time their daughter went missing and who by all means requires a *vague* eye being kept on, *no*. That I was *definitely* involved in an attack on a girl a year ago, carried out on the anniversary of the hanging of a man who was *definitely* hanged by a man who's [sic] daughter has just *definitely* gone missing. (70)

The "plan" was to operate in that gap between the *definite* and the *vague*, the gap in which we often find ourselves.

Syd is not the only storyteller in *Hangmen*. Fry reports the details of Phyllis Keane's incarceration in a mental home, a true story from an esteemed gossip-monger who evokes the memory of Johnnypateenmike in *The Cripple*. Harry's stories of why he never executed any Germans are only excuses, crude fabrications. To demonstrate his sanctimonious outrage at Syd's expression of surprise over the dimensions of a Manchester gangster's genitals, Harry has to repeat the story in detail, a prurient exercise that may be worse than whatever expression of surprise might have issued from Syd in that moment. Syd (and the audience) believes Mooney's very sinister story of abducting Harry's daughter Shirley and leaving her to die, not least because it is so rich in detail. Syd's story is perhaps the most pernicious because rather than sticking to a dubious plan to suggest that Mooney is vaguely menacing, he embellishes extemporaneously to make Mooney definitely evil. The stories told in *Hangmen* do not come from reciters, artists or fabulators but craven hypocrites. Status, control and power derive from some stories, especially ones that impart secrets. As in *The*

Pillowman and *Seven Psychopaths*, all of these stories have consequences well beyond anything their tellers ever intended or imagined. In scene six, immediately after the audience's assumptions (specifically, that Syd acted altruistically in approaching Harry) have settled during intermission, they are undone by learning that Syd and Mooney not only know each other, but have conspired. Again, the audience along with Syd must adjust to a now-vertiginous horizon of expectations.

McDonagh's Irish plays in particular demonstrate the signal importance of a specific time and a specific place. Huber described "the typical McDonagh locale [as one in which] everything is put into a 'parochial' perspective" ("Plays of Martin McDonagh" 564). The first of his plays set in the country of his birth, *Hangmen* was lauded for its adept handling of the period and place. McDonagh's use of the Oldham dialect drew praise from an Oldham native, Matthew Dunster, the director of the play's premiere:

[McDonagh]'s responding to the north of England rather than the west of Ireland, so the vernacular is different, but he nails it. There's a precision to his writing and he has an ability to summon up this incredible sense of place purely out of his imagination. I'm actually from Oldham and he's never even been there, yet Oldham is there, real and recognisable, in the play. (O'Hagan)

Much of the critical controversy over the Irish plays in particular struggle with their mimetic representation of the West of Ireland, but critics celebrated the accuracy of McDonagh's parochial Oldham.

Perhaps even more important than the faithful staging of place in the instance of *Hangmen* is its fidelity to a specific moment. As much as 1934 is crucial to *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and the years immediately before the Celtic Tiger (1990-1992) are vital to *The Leenane Trilogy*, 1965 is crucial to *Hangmen*. Published and first performed fifty years after the abolition of the death penalty in Britain, *Hangmen* captures what director Dunster describes as

the fascination with that period ... that particular time when we are celebrating the freedom that seems to come with pop music and pop culture and we're still murdering people by the state. There's something about that sort of Rubicon that's obviously deeply fascinating to Martin. And Orton and Pinter are products of that atmosphere, so it is just feels absolutely right... (Trueman)

For all of the trademark continuities with his earlier works, *Hangmen* departs from them in many ways. Not only in the time (one reason that there is vastly less vulgarity in *Hangmen*) and place of its setting, but also its characters and plot are closer to stage realism, especially in its treatment of the body and of violence. We see two deaths on stage in *Hangmen*, but hear of hundreds. McDonagh relies more heavily on historical events (such as Britain's abolition of capital punishment) and executions of real people (the "controversial" cases that Clegg asks Harry about – Derek Bentley, Timothy Evans and Ruth Ellis who were all actually executed in the 1950s), so the gravitation toward realism might be expected. The play moves away from the hyperbolic physical violence against humans, animals, and major appliances in earlier works to examine society's institutional violence. Although representatives of the law

or legal system appear in *A Skull in Connemara* (the vain, self-important Gardai Tom Hanlon) and, much more centrally, in *The Pillowman* (the two detectives, Tupolski and Ariel), those in *Hangmen* underscore the play's attention to relationship between personal and civic morality.

The principal setting for *Hangmen* is Harry Wade's pub in Oldham, both a domestic space for the nuclear Wade family and a public space populated by a handful of regulars and four outsiders: the reporter Clegg, Harry's former assistant Syd, the mysterious Mooney, and Harry's nemesis hangman Pierrepont, all of whom are drawn on some level to Harry because of his former position as hangman. From a production standpoint, however, perhaps the outstanding feature of *Hangmen* in comparison to McDonagh's other plays is its significantly larger cast. Even with doubling (by having the prison guards, doctor and governor in the first scene also play the denizens of Harry's pub), *Hangmen* demands no fewer than twelve in its cast, more actors than appear in all three plays in *The Leenane Trilogy*. To the core group of six – Harry, Alice, Shirley, Mooney, Syd, and Pierrepont – that propels much of the action of the play are added representatives of society's institutions: the prison doctor, its governor and guards in the prologue; later, a police detective and a journalist appear. And in addition to these characters are the habitués of Harry's pub: the "cronies" as McDonagh describes Bill, Charlie and Arthur at the beginning of scene two. These three form a chorus that variously echoes and repeats the dialogue, placing particular emphasis, explaining nuances, and, like the chorus of classical theatre, directing however obliquely audience response.¹ Charlie summarizes much of the conversation for the benefit of the slightly deaf Arthur, often to celebrate Harry's wit and insight (which, of course, isn't at all witty or insightful). The cronies endure Harry's corrections, his abuse, and his insults: "bloody jackdaws" (27); "a daft pillock" (21). Harry tells his customers what they will and will not drink; when to wait and when to drink up. The three cronies are at the very bottom of *Hangmen*'s elaborate hierarchy. Even Harry's wife Alice can rebuke them (28). They are, of course, exclusively male and derive pleasure or at least satisfaction from acting as a group.

Since 2000, McDonagh's work both on stage and in film gravitates toward the closed world of men as seen in the two brothers investigated by police detectives in *The Pillowman* or the demi-monde of assassins and hit men in *In Bruges* (2008). A lone woman appears in *A Skull in Connemara*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, and *A Be-*

1 Although they hardly call attention to themselves, several features of classical Greek theatre course throughout *Hangmen*. McDonagh consistently denigrates his knowledge of theatre, but his incorporation of elements or variants of the formulae of classical tragedy in *Hangmen* is prodigious. In its relentless focus on capital punishment, *Hangmen* embraces unity of action. After a prologue, the play's action unfolds within twenty-four hours, suggesting unity of time and of place (although there are two locales in Oldham for most of the play).

In the first scene (or prologue), Hennessy prophetically curses Harry and Syd, "I will come back to whatever northern shithole you live in and I will fucking haunt you" (13).

handing in Spokane (2011). Harry's pub offers yet another male sphere where status is tied to power over others. In concert with Inspector Fry, the cronies deal with the journalist Clegg, first, through Fry's threat to arrest him for underage drinking or "just give him a bloody hiding" (17) and by taunting him as accountable to his mother. They handle another "stranger in the house", Mooney, by impugning his masculinity in labeling him "the Babycham Man." When Arthur refers to Mooney as "the *new* Babycham man" (33; emphasis added), we might suspect that this may be a recycled trope to demean newcomers. If these insults, corrections, and put-downs existed on a smaller scale, they might be called microaggressions, but writ large and as pervasive as they are, they are full-blown aggressions intended to reinforce and maintain the male hierarchy in their closed world. As well as insults and punishments, there are also rewards: an invitation, extended to Clegg and later Fry to speak privately with Harry upstairs. And there are free drinks that come from pleasing Harry.

Mooney's immediate recognition of this systematic intimidation and humiliation in this male domain is highly evocative of what Martin Esslin described as Harold Pinter's comedy of menace. An intricate series of aggressions, retreats, and truces, analogous to those in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1956) or *The Homecoming* (1965), creates a recurrent pattern in *Hangmen* in which characters either claim a place in this pecking order or submit to others. Returning from the bar with his second pint, Mooney pauses to whisper something in Clegg's ear, something that may well trigger the young journalist's successful gambit to get an interview from Harry. Soon after enduring a barrage of insults about living with his mother, when Clegg proposes to leave so he can speak with Pierrepont, "*the pub suddenly goes silent and Harry stops what he is doing to stare at [Clegg]*" (25). The moment Clegg refers to Pierrepont as "being, y'know...the Number One hangman all them years" (25) Harry summons Clegg upstairs for the interview seen in scene three. Occasionally the game that dominates their interactions is acknowledged in the rare compliment for one-upmanship, for playing this ritualized male game well:

FRY: Alright, lad. Very good.

MOONEY: Did you like that? Did you like how I made that turn, Officer?

FRY: We'll leave it at that then, shall we?

MOONEY: No more of this Babycham business. I know only too well what Babycham is. I know all of its connotations. Alright?

(MOONEY drinks his pint in one.) (31-32)

Mooney's downing his beer is a gesture of defiance and assertion is somehow meant to authenticate his manliness – that, certainly, is the effect it has in silencing the other men. In the final scene, strung up by what has become a mob, masculine bravado drives Mooney to defy his tormentors with cheeky taunts that fuel their rage. As he stands precariously perched on a chair with his neck in a noose, Mooney is interrogated one last time by Harry:

HARRY: Where is she?

MOONEY: She's ... (*Gasping.*) She's ...

HARRY: Aye?

MOONEY: She's up shit creek ... and I don't think she's got a paddle ... which is very dangerous ... cos she was never a lightweight girl, was she? (94)

This enlarged cast provides not only a cross-section of society ranging from the gainfully employed (even "a servant of the Crown" [18]) to the marginally tolerated, but it also enables McDonagh to show that Mooney's lynching is made possible through the action and inaction of the many, not just the few. Not only are the many complicit in Mooney's death but also in covering up the discovery of it in order to protect those most culpable.

The pattern that characterizes every scene in *Hangmen* is one in which a character attempts to assert dominance over others and claims a privileged place in the hierarchy, to establish himself (in this case) as the alpha male by intimidating, cajoling, wheedling, insulting, threatening, or much more rarely, by charming others. In the first scene, a prologue set two years earlier, Harry asserts his dominance over six other men, first through his avuncular treatment of the condemned man. But as soon as Hennessy suggests that Harry is a lesser hangman than Pierrepont, Harry quickly resorts to an authoritative manner: he bullies the prison guards and officials, mocks Syd's nervous stammer, and renders the prisoner semiconscious with a billyclub. Harry regulates his wife's drinking and (mistakenly) corrects his daughter Shirley over "cloud" and "clown." Shirley is repeatedly labeled a mope by both her parents. As she laments to Mooney, at fifteen "everybody just keeps is having a go at ya" (48). We see aggression in Mooney as well, especially in his highly-charged encounters with Alice and Shirley. One of Mooney's most menacing actions is to interrupt Alice and later Shirley to "shush" them. However, most of these aggressions are not directed toward women but at men by men in the form of denigration, humiliation, belittlement and, more rarely, flattery. Especially in Clegg's "interview," Harry repeatedly denigrates Pierrepont claiming that if you do not count the Germans that were hanged during and after the war, Harry really is the number one hangman. This pattern of aggressions builds subtly throughout the play aiming to establish the alpha male.

Very late in the play, McDonagh brings a new character, Pierrepont, on stage to correct what Harry has said in his interview in that morning's *Oldham Gazette* by asserting himself as a man of integrity. Pierrepont demands to know if "the word sacrosanct mean[s] anything" (96) to Harry. Indeed, the word echoes through the play, as does the larger question of professional discretion, which Inspector Fry travesties in discussing the particulars of poor Phyllis Keane's incarceration in a mental home. In declining Clegg's requests for an interview, Harry repeatedly announces himself as one who "keeps my own counsel" (18, 19 [twice], 21 [twice], 27, 34) as key to his professional and personal integrity. Pierrepont comprehensively asserting himself over the reigning alpha male, by calling Harry "a whiny, insecure, dicky-bow wearing fuck-

pig who was never any good at his fucking job" (96) whose "shitty, fat, nondescript Oldham's publican's fucking life" is entirely without integrity. Not only does Pierrepont assert his own integrity but he also must refute Harry's slur that Pierrepont's hair smells of death. While Mooney is strangled to death, Pierrepont tells a parable of integrity (concerning a Frenchman he executed) and then slowly, methodically steps before all the pub's patrons to demand that they smell his hair.

The notion of culpability that echoes throughout *Hangmen* chimes with McDonagh's persistent concern with morality, an innate or cultural sense of what's right and wrong, and a recognition of responsibility, sometimes sought but rarely found in institutional religion. In the first scene, Hennessy ascribes "responsibility" for his execution personally to Harry and Syd. Harry blames Hennessy and, to a lesser extent, Syd for the "dust up" during his execution. To Hennessy's protestation of innocence, Harry defers any responsibility telling him: "It's the courts that's hanging ya, not us ... That's nowt to do with me" (18). Similarly, when Alice objects to Harry taking Clegg upstairs because it's "a pigsty," Harry demands, "Whose fault is that?" (27). To blame others and deny responsibility is part of the larger pattern of claiming and maintaining status. Sickened by the idea that Shirley has been abducted, Syd cannot go to the police because he's culpable:

MOONEY: That's nothing to do with me.

SYD: It *is* to do with you. It's all your fault....

I'll go to the police!

MOONEY: You can't, can you, Syd? Culpable. Unfortunately. (72)

All of the characters on stage in the final moments are culpable. Inspector Fry twice threatens to interrupt the lynching, but does not. The chorus of alcoholics along with Syd fail to act when they might. Alice brings the arm strap. With the exceptions of Shirley and the two men executed, they are all hangmen.

The death penalty involves finality unlike any other punishment and, quite simply, this play argues that no one can reach that level of certainty. Human knowledge is inherently limited, flawed and imperfect. Syd may well have been haunted by Hennessy's curse. He tells Harry that he has doubts about Hennessy's guilt for several reasons, including testimony from a prostitute that might have exculpated Hennessy, but Harry dismisses this out of hand: "Evidence from a tart!" (62).

Now open to us is the possibility of reading McDonagh's recent plays as moral arguments against torture in the case of *The Pillowman* and against the death penalty in *Hangmen*. The play graphically shows the death penalty as indefensible: cruel, undignified, and inhumane. Of course, the death penalty was abolished in 1961 in the UK and in 1964 in Ireland (with the last execution having taken place ten years earlier); it is still legal in thirty-eight American states, including California. Although on its surface it is no less politically incorrect than his other works, *Hangmen* is yet another step in the direction of engagement with contemporary social issues towards the as-

piration of Marty in *Seven Psychopaths*: towards love, towards the rejection of violence.

Mooney remains the most cryptic of McDonagh's characters. His motives remain opaque, his background obscure. He refers to the philosophers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche ("I am my own man. I do my only thing. Like Nietzsche" [66]); his vocabulary runs to "connotation" and "prurience." Like Shirley and her mother, the audience is intrigued by a man willing to venture into the extraordinarily closed, xenophobic atmosphere of Harry's pub. Mooney is abrupt, rude, and given to racial slurs and jibes. Compounding his unknowability is the fact that he uses grotesquely specific language to lead Syd and the audience to believe that he has abducted Shirley and is about to kill her. He deliberately cultivates a menacing air, is condescending, and creepy (especially in his questions about Shirley's swimsuit). By speech, behavior, and age, he is unlike everyone in the play except Hennessy. Both are mistakenly (if we doubt Hennessy's guilt) linked with the abuse and murder of a young woman. They share a London accent, and even in the most vulnerable situations they are cheeky and provocative, even when they face imminent death. Both are struck by Harry using what the stage directions stipulate is "*the same billyclub*" (89); they both complain of a "bad wrist" (14 and 91) and refer to the people executing them as "nincampoos" (13 and 93). The lynching of Mooney in the final moments is thereby unequivocally linked to Hennessy's execution. Mooney does the logical thing to demonstrate his innocence in Shirley's disappearance: he returns to the pub as only an innocent would. Caught up in a mob action in Mooney's lynching, Harry and his pals are not only hypocritical bullies, they are irrational hypocritical bullies. We know Mooney is innocent and we are left believing that Hennessy was as well.

The conclusion of *Hangmen* illustrates yet another crucial difference between *Hangmen* and much of his earlier work: the lack of closure. McDonagh's previous plays typically ended with a satisfying moment of theatrical legerdemain. The entrance of the supposedly dead cat, Wee Thomas, in the final moments of *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is perhaps the best example. McDonagh might have had Shirley return home moments earlier or might have arranged for Pierrepont to arrive moments later. But Mooney's death and his innocence are both key. Consequently, the end of *Hangmen* leaves many questions unanswered. Did Syd seek out Mooney or vice versa? Did Mooney really know Hennessy as he tells Syd he did? What were Mooney's motives? Did he act to avenge Hennessy's unjust execution? After Mooney's death, these and others are questions that we cannot hope to answer. Mooney is, finally, an unknowable character. Mooney tells Syd that he picked Syd out, although Syd challenges this absolutely (70). Mooney is a consummately unreliable narrator, but the ending of *Hangmen* reminds us of death's finality. Despite the epistemological instability McDonagh explores, we can know some things are beyond doubt and that there are absolutes. We know that Mooney did not abuse and murder Shirley and that he did not deserve to die. There are truths: Mooney's death and his innocence being two examples.

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POST-CELTIC TIGER CRISIS GENDERIZED AND THE ESCAPE TO VIRTUAL REALITIES IN NANCY HARRIS'S *NO ROMANCE*¹

Mária Kurdi

Contributing to a volume of essays on recent developments in Irish theatre in 2000, Fintan O'Toole argued that "Ireland is not one story anymore, and we cannot expect single theatrical metaphors for it. Instead of one story and many theatrical images of it, we are moving towards a dramatisation of the fragments rather than the whole thing, the whole society" (54). While this contention might have sounded quite radical at that time, it has proven to be useful in the analysis of a number of so-called Celtic Tiger plays written in the period between the mid-1990s and 2008.² A few years after O'Toole's remarks about the substantial change in contemporary Irish theatre Carmen Kuhling and Kieran Keohane observed signs of disintegration characterising the Celtic Tiger years from another angle, stating that "Ireland's experience of accelerated modernization had produced a variety of cultural and social collisions between different and often incompatible forms of life, collision between 'traditional' and 'modern', [...] which reflect how difficult it is to make sense of these rapid social transformations" (12). Works for the stage conceived in these circumstances dramatize a range of responses to the tensions and conflicts rooted in the unexpected and over-fast transition as well as the uneasily obtrusive dichotomies in people's personal experiences. In the post-boom years O'Toole's argument about the multiplication of theatrical metaphors to perform the increasingly divergent stories of Ireland still holds true, while more recently emerging phenomena and constraints also claim to be considered in a critical approach to the Irish theatre of the very recent period.

In a survey of young women playwrights' drama, Melissa Sihra opines that "the younger generation of women in theatre now largely self-identify as feminists, due in part to the integration of feminist discourse in education" and, she continues, "[t]here is a sense of self-worth and entitlement in this generation of women which was not inherent in the previous generation" (557). This new attitude underpins innovations which become manifest in women authors' choices of both subject matter and dramaturgy. Among the young female playwrights who "had plays commissioned by the Abbey" Sihra includes Nancy Harris beside Hilary Fannin, Stacey Gregg, Abbie Spallen, and Elaine Murphy (557). The dramatization of fragments O'Toole calls attention to appears in Nancy Harris's *No Romance* (2011) by way of fragmenting the plot itself. The play consists of three distinct parts, which, at least at first sight, share

1 The first version of this paper was read at the BAIS Conference hosted by St. Mary's University College in Twickenham, September 2015.

2 The term is used by Richards in his essay "'To Me, Here is More Like There': Irish Drama and Criticism."

very little in terms of setting, action and character. Through its discontinuous form, *No Romance* reflects the atomization of Irish society during the post-Celtic Tiger economic recession: the three parts dramatize troubled close relationships involving couples, families and generations, isolated from each other. The form can be seen as having affinities with postdramatic theatre, which, as Hans Thies Lehmann defines it, is distinguished by experimenting with, among other things, the renunciation of a consistent plot (27). A 2005 production of *Fewer Emergencies*, a work of the boldly experimental British playwright Martin Crimp, established a precedent of this kind of open form before Harris. Crimp's dramatic work consists of three separate parts like *No Romance*, with the notable difference that the three pieces each have their titles, but the characters are unnamed and events are only narrated on the stage. In contrast, Harris deploys the traditional method of having the scenes acted out by characters with names and arranges the three units under the overall heading of the title by simply numbering them. Thus Harris blends features of the postmodern discontinuity and fragmentation with the familiar technique of staging characters' action and dialogue.

Post-boom Revival of Traditionalist Attitudes to Gender

Kuhling and Keohane's above-quoted observation about decisive collisions in the Celtic Tiger society applies to the post-boom years as well, perhaps in even more threatening ways due to the after effects of the erosion of values like solidarity in a largely success-oriented, over-mediatized and materialist culture promoting individualism and consumerism. *No Romance* foregrounds newly emerging problems linked to the economic recession, most notably the resurfacing of traditionalist views on gender and relationships in the postmodern and postfeminist world. Also, the play highlights the ways in which this process can undermine and distort close relationships and family ties as well as make the characters feel isolated, hurt or even powerless to various degrees. Discussing products of contemporary Irish popular culture, Claire Bracken suggests that the much debated term post-feminism reveals contradictory problematics of "subjectivity and objectivity, of negotiating the very fine lines between sexualisation and an articulation of sexual identity, of owning desire and being an object of desire" (6). Taking these contradictions into consideration, post-feminism, unbelievably, seems to involve both feminism and its opposite, anti-feminism concurrently. In this paper I am going to discuss the entangled social and moral issues that underpin the ambivalence of Harris's characters and call for the questionable strategies they use to counteract their loss of certainties regarding gender equity and personal agency while they face the unwelcome constraints of the recession following the Celtic Tiger years.

In his PhD dissertation, considerable sections of which explore the damaging effects of the patriarchal economy on gender relations up to our time, Cormac O'Brien addresses *No Romance* in the context of a "neoliberal, postfeminist culture" (177), fo-

ocusing on Harris's concern with gender primarily in the first scene.³ Yet, gender is a key theme in all three parts of the play, along with family and generational relations, due to their inseparable ties. Diane Negra calls attention to certain new-old phenomena in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, stressing that "men's falling status and positionality in the recession is recuperated by their symbolic mastery of women. This is part of a broad pattern in which recession-beset masculinity is stabilized through invocation of its social inferior" (26). Put in another way, the process and pitfalls of regression entail the re-establishing of concepts and practices of gender which were dominant in Ireland before the 1980s, affecting both men's and women's behaviour. In the unexpectedly difficult circumstances of the recession, *No Romance* depicts that the communication of those who are closest to each other is fraught with misunderstandings and lies because all parties strive to pursue their own agenda. There are two adult male characters on stage in the second and third parts of the play respectively. One is Joe, the unemployed husband of Carmel; another is Michael, a divorced man and weekend father to his twelve-year-old son, Johnny, and son of eighty-year old Peg. Beside them a third, although offstage male character called Simon is also portrayed in the first scene, through the ample and vivid references to him by his fiancée, Laura. All three are middle-aged and their relationships with their female partners or, in Michael's case, his offstage ex-wife and onstage mother, are strained and disharmonious explicitly or covertly, with the men trying to recuperate patriarchal control while the women either humiliate themselves or strike back, even using violence to do so.

The first scene comprises a dialogue between Gail, a lesbian photographer, and Laura, her client. Laura holds a job under the name "hostess" which, according to her husband-to-be, Simon, "is a form of prostitution" (25), and so he wants her to give it up once they are married, a step which had been the norm decades before in the post-independence Irish society. Laura is eager to please him and has come to Gail to be photographed in fantastic dresses so as to have her body eternalized in some admirable and erotic pose before she receives radical therapy for breast cancer, which is likely to ravage her figure. The sexy photos are meant to serve as a unique present for Simon on his fortieth birthday. As O'Brien sums up her situation, Laura "willingly objectifies herself and embraces the patriarchal gaze economy of both her fiancé and society" as well as internalizes "post-feminist body politics" (178). Often quoting Simon, Laura seems to be so dominated by him and his patriarchal views that she wears a corset, having succumbed to Simon's wish to control and shape her body for his satisfaction: "Simon bought me this corset. Picked out himself and everything, bless him. [...] he loves the whole chorus-girl can-can thing" (21). To save him from any disturbance, she is determined not to share her grave health problem with Simon and plans to leave him after giving him the photos so that he remembers her body in its pre-treatment beauty and perfection. For his sake she renounces her

3 I quote from this dissertation with the kind permission of its author, Cormac O'Brien.

sense of self and dignity which would demand her to be honest in their relationship, and readily defends him even at the cost of contradicting herself: "Simon's a good man. He really is. If I tell him, he'll be fantastic" (39-40). Moreover, she regards her own insincere behaviour as natural and conforming to the general norm: "it's amazing the things you can *not* say to someone – when they're in the bed beside you. It's amazing the things you can keep to yourself" (31).

Gail, the other character in scene one is also damaged by the legacy of the strict moral system of the past reappearing in a new though not always recognizable guise. Her ten-year-long lesbian relationship with her lover Sarah has just broken up, but she is not able to move out of their so far shared home for financial reasons and has to witness the presence of Sarah's new girl-friend in the apartment. O'Brien observes that the author assigns "typical male/female roles" to the lesbian couple, which emulates "heteronormative relationality" (177). In accordance, Gail is cast in a female artist's role whereas Sarah, her ex-lover, is a doctor, pursuing a 'man's' career and it is she who pays for the mortgage on the posh apartment. At the time of the play's action, Ireland had not yet introduced same-sex marriage as a personal option, and consequently abandoned partners like Gail could remain without any kind of legal arrangement to help them start a new life. In the post-boom circumstances Gail remains dependent on her former partner, subjected to the inferior position of being tolerated and practically trapped in Sarah's "upmarket apartment in Dublin's city centre" (5), which must have been built during the Celtic Tiger boom. Distressed and seeing no way out, Gail complains to her client about her hopeless situation: "my old studio was in town but – the rents" (12).

Joe, the husband in the second scene is unemployed, while Carmel, his wife, holds a good job and has become the bread-winner for the family. Their case illustrates the commonsensical and widespread notion that the scarcity of jobs during the post-boom years is gendered, leaving men "particularly and singularly impacted by the global recession" (Negra 24), which can alienate partners and destroy marriages. Clearly, the experience of living in unwelcome passivity and dependence on his wife has a damaging effect both on Joe's masculinity and his ethical self, urging him to set the gender balance 'right' at whatever cost. His male identity significantly confused, Joe tries to compensate for his weakened and feminized state by acting the authoritative judge of women who cannot speak back since they are absent. He recalls his dead mother as "an old dragon" (69) and expresses a profound shock at the news that their daughter, Emer, has uploaded pictures of herself naked under a wet T-shirt on the internet for a competition which anyone can see. In contempt, he calls her "an internet troll" (45), forgetting that he himself is an addicted internet user who often searches for pornographic material on it.

To borrow Edward Albee's satirically charged subtitle in *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, the vicious "fun and games" Harris's couple play begin when Carmel divulges her recent discovery that Joe has received a pair of stockings and a dirty letter

by post from someone called Abbi, who had offered her already worn intimate items for sale online, and Joe had ordered this item from her. First Joe denies the whole thing, then admits that it really happened but that it was only a joke and accuses his wife of violating his privacy when she opened his emails and the parcel addressed to him. Infuriated, Carmel regards Joe as a hypocrite and suddenly “*kicks him in the shin*” (62), unable to consider that the roots of his behaviour might reach deeper than lying for the sake of convenience. Not having a job, Joe is a man without socio-economic status and agency, therefore he feels his manhood threatened and attempts to reclaim it by regressing to old patriarchal attitudes. To understand his identity crisis Negra’s argument is helpful again:

[i]n Ireland’s rapid conversion from capitalist utopia to dystopia, a gendered logic of ascription/explanation for developments, the speed and scale of which nearly everyone finds overwhelming and disorienting, promises (sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly) stabilization through the restitution of essentialized gender dichotomies. (31)

Among the tropes depicting these dichotomies one finds, Negra goes on arguing, that “the beset, recession-impacted man, whose anxieties are done away with via his transformation into the re-masculinized man” (31). Joe’s attempts to re-masculinize himself apparently fail and the ways in which Harris shapes the couple’s relationship bring further twists into the dramatic representation of the new-old gender conflicts.

Uncertain of his identity as a man but not a breadwinner, Joe behaves in strangely contradictory ways. Once he falls on his knees like a medieval knight in front of his wife whom he betrayed by his involvement in the porno story on the internet, acting out a traditional example of manhood. Then he is eager to take revenge on Carmel for humiliating him by what resembles the stereotypically feminine act of gossiping. Hiding behind memories of his mother as a strong individual who “was funny about most women” (70), he blurts out that she had made a remark about the fatness of Carmel’s legs after she “got the job in the bank” (71). True or not (probably not), if he intended to humiliate Carmel in his turn, this story only works to fuel Carmel; she strikes back as an emancipated, self-aware woman who emphasizes her independence by telling Joe about her sexual adventure with a Nigerian taxi driver. Similar to Laura’s silence about her fatal disease so as not to disturb her fiancé, Michael resorts to conventional beliefs about partnership according to which openness and sincerity should necessarily be limited between men and women to avoid crossing certain fixed boundaries: “What happened to privacy? What happened to discretion? What happened to keeping it to yourself? Maybe there are some things we are better off not knowing. Maybe we can love each other despite” (75). Unlike in the tentatively optimistic closure of Albee’s play about deep-running marital conflicts, there seems to be not the slightest chance for the couple’s at least partial reconciliation in *No Romance*.

Family Feuds and Domestic Violence

In the third part of the drama Michael has just bought a wheel-chair for his eighty-year-old mother Peg, although she does not need one yet. The reason for buying it was that he is determined to move her out of the country cottage where she lives (and where the scene is set) and place Peg in an old people's home in Dublin. Michael worries about the problems the economic recession is causing him, therefore it is more than likely that he is intent on moving her so that he can sell the house. Relations in his own family are stressful and could not be worse, summed up in his biased harangue: "he [Michael's son, Johnny] got his head stuck in fucking computer games twenty-four-seven and his mother's a nutcase. It's her that's the problem. Her" (86). Ireland made legal divorce possible only after the referendum of 1995, and not much has happened since then to help divorced couples, in terms of marriage counselling, maintain a normal relationship with each other for the sake of their children. A weekend father struggling with economic problems, Michael sees himself a victim deprived of authority and agency: "She [his ex-wife] wants him [Johnny] home tonight [...] despite the fact it's my weekend with him [...] I'm done arguing with her. Like all women she always gets what she wants in the end" (89). Comparably with Joe in part two, he also chooses the kind of compensation of exercising dominance over weaker people like his elderly mother and his teenage son. His re-assertion of patriarchal rules involves the infantilization of Johnny whom he orders about, for instance telling him to avert his eyes when they catch sight of hippies taking off their clothes in the vicinity of the house.

Like Beckett's old and lonely women, Winnie of *Happy Days* in particular, Peg likes to speak a lot about her personal history. What inspires her to conjure up memories this time is the prospect of losing her house as Michael is so obviously intent on moving her out of the cottage and putting her into a state-run institution. Obsessed with his own problems he fails to understand that this country house, which she bought for herself after her husband's death, symbolizes freedom for his mother. Peg says: "I can sing in this cottage at the top of my voice. [...] And there is no one here to say I can't. When I saw this cottage I knew it was a place I could be myself" (102). Through memories of Peg's ruined married life the author introduces the subject of the inequity of genders and the potential occurrence of domestic violence along with it, which were quite prevalent in the postcolonial decades and are still haunting Irish society. As a crucial example of her psychological and also physical wounds, Peg dwells on how once her husband belted her "straight in the face with his fist" (97) when she was making well-rehearsed preparations to take off her stockings in front of him in a sexy way. In Jesse Weaver's wording Peg's husband "battled with his own buried sexuality" through a lifetime because his real love was his best friend, but he had to repress his homosexual inclinations to avoid contempt and marginalization in the ultra-conservative and prudish Irish society. Consequently, his wife and children suffered from the aggression he vented on them so much so that as Peg now confesses

she would have liked to gather her three children and find peace “far away from him” (104). Strangely, the past now revisits her in the form of being mistreated by her son.

Calling Beckett’s Winnie to mind again, Peg takes out “a *small compact mirror*” (98) from her bag and reminisces about men’s views on female beauty that she became aware of in her youth, implying the power of the male gaze which had traditionally been the catalyst for women’s efforts to look attractive. What Peg went through in her younger years as a woman subordinate to her husband and a plaything for his selfish best friend sounds like a cautionary tale in the context of the recession crisis characterised by “intense economic austerity as an overriding imperative that nullifies the interests of gender equity” (Negra 24), which might easily generate the reappearance of old patterns and attitudes. As oppressed subjects to colonial or patriarchal rule did in the past, Peg protests and rebels against the threat of being deprived of freedom and carried to a place where she does not want to go. Reminiscent of Carmel in the second part, she turns to violence as a means to defeat the revival of male control if words fail; she thrashes her son with the sweeping-brush, a symbol of domestic duties assigned to women, children and other inferiors in the patriarchal system.

Peg’s case shows that growing materialism and the concomitant cultural fragmentation within the post-boom society are likely to alienate not only couples but also generations from each other. Early twenty-first-century Ireland, where “the past, repressed, returns and intrudes into the present, informing the future” (Kuhling and Keohane 120), is haunted by an earlier stage in the nation’s life, the decades when it was still influenced by the socially divisive rigidities inherited from colonialism. The other victim of a failed relationship in the third scene of the play is Johnny, the twelve-year-old boy who is wedged between his divorced and antagonistic parents, an overanxious but also manipulative mother and a father whose multiple frustrations find an outlet in self-pity and verbal aggression. In a sense, his grandmother does not spare Johnny either; ignored by her son but compelled to speak to someone, she tells her stories to the boy as her reluctant audience, moreover, she asks him to help her put make-up on her face. Disconcerted even further, the teenage child appears to turn apathetic, uncommonly speechless and insensitive, at least in the eyes of adult family members: Peg’s remark that the boy is without a “sense of family” (93) sounds deeply ironical, albeit unintentionally so. Johnny’s monosyllabic kind of communication is probably just his defensive strategy in a contradictory and hostile world.

Ethical Issues, Humour and the Grotesque

In his introduction to the first volume of the series *Irish Studies in Europe*, Werner Huber⁴ claims that in recent Irish literature “the signs of an ‘ethical turn’ begin to appear. Questions are being asked [...] concerning ‘responsibilities’ and the problem of

4 The book series *Irish Studies in Europe* was founded by the late Werner Huber, esteemed colleague and friend whose expertise, personal kindness and helpfulness we miss very much.

being in accordance with moral/ethical standard of any kind" (9). The process is all the more conspicuous in Irish culture close to the end of the first decade of the 2000s because "the enthusiasm that naturally goes with such progress [experienced during the Celtic Tiger] has evaporated and been replaced by sobriety" Huber continues (9). In the postmodern and postfeminist Irish theatre that Harris's play belongs to it is the reader/spectator who is inspired to raise questions about certain negative phenomena that the authors represent in public morality, individuals' ethical stance and responsibility or the lack of it for their acts. Relevantly, Nicholas Ridout discusses the idea of "the re-activation of the spectator" which he calls "one of the key concepts of ethical thought about theatre and performance" in his book *Theatre and Ethics* (59). He also adds that "[e]thics does not quite displace either aesthetics or politics. Aesthetic experience becomes the condition of possibility for a particular kind of ethical relationship" (66). *No Romance* deploys a special kind of humour as the most effective dramaturgical means of its aesthetics.

Meidhbh McHugh in an essay explores the presence and working of humour in the most recent plays by female authors that premiered in the Abbey between 2010 and 2014, including *No Romance*. Her chief goal is to highlight that these works, conceived in the last few years which she defines as the "fifth tide of feminism" (144), have one thing definitely in common: they all present funny details. As McHugh argues, by means of comedy the young women authors' plays expose shortcomings and failures within the society and make these the butt of the joke: "The inanity of sexism and misogyny; the absurdity of gender inequality, and the oppressive effect of patriarchy on both women *and* men, is now a cause for laughter, and by looking and laughing we might shake the foundations on which its culture stands" (145-146). Staging the absurdities of the patriarchal order and its militarized version through ludicrously impossible issues and incidents women have to cope with is, of course, not new, either North or South of the Irish border. In the 1980s, the women's theatre company Charabanc provoked its audiences to laughter at the horrific effects of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, suffice it to mention *Somewhere over the Balcony* (1987), a work of Marie Jones and the company. This play offers a farcical picture of the chaos of existence everybody experienced in the region during the conflict-ridden years before ceasefire. One example from the South might be Paula Meehan's *Mrs Sweeney* (1997), a dramatic transposition of the medieval myth of the mad Sweeney to a contemporary working-class milieu in Dublin, which stages women's desire for liberation through comic and carnivalesque parts of its action.

About *No Romance* McHugh says that "particularly in the second and the third parts of the triptych structure, much of the comedy comes from incongruous elements" (152). The critic's most telling examples are the following: "Incongruity happens in witty, one-line absurdities or it is situational such as the extraordinary inappropriateness of Carmel holding up a pair of women's stockings which Joe has ordered online, from a girl called Abbi (with a 'heart over the i') in what should be his last moments alone with his mother's corpse" (152). Indeed, humour and the laughter provoked by

a range of incongruities is a distinctive feature of the play. However, the quality of the comic effects achieved by the play can be further specified. In his recent book which explores the strategic use of the grotesque in contemporary Anglophone drama Ondřej Pilný writes: "I tend to agree with Ralp Remshardt – the author of the only existing study in English dedicated to the grotesque in theatre – in that laughing at the grotesque is always inappropriate in a sense: laughter counteracts the horror generated by the grotesque but it is simultaneously a reaction that is chillingly aware of its own 'callousness'" (7). Through incongruities, Pilný continues, the absurd remains influential, shaping the "ethics, politics, social justice" of recent plays, and so it is possible to analyse "the use of the grotesque as a device of social and political critique" (13). In *No Romance* a vividly conspicuous incongruity that nurtures grotesque effects is the wide gap between the characters' regression to conservative views, practices and patterns of behaviour in gender and generational relations, while they are obsessed with the virtual world of postmodern cyberspace culture as their individual strategy to cope with hardships and failures.

Escape to Virtual Realities and Its Risks

In scene one Laura, shortly before her treatment for cancer, embodies the traditionally self-effacing role of the devoted partner and comes up with extravagant ideas about the best poses for photos which could display her beauty and impress her future husband. In fact, her wild ideas are inspired by an online sex blog written by a woman who calls herself "C", who uploads erotic stories after going through a routine: "she puts on some music, pours herself a drink, closes her eyes and calls in her muses" (22). Gail, the other character of the scene, reacts to the presence of her ex-partner's new girlfriend in a conventional way, embracing the role of the cheated and jealous woman: "I can't stand the thought of their love-making. Do you think it means more to her than ours did?" (37). Being powerless, she resorts to the act of taking revenge by the most up-to-date method: she "defriends" Sarah on Facebook (36). Both Laura and Gail try to overcome their helplessness and repossess some agency by replicating normative standards of behaviour or using defensive strategies characteristic of unequal relations under patriarchy. Incongruously, however, they turn to the latest technological means of cyberspace culture, while their aim is not to have fun so much as to gain some better hold on their own life.

Joe in scene two is impatient with their daughter's self-advertising on the internet, yet he himself is addicted to its challenges and has joined the admirers of "this one woman who writes kinky versions of myths and things. She has a whole fan club and her use of language and her imagery, [...] she's probably a university professor over there in New York or somewhere" (66). The liberating advantage of online communication is that the users can remain anonymous, at least to a large extent, and, as Máirtín Mac an Ghaill and Chris Haywood claim, "individuals because of their relatively anonymous communicative practices suspend their conventional norms and

values" (134). Doing so, they manage to disconnect themselves from the burden of their bruised past or confused identities in the present. The internet, Mac an Ghaill and Haywood continue, "provides the possibilities of women being men who are playing women and the alternative position of men being women who play at being men" (137). Thus online communication is an ideal resource and pastime for Joe, who, jobless, needs a boost of his masculine identity. Claire Lynch writes that "the internet is ultimately a destination for the imagination" (29), which explains why Joe, disappointed with everyday reality that questions and restricts his authority, chooses to enter into relationships online. Carmel's discovery that Joe receives sexy emails and has bought a pair of used female stockings described by its anonymous sender as "little naughties" (59) that Joe can have fun with, as well as Joe's comically contradictory self-defence, are incongruous with the setting, a funeral parlour where his mother's corpse is laid out. The grotesque effects produced in the scene are at their peak when, infuriated by Joe's clandestine sexually tinged activities on the internet while he preaches the need for compromises in marriage, Carmel "*stuffs the stockings inside the corpse's jacket*" (76). A chillingly profane act, it is carried out just before the mourning relatives' arrival at the funeral parlour so there is no chance for Joe to fish the stockings out and dispose of them somehow.

O'Brien observes that the "secret identity of the author of a pornographic blog [where Laura takes peculiar ideas from] and online vendor of erotic paraphernalia [bought by Joe] is revealed to be Peg, a wheelchair-bound octogenarian," joining the three parts of the play together (177). Like Laura in Part One, who struggles to keep her fiancé's love, or Joe in Part Two, who tries to re-secure his masculinity, or her own grandson, who plays digital games endlessly, old Peg uses the internet in search of a new self and exciting experiences that mask the reality of old age and her disturbing memories. In Caomhan Keane's interview with the playwright Harris suggests that through her sexy blog-writing game Peg aims "to recapture the youth she wasted on an abusive, closeted husband." The imaginary position she takes in the blog is that of a younger woman who allures men (or women playing men) to enter into "cyber-sex" with her, which serves as compensation for having suffered so much in a loveless marriage. Emer O'Kelly writes in her theatre review that by devising her fictional blog "old Peg has her own methodology for surviving lonely decrepitude." At the end of the play, after she has managed to persuade Michael and Johnny to leave her alone for some time, Peg pours herself a drink, takes out a pair of silk stockings from a bag, and puts them on. Then she releases a computer from a leather case, and begins to type. It all looks like the scene described by Laura earlier, who got to know Peg in the virtual world through her blog of wild stories under the name "C," which may mean many things including "cunt" (22) true to the erotica in the stories. The subtle interaction of the playful and the horrific provides the source of the grotesque here.

No Romance is not the first contemporary play which articulates the intrusion of digital culture into the world of the theatre. In 1997, Patrick Marber's *Closer* became a hit with a hilarious chatting scene between two male characters, one of whom pretends

to be a woman. Besides being funny, their talk leads to misunderstandings in the relationships they are involved in. Another example is Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* (2005), which raises the issue of bullying in cyber-space and its potentially tragic outcome. The persistent use of the internet in *No Romance* is a strategy to highlight that the recession following the Celtic Tiger boom years and its effects in terms of the isolation of individuals and the confusion of values have left many people lonely and desperate. In Keane's interview with her Harris says: "we live in a society where communication has become so much easier yet at another level so much more complicated because we can create mythologies about ourselves online. We can be invisible and hide behind things a lot more. That adds to the complexity of our one on one communication." The stories of different characters in *No Romance* connect with each other only in the terrain of a virtual reality and have no promising closure. Most of the characters immerse themselves in internet culture and are tempted to assume alternative identities, and hope to regain agency over their actions and choices. However, the strong addiction to newness easily leads to the denial of contemporary reality, Lynch cautions (27), as well as to shirking responsibility to other people in the Levinasian sense, which can be detrimental to both social and cultural values.

Conclusion

As Weaver cogently summarizes, "Harris does on the whole deliver an effectually fractured portrait of an Ireland undergoing a collective loss of its sense of self, delicately structured with interwoven references that tie all three disparate acts together." *No Romance*, therefore, reveals that entering virtual realities to compensate oneself for multiple disappointments might seem to work for a time but is likely to further alienate characters from each other and also from themselves in the real world. In these conditions, the play attests, even the closest relationships of married couples, partners and family members have no romance in them; rather, the opposite is the case. The grotesque mode developing from the dramatic situations set in the troubled cultural environment of economic recession and its gendered consequences provides the means with which the play highlights the pitfalls of addiction to virtual realities. In addition, its critical function is to lay bare the potential harmfulness of the lurking signs of fragmentation, lack of solidarity and regressive tendencies that affect morality and communication in the post-boom society. By theatrical means, Harris forces her audience to raise the question: is this the path Irish people should follow now?

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FICTION

ANOTHER LISTEN TO THE MUSIC IN JAMES JOYCE'S "A MOTHER"

Gerry Smyth

Since the Joycean critical tradition began to consolidate around about the middle of the twentieth century, attention to the musical aspects of his work has ranged across the entire *oeuvre*, from *Chamber Music* to *Finnegans Wake*. During the same period that same tradition has also adopted a wide range of discursive emphases: biographical, socio-cultural, aesthetic, literary historical and musicological. As a writer whose aesthetic vision was profoundly influenced by music, Joyce is sometimes regarded as emblematic of one strand of modern literature – that running between, say, the proto-modernist poetry of Charles Baudelaire and the late modernist drama of Samuel Beckett; and including within its compass novelists such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust.¹ In this tradition music operates as a recurring presence, mitigating both the conceptual thrust and the formal organisation of the literary text within which it is invoked.

It's fair to say that *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* have featured less strongly in this particular critical tradition than either *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*. In his study of Joyce's music allusions, Zack Bowen dedicates a mere twelve pages to the first (11-23) and fifteen to the second (30-45), whereas the catalogue of references in *Ulysses* takes 300 pages (46-346). This is doubtless a reflection of the fact that Joyce's response to music developed as a function of his aesthetic maturity, and that he came to regard his own extremely positive engagement with music as more than just a matter of taste. Music, rather, represented something fundamental and essential about human experience – hence its capital significance for the artist attempting to capture and communicate that experience. Music, it seems, was multitudinously locked into the ordinary Dublin life that was Joyce's consistent theme; as an artist who had dedicated himself to the encapsulation of that life he simply could not afford to ignore it, and this was something that struck him more as his insight developed and his technique adjusted.

Such a judgement should not lead us to underestimate the significance of music in the earlier work, however. Joyce himself came to regard his mature writing "as a continuation of the expression of myself which I now see I began in *Chamber Music*" (qtd. in Ellmann 217). The same is true of the short stories he began writing and publishing whilst still living in Dublin – *before* his departure with Nora Barnacle in October

1 See Aronson 1980, *passim*. His university friend C.J. Curran goes so far as to insist on D'Annunzio (rather than Ibsen) as the greatest influence on Joyce's artistic development, most especially in respect of the Italian's regard for music. Stanislaus Joyce reported that his student brother considered D'Annunzio's *Il Fuoco* 'the highest achievement of the novel to date' (*My Brother's Keeper* 154).

1904, and the commencement of his artistic majority.² Music might be regarded in the first instance as simply an impulse of the cultural milieu from which the author was in the process of emerging, or as an obvious ongoing preoccupation for someone who was still seriously considering a career as a professional singer. But the musical matters bearing upon the stories collected in *Dubliners* function much more significantly in relation to the Joycean canon taken as a whole. Certainly, these matters transport the reader back to a nineteenth-century musical landscape incorporating elements such as light opera, street ballads, nationalist songs, parlour pieces, music hall, as well as an uneven and inconsistent engagement with the European art tradition (White). Certainly, also, much of the time they emerge (as we shall presently see) directly from documented experiences in the author's biography. But they also anticipate the later work in which particular ideas relating to music were integrated into the complex literary aesthetic which characterised Joyce's take on the cultural paradigm known as 'modernism'.

We may observe all these forces at work in "A Mother" – "perhaps the most overlooked and underrated story in *Dubliners*" (Miller 407), but also the one (along with "The Dead") in which music features most significantly. The conflict between Mrs Kearney and the agents of the fictional *Eire Abu* society have generally been regarded as a typical manifestation of Joyce's jaundiced view of a city under the unpropitious sway of Revivalism. Against the backdrop of a musical concert the author ruthlessly exposes Dublin's desperately damaged moral economy. Critics have by and large reproduced what they regard as Joyce's critical attitude towards Mrs Kearney; so, in his article "Silence in *Dubliners*", for example, Jean-Michel Rabaté hears only her spiteful obstinacy and her husband's collusive 'silence' – qualities which mark them both down as yet "another symptom of paralysis" (70). The termagant confronts the chancer under the egregious eye of the press; the next generation is mortified (Kathleen) or recruited as betrayer (Miss Healy); and thus the pattern of paralysis is confirmed and repeated.

Not unsurprisingly, "A Mother" has more recently yielded more suggestive possibilities with the bringing to bear of different conceptual (such as gender) and theoretical (such as feminism) emphases. The story is unusual, as Jane Miller points out, in its "portrayal of a woman venturing outside the domestic sphere and interacting with men in a business situation" (407). The animosity towards Mrs Kearney on the part of the story's male characters derives from a social context in which gender relations were managed according to a strict (although seldom openly articulated) discursive economy. "Ireland", in short, "was a society pervaded by male values" (Kiberd 396). This situation was the product of a particular set of religious (Catholicism), political (colonialism / nationalism) and social (familialism) influences, and was itself structured in terms of a series of binaries which operated flexibly throughout contemporary

2 'The Sisters' was published in *The Irish Homestead* on August 13 1904, under the *nom de plume* of Stephen Daedalus.

Irish society, *and* the culture it produced: domestic / public; passive / active; emotional / material; corporeal / cerebral; and so on. Mrs Kearney's danger is that she threatens to undo these implicit binaries – by leaving her home; by being proactive in her dealings with the committee; by concerning herself with financial matters; by standing up for her rights; ultimately, by believing that the contract she signed with Mr Holohan possessed any force outside the domestic sphere which is her 'proper' theatre of operations.³

It would be a mistake, however (and it is a mistake to which many readers, including professional critics, have fallen prey), simply to align the author's intentions with those of the male characters in the story, or to acquiesce in the narrative's apparent endorsement of Mrs Kearney's 'defeat'. Joyce's target is not (or not only) the tawdriness of this banal little *contretemps* as simply another instance of the moral paralysis into which Ireland has fallen; it is also, and more significantly, an indictment of the discursive field which has produced the very terms of the conflict – the contemporary gender relations in which Mrs Kearney's voice simply cannot be heard, nor her perspective seriously countenanced. Mrs Kearney is not so much an agent of, but a rebel against, the presiding paralysis of contemporary Dublin; her 'defeat' is a blow against the community at large – as Miller points out:

Ironically, so many critics, while concentrating on what they believe are Joyce's intentions in the story have unwittingly fallen into his trap. Neither understanding nor appreciating the very real grounds for Mrs. Kearney's anger, they can only see that she is stepping beyond the social norms of acceptable conduct for a 'lady,' and, mimicking the action of the story, they censure and dismiss her. It is easy to be seduced by the crowd when faced with the 'unbending' Mrs. Kearney, but in the end, those readers who approve of her defeat ally themselves with the stiflingly conformist Dublin society that Joyce wished to indict in *Dubliners*. (424)

Feminism and critical theory offer an array of methodologies and concepts with which to recast and rethink "A Mother".⁴ My argument here is that music provides the same service. By *listening* to the text – its contexts and traditions as well as its own inherent musicality – we hear it, and thus read and understand it, differently.

According to Richard Ellmann, "A Mother" was completed in Trieste by the end of September 1905 (*James Joyce* 207); but its roots lie in three concerts in which Joyce sang during the auspicious summer of 1904. The first of these was on Saturday May 14th as part of the recently developed *Feis Ceoil* (Music Festival); Joyce famously was relegated from first to fourth (eventually third) prize after he refused to attempt a

3 Margot Norris reminds us of the significance that "the contract" would have had for women such as Mrs Kearney in the wake of the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 (187).

4 Norris, following Valente, deploys the concept of the *differend* (developed by French postmodernist philosopher Jean-François Lyotard) to discuss the operation of gender in "A Mother". Lyotard's description of the *differend* as a point of difference between disputants who lack common terms, and his recurring metaphors of *voice* and *silence*, are highly suggestive in the present context.

sight-reading test. The second and third performances were staged as part of the August Horse Show celebrations, and took place at the Antient Concert Rooms on Monday 22nd and Saturday 27th.

These three events involved Joyce in Dublin's complex music politics, wherein a host of questions relating to the identity, meaning and scope of 'Irish music' was under constant scrutiny.⁵ They also exposed him to the demands of competitive singing and the rigours of public performance. Thus far in his life, music had been part of a wider array of social and cultural accomplishments. In his various writings Stanislaus Joyce described the musical milieu in which the family was raised; their father (who had himself contemplated a musical career, and retained a high estimation of his own voice) exposed his children to a great fund of arias and ballads. His wife May was "a brilliant pianist" (Gorman 12), and from her they gleaned some knowledge of the nineteenth-century Romantic art tradition. Their eldest son built on this inheritance, developing a musical alongside a literary imagination throughout his student and undergraduate days.⁶ Joyce sang regularly at the home of the Sheehy family, especially when there was an opportunity to impress the various daughters; he collected early modern English songs and attended concerts by Palestrina and Victoria with close friend Vincent Cosgrave; he set his own lyrics to music, as well as poems by Mangan and Yeats; and he learned to appreciate the range, the power and the sensitivity of music as a supremely endowed mode of engagement with the phenomenon of human consciousness.

To expose this appreciation in the marketplace of competitive performance must have struck Joyce as a somewhat conflicted usage of his own musical abilities. No doubt he wished to win and reap the potential rewards (as John McCormack had the previous year); and no doubt also he was fully aware of the financial considerations with which musical practice of every kind and every era was symbiotically enmeshed. Music speaks the language of the heart; but it speaks also the languages of the head and the pocket, and this always tends to mitigate any idealistic claims made on its behalf.⁷ Just so on the occasion of Joyce's performance in the *Feis*: such a realisation, in the context of an artistic competition with overtones of financial reward, sensitised the developing artist to music's vulnerability in the face of economic reality; and to the possibility that art, no matter how idealistically oriented towards the true and

5 See the chapter "Music and the Literary Revival" in White (94-124) in which he discusses a range of contemporary engagements with "the idea of an Irish music at once sensitive to the myths and materials of the revival and yet committed to the language and syntax of European romanticism" (113).

6 All the friends and relations who published on the subject of Joyce's development have remarked on what Curran referred to as his 'abiding passion' (40) for music; for Joyce, according to Padraic Colum, "what was sung transcended in appeal everything that was written" (185).

7 In a letter to Curran dated 23 June 1904, Joyce ironically describes being paid for a recent performance with "nods and becks and wreathed smiles" (49).

the beautiful, could all too easily end up in the service of the tawdry and the self-serving.

The latter scenario describes in some respects the situation depicted in "A Mother", and this ties in with the traditional view of the story as participant in Joyce's indictment of main-chance Revivalism. Mrs Kearney's interest is prompted in the first instance by her determination "to take advantage of her daughter's name" (123) within the context of vogueish cultural nationalism; and this might be regarded as symbolic of the fact that every aspect of Irish life is (in Joyce's view) significant only in terms of its cash equivalent value. Once established, moreover, the association of music with money is maintained throughout – becoming, indeed, the crux of Mrs Kearney's grievance. The reality of the cash nexus is belied, however, by a combination of ideological effects: the pretext of cultural nationalism on the one hand, and the appeal to an asymmetrical gender politics, on the other. And behind each of these forces lies Joyce's own conflicted attitude towards the fatal infection of art with economic considerations – a conflict that he could never resolve in his own life, and which recurred in a great variety of forms throughout the canon of his work.

The two August concerts bear more directly on the events described in "A Mother". Joyce's *Feis* performance from earlier in the summer earned him an invitation to perform at a 'Grand Concert' organised under the auspices of an 'Irish Revival Industries Show'. He rehearsed at the home of accompanist / conductor Eileen Reidy; and although not included on the evening bill Joyce sang two songs – "My Love She Was Born in the North Countree" and "The Coulin" – well enough at a Monday matinee to earn an invitation to perform at Saturday's more prestigious event. That event, as described by contemporary diarist Joseph Holloway, was a pretty ramshackle affair, despite the involvement of star-in-waiting John McCormack. It started late, and there was a considerable delay after the first item, causing the audience to grow 'noisy and irritable' (qtd. in Ellmann 168). The problem seems to have been caused by Reidy's decision to leave; her substitute was so incompetent that Joyce "had to sit down at the piano and accompany himself in the song 'In Her Simplicity'" after she had made several unsuccessful attempts to strum out "The Croppy Boy". Joyce also sang the Yeats favourite "Down by the Sally [sic] Gardens", and encored with "North Countree".⁸

The concert described in "A Mother" closely parallels the one in which Joyce sang on that Saturday evening in August 1904. In the story the baritone (J.C. Doyle) and first tenor (McCormack) arrive together – "stout and complacent ... they brought a breath of opulence among the company" (128). Like their real-life counterparts, Madame Glynn (Madame Halle) sings "Killarney", and the "young lady who arranged amateur theatricals" (Máire nic Shiubhlaigh) delivers a "stirring patriotic recitation" (131). Like the author himself, the second tenor, Mr Bell, has won a bronze medal at the *Feis*

8 The Saturday programme is reproduced in the annotated edition of *Dubliners*, 131.

Ceoil, and is also “extremely nervous” (127).⁹ And as with the real event, the fictional concert features a selection of Irish airs (played by Kathleen Kearney, when she does finally manage to get on stage) “which was generously applauded” (131).

It was Reidy’s unexplained withdrawal, however, that provided Joyce with the germ of his story; it may indeed have been an issue concerning payment or some other financial consideration; there may have been a medical or other emergency.¹⁰ Speculation aside, it seems clear that Joyce adapted the events of the evening to write a story that would serve his larger purpose – the purpose, that is to say, of unmasking the pretensions of revivalist culture, and of exposing what he described to his brother in a letter of November 1906 as the perennial Irish propensity for “blatant lying in the face of the truth” (qtd. in Ellmann 129).

It’s worth returning to that concert, however, in order to confront the possibility that closer attention to an array of musical considerations might mitigate to some degree a traditional critical view of “A Mother” (and *Dubliners in toto*) as simply another witness in Joyce’s damning indictment of contemporary Ireland. And such a possibility could commence with Reidy herself, whose mysterious *silence* represents the paradoxical *voice* around which the story is structured.

Eileen Reidy had been trained at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and was typical in many respects of a growing cadre of middle-class Irish women who worked hard throughout the nineteenth century to establish music as a viable female profession. The Royal Irish Academy of Music, inaugurated in 1848 and properly professionalised in 1856, was a typically cultural nationalist initiative in terms of its mission to create an Irish musical culture that was not dependent on English talent or English taste. In one aspect it did buck nationalist trends and follow the lead from across the water, however: women were deeply involved from the outset in all aspects of the academy’s activities – as students, administrators and teachers (O’Connor 47). The same is by and large true of the *Feis Ceoil* which, as we’ve seen, features in “A Mother” in terms of the author’s experience and of the general musical milieu within which the story takes place.

A key figure here was Dr Annie Patterson who, as scholar, administrator, critic, journalist, organiser, teacher and adjudicator, was a powerful presence in Dublin musical circles during Joyce’s time in the city. Patterson was the first woman to receive a doctorate in music from the Royal University of Ireland; she was also a key figure in the founding of the *Feis Ceoil* (launched in 1897) and, when that proved unlikely to meet

9 As a consequence of Mr Bell’s admission (albeit under a certain amount of duress) that he believes Mrs Kearney “had not been well treated” (132), Miller suggests that the fictional second tenor “seems to be a clue, playfully dropped, as to whose side Joyce is on” (424).

10 In *James Joyce Remembered* Curran writes intriguingly: “Eileen Reidy, the accompanist, left early – for good reason” (45), but he neglects or declines to say what that reason was.

all her nationalist aspirations, of another competitive forum called *An t'Oireachtas* (*The Assembly*) which, unlike its more inclusive counterpart, "focused completely on the promotion of Irish culture through Irish music and the Irish language" (O'Connor 213). A republican and a feminist, Patterson managed to support a household through her earnings while at the same time maintaining a respectable public profile in what was, after all, a society suspicious to the point of antagonism in respect of female agency outside the domestic sphere.

Another interesting contribution to Joyce's fictional entertainment is the "stirring patriotic recitation delivered by a young lady who arranged amateur theatricals" (131). As noted already, this appears to be a reference to Máire nic Shiubhlaigh (Mary Walker), who performed in the second part of the Saturday concert. Nic Shiubhlaigh had connections with Inghinidhe na hÉireann and the Abbey Theatre, and would continue to be active, "along with many other passionate thespians" (Foster 112) in various agit-prop initiatives up to and including the Easter Rising. Like the fictional Kathleen Kearney (and the real-life Annie Patterson) "she was a believer in the language movement" (123); and her credentials for involvement in a 'Grand Irish Concert' were solid.

Reidy, Patterson and nic Shiubhlaigh were just three of the "vivid faces" identified by Foster – part of "a vital minority who did *not* hold with an unquestioning spirit to the inherited state of things" (xxiii, original emphasis). The career of each is indicative of a social milieu that cultural critics and historians are bringing increasingly into focus, one in which women emerge as fully engaged agents working across a range of complementary fronts, including nationalism, republicanism, feminism and socialism – what Foster refers to as "the associational counter-cultures that tended to be written out of Irish history in the period of post-revolutionary stabilization" (26). What these same critics and historians have also discovered is that such agency invariably found itself in opposition to an entrenched patriarchal culture that was deeply complicit with the imperialist-capitalist discourses it ostensibly looked to replace.¹¹

Molly Bloom represents Joyce's most fully realised fictional engagement with the question of women and music; but it's important to acknowledge that the complexities and ambivalences that famously attach to her character are anticipated throughout the earlier writing – in "The Dead", certainly, with its focus on the three Morkan women and Gretta Conroy's impassioned response to an old ballad, and also (and, indeed, equally forcefully) in "A Mother" with its depiction of the Misses Healy and Kearney, as well as the latter's musically ambitious parent.

11 Declan Kiberd points out that when Anna Parnell assumed *de facto* leadership of the Land League in the wake of her brother's imprisonment, "she was soon being denounced as 'fanatic' and 'harridan' by dismayed nationalists as well as by enemy imperialists" (396). "The painful uncertainty of nationalism-republicanism vis-à-vis its gender status", he goes on, "was a condition calculated to generate endless crises of self-legitimation, and with them a nervously patriarchal psychology" (406).

What of Joyce's musical contributions to the various concerts in which he participated? The two songs set for the *Feis* competition were "No Chastening" and "A Long Farewell" – the first from Arthur Sullivan's early oratorio *The Prodigal Son* (1869), the second a ballad arranged by the Scottish folklorist Alfred Moffat. The first was marked by the composer as 'Recitative and Aria' for tenor, and it was (and remains) a challenging piece, particularly in terms of phrasing and enunciation. With its descriptions of God scourging those whom he loves, and its offer to teach children 'the fear of the lord', moreover, the text (taken from *Psalms* and *Hebrews*) must have been interesting for a young man just coming to terms with his own apostasy.

The melody for "A Long Farewell" had first been collected by George Petrie in his *Ancient Music of Ireland*, in which he noted that it was based on a street-ballad entitled "O Nancy, Nancy, Don't You Remember" he heard sung by a servant girl around about the year 1805. Petrie felt that the tune appeared to have "as much of an English as an Irish character", and more than likely had been imported from across the water; "it would be strange", he went on,

if, during the last seven centuries, in which our island has been so largely planted from England, no melodies should have been introduced amongst us which had sufficient beauty to insure their perpetuation, even after they had been forgotten in the country in which they had their origin: and it would be equally strange if the incorporation of the two races did not give birth to a class of melody indicative of the mixed character so produced, and to which the term Anglo-Irish might with propriety be applied. (110-11)

A Gaelic version entitled "Slán le Máigh" was translated as "Farewell to the Maig" by the poet Edward Walsh and published in his Irish *Popular Songs* of 1847 (87). This was the version set as "A Long Farewell I Send to Thee" by Moffat in 1898 (2) and included shortly thereafter as a competition option in the *Feis* programme. As with the Sullivan piece, Joyce must have been struck by both the musical and the lyrical resonances of this song, with its 'traditional' melody, its macaronic language (*uch ochón*), and its dramatisation of an alienated figure, exiled from homeland and friends, condemned to "wander lonely" through the world.

The most significant piece from Joyce's *Feis* performance, however, is the one that's missing – the one he refused to attempt from notation, and that cost him the competition and possibly (following McCormack's footsteps) the realistic opportunity of a musical career. Joyce was understandably disappointed and frustrated at the outcome; but the experience would serve him well inasmuch as the missing piece embodies a paradox: silent (or absent) music – a paradox that speaks readily to novelistic discourse (the music invoked in the novel cannot be heard), and more fundamentally to the human practices and experiences that the novel looks to represent. Joyce found in the concept of 'silent music' – which is to say, the silence that precedes, follows and inheres *within* music – a potent symbol of our paradoxical relation to language, one that recurs (in many different forms) throughout his work.

We observe an early instance in "A Mother", in which the absence of music (Kathleen's refusal to play, albeit at her mother's insistence) precipitates the central conflict on

which the story's moral crisis turns. The *leitmotif* has already been established in the marriage with which Mrs Kearney silenced the loosening tongues of her friends (122); the "ladylike" (110) silence she initially maintains in the face of Mr Fitzpatrick's provocation; and the "painful" (114) silence which pervades the backstage area during the stand-off between mother and committee. The latter instance occurs, paradoxically, against a cacophony of "clapping and stamping ... [and] whistling" (130) coming from the impatient audience, once again revealing the extent to which silence is not an absolute condition but a discursive effect that is always produced in a particular context (Hepburn, 199). Kathleen *plays*, her music *sounds* temporarily but is then withdrawn; the writing *ends*; and the reader is left to speculate as to the *meaning* of what Joyce wrote as well as the *significance* of what he did not write. Absent music thus comes to mark all three related levels: story (the narrative event), text (the writing event) and consumption (the reading event); and the effects and insights afforded by this flexible economy would inform Joyce's art for the remainder of his career.

Moving on to the August concerts, on Monday afternoon Joyce sang two traditional ballads from the pages of Moffat's *Irish Minstrelsy*: "The Coolin" (66) and "My Love She Was Born in the North Countrie" (151) – each of which represents an interesting choice in the context of his wider profile. The Saturday concert seems to have been more problematic. Horse Show week was busy in Dublin; there were competing entertainments all across town, but the Antient Concert Rooms was fully booked and Joyce was nervous, especially as he would be performing in public before his girlfriend Nora for the first time. In Part I he was programmed to sing "Down by the Sally [sic] Gardens" – the Yeats lyric which first appeared in *The Wandering of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889). The most popular setting of this lyric was made by the composer Herbert Hughes in 1909, when (after consulting with the poet himself) he put it to an air entitled "The Maids of Mourne Shore".¹² A question mark remains, therefore, regarding the melody that Joyce sang on this occasion (the song is not included in Moffat); it was in all likelihood a well-known ballad entitled "Rambling Boys of Pleasure", which seems to have been the song imperfectly remembered by Yeats when composing his own version.

Joyce was programmed to sing "The Croppy Boy" in Part II; there are in fact two popular versions of this ballad, each telling the story of an Irish volunteer of 1798 betrayed to his death. The version particularly associated with Joyce sees a young man on his way to join the rebel army, stopping off to go to confession at which point he is captured by a yeoman captain disguised as a priest – this is the version that figures throughout *Ulysses*, especially in the chapter entitled "Sirens" where it underpins the motif of betrayal which was itself so decisive an influence on both this particular novel and on its author (Smyth 69-91). Reidy had already departed by this stage, however, and Joseph Holloway reports that *after* her replacement had made 'several unsuc-

12 In 1933 Hughes edited a book of settings of Joyce's poems.

cessful attempts' (qtd. in Ellmann 168) to play the programmed item, Joyce was obliged to accompany himself on a different song. This seems to imply that Joyce did not in fact sing "The Croppy Boy" on this occasion, moving instead to an alternative once the original had been compromised in such an embarrassing fashion. Monday's review in the *Freeman's Journal* (once again as reported in Ellmann), however, states unequivocally that Joyce did in fact give "a pathetic rendering" (168) of the ballad.

So who was right? The career of the imaginary Mr McIntosh in *Ulysses* reveals that Joyce was not unfamiliar with the proposition that press reportage could on occasion fail to meet the highest standards of the profession. In "A Mother" the "plausible" (129) *Freeman* reviewer Mr Hendrick arrives at the venue but cannot attend the concert – indeed, "concerts and *artistes* bored him considerably" (129); his intention, rather, is to go on to the Mansion House to report on a lecture by an American priest, leaving his crony Mr O'Madden Burke to write and deliver the review.¹³ In the meantime, he is happy to exploit his position of relative power in order to flirt with Miss Healy and to avail of free drink. All in all it's not a flattering portrait; whether or not his own performance was misreported in this particular instance, the inherent speciousness of journalistic reportage became for Joyce a special instance of the *partiality* (in the dual senses of incompleteness and bias) of all discourse – the perennial failure, by turns comic and heroic, of language itself.

The song (according to Holloway) to which Joyce turned in the circumstances was an established favourite from his repertoire. "In Her Simplicity" is an English version of an aria entitled "Elle ne croyait pas" sung by the character Wilhelm in *Mignon*, an opera first performed at the *Opéra-Comique* in Paris in 1866. Composed by Ambroise Thomas, *Mignon* was adapted from the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*) written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and first published in 1795-6. Although the libretto (by the well-established team of Jules Barbier and Michel Carré) refocused the story on the character of the eponymous gypsy girl, Goethe's original themes – education through experience, the theatre as a metaphor for 'real life' – remain just about discernible. Besides its effectiveness as a tenor showcase,¹⁴ Joyce was no doubt attracted to "In Her Simplicity" because it embodied a mainstream Romantic cultural tradition with which he was still coming to terms, especially that strand wherein the young hero turns away from the conventions of his parents' generation in order to embrace the life artistic.

In any event, Joyce must have performed the song pretty well, for he was called for an encore and chose to sing one of his pieces from the Monday concert. A version of the song "My Love She Was Born in the North Countree" was first collected by Patrick Weston Joyce in his *Ancient Irish Music* (68) under the title "Fair Maidens' Beauty

13 This character is based on the journalist William O'Leary Curtis, and features also in *Ulysses* (Igoe 40-41).

14 A recorded version by McCormack from 1908 demonstrates the effectiveness of this song for a tenor singing to a sparse chordal accompaniment.

Will Soon Fade Away". This is the ballad that Stephen Dedalus sings for Emma Cleary in *Stephen Hero*, eliciting her comment that she loves Irish music because "it is so soul-stirring" (141).¹⁵ Joyce (and Stephen) certainly recognised the power of these traditional ballads to stir the soul – indeed, it was just that quality that he admired when it resurfaced in somewhat altered form in the poetry of Mangan and Yeats. At the same time, "soul-stirring" retained overtones of "the rabblement", and of "surrendering to the popular will" ("The Day of the Rabblement" 50). The increasing association of Ireland's musical heritage with a kind of insular bourgeois nationalism rendered it problematic for Joyce in a number of respects, and made engagement with it (in the act of singing) a deeply ambivalent undertaking.¹⁶

Music and literature were locked together in Joyce's imagination from an early stage of his aesthetic development, and this was as much a formal as a thematic concern: "a song by Shakespeare", he wrote in *Stephen Hero*, "discovers itself as the rhythmic speech of an emotion otherwise incommunicable" (74).¹⁷ In *Dubliners*, as Allan Hepburn writes, "singing enacts identity, not straightforwardly, but in a medium that revels in ambiguity. In these stories, not hearing music accurately, not listening for encrypted clues, leads to wrongheaded actions" (190). As for the primary literary text, so for the secondary critical commentaries: listening with an ear for the subtleties and the complexities of Joyce's musicalized method (which comprehends a literary style as well as a musical content) enables us to better understand the subtlety and the complexity – ultimately, the ambiguity – of his own response to the competing cultural and political traditions within which he found himself caught up.

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15 This song also features in *Ulysses* (185) and *Finnegans Wake* (622, 628).

16 'My Love She Was Born in the North Countrie' is included in Moffat's *The Minstrelsy of Ireland* (151), clearly a popular resource for contemporary singers in search of repertoire. As with "A Long Farewell", both the provenance and the afterlife of this particular ballad implicate Irish music within an expansive international framework.

17 Later, in conversation with Cranly, Stephen says: "Song is the simple rhythmic liberation of an emotion" (158).

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OUT OF JOINT: JAMES JOYCE AND 'IRISH TIME'¹

Paul Fagan



Fig. 1 "Stopped clock at the GPO after its destruction" (1916-1921: *Revolution* Collection, Mercier Press: <http://hdl.handle.net/10599/10027>)

This is the Dublin General Post Office clock, stopped during the fighting of the 1916 Easter Rising. In capturing the spirit of a sudden local event that seems to rupture the linear flow of universal history, the photograph speaks to a paradigmatic modernist concern with living in a time that is – in Hamlet's well-worn phrase – "out of joint." At the same time, the scene violently reimagines the Irish revival's literary and institutional responses to the misalignment between 'Irish Time' and 'Colonial Time', as it inscribes this jarring disjuncture between historical time, clock time, and lived time onto the material surface of Dublin's buildings and public utilities. The image is charged with connotations that tell us that the insurrection was staged amid, and as a front in, the historical politicisation of time in Ireland. Across these diverse contexts, the motif of the stopped clock comes to symbolise Ireland's strangely liminal semi-colonial status, under which *time* itself becomes at once an aesthetic, political, and legal dispute.

1 This chapter is extracted from the lecture "Revive/Revisit: The Rising and Irish Modernism," delivered at the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies on 19 May 2016 as part of the *Easter 1916: Representing the Rising* lecture series, organised by Werner Huber and Dieter Fuchs.

The 1880 Definition of Time Act instituted Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) as the standardised legal time throughout Britain, except for Ireland, which would operate at Dublin Mean Time, established at Dunsink Observatory as 25 minutes 21 seconds behind GMT. As Luke Gibbons underlines, “while modernity sought to standardize time to facilitate synchronic timetabling at a global level, the imperial connection and the need to facilitate shipping from Britain imposed another time scale on Irish society, undermining that simultaneity” (“Spaces” 80). A few weeks after the Rising, on 21 May, the Summer Time Act 1916 implemented Daylight Saving Time (DST) in Britain and Ireland, turning the clocks forward one hour in the summer, leading to “the incongruous situation [...] where as many as four different time scales could have been operating in Ireland” (Gibbons, “Spaces” 80). The measure was undertaken, ostensibly, to enact savings to the Exchequer amid the spiralling costs of the First World War, but it stirred political sentiment in Ireland where it worked to the disadvantage of farmers and agricultural workers. The fault lines were not only between British and Irish politicians and activists, but also between financial, industrial and agricultural sectors within Irish society (Shorten). Four months after the insurrection – indeed, “as if in retaliation” for it (Gibbons, “Spaces” 180) – the House of Commons passed the Time (Ireland) Act of 1916. The Act abolished Dublin Mean Time once and for all, supplanting it with a Britain and Ireland-wide standard GMT.

These erasures of ‘Irish Time’ were a significant component of private and public responses to the Rising and its fallout. In a 1918 letter to London-Irish solicitor JH MacDonnell, Countess Markievicz charged that “public feeling is outraged by forcing of English time on us” (qtd. [sic] in Parsons). An August 1918 letter to the editors of the *Irish Independent* openly asked “whether we should give up this mark of our national identity to suit the convenience of shipping companies and a few travellers” (qtd. in Ó Coimín). In his 1927 *Dublin Magazine* essay “Irish Time,” J.F. MacCabe ties these politically transformative temporal events together in the public imagination: “It cannot be disputed that the imposition of ‘Summer Time’ on Ireland was a definite invasion of our national habits of thought, work, and outlook. It was, and is, a product of English town and industrial life” (35-36).

Recent work by Luke Gibbons, David Lloyd, and Gregory Dobbins, among others, has retraced this history of the politicisation of ‘Irish Time’ and focused the critical lens onto a direct concern: “What impact would the assertion of a distinct Irish temporality have for an understanding of Irish narrative?” (Dobbins 180). The immediate creative response to the 1916 Rising provides a revealing point of departure for such an inquiry. In their labour to capture the spirit of the moment, and to interrogate Post-Rising frictions over definitions of Irish nationalism (and of the imagined Irish nation), these texts endeavour to take stock of, and re-evaluate, the legacy of literary renderings of ‘Irish Time’. In Yeats’s *The Dreaming of the Bones*, for instance, “a rebel fugitive in 1916 is haunted by ghostly lovers” as he is “faced with the spectre of a primordial sin, an originative historical rupture, which led [...] to his own, contemporary impasse” (Pierse). Even as it continues the revivalist theatricalization of myth as a time-

less link between the nation and its origins, Yeats's spectral plot complicates this mode through a sense of complicity with the events of the Rising, and of a cultural and aesthetic impasse in its wake. In their reflections on the Rising's failures in *The Death of Fionavar from the Triumph of Maeve*, Markievicz and Eva Gore-Booth invoke the Irish warrior-Queen Maeve both to engage in "a coded conversation about the ethics and politics of insurgency" and to challenge the masculinist myth-making which had positioned Irish mythic women as "passive emblems for an occupied country" (Eide 25). Crucially, as Marian Eide underlines, for Markievicz and Gore-Booth "the Irish mythic tradition provided the allegorical medium through which to explore present concerns" (25) even as the Rising and its aftermath have compromised the politics of these literary models and stances. And during the Rising scenes of Eimar O'Duffy's *The Wasted Island*, we are informed how the protagonist Bernard "[i]n a few hours [...] went through an eternity of torment. He had lost all sense of time, all feeling of reality. Existence had become phantasmagorical" (530). The scene captures a pointed sense of living in a time-out-of-joint, which necessitates a break with the linearity of realist 'clock time' in favour of phantasmagorical modes and devices that desynchronise narrative.

In my intervention into this conversation, I focus on James Joyce's attempts to develop a mode of literary representation that could capture the aesthetic, philosophical and political stakes of 'Irish Time', which shapes his writing from the outset and reaches its apex in the events and aftermath of Easter 1916. Joyce's labour to represent the disjuncture between 'clock time' and 'lived time' has long been understood as a defining and distinguishing feature of his modernist poetics. It is in response to such a "haunted modernity" that is "never contemporaneous with itself," Jean-Michel Rabaté argues, that the modernist writer endeavours to assume a ghostly vantage that "constantly projects, anticipates, and returns to mythical origins, but [...] also teaches us more about the 'present' which it historicizes" (3). Rabaté's genealogy of *The Ghosts of Modernity* draws a lineage from Chateaubriand's posthumous *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* to the spectral vantages and temporalities of key high modernist texts such as *Finnegans Wake* and Beckett's *L'Innommable*. And yet, as these post-Rising examples suggest, Joyce's place in this lineage needs to be thought also in its relation to diverse cultural responses to the material and political reality of 'Irish Time' – from the allochronic textures of post-famine trauma narratives to the revival's employment of myth as a means of leveraging a spectral vantage by which to see the present moment more clearly. As Lauren Arrington insists, "[t]he persistence of multiple temporalities in modernizing Ireland was the concern of modernist writers who were very different from Joyce" ("Irish Modernism"). By examining the development of his temporal poetics alongside Catholic, revivalist, and nationalist attempts to reckon the consequences of a distinct Irish temporality, I mean to bring to the fore some of the uniquely Irish contexts of Joyce's "resistance to synchronicity" (Gibbons, "Spaces" 71). Concurrently, by retracing the historical politicisation of 'Irish Time' along the arc of Joyce's aesthetic project, I hope to shed light on certain affinities and continuities

(as well as antipathies and discontinuities) between the efforts of these diverse movements to develop a literary mode that can capture the stakes and experience of a peculiarly Irish time-out-of-joint.

To better view Joyce's development of a distinct literary image of 'Irish Time', I first situate *Dubliners* more firmly at the nexus of *fin de siècle* Irish temporal debates and trace the contours they leave on his emerging temporal poetics. Next, I consider how *Ulysses*, in its "vested interest in rethinking history" (Hansen 86), continues as a part of, and not apart from, this effort to both engage and reimagine the legacy and crisis of 'Irish Time'. Finally, I argue that to achieve these aims, Joyce works to develop a unique literary image that both diagnoses 'Irish Time' as a time-out-of-joint and attempts to rethink its politics. This image hinges upon the creative confluence of four distinctly temporal motifs that recur throughout his *œuvre*.

First, the stopped, slowed, or otherwise misaligned timepiece; a motif which Joyce inherits from Irish Catholic, nationalist, and revivalist literary traditions, and which indexically signals his engagement with the political and aesthetic stakes of 'Irish Time'.

Secondly, the *Hamlet* metaphor of living in a time that has come off its axis:

The time is out of joint – O cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right! (1.5 188-89)

The *Hamlet* metaphor is given new life in modernist writing, as an embodiment of Jacques Derrida's characterisation, in *Specters of Marx*, of a modernity decentred by trauma and of a present haunted and dislocated by the insistent return of the past as a revenant. What distinguishes Joyce's response to the issue of 'Irish Time' is his sustained reflection on the politics entailed in *Hamlet's* foregrounding of hesitation over action in responding to the injunction to set right a disjointed time.

Thirdly, the 1882 Phoenix Park Murders, an historical event which Joyce treats as a displaced site in which to explore the violent events of the present historical moment, and their confluence with his own biography, from a skewed and strangely spectral temporal vantage.

Finally, the legacy of Charles Stewart Parnell, who in Joyce's poetics is refigured to exemplify the Hamletian theme of *hesitation* (through the Piggott forgery affair) in an Irish political context as an alternative to the figure of the *homo religiosus*, embodied by Rising leaders such as Patrick Pearse.

Dramas of Lost Time

In his pioneering analysis of Joycean temporality, Marcel Brion describes "Araby" as "a drama of lost time," an attempt to capture a state of temporal parallax under modernity in which two people can be side by side yet "not live in the same time" (26). The modernist and Einsteinian credentials of such a temporal parallax have been

developed by Laurent Milesi (11) and Katherine Ebury (13-14, 98-99). What has been less commented upon, however, is that this 1905 story (and the broader *Dubliners* collection that approaches this theme from several vantages) is composed at the nexus of Irish Catholic, nationalist, and revivalist contexts in which the disparity between 'Colonial Time' and 'Irish Time' has *already* engendered a peculiarly local "experience of disjunctive or 'allochronic' time" (Gibbons, "Spaces" 71).

The sense of living in a time-out-of-joint is a recurrent theme of nineteenth-century Irish writing, which bears witness to the incursions of dominant concepts of time. Amid the political struggles for Catholic suffrage, and the risings of 1848 and 1867, "Irish fiction takes upon itself the burden of explaining [...] [t]he failure of history to 'take' in Ireland as elsewhere in the so-called United Kingdom" (Nolan, "Joyce" 18). Joyce's interest in "these earlier attempts to devise new narrative forms" by which to capture the sense that history itself has come off its hinges in nineteenth-century Ireland (Nolan, "Joyce" 17) is evidenced in a 1906 letter to Stanislaus in which Joyce mentions that he has asked their Aunt Josephine to send him books by Charles Kickham, Gerald Griffin, William Carleton, and John Banim (*Selected Letters* 124). Emer Nolan observes that Joyce's modernist temporality is anticipated, for example, in Fenian revolutionary Charles Kickham's 1867 novel *Sally Cavanagh: or, the Untenanted Graves*, which exhibits a "preoccupation with [...] the contrast between objectively measured time and time as it is experienced by those who are in severe distress" (*Catholic* 113). Kickham's critique of the brutality of the Irish land system recurrently contrasts the regulatory function of 'clock time' (the text opens and closes with the image of protagonist Brian Purcell checking his watch; Kickham 1, 198) with the local experience of trauma which sets this linear time off its axis and undermines one's certainty that "reality is not a hideous dream" (Kickham 198). Kickham's "sensitivity to this phenomenon of the freezing of time" (Nolan, *Catholic* 114) is borne out in the spectral temporality of the graveyard scenes in which Sally Cavanagh refuses to leave the "untended graves" of her five children, who suffered brutal deaths in a workhouse. This narrative scheme – a local political critique that desynchronises the authority of a linear temporal frame through a nested spectral scene of trauma – is paradigmatic for both Joyce and his turn-of-the-century contemporaries in their attempts to render faithfully Ireland's "competing, unresolved temporalities" (Gibbons, "Spaces" 71). More narrowly, Kickham's depiction of the landlord Grinden as having suffered "from an attack of paralysis," which left his "tongue lolling over the under lip" so that his "face was that of a corpse" (Kickham 195) anticipates the depiction of Father Flynn in "The Sisters", whose own attack of paralysis had meant that he "let his tongue lie upon his lower lip" (*Dubliners* 4). In Joyce's story, the narrator's own "hideous dream" of the priest's corpse-like face likewise introduces a jarringly spectral temporal scheme that upsets the realist chronology established at the outset ("night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time)"; *Dubliners* 1).

After the 1880 Definition of Time Act, this politically inflected theme of Ireland's misaligned temporalities is focused increasingly on the colonial imposition of standard

time and its attendant discourses of progress. In Canon Sheehan's 1901 novel *Luke Delmege*, for instance, the eponymous Maynooth alumnus "sheds his Irish identity" in London (Murphy, *Catholic* 121) and returns to Ireland with the conviction that it is "England's destiny to bring all humanity, even the most degraded, into the happy circle of civilization" (Sheehan 243). Immediately following his humiliation at the hands of a local pastor regarding his insistence upon punctuality ("That needn't trouble you much" here, he is informed; Sheehan 333), Delmege travels to inspect a local school and is struck by the broken clock in the classroom. He "lectures [the pupils] on hygiene and diet, extolling the wholesomeness of oatmeal" (Fleischmann 94), with jarring results: "Before the Angelus bell tolled that evening, it was reported through the parish that a Protestant parson from England had visited the school, and had recommended the children go back to the diet of the famine years" (Sheehan 336). The comparative images of the stopped clock and the tolling Angelus bell capture the scene's irony, as the colonial discourse of progress (organised here around the bio-power coordinates of hygiene and diet) is ruptured by the revenant of the famine. Even as it speaks to "a situation in which modernization occurred in some spheres [of Irish life] (parliamentary politics, colonial administration, the arts) but was retarded in others (industry, agriculture, education)" (Castle 2), the scene works to mock an active, instrumentalist response to such uneven temporality.

Out walking the parish on All Soul's Night, Delmege reflects on his failed project: "Where was the use of talking about economizing to a people whose daily fancies swept them abroad to regions where Time was never counted?" (458). Struck by the spectrality of the surrounding landscape ("the heavens and earth were haunted that night"), Luke is "affected [...] deeply" by "the pathetic remembrance of the dead by these poor people" (458). The immediate resonance with "The Dead" is suggestive, but an even more provocative comparison may be to consider the curious double of Delmege's trajectory and vision to Stephen Dedalus's in *A Portrait*. The "sense of the fragility of Catholicism in the modern world" underpins Delmege's intellectual journey to "distinguish between a true and false intellectualism" (Murphy, "Catholics" 105) and towards an epiphany in which he envisions "the creation of a new civilization, founded on Spartan simplicity of life [...] to which all the aspirations of his race tended, instead of [...] the new dogmas of mere materialism" (Sheehan 459). Even as they arrive at radically divergent programmes by which "to forge [...] the uncreated conscience of [their] race" (Joyce, *Portrait* 253), it is the same problem of the true intellectual response to Irish modernity that underpins Delmege and Dedalus's curiously mirroring and countering trajectories.

The sites and borders of Ireland's uneven temporalities are complicated further in the allochronic temporal structure of *fin de siècle* fieldwork ethnography, which exemplifies Fionntán De Brún's sense that "colonialism effects its own unnatural temporality" in which "the Gaelic language and culture of Ireland were out of step with 'public time'" (23). Synge's *The Aran Islands* (composed in the same year as *Luke Delmege*, although published in 1907 as Joyce was writing "The Dead") is characteristic here in

its projection of a temporal disjunction between the "modern time" of the Anglo-Irish mainland and the "primitive time" of the islanders:

Few of the people [...] are sufficiently used to modern time to understand in more than a vague way the convention of the hours, and when I tell them what o'clock it is by my watch they are not satisfied, and ask how long is left them before the twilight. (25-26)

In *Time and the Other*, Johannes Fabian argues that by thus positioning the interlocutor as a temporal Other who lives in another time, fieldwork anthropologists implicitly enact a "denial of coevalness" that advances the universalization of "Western progress" and engenders a "politics of time" (xl). David Lloyd draws our attention to the critique staged in Joyce's work of such an historicist narrative, which "views social and cultural elements that resist modernization as residues of ideas and practices that belong to the past and remain to be overcome" (3). And yet, it is worth noting the ways in which Joyce's temporal poetics emerge through an ambivalent relation to such depictions of the Irish West's temporal Otherness.

Anne Fogarty's assessment of how Joyce's "rivalry with Synge was drawn upon productively throughout his career to feed and inform his radical aesthetic" (225) refocuses our attention onto the ways in which Joycean time develops not only in dialogue with, but also through a certain ambivalent inhabitation of such anthropological representations of 'Irish Time'. There is a copy of the 1907 Maunsell edition of Synge's *The Aran Islands* in Joyce's Triestine library,² and its influence is most palpable in Joyce's own travel-writing piece "Il miraggio del pescatore di Aran" [The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran], published September 1912 in *Il Piccolo della Sera*. In Fogarty's analysis, Joyce likewise frames this "world about to be eclipsed" as an amenable site for contemplating "the tensions between tradition and modernity" in Ireland and "replicate[s] Synge's insights into the Otherness of the Aran islands" (232-33). For instance, the islander that Joyce meets "does not know how old he is, but he says that he will be old soon" (*Occasional* 204).

The sharper distinction between the two pieces lies in Joyce's diagnosis of the islanders' way of life as "less a sign of cultural authenticity than a strangulated attempt to perpetuate a way of life that has lost its vibrancy and potency" (Fogarty 233). To develop this vantage, Joyce labours to complicate (rather than reject outright) Synge's allochronic picture of the Islands. At the outset of the piece, Joyce surveys a map of projected trade routes in a pamphlet envisioning *Galway as a Transatlantic Port*, which would serve as "a safety valve for England in event of war" (Joyce, *Occasional* 201-02, 342-43). Yet, even as he alludes to the domination and exploitation of the temporal relation between England and the Irish West, Joyce desynchronises this narrative of progress through an emphasis on the spectral qualities of the surrounding landscape, which "gave holy burial to the shipwrecked dead" (*Occasional* 203). The disappointed plan for a Galway Harbour is an iteration of a similar, failed 1858

2 See *James Joyce Online Notes*, "Joyce's Trieste Library": <http://www.jjon.org/joyce-s-library/trieste-s>.

scheme; however, Joyce frames it more provocatively as a potential revenant of the region's former *modernity*, when it was home to Dante's precursor St Fursa and the original Western discoverer of America, St Brendan. Thus, even as he draws out the Islands' modern stasis, Joyce imbues the liminal space with complicated temporal signifiers by recasting it as a revenant of 'the (old) New World'. To achieve these ends, he inhabits (though does not necessarily endorse) a certain revivalist, even quasi-nationalist messianic temporal rhetoric, in his aside that "[t]he old decaying city would rise again" (*Occasional* 203).

The distance between Joyce and Synge has also been shortened in the other direction, with Elaine Sisson making a pitch for reading Synge's travel essays as "early modernist" explorations of the tension between the archaic and the progressive, written in a style comparable to Joyce's, that marries "poetic, reflective and [...] elegiac" modes with depictions of inner-consciousness and "emergent discourses of modernity such as photography [...] and documentary realism" (52-53). Integral to this recalibration of the modernist qualities of Synge's fieldwork is his attention to "death and the cyclical nature of life," particularly in his rendering of the scene of a funeral on Inis Meáin (Sisson 62, 60). Joyce picks up on this spectral quality in his characterisation of the Aran hermit: "Under his apparent simplicity there is something sceptical, humorous, spectral" (*Occasional* 204). This phrasing hints that the temporal domination of fieldwork texts is not a totalising discourse; that even as Joyce's "'enthusiastic scholar' [...] implicitly merged the figures of Joyce and Synge" (Fogarty 223), there is an off-text "suggestion that Synge's observation might be his own primitivist projection, a naiveté ready to be exploited by his subject" (De Brún 26).

This merged yet doubled vantage draws our attention to the resonances of Joyce's disturbance of the historicist picture of the islands (underwritten as it is by the rhetoric of rational, active, and industrial progress) with the Irish revival's attempts "to establish an idea of Irishness that extends back into mythological times in an attempt to resist the hegemony of [an] imperialistic modernity" (O'Malley 20). Sisson highlights that "[w]hile many Revivalists' work displays a sentimentalised yearning for more 'authentic' times, the very act of photographing, documenting, recording and describing rapidly disappearing peasant ways of life [...] is in itself part of the technocratic apparatus of modernity" (52-53). Increasingly we discern the extent to which turn-of-the-century Irish revivalists also saw in the tension between time and timelessness staged by rural myths of fairies and ancient gods "a remarkable opportunity for experimental fiction" and "for breaking with the conventions of realism in pursuit of a purer sense of reality" (A. Martin 133). At the same time, Sinéad Garrigan Mattar asks us to leave aside critical "embarrassment" at Yeats's "belief about fairies" in order to "reevaluate the radicalism of [his] animist and revivalist poetics" (137). This experimental break entails a specific vision of the relation of time and the nation, which is manifested in a troubling of the realist novel's public objective 'clock time' in favour of the enduring timelessness, and thus authority, of mythical origins.

A strange rhetoric of *death-in-life* underpins the Irish revival's key works – indeed, the term 'revival' (from Latin *revivere* "to live again") is shot through with the temporality of the revenant. In *The Celtic Twilight*, Yeats identifies 'Irish Time' as uniquely spectral in nature: "[i]n Ireland this world and the world we go to after death are not far apart" (96). A recurring thematic of Katharine Tynan's poetry is that "death is the necessary precursor to rebirth" or revival (Collins 82). Lucy Collins also draws attention to Dora Sigerson Shorter's evocations of "the life of the spirit world and of faery-land," which "emphasise the experience of death-in-life" as "a way of probing the inner life and of engaging with realms of experience that were not the subject of rational discourse" (26).

This programme is engaged directly, if ambiguously, in the closing pages of "The Dead", which capture Joyce's modernist sense of living under "a spectral modernity, emanating from the unrequited voices in the margins" (Gibbons, "Ghostly Light" 371) while echoing the vitalism of the revivalist desire to replace "the finality of death [...] with a radically different temporal scheme, which allows for traffic or even synthesis between past and present, living and dead" (De Brún 18). In a characteristic mode, the story opens with an allusion to the restrictions of regulatory clock time ("it was long after ten o'clock and yet there was no sign of Gabriel and his wife") unsettled by an embedded rhetoric of death-in-life ("my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself") (*Dubliners* 122). The text recurrently alludes to the material traces left on public spaces and life by the spectres of past political conflict – for instance, through strategic allusions to the Dublin statues of King William of Orange and Daniel O'Connell. These political fault lines of Ireland's haunted modernity are given voice in Gabriel's heated discussion with Gaelic Leaguer Molly Ivors, and in his rejection of the revival project articulated in his dinner speech, with its injunctions to turn away from the insistent voices and "thoughts of the past [...] of absent faces" (*Dubliners* 190). It is, of course, the revenant of Michael Furey that enacts "the 'hauntological' disturbance that occurs whenever a ghost confounds history by bringing the past to life and giving absence itself a spatial form" (Sword 182). This sudden spectral intrusion profoundly disrupts Gabriel's own narrow sense of the present, and draws his soul towards "that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" and "his journey westward" (*Dubliners* 195). Critics have tended to read the closing evocation of the West in Joyce's story "as embodying the national, whether as a vehicle of reconciliation or of division"; yet Marjorie Howes profitably complicates this picture by emphasising how the closing scene rather explores the region's temporal-spatial ambiguity as "a shifting, semi-modern, marginal set of regions that both enables and defies the fantasies that Gabriel, Miss Ivors and Gretta construct" (67).

I would foreground two points at this juncture. First, that Joyce's temporal poetics develop out of, and are continually reshaped by, his creative dialogue with this cultural matrix of converging and diverging aesthetic and political discourses of 'Irish Time', in which the clash between 'Colonial Time' and the spectral time of local trauma is decisive. In recent years the close of "The Dead" has been anchored more

firmly in a complex dialogue with contemporary Irish literary movements and modes. Fogarty notes Synge's *Riders to the Sea* among "the several ghostly intertexts that endow the lyrical ending of 'The Dead' with such force" (226) and Gibbons places Joyce's later Aran travel-writing piece into parodic relation with Gabriel's imagined journey westward ("Ghostly Light" 371). For Barry McCrea, the story's closing imagery "depicts (without embracing it) the revivalist dream that Irish might resolve [contemporary cultural] dilemmas and constitute a lost, utopian language in which body and soul can be as one and find a home" (153). To these "ghostly intertexts" we might add the remembrances of the dead that underpin the politics of Kickham and Sheehan's spectral temporalities and epiphanies. These diverse rejections of modernity and refusals of realism, enacted from different class positions and ideological assumptions, constitute direct engagements with modernity's thresholds in ways that are intimately related to a project of capturing, diagnosing, and, potentially, setting right a peculiarly Irish time 'out of joint'. The relations staged in his writing with and within this matrix leave indelible traces on Joyce's figuring of 'Irish Time'.

Secondly, Joyce's response to politics of 'Irish Time' is characterised by a certain ambivalence that is thematised and aestheticised in his writing. This ambivalence sets up a complex set of engagements with competing fetishisations of 'Irish Time' from diverse ideological positions: merging and doubling their discursive genres, assuming without endorsing their vantages and perspectives. Noting this confluence of thematic concerns, Rónán McDonald conceives the continuities and sharper differences between Irish revivalist and modernist responses to 'Irish Time' not exclusively in terms of tradition and modernity, but also in terms of active and passive responses to an emergent nationalist impulse and crisis. Gregory Dobbins has argued, persuasively, that the cultural politics of Irish modernism hinges upon its deployment of "deliberate idleness" (5) as a critique and rejection of Irish nationalist discourse that frames the past's vitality to the present in terms of an active masculinist programme. McDonald endorses and complicates this reading by arguing that modernism's "insolent indolence, emerges from a history of withdrawal from useful masculine citizenry that can be traced to the literary Revival" (72). Rather than a clean break, "male inaction shifts from early to late Irish modernism, from modes of enchantment and self-sacrifice in Yeats to the more conscious rhetoric of refusal and obduracy in Joyce and Beckett" (McDonald 72). Bolstering this point, Seamus O'Malley underlines the "nationalist doubts" that underpinned Yeats's project in *The Celtic Twilight*, as the folklorist explicitly "highlights the resistance of the peasantry to his project" along the lines of "class, religion, language and politics," thereby "signalling not only the difficulties that would lie ahead for nationalism but also one of the forces that would compel Yeats to distance himself from the movement" (16). And as the foregoing history suggests, this tension between active and passive responses to 'Irish Time' reaches back further still into this tradition; for instance, to Sheehan's operating thesis that "true sanctity is to be found in a certain type of passivity" (Murphy, "Catholics" 106). As I mean to argue presently, such a relational resituating of Joyce's temporal poet-

ics within a field of active and passive literary responses to the history, politics, and aesthetics of 'Irish Time' is key to thinking his response to the Rising in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Homerule Sun Rising up in the Northwest

In recent years, the 1904 Dublin setting of *Ulysses* has been read as providing a skewed vantage on the time of the novel's composition, during the build up to and fallout out of the events of 1916. However, critics have tended to emphasise the spatial and topographical rather than temporal dimensions of this parallax perspective. Enda Duffy, for instance, ties Joyce's attention to the intricate detail of Dublin's 1904 streetscapes to "the photographs of ruined streetscapes in Dublin after the 1916 Easter Rising" (37). For Howes, *Ulysses* responds to the Rising by foregrounding the spatial scales of the "local, regional, international" as a means of countering and complicating the "ideology of the nation" (59). Thus conceived, nationalism is at essence a politics of territorialisation, which *Ulysses* counters by both fetishising and 'derealising' the material, memorial and political space of Dublin. I want to complement these insights by emphasising that Joyce's response to the Rising is also firmly anchored in his understanding of Irish nationalism writ large as irreducibly engaged in a 'politics of time', which he likewise fetishises and 'derealises' as he labours to re-imagine the legacy of 'Irish Time' in *Ulysses*.

The Rising's radical programme to bring the heroic or epic qualities of the ancient sagas to bear on the quotidian time of everyday Dublin – to re-activate a paralysed city and actively set right a time-out-of-joint – rises out of the ferment of political and aesthetic discourses of 'Irish Time' in which Joyce had also forged his artistic vision. However, it is distinguished by its nationalist framing of mythical allusions as a distinctly masculinist call to *action*, a framing Joyce inhabits and counters in his casting of Bloom as a passive Odysseus. The Rising's 'politics of time' is inscribed into the very theatricality of the insurrection itself: Pearse prophesised that the "fire and bloodshed" of 1916 would serve as a "cleansing and sanctifying" restoration of a "lost manhood" (F.X. Martin 72), and "wore an ancient sword during the entirety of the Rising" (Crosson 10). Thus, Pearse fits Mircea Eliade's characterisation of the figure of the *homo religiosus* as one who understands his significance as arising from his actions' reiterations of patterns of a glorious past. Richard Kearney directly characterises the Irish nationalist discourse of 'original identity' as a performance of the *homo religiosus* figure that responds to a sense of living in a time-out-of-joint: "symbolic or ritualistic reiteration of the myths is thought to redeem the fractures of the present by appealing to some foundational acts which happened at the beginning of time and harbour a sense of timeless unity" (87). In this messianic narrative, this timeless unity augurs the *coming again* of a glorious past which is projected onto the nation which is *yet to come*.

Several episodes of *Ulysses* work to unhinge such nationalist attempts to synthesise diffuse revenants of the past into a pure, unmixed present. The most obvious is “Cyclops” (composed 1916-1919), which comically deflates the metanarrative of a time-less and stable relation between myth and the nation by staging a bathetic oscillation between ‘clock time’ and ‘Irish mythical Time’. However, here I wish to focus more narrowly on a particular strand of motifs that are developed and interwoven across *Ulysses* in order to forge a literary image that both diagnoses ‘Irish Time’ as a Hamletian time-out-of-joint and attempts to reimagine its legacy and politics.

Stop the Clocks

Joyce’s engagement with the politics of ‘Irish Time’ in *Ulysses* is anchored to the motif of the stopped, slowed, or otherwise misaligned timepiece, which he inherits from previous traditions. Throughout the novel, “[c]lock time, psychological time, and political time are sedimented on the buildings and streetscapes encountered by the various characters” (Gibbons “Spaces” 186). In the “Lestrygonians” episode, for instance, Bloom observes that Dublin’s Ballast Office clock is set to Dunsink time while the copper timeball atop the same building is synchronised to GMT.³ The scene speaks to the ways in which “the instabilities of time in Joyce’s Dublin inhabit public space and coexist with, or may even be actively produced by, the dislocations of colonial modernity” (Gibbons, “Spaces” 184). Yet, Joyce demonstrates how this temporal parallax shapes the subjective and personal, as well as the objective and public. Margaret McBride characterises Bloom as being “obsessed with the clock” as he “fixates on mechanical time because he knows that Molly will meet with Boylan at four o’clock” (357). Anticipating this event, Bloom’s thoughts dwell on the seemingly unstoppable momentum of ‘clock time’: “At four, she said. Time ever passing. Clock-hands turning” (250). In “Lestrygonians”, Bloom, planning out his day, is suddenly struck by the thought: “Then about six o’clock I can. Six. Six. Time will be gone then” (166). If Molly and Boylan’s tryst is represented as an event that is at once unstoppable and which stops time, this thought is literalised in the “Nausicaa” episode: “Funny my watch stopped at half past four. [...] Was that just when he, she?” (353).

Again, Joyce sets up a linear realist temporal frame which is disturbed by a series of spectral and phantasmagorical scenes: as James A. Hansen insists, “[t]he text of *Ulysses* is full of ghosts” (89). From the outset, *Ulysses* anchors these mutually informing public and private spectral senses of living in a time-out-of-joint to the guiding metaphor of *Hamlet*. In “Telemachus”, for instance, nationalist discourse is pegged to performances of masculinity against which Stephen is cast as the brooding figure of

3 This disjuncture stays in Bloom’s thoughts throughout the day. In “Ithaca” he contemplates a scheme for turning Dublin’s temporal parallax to his financial advantage by arranging a “private wireless telegraph which would transmit by dot and dash system the result of a national equine handicap [...] at 3 hr. 8 m. p.m. at Ascot (Greenwich time) the message being received and available for betting purposes in Dublin at 2.59 p.m. (Dunsink time)” (670).

Hamlet: dressed in black, in mourning for his mother, proving "by algebra" the temporal impossibility "that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father" (18). A key context, then, for Joyce's foregrounding of a "withdrawal from useful masculine citizenry" (McDonald 72) as a response the question of 'Irish Time' is the modernist reflection, through Nietzsche, on Hamlet's hesitation at setting his disjointed time right. What is at stake for Nietzsche, but also, I would suggest, in part, for Joyce, is the question of what Hamlet's hesitation might "offer for politics in a world where time is experienced in the complex confluence of the tenses" (Rahman 2). For Nietzsche, comparing Apollonian and Dionysian man,

the Dionysian man resembles Hamlet: both [...] feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion: that is the doctrine of Hamlet, [...] true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action. (37)

This is a key distinction that sharpens our understanding of Joyce's engagement and quarrel with contemporary renderings of 'Irish Time': while the revival, and the sudden actively violent arrival of the Rising proposes to retrieve or reunify 'Irish Time' by drawing direct links from the mythological past to the present, Joyce labours to foreground the ways in which these revenants always already inhabit and haunt the borders of the present moment, threatening to arrive undecideably and radically reimagine the (im)possibility of the future. Such a diagnosis necessitates hesitation, a form of aestheticised ambivalence, rather than action, as the only plausible response to a time-out-of-joint.

Bloom's watch is not the only stopped timepiece in Bloom's possession. In "Ithaca" we learn that on Bloom's mantelpiece sits "A timepiece of striated Connemara marble, stopped at the hour of 4.46 a.m. on the 21 March 1896, matrimonial gift of Matthew Dillon" (659). Intriguingly, it is this "marble timepiece", a broken matrimonial gift, that anthropomorphically discloses his membership of "the cuckolds in Dublin" in the "Circe" episode (444), and thus his oblique relation with King Hamlet. In accounting for the difference from the proto-draft of the chapter, which simply has it that the clock stopped "a long time ago at twenty to eight," Luca Crispi posits that the stated time is simply an "'Ithacan' joke" on uselessly specific detail, especially given "the ridiculous notion that an analogue clock could have stopped at any time in the 'a.m.'" (182). It is true that the episode's proliferation of detail works to entice scholarly analysis and then pull the rug out from under such readings. And yet, given the function of the stopped clock at the nexus of discourses of personal and political betrayal in the text, it is possible to see the image pointing to overlapping autobiographical, historical, and aesthetic coordinates. In its evocation of Connemara's 'Joyce country', for instance, or of the tenuous beginning of Joyce's writing career with the composition of the juvenile essay "Trust Not Appearances" at Belvedere College in 1896; or, more obliquely still, of the 22 March 1907 publication of "Il Fenianismo: L'ultimo Feniano" in *Il Piccolo della Sera*, in which Joyce wrote about the failed Fenian insur-

rection of 1865 (of which the Easter Rising would be a direct revenant) and laid out his understanding of Irish politics as a recurrent betrayal of the living and bad faith celebration of the dead, for which Parnell would offer the main archetype.

As such, the stopped clock both offers and withholds an index of Joycean engagement with an Irish time-out-of-joint through a self-inscription into history *via* a strangely spectral autobiographical vantage. For Ruben Borg, building on Rabaté's thesis, modernism is "a ghost-like moment arising within the historical programme of modernity," which is "characterised by an excess of historical self-consciousness," or an "over-extension [...] of the project of ideal history" that necessitates "a certain spectrality, a metaphors of the ghost" in "the modern writer's self-inscription in history" (220). As the stopped Connemara timepiece tells us, in pursuing this spectral self-inscription into history, Joyce works to creatively fuse the rhetoric of disjointed temporality and the metaphoric of the ghost offered by *Hamlet* with both his own biography and the historical revenant of Parnell.

Hesitancy was clearly to be evitated

Joyce's fascination with Parnell as an Irish nationalist figure who refuses or sidesteps the role of *homo religiosus* is well known from his treatment in *A Portrait*; however, the alliance of Parnell and the Shakespearean revenant in Joyce's thought is most clearly laid out in "The Shade of Parnell," published in *Il Piccolo della Sera* on 16 May 1912. The piece implicitly evokes *Macbeth* in its description of Ireland's betrayed "uncrowned king" as a "shade at the feast" (or "ghost at the banquet") of the anticipated 'New Ireland' (Joyce, *Occasional Writing* 196, 193). Parnell's legacy is thus figured as a uniquely disruptive revenant in the narrative of 'Irish Time': his recurrent rearrival upon the scene – *à la* Banquo's or King Hamlet's ghost – ruptures narratives of teleological progress, even as his failed return disrupts also the nationalist myth of the messianic timelessness of the *homo religiosus*. This alignment of Parnell and Shakespeare anticipates, and localises, Derrida's thought, which "invokes [...] Prince Hamlet's murdered father, as [the] prime exemplar of a spectral subject who haunts future generations by disrupting linear conceptions of history and reminding us, through his uncanny revenance, that 'the time is out of joint'" (Sword 181).

These coordinates coalesce most clearly in *Ulysses*'s handling of the Phoenix Park Murders of 6 May 1882, the year of Joyce's birth – a confluence of dates that is particularly germane to a modernist ghostly autobiography that enables a new vantage on the present. Clearly, the fatal stabbings of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Henry Burke by the Irish National Invincibles are an important part of the pre-history of the Rising. Yet, their place in Joyce's 1904 Dublin is marked by amnesia and paramnesia, in ways that work to disrupt their direct connection to the present moment. Entering All Hallows Church in "Lotus Eaters", Bloom struggles to recall the names of the Invincible James Carey: "Peter Carey, yes. No, Peter Claver I am thinking of. Denis Carey" (78). The Invincibles' "fading exploit is recalled with similar [...] confu-

sion" in "Aeolus", when Myles Crawford, editor of *The Evening Telegraph*, brags about an article on the Murders published on 6 May 1881, and in the process "gets almost all of his details wrong," especially given that the Phoenix Park murders "occurred not in 1881 but 1882" (Fairhall 21).

I would suggest this error offers an attempt both to inscribe and conceal (by temporally displacing) Joyce's own biography into this history.⁴ At the same time, such forgetfulness disrupts both the linearity of the historical record and the ideological significance of reiterating past events. The text's strange linking of the Phoenix Park Murders both back to *Hamlet* and forward to the Rising are centred on the public political betrayals of Parnell (and intimately linked to the 'time of betrayal' motif of *Ulysses* through Parnell's affair with Kitty O'Shea). While Parnell officially condemned the murders in 1882, in March 1887 the *Times* printed letters purportedly from his hand claiming that his public denunciation of the Phoenix Park assassins had been insincere and that in truth he sympathised with their cause. The letters were spurious, forged by journalist Richard Pigott, as disclosed by Piggott's misspelling of 'hesitancy' as 'hesitency'. This strange coincidence of hesitation/hesitency allows Joyce to position Parnell – and not the mythological figures of the Revival and Rising – as the Hamletian figure *par excellence*, a revenant figure of *death-in-life*, embodying the Irish time-out-of-joint, whose return is messianically assumed, yet crucially disappointed:

One morning you would open the paper, the cabman affirmed, and read: Return of Parnell. He bet them what they liked. A Dublin fusilier was in that shelter one night and said he saw him in South Africa. [...] Dead he wasn't. Simply absconded somewhere. The coffin they brought over was full of stones. He changed his name to De Wet, the Boer general. (*Ulysses* 603)

Joyce would revisit, and continue to develop, this image of living "at disjointed times" in *Finnegans Wake* (104). In a pivotal scene, HCE is "accosted" in Phoenix Park one "Ides-of-April morning" by "a cad with a pipe", who asks him "could he tell him how much a clock it was [...] as his watch was bradys" (35). HCE is put on his guard by the cad's strange Irish greeting "Guinness thaw tool in jew me dinner ouzel fin?" – *Conas tá tú indiu mo dhuine uasal fionn?* – and realises that "Hesitency was clearly to be evitated" as he is "unwishful [...] of being hurled into eternity right then, plugged by a soft-nosed bullet from the sap" (35). His suspicions are further raised by the pealing of church bells in the distance. The scene works through the same coordinates of an unhinged 'Irish Time' that had been deployed in *Ulysses*: the blending of Hamletian hesitation and Irish history through Pigott's misspelled "hesitency"; the evocation of the Easter Rising through the reference to the "Ides-of-April" and the "soft-nosed bullets" used by republicans in the insurrection; the displaced coordinates of the autobiographical (Mary and Padraic Colum recount that the scene restages an anecdote of Joyce's father being asked the time by a "cad with a bicycle" in Phoenix

4 I am grateful to Anne Fogarty for suggesting to me this way of reading the amnesia of historical and biographical dates here, in conversation at the Zürich James Joyce Workshop in 2015.

Park; 159-160); the characterisation of the Rising as a revenant of past events, as alluded to in the reference to the 1867 “fenian rising,” and to the Phoenix Park Murders through the allusion to Joe Brady in the phrase “his watch was bradys”; all tied together in the image of the stopped or slowed clock as a metonym of ‘Irish Time’ (“bradus”, Greek “slow”).

This, then, is the paradigmatic Joycean image of ‘Irish Time’: a radical temporal aesthetic, which evokes the diverse temporal images of Hamlet, Parnell, the Phoenix Park murderers, Joyce’s own autobiography and the 1916 Rising in order to both foreground and disrupt their direct connection to an unhinged present, which is characterised by a confluence of alternative histories, skewed temporalities, spectral vantages, and a decision (unmade, finally) about whether hesitation is to be avoided or embraced. Yet if this is a modernist rendering of this theme, it occurs within and through a series of paradoxically ambivalent yet engaged inhabitations of a lineage of Irish writers such as Kickham, Sheehan, Synge, Tynan, Sigerson Shorter, Yeats, Markievicz, Gore-Booth, O’Duffy, *et al.* At the same time, Joyce’s image of the misaligned timepiece anticipates and informs future renderings of ‘Irish Time’, staged amid the ideological memorialist imperatives of the Irish Free State in de Valera era: the haunted and posthumous late-modernist Irish narrative of Máirtín Ó Cadhain’s *Cré na Cille*; the stopped clocks of Elizabeth Bowen’s *A World of Love*; the lost watch of Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman*; and the allochronic textures of O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds*, which concludes with the narrator hearing the Angelus bells pealing outside and realising his watch is six minutes slow (214).

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‘SIGMUND FREUD ... ANALYZE THIS’: THE JOYS OF FREUD AND THE “CYCLOANALISM” OF *FINNEGANS WAKE*

Tamara Radak

It is a truth universally acknowledged that James Joyce displayed a “manifest hostility to Freud” (Thurston, “Scotographia” 407). According to a number of first-hand sources and Joyce’s surviving written correspondence, the author also had a somewhat troubled relationship with Carl Gustav Jung, who treated his daughter, Lucia, and reviewed Joyce’s *Ulysses* in not exactly favourable terms. In one of his inimitable letters, the Irish author casts Jung as “the Swiss Tweedledum who is not to be confused with the Viennese Tweedledee, Freud”:

People in Zurich persuaded themselves that I was going mad and actually endeavoured to induce me to enter a sanatorium where a certain Doctor Jung (the Swiss Tweedledum who is not to be confused with the Viennese Tweedledee, Freud) amuses himself at the expense (in every sense of the word) or ladies and gentlemen who are troubled with bees in their bonnets. (*Letters* I 167)

Joyce biographer Richard Ellmann notes that the ambivalent feelings between the author and the Swiss psychoanalyst might have been mutual:

When [Joyce] met Brody he asked, ‘Why is Jung so rude to me? He doesn’t even know me. [...] I have nothing to do with psychoanalysis.’ Brody replied, ‘There can be only one explanation. Translate your name into German.’ (628)

However, archival research into Joyce’s libraries has unearthed evidence which proves that Joyce was in possession of a number of books on psychoanalysis, including Freud’s *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* and Jung’s *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen* (see Beck and Simpson, eds.). The author verifiably took notes from these and other texts on psychoanalysis (including *The Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud*) that were later incorporated into *Finnegans Wake*.¹ Sheldon Brivic notes that “*Finnegans Wake* is loaded with references to Freud and Jung” (10). In a recent article for *The Guardian*, Edna O’Brien in turn posits that the “tumble of language” in *Finnegans Wake*, “this transubstantiation of words, these heavenly and unheavenly vocables, poured out from him [...] they came directly from the unconscious mind” (n.p.).

One of the concepts that Joyce seemed particularly fascinated by in these writings is human error. Daniel Ferrer, commenting on Joyce’s notes on Freud in the notebooks, remarks that Joyce jotted down “several elements connected with phonetics, stutter-

1 See Ferrer and van Mierlo for detailed accounts of Joyce’s notetaking from these particular sources. Explicit references to psychoanalysis are also documented in Joyce’s Buffalo notebooks, in particular VI.B.3, VI.B.5, VI.B.6, VI.B.9, VI.B.10, and VI.B.19; see Deane, Ferrer, Lernout (eds.).

ing, misspelling" (379) as part of his extensive notes on "The Wolf Man," one of Freud's best-known cases. Forgetting ("Vergessen"), mispronunciation ("Versprechen"), misreading ("Verlesen") and "combined blunders" ("kombinierte Fehlleistungen") also feature prominently in another book which Joyce owned, Freud's *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (*Psychopathology of Everyday Life*). A well-known quotation from Joyce's *Ulysses* suggests that "errors" can be seen as "portals of discovery" (U 156) and indeed, "errears and erroriboose" (FW 140.32-33) abound in the "Errorland" (FW 62.25) of *Finnegans Wake*.²

As Wim van Mierlo argues, contextualising Joyce's notes on the New Psychology in terms of genetic criticism and manuscript studies, "on a rhetorical as well as narrative level Joyce [drew] on psychological writings without necessarily subscribing to a psychoanalytic agenda" (116). Ferrer and van Mierlo concur in their assessment that "Joyce treated the Freudian text in the same way he treated his other sources, [...] as a quarry for unusual or foreign words and phrases which he sometimes used later and sometimes left forgotten in his notebook" (Ferrer 379). Luke Thurston similarly argues that

the real 'link' between Joyce and psychoanalysis lay not so much in Freudian theory [...] as in the recalcitrant anamorphic *objects* that inhabit that theory, that simultaneously provoke and challenge it: dreams, fantasmic scenes, misrememberings, primal symptoms" ("Psychoanalysis" 95)

Commenting on John Bishop's *Joyce's Book of the Dark*, Thurston highlights the "anti-hermeneutic importance of psychoanalysis" in Joyce's work, arguing that the discipline is important primarily as "an equivocal site of 'dark language' rather than a source of theoretical enlightenment" ("Psychoanalysis" 96) in *Finnegans Wake*. Allusions to Freudian and Jungian concepts include "doblinganger" (FW 490), "intrepidation of our dreams" (FW 338), "eatopus Complex" (FW 128), "A cataleptic mithyphallic! Was this *Totem Fulcrum Est*" (FW 481) and "*totam in tutu*" (FW 397). Such cases, of course, primarily serve as comic release; however, their function in the text is not limited to parodic reworking.

While I do not want to suggest that Joyce was an uncritical admirer of psychoanalysis or posit a Bloomian anxiety of influence, as previous critics have occasionally done,³ the frequency with which the author evokes certain psychoanalytic "buzzwords", techniques and concepts in *Finnegans Wake* is indeed noteworthy. Although it would

2 For comprehensive investigations of this topic, see Conley; Creasy.

3 For a detailed summary of previous approaches on this topic, some of which seem to be "bent on demonstrating that Joyce was the most Freudian of authors" (van Mierlo 116), see Thurston, who himself conducts a Lacanian reading of Joyce's writing ("Psychoanalysis"), and van Mierlo 116-120. Tony Thwaites gives an exhaustive list of Joycean criticism that deals with psychoanalysis in one way or another (692, note 1). As Thurston rightly notes, "the problem of psychoanalysis in Joyce cannot be confined to an investigation of the writer's 'sources', much as critics have laboured to bring such an investigation to a definitive conclusion" (*Joyce and Psychoanalysis* 11).

only seem fitting to attribute any potentially unintended parallels to unconscious interference, especially considering the deliberately elusive linguistic mannerisms of *Finnegans Wake*, in which polysemy, homophones and portmanteaus abound, I want to argue that Joyce's employment of certain ideas from this discipline is far from arbitrary. In this essay, I will investigate passages from *Finnegans Wake* which feature thematically clustered references to psychoanalysis, arguing that such occurrences have a significance beyond parodic intertextual acknowledgement within the poetics of Joyce's multifarious text. Although Joyce's relationship to psychoanalysis may have been ambivalent at best,⁴ the concept as such forms part of a larger debate concerned with the interplay between chaos and order and the questioning of unified systems of interpretation in *Finnegans Wake*.

In the following, I will show two possibilities of exploring the theme of psychoanalysis in this text beyond mere ascriptions of influence. The first part will consist of a close reading that takes Breuer's case history of his patient "Anna O." as a starting point, arguing that a number of parallels can be drawn between her quite specific brand of "hysteria" and the poetics of *Finnegans Wake*. Despite a number of articles that shed light on Joyce's personal attitude towards psychoanalysis and/or apply contemporary or recent psychoanalytic approaches to his work, few scholars have, in fact, conducted in-depth analyses of references to psychoanalysis in *Finnegans Wake* beyond acknowledging (or refuting) the author's indebtedness to its prominent thinkers.⁵ In the second part of this essay, I will therefore conduct a reading of II.2 ("night lessons"), a particularly dense chapter as regards references to psychoanalytic concepts and furthermore noteworthy for being the most experimental chapter of the text in terms of layout. By way of conclusion, I will investigate to what extent the concept of psychoanalysis can be seen as a metaphor for the reading process(es) of *Finnegans Wake*.

The Strange Case of Anna O.

Book I.8 of *Finnegans Wake*, titled the "washerwomen" chapter, begins with an exchange of gossip, with one washerwoman asking the other to "tell me all", "tell me now" about Anna Livia Plurabelle ("ALP"), one of the 'protagonists' of *Finnegans Wake* (if, indeed, such a term can be applied). ALP is the wife of HCE (an acronym of, among other things, "Here Comes Everybody", FW 32), with whom she has three children: a daughter, Issy, and the twin brothers Shem and Shaun:

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- 4 Van Mierlo, recurring to Levin and Bishop, rightly notes that "Joyce's aversion was primarily directed towards psychoanalysts, and perhaps not towards psychoanalysis" (118).
 - 5 A number of critics (see in particular Shelton, Benstock, Herr) have discussed the "night lessons" chapter and/or psychoanalysis and *Finnegans Wake*; however, even despite occasionally using psychoanalytic vocabulary for their analysis (see e.g. Shelton, Thurston), these critics do not engage with the wider significance of the clustered references to psychoanalysis in this part of the text.

O

tell me all about

Anna Livia! I want to hear all

About Anna Livia. ... We all know Anna Livia.

Tell me all. Tell me now. (FW 196)

The imperative to “tell me all”, “tell me now”, however, also recalls the typical practice in psychoanalysis of free association that not only the character of Anna Livia, but also the text as a whole seems to practice. This opening may furthermore contain a possible, as yet unexplored, allusion to “Anna O.,” the pseudonym given to Breuer’s patient Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936) in *Studies on Hysteria*. Freud was very familiar with this case through his collaboration with Breuer on the publication of this volume and referenced “Anna O.” in a number of his own studies. He also called Pappenheim’s case the “founding case of psychoanalysis” (see Gay 63) – indeed, both the practice of the “talking cure”, which the patient developed together with Breuer, and the term itself, which she coined (in English) are still relevant today.

While archival material on Joyce that would prove a direct connection with this case has – to my knowledge – not been found (yet), it can be inferred that Joyce had perhaps heard about the case at some point given his general interest in Freudian ideas (despite his personal misgivings) and the fact that Anna O. was “Breuer’s most famous patient” (Schwarze 100). Regardless of the question whether Joyce was aware of the case of Anna O. in particular, there is evidence in his notebooks that he had read the third volume of Freud’s *Collected Papers*, which opens with a case of hysteria.⁶ Given both this evidence and the real-life occurrence of Lucia Joyce’s mental illness, it is safe to assume that Joyce was aware of the concepts of hysteria and schizophrenia, even though he may not have displayed in-depth knowledge of the specific case at hand.

Some of Anna O.’s symptoms will immediately sound familiar to readers of Joyce’s almost hermetically obscure final work, which, even more so than *Ulysses*, pushed the novelistic form to extremes and displays textbook cases of what Deleuze and Guattari would much later call “schizoid” literature in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972).⁷ Although Anna O.’s case forms part of Breuer’s and Freud’s investigations of hysteria, recent accounts argue that “Bertha Pappenheim was schizoid” (Hunter 475).

Bertha Pappenheim started treatment with Breuer in 1880, after her father had fallen terminally ill and she had started displaying “hysterical phenomena” (Breuer and Freud 34). In his case history of “Fräulein Anna O.,” Breuer notes that the patient was “markedly intelligent, with an astonishingly quick grasp of things and penetrating in-

6 See van Mierlo.

7 The first part of the 1993 *James Joyce Quarterly* issue was devoted to a “Deleuze-Guattari Cluster,” with essays by Vicki Mahaffey, Nicholas A. Miller, Marilyn Reizbaum, and Joseph Valente.

tuition. [...] She had great poetic and imaginative gifts" (21). Amongst other symptoms, the account suggests that the patient indulged in "systematic day-dreaming, which she described as her 'private theatre,' [...] living through fairy tales in her imagination" (Breuer and Freud 22). The wording of the patient's symptoms in terms of "theatre" and "fairy tales" shows an awareness of literary forms and conventions and an interplay between medical and literary discourses typical of Freud's and Breuer's time. The mentioning of "theatre" furthermore aligns hysterical symptoms with a peculiar, quasi-Butlerian discourse of forced enactment, which is particularly noteworthy considering the fact that, prior to Breuer's and Freud's ground-breaking work on hysteria, hysterics (including Bertha Pappenheim herself) were sometimes accused of simulating their symptoms. Patients diagnosed with hysteria were thus seen as 'acting out' in more than one sense: As Tracey Teets Schwarze notes, "[p]erceived as rebels and suspected of fakery, these patients were frequently accused [...] of 'moral perversion'" (99), with early treatises suggesting "that hysteria was, at best, a rebellion of the conscious mind that could be simply 'willed' away" (Schwarze 100). Hunter notes that "Pappenheim [later] told [Breuer] that 'the whole business had been simulated'" (475). This statement must not necessarily be taken at face value but could rather betray a wish on Pappenheim's side to shed the stigma of mental illness after her recovery. As Robert Kaplan notes, Pappenheim was reluctant ever to revisit her treatment and was allegedly "scathing about psychoanalysis" (67) in later years. Dan Gilhooley similarly suggests that "Anna's theatrical symptoms become the model for a "theatre of cure" created by Breuer and Freud" (75).

Breuer further notes that Anna O. suffered from "somnambulism" (22), "sleep-like state[s]" (23) and "*tussis nervosa*" (23), a nervous cough. Apart from the fact that *Finnegans Wake* as a whole has often been linked to the idea of "dream language" (Norris 8) or believed to be the dream narrative of HCE or Finnegan (see e.g. Frye), ALP's soliloquy towards the end of the text includes the word "sublumbunate" (FW 607). This neologism connects the words "somnambulate" and the psychoanalytic term "sublimate" (Slepon n.p.) frequently used by both Freud and Jung. A further possible reference to hysteria can be found in "wringing and coughing, like brodar and histher" (FW 22), especially in combination with "hussthenhasstencaffincoffintussemtosem-damandamnacosaghcusaghhobixhatouxpeswchbechoscashlcarcaracat" (FW 414). This passage thus connects the "wringing" for words (echoed in II.2 in "wringwrowdy" (FW 266)), a typical symptom exhibited by Anna O., whose "language failed her" (Breuer and Freud 39) with "coughing" (*tussis nervosa*) and "hishter" (hysteria).⁸ At the same time, it introduces the quarrelsome (or "corralsome", FW 254) dynamics of the siblings Issy, Shem and Shaun, who are here "wrestling" like "brother and sister"

8 A more speculative addition to this reading is the fact that the tale of the "prankquean" (FW 22), of which the cited passage forms part, is structured according to a children's story and it was only after Anna O. "thought of some children's verses in English" and recited them that she "found herself able to think and pray" (Breuer and Freud 39) again after a prolonged inability to do so.

(Slepon n.p.). This dynamic becomes particularly relevant in II.2, the “night lessons” section of *Finnegans Wake*.

One of the most remarkable things about Anna O.’s case in connection with the present context is the patient’s “timemissing” (Hirschmueller qtd. in Gilhooley 78). Commenting on his patient’s “*absences*,” Breuer notes: “she used then to stop in the middle of a sentence, repeat her last words and after a short pause go on talking. These interruptions gradually increased” (23). Later, “she would complain of having ‘lost’ time” (Breuer 23). At a later point, Anna O.’s personality was split between a self that lived in the present and a “*condition seconde*” (Breuer 31), in which she experienced events that had taken place at the same time in the previous year, oscillating in her mind between these different selves. The archaeological, palimpsestic layering of time in *Finnegans Wake*, in which “ancients link with presents” (FW 254) and “Time: the pressant” and “footure” (FW 123) are intermingled quite liberally in a “FUTURE PRE-SENSATION OF THE PAST,” is certainly comparable to such disorientation in time and space. Furthermore, “lost time” (FW 149) is evoked *verbatim* in Joyce’s text. Although this can primarily be read as a reference to Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (invoked in “*recherche*” on the same page), the sentence also forms part of a question and answer section that is littered with pseudo-scientific language and literal translations from German (“blinkpoint,” Ger. “Blickpunkt” (Engl. “point of view”); “naturalistically,” Ger. “natürlich” (Engl. “of course”); “Bitchson,” Ger. “Hurensohn”; “Schott,” Ger. “Schotte”):

So you think I have impulsivism? Did they tell you I am one of the fortysixths? [...] And I suppose they told you too that my roll of life is not natural? [...] it would be far fitter for you, if you dare! To hasitate to consult with and consequentially attempt at my disposure of the same dime-cash problem elsewhere naturalistically of course, from the blinkpoint of so eminent a spatialist. (FW 149)

Such noteworthy accumulations of recognisable idioms and grammatical constructions taken from a certain language, in this case the German of the “Swiss Tweedledum” or the “Viennese Tweedledee,” often correspond to a certain thematic preoccupation on the level of plot. The lofty jargon of the passage (including diagnoses of “impulsivism” and references to “surrogate[s]” and “alternativementally”) and the cluster of German references, combined with the advice to “consult with” an “eminent” specialist, suggest yet another possible connection to psychoanalysis.

Finally, one of Anna O.’s symptoms corresponds directly to the multivocal Tower of Babel that is *Finnegans Wake* and its ‘language hysteria’ (‘languishing hysteria’ [FW 528]): occasionally, the patient “became almost completely deprived of words,” at least in the conventional sense of creating sentences from one language only: “She put them together laboriously out of four or five languages and became almost unintelligible” (Breuer and Freud 25). The notion of (supposed) unintelligibility provides yet another point of comparison between the medical discourse surrounding patients with mental disorders in Freud and Breuer’s time and Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce’s contemporaries and especially his early reviewers and critics occasionally

suggested that "*Finnegans Wake* is, in an important sense, unreadable" (Deane vii). Arguing that the "*Schizophrenesis*" (FW 123) of *Finnegans Wake* and its "frenetic style" (118) should be seen as "an ironic commentary on the colonial stereotyping of Irishness," Cheryl Herr proposes to investigate the text's "linguistic fractures – traits so often compared to the speech characteristics of schizophrenic" as an expression of "colonial experience of indigenous Irish cultural losses" (118). However, while such (in Joyce's case deliberate, in Anna O.'s case unintentional) "linguistic fractures" do not conform to normative notions of what constitutes intelligibility, they establish an alternative set of rules and can act as a wellspring of "endless creativity" (McBride). They create a space outside the normative discourse that allows them to "subvert the reigning cultural order by exploding its linguistic conventions and decomposing its façade of orderly conduct" (Hunter 486).

"The law of the jungerl"

II.2 (commonly labelled "night lessons") is one of the sections that most explicitly challenges traditional novelistic form; the layout of the chapter already signals a departure from linearity, foregrounding the text's status as a constructed artefact and drawing attention to its materiality. The running text of this section mimics a straightforward schoolbook. However, unlike a schoolbook, this chapter features marginalia and footnotes throughout. Critics generally agree that HCE's and ALP's daughter Issy is providing the footnotes in this section, while her brothers Shem and Shaun "place chapter headings and glosses similar to medieval ones in the left and right markings respectively, switching places halfway through" (Shelton 208-209). This chapter embodies the idea of *Finnegans Wake* as a text made up of split and multiple personalities,⁹ with a narrative that is focalised through more than one consciousness. In this chapter, the multiple personalities in the text manifest themselves visually through the spatial splitting up of the characters' narratives.

Issy's footnotes, told from a position of "quasi-authorial knowledge" (Shelton 203) despite their ostensibly marginal status, enhance the alienation of the reader by commenting on the textual genesis of *Finnegans Wake* and laying bare the structural fabric of Joyce's text as well as the incestuous nature of HCE's crime. As Jen Shelton notes,

Issy disrupts readers' expectations of what comprises proper knowledge for a character. [...] [She] reverses the usual hierarchy between text and footnote [...], confirming her special narrative powers when she predicts in footnote three the presence of 'Baa Baa Blacksheep' on the succeeding page. (203)

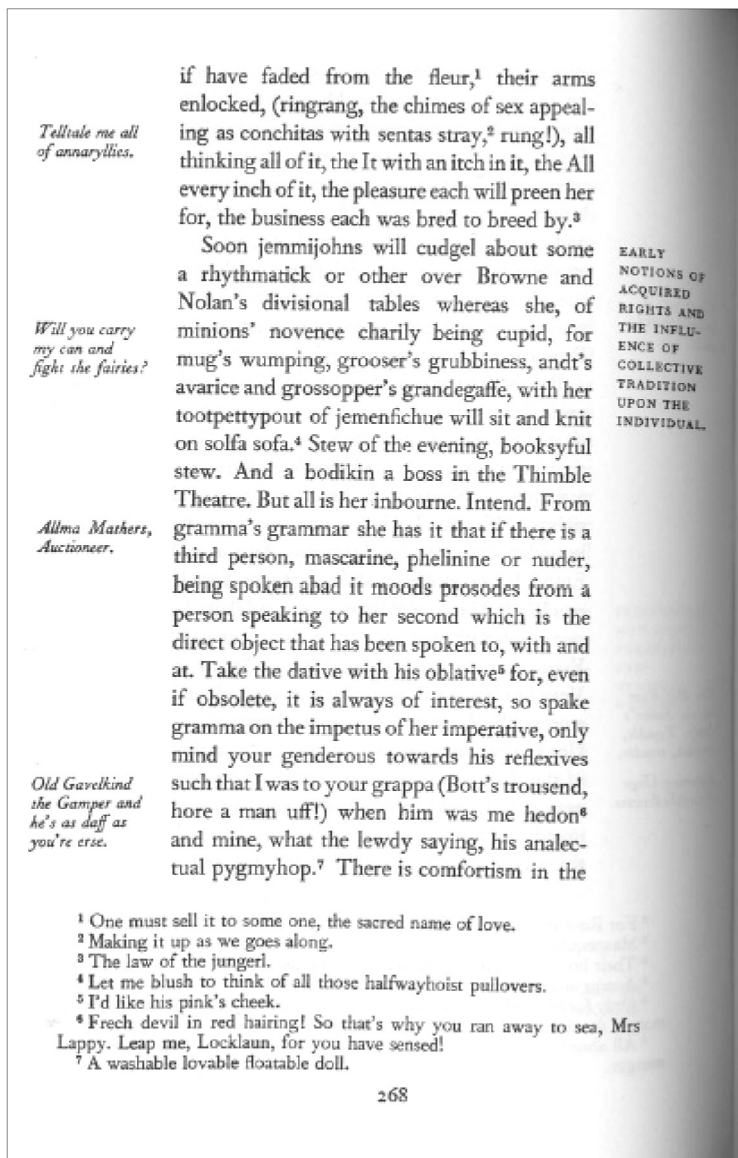
9 Jung also classified *Finnegans Wake* as a "schizophrenic" text in the metaphorical sense. As Loeb Shloss wryly remarks, "though [Jung] claimed that 'the clinical picture of schizophrenia is a mere analogy,' his lecture makes clear that he thought Joyce's work fit the mold" (278).

The marginalia in this section mimic rational, scholarly discourse. Especially the capitalised right-hand side notes display an air of scholarly grandeur and eminence ripe with Papal overtones (“UNDE ET UBI”, FW 260.R01), while the notes on the left-hand side and the footnotes show a more playful approach at annotating the continuous text. The whole chapter is characterised by a strong self-reflexive impetus and metafictional commentary.

Both the continuous text and the marginal notes frequently allude to psychoanalytic concepts, most notably those of “jungerl” (FW 268.F03) or “Jungfraud” (FW 460). Apart from the fact that “Jungfraud” is a combination of Jung and Freud and signals Joyce’s attitude towards both as “frauds”, the term could also refer to “Jungfrauen”, not only in the sense of virgins but also in the sense of “women who formed the inner circle around Jung – variously referred to as the Vestal Virgins, the Maenads, the Jungfrauen, and the Valkyries” (Loeb Shloss 281).¹⁰ Some of these notes appear somewhat randomly chosen as they do not always seem to refer to the continuous text, but rather comment on *Finnegans Wake* as a whole by “diagonising” (FW 260) the “SIC” (FW 260) text and its “URGES AND WIDERURGES” (FW 267) from a detached and, again, mock-scientific point of view.¹¹ However, the allusions to psychoanalytic concepts scattered across the chapter do relate to each other in a dialogic way upon closer examination. Within the scope of only a few pages, we find references to Jung’s archetypes in the continuous text (“archetypt”, FW 263), a mentioning of his name (“Storiella as she is syung”, FW 267), a footnote dealing with “The law of the jungerl” (FW 268, note 3), and a right-hand margin on the same page that echoes Jung’s “collective unconscious”: “THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLLECTIVE TRADITION UPON THE INDIVIDUAL” (FW 268.R07-08):

10 Ironically enough, the German word for “disciples” (who also form “an inner circle” around a certain person) is – “Jünger.”

11 Shelton reads Issy’s comparably “simple” language as “pok[ing] fun at her brothers’ posturing [...], showing that she understands very well the masculine world of scholarly pursuits for which she pretends to have no faculty” (206).



Page 268 of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

The mentioning of archetypes in connection with "odium teleologicum" (ARCHAIC ZELOTYPIA AND THE ODIUM TELEOLOGICUM", FW 264.R01-05) is particularly noteworthy, as HCE, short for "Here Comes Everybody" (FW 32), can itself be read as the universal everyman, and thus an archetype. Furthermore, *Finnegans Wake* as

a whole displays a strong sense of “odium teleologicum” in the sense that it refuses to end. The last line of the text famously ends mid-sentence, with the words “A way a lone a last a loved a long the” (FW 628), only to re-begin on the first page with a conclusion of the fragmented sentence: “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs” (FW 1). The beginning and ending of the narrative are foreshadowed in the “A”, “Z”, and “O” of the marginal comment, with A/O being one of the many leitmotifs of the text.¹²

In the same chapter, the comment “PREAUSTERIC MAN AND HIS PURSUIT OF PAN-HYSTERIC WOMAN” (FW 266) appears in connection with the following passage:

Here (the memories framed from walls are minding) till wranglers for wringwrowdy wready are, F F ... and ere commence commencement catalaunic when Aetius check chokewill Attil’s gambit ... lead us seek, O june of eves the jenniest, thou who fleetest flickesome the fond fervid frondeur to thickly thyself attach with thine eftedased ensuer, ondrawer of our unconscionable, flickerflapper fore our unterdrugged lead us seek, lote us see, light us find, let us missnot Maidadate, Mimosa multimimetica, the may-meanning of maimoomening! (FW 266-67)

As in the question and answer section discussed earlier, this entire passage is interspersed with terms that occasionally sounds like badly translated German (“ondrawer”, for instance, is a literal translation of German “Aufzieher”, or educator). “Catatonic” states are not only typical in patients with schizizophrenia, or *dementia praecox* (“precoxious”, FW 52) – as Carol Loeb Shloss informs us, Lucia was indeed herself subject to “catatonic” states: “Her behavior was called ‘catatonia’ – the refusal of gesture – which, in the case of a dancer, is an extraordinary form of eloquence” (219). The term “cataleptic” was explicitly used by Freud and Breuer to refer to a particular stage of hypnosis; “launig”/“launisch” means “moody” in German. Freud might once again be present in “frondeur,” but the passage is certainly also reminiscent of Anna O.’s physician, Josef Breuer, who not only hypnotised her and can thus be seen as an “ondrawer of [her] unconscionable,” but also administered large quantities of morphine to her and thus indeed “underdrugged” (Ger. “unterdrücken” = oppress/repress) her in order to extract ‘repressed’ thoughts.

Finally, “Telltale me all of annaryllies” (FW 268.L01-02) echoes “O tell me all about Anna Livia” from I.8. This exclamation is notably linked to “the chimes of sex appealing”, “the It with an itch in it” (a reference to Freud’s notion of the *Id*) and “the pleasure” principle (FW 268). Whether the person in question is Anna Livia or Anna O, “anna” is certainly central for the “cycloannalism” of *Finnegans Wake*.

12 This is another reason why “Anna O.” would fit the multiverse of *Finnegans Wake* very well.

The "twilight states" of *Finnegans Wake*

Issy is generally understood to be modelled on Lucia Joyce, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia (but also a range of other illnesses).¹³ In spite of the genuine threat of mental illness looming over Joyce's life, *Finnegans Wake* transforms and positively reevaluates Issy's affliction by making it part of the aesthetics of the text. In some ways, the idea that this text stylises itself as certifiably "inn sane" (FW 129) relieves it from the responsibility to obey traditional notions of form, lexis or content. Its "hysterical" symptoms are therefore endowed with an ambivalent, if not even positive aspect that creates a way of queering traditional novelistic discourse. This ambivalence is best illustrated in a footnote written by Issy in II.2 that almost takes up the whole page: "I was thinking fairly killing times of ending my malody" (FW 279.F03-04). The word "malody" encapsulates both "melody" and "malady," illness and song. As McBride states, "a central theme in Issy's handiwork is that her affliction should be viewed, not as a form of insanity, but instead as a kind of endless creativity" (148). Finn Fordham similarly sees in Lucia "the positive side of unreason – the creative realm that offers so many resources for the creation and the reception of such a work as *Finnegans Wake*" (350). Although it may be most palpable in the character of Issy, the idea of a creative process that departs from pre-established norms, a sense of "creative psychosis" is certainly at play in *Finnegans Wake* as a whole. Perhaps, especially given Lucia Joyce's "loose affiliation with surrealist youth" (Loeb Shloss 113), members of which considered hysteria "a supreme mode of expression" (Chenieux-Gendron 52), Issy's affliction could be read in terms of the belief that "[a]nyone who could rid him- or herself of inhibitions would find latent talent" and as a way of "challenging received ideas about institutionalized insanity" (Loeb Shloss 112). Hunter similarly sees a radical, subversively feminist aspect in Bertha Pappenheim's inability (or refusal?) to speak:

Bertha Pappenheim's linguistic discord and conversion symptoms, her use of gibberish and gestures as means of expression, can be seen as a regression from the cultural order represented by her father as an orthodox patriarch. Bertha Pappenheim was 'unable' to speak her native language, but could be fluent in alien forms of expression. (474)

In Pappenheim's case, the "flash" (flesh) thus quite literally and subversively "becomes word" (FW 267); her act of silent rebellion parallels Issy's "break[ing] out of the main narrative frame in her footnotes, [where] she is creating literal and figurative space for a story that may not fit within the confines of even the novel's expansive narrative structure" (Shelton 210).

13 Loeb Shloss provides a comprehensive biography of Joyce's daughter, considering Lucia an unfortunate 'child of her time', lamenting the fact "that Lucia's many doctors failed to agree with one another had as much to do with the lack of uniform diagnostic categories among physicians as with inconsistencies in her behavior" (230-31).

“Dreyschluss” (FW 139): Conclusion

Even though Joyce refused to be “psychoanalised” (FW 522) by the “Swiss Tweedledum”, he was certainly familiar enough with his theories to exploit them for comic effect. However, psychoanalysis can also be read in a metaphorical sense: Reading the “loovely freespeech” (FW 273) of *Finnegans Wake* almost certainly involves a diagnosis of some sorts, possibly even in the form of marginal notes. The practice of reading and that of analysing the “patient” text can thus, to a certain extent, be seen in parallel. However, just as the practice of psychoanalysis is an ongoing process that can never be finished, the reader is never able to come up with one singular “diagnosis”, or one unified interpretation of the text in the case (study) of *Finnegans Wake*.

As Beckett reminds us in “Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce,” the application of one single theory, or, for that matter, the idea of a singular “diagnosis” is “soothing, like the contemplation of a carefully folded ham-sandwich” (19). In the same text, however, he cautions against the

temptation to treat every concept like ‘a bass dropt neck fust in till a bung crate’, and make a really tidy job of it. Unfortunately such an exactitude of application would imply distortion in one of two directions. Must we wring the neck of a certain system in order to stuff it into a contemporary pigeon-hole, or modify the dimensions of that pigeon-hole for the satisfaction of the analogymongers? (19)

The increasing obscurity of the marginal notes in II.2 is indicative of the pre-programmed failure of any kind of unified interpretation when it comes to encapsulating the complexity and elusiveness of a text like *Finnegans Wake*. The reader’s need for a sense of order is subverted and our “fictions of concord” (Kermode 59) are blatantly and mercilessly exposed as what they are – fictions.

While *Finnegans Wake* erects various forms of structural and content-related scaffoldings, creating the illusion that it is possible to reduce this limitless text to a few basic principles, such scaffoldings prove essentially unable to keep the rogue text in check, just as the reader will never be able to come up with a unified interpretation of the text. *Finnegans Wake* refuses to “get [itself] psychoanalised”, but not because it is “yung and easily freudened” – on the contrary: it confidently claims that “I can psoakoonaloose *myself* any time I want” (FW 522, my emphasis). The text is thus seemingly able to overcome its alleged psychosis or “hysteria” by analysing the deep structure of its narrative (which it frequently does, as outlined above). *Finnegans Wake* practices a never-ending process of free association, which often seems inaccessible, or indeed “unintelligible” to outsiders at first, until they become better acquainted with the inner workings and multiple layers of this text.¹⁴ Both in its lack of a formal ending and in view of the reading process as a never-ending “Tobecontinued’s tale” (FW 626), the *Wake* comes close to Deleuze and Guattari’s contention that “lit-

14 See Senn’s concept of “anagnostic reading” (91).

erature is like schizophrenia: a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression" (133).

In *Finnegans Wake*, all systems of order which are devised to keep the overflowing text in check are ultimately subverted from within and must essentially fail when faced with the sheer force of the text, which at times seems to run away with itself or, in Barthes's terms, to write itself forth. The limits of form are constantly being tested and re-negotiated in this text and eventually, even the formal categories of narrative beginning and ending are subverted. In *Finnegans Wake*, closure is endlessly postponed. The text does not end in the strict sense, or at least takes desperate measure not to end. In the words of Shelton,

[a]lthough Joyce asserts control over all his texts, organizing them with superstructures that found favour with such hierarchically minded early theorists of modernism as Pound and Eliot, his texts are constantly negotiating an uneasy balance between that control and the counternarratives that resist it. (204)

Amidst ALP's pleas for "[o]netwo moremens more" (FW 628), the text trails off into a white space of possibilities. This, perhaps, can be read in connection with the idea that "cycloannalism" (FW 254) as both a medical and a metaphorical concept points to the "unfinalizability" of human character (Bakhtin 272) and implies that our attempts at communicating complexities through language must always remain a deliberately endless, but not entirely fruitless work in progress. *Finnegans Wake* always "URGES" – or, indeed, "WIEDERURGES" – us to read the text again, to consider more angles of its "collideorscape" (FW 143), its "kaleidoscope" of possible meanings that occasionally also "collide" or "escape" us and, importantly, to share our reading experience with others and thus prolong the moment before bidding "fforvell" (FW 626) to the text for "onetwo moremens more."

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BEYOND ENGLAND: BRINGING IRELAND INTO THE VICTORIAN NOVEL, THE CASE OF ANTHONY TROLLOPE

John McCourt

Anthony Trollope was, among other things, the very English author of five very Irish novels – *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847), *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848), *Castle Richmond* (1860), *An Eye for an Eye* (1879), and the unfinished *The Land-leaguers* (1883). He also penned two 'English' novels, *Phineas Finn*. *The Irish Member* (1869) and *Phineas Redux* (1874), the second and fourth of the Palliser series, which have as their hero the Irish politician, Phineas Finn. Trollope also sporadically produced short stories with significant Irish content. Taking Trollope as a test case, this essay will explore what happens when an English writer looks beyond England and turns his attention, very specifically, to Ireland. Like the Irish writer, but heading in the opposite direction and placed at the better end of an uneven power relationship, his English counterpart is still called upon to negotiate a set of boundaries, passages, and transitions. And yet, coming as he did to Ireland as a Post Office administrator (albeit initially in a lowly position), Trollope would have had far more doors opened to him there than would have been the case for the vast majority of Irish writers (not to mention of the Irish in general) seeking their fortune in Britain. Unlike many of the Irish in Britain who tried to become invisible there, Trollope would have felt little need or inclination to camouflage his Englishness in any of his dealings on John Bull's Other Island. However, he would attempt to get beyond stereotype, to offer mostly respectful and singular representations of the Irish, and show empathetic understanding of the fate of those Irish who were trying to make their way in Britain. This would become a substantial, if sporadic, focus of his fiction.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's description of Trollope's novels being "just as English as a beef-steak" (Trollope, *Autobiography* 144), was one that the somewhat insecure author embraced partly because he was a writer whose English roots were looser than might be surmised. When faced with severe financial difficulties at home, his mother Frances (Fanny) Trollope had salvaged her and her family's fortunes by looking beyond England and moving to the United States. In so doing she kick-started a productive writing career with her successful *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). Trollope's own move to Ireland was sparked by frustration with his unpromising situation as an under-appreciated junior clerk at the General Post Office at St-Martins-le-Grand in London, by his desire to have a fresh start, and by his need to get out of debt and to earn a better living. A junior Post Office official's salary would surely go further in rural Ireland than it would in London and there would be considerable expense claims to boost it further. Like his mother, Trollope was remarkably mobile and had little difficulty making his home in Ireland and later, in journeying, re-

lently, around the world to see to Post Office affairs (while equally unrelentingly pumping out page after page of his almost fifty novels).

Critics, such as Simon Gikandi in *Maps of Englishness*, have argued that “it is in the contrastive space afforded to it by its colonies that English identity consolidates itself” (Gikandi 46), however for Trollope the contrastive space of Ireland was the more important formative element. Trollope became the Englishman we know today because of his move to Ireland, a country seen by many of his fellow Englishmen as a no-man’s land better avoided. He quickly became a figure of substance there, a valued public servant and later never failed to underline how happy his life had been there after the previous 26 years in which by his own account he “had been wretched. I had been poor, friendless, and joyless” (Trollope, *Autobiography* 132). Things changed for the better after he landed in Dublin in September 1841 without, as he says in the romanticized transformation legend that he constructs in his *Autobiography*, “an acquaintance in the country”:

I had learned to think that Ireland was a land flowing with fun and whisky, in which irregularity was the rule of life, and where broken heads were looked upon as honourable badges. I was to live at a place called Banagher, on the Shannon. (62)

For Anthony, the shortest route to success in his literary and Post Office careers was through the initially unpromising and circuitous journey that saw him working and living up and down the length and breadth of Ireland in Banagher, Clonmel, Mallow, Belfast, and Dublin. This was a singular inversion of the typical nineteenth-century career path that saw aspiring writers making a beeline for London.

The optimism, the belief in the possibility of individual and collective progress that was the motor of British nineteenth-century success, had largely been lost on Trollope up until his Irish move. It was in Ireland that he actuated the Victorian dream of individual success by following the classic values of the time – self-reliance, personal responsibility, thrift, and, most of all, hard work – and in doing so he quickly gained a sense of his own personal worth, becoming an exemplary Victorian. But for all that, Trollope is too often perceived as embodying all the conservatism of Victorian England, a conventional artist who rarely questioned the social or literary conventions that he inherited. Catherine Hall describes him as “safe and English [...] riveted by the daily round of politics without being political, producing happy endings for his novels, believing in church, family and nation in ways which confirmed complacency rather than producing unsettled states of mind” (Hall 210-11). To read him in this way is to miss the challenging, critical edge that made him one of the great observers and interrogators of the social, cultural, and political mores of his time. Beneath the orthodox surface sheen of his writings, there is a constant questioning of established wisdom and convention. And his writing about Ireland fits into the pattern.

Trollope attempted to understand and interpret Ireland in the often calamitous four-decade period that stretched from his arrival into a country on the cusp of the Great Famine up until his final visits in the early eighteen-eighties at the height of the bitter

and divisive Land War. He is unique among English novelists in this sustained engagement with Ireland and in his on-the-ground knowledge of the country. He is almost equally a rarity within the Irish nineteenth-century canon as just one of a handful of writers who kept faith with Irish issues throughout his career. In doing so, he was well aware that he was battling against indifference and ignorance at home in England. As he put it, in *Phineas Finn*, “men in Parliament know less about Ireland than they do of the interior of Africa” (549). At a time of “literary famine”, to borrow William Carleton’s term, at a time when “our literary men followed the example of our great landlords; they became absentees, and drained the country of its intellectual wealth precisely as the others exhausted it of its rents” (1: v), Trollope’s choice of Ireland was unusual. It was also unpopular with his publishers. After the low-key impact of his second novel, *The Kellys and the O’Kellys*, his publisher, Colburn, told him that it was “evident that readers do not like novels on Irish subjects as well as others” (Trollope, *Autobiography* 78). Trollope paid little heed and returned stubbornly to Irish themes, characters and settings, rarely failing to describe what he saw and heard with skill and colour, pace and candour. Even if the politics to be drawn from the novels sometimes jars and if none of his Irish novels are wholly successful, they all offer much to the reader alternating as they do between the deeply tragic and the affectionately comic. An example of the latter is to be found in his descriptions of the Irish clergy – both Catholic and Protestant – or in the description in the *Kellys* of Martin Kelly’s “horrid voyage” from Dublin to Dunmore among the “diversified crowd” on the “floating prison” that was “the Ballinasloe canal-boat”:

the fumes of punch; the snores of the man under the table; the noisy anger of his neighbour, who reviles the attendant sylph; the would-be witticisms of a third, who makes continual amorous overtures to the same over tasked damsel, notwithstanding the publicity of his situation; the loud complaints of the old lady near the door, who cannot obtain the gratuitous kindness of a glass of water; and the baby-soothing lullabies of the young one, who is suckling her infant under your elbow. [...] Martin, however, made no complaints, and felt no misery. He made great play at the eternal half-boiled leg of mutton, floating in a bloody sea of grease and gravy, which always comes on the table three hours after the departure from Porto Bello. He, and others equally gifted with the *dura ilia messorum*, swallowed huge collops of the raw animal, and vast heaps of yellow turnips, till the pity with which a stranger would at first be inclined to contemplate the consumer of such unsavoury food, is transferred to the victim who has to provide the meal at two shillings a head. Neither love nor drink – and Martin had, on the previous day, been much troubled with both – had affected his appetite; and he ate out his money with the true persevering prudence of a Connaught man, who firmly determines not to be done. (77-8)

Much of the warmth and affection that Trollope held for Ireland is expressed in these lines which doubtless grew out of his own journeys on the same means of transport. In an even more autobiographical key, Trollope enthused in *North America* that

It has been my fate to have so close an intimacy with Ireland, that when I meet an Irishman abroad I always recognize in him more of a kinsman than I do in your Englishman. I never ask an Englishman from what county he comes, or what was his town. To Irishmen I usually put such a question, and I am generally familiar with the old haunts which they name. (599)

Protestations of kinship of course are no guarantee of accuracy or that Trollope was all sweetness and light. Quite the contrary. In his role as a highly effective Post Office chief in Ireland, he exercised his authority over his Irish underlings in gruff, peremptory tones. His manner with subordinates, as Pope-Hennessy describes it, “was aggressive and offhand [...] what Trollope’s friends used to call his ‘abrupt bow-wow way’ of addressing them” (Pope-Hennessy 81). This behavior was in no way confined to his Irish staff, however, but extended to all who served under his charge. Trollope was also remarkably open to the experiencing what Ireland (and later other parts of the world) offered and was not the “insular Englishman whose early sympathies and antipathies were unmodified by reason or by observation”, whom some critics describe (Stebbins and Stebbins 321). As can be seen in the following passage from *South Africa*, he was not without self-awareness or awareness of how the English ruling classes behaved abroad:

Let an Englishman be where he may about the surface of the globe, he always thinks himself superior to other men around him. [...] He, – and the American who in this respect is the same as an English, – always consumes the wheat while others put up with the rye. [...] He expects to be “boss” while others work under him. (Trollope 17)

This description was not written as a self-portrait. However, in attempting to impose an ‘English’ system of management on the Irish postal system, Trollope was engaged in what was a colonial enterprise. That said, it is more appropriate to read his Irish work (both postal and literary) as an expression of Unionist rather than colonialist beliefs. Trollope was at most a reluctant colonialist, and argued in 1874 that “Great Britain possesses enough of the world [...] and that new territorial possessions must be regarded rather as increased burdens than increased strength” (qtd. in Brantlinger 6). He saw Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom, believed the country could be modernized, integrated and improved by being made more like England, and felt that this process would strengthen the Union and could only benefit England’s own security and wealth as it would Ireland’s. The character of Phineas Finn – who enjoys a successful but complicated career as Irish politician in Britain – is his most sustained demonstration of this.

Long before Phineas, what emerges from Trollope’s earlier Irish novels is a sense of political turbulence, social injustice and unrest, and an overall situation of unsustainability that can only be addressed through a fairer economic union between the two countries. *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* is centrally concerned with questions of justice. It chronicles the fall of the family of Larry Macdermot, an impoverished survivor of the old Irish Catholic gentry, who represents a doubly marginalized reality, held at a distance by the Anglo-Irish, but also by the peasantry that resents his family’s rank, even if they have fallen into abject poverty. He and his son Thady and daughter Feemy live in a dilapidated (although recent) mansion in County Leitrim, unable to pay the mortgage which is being enforced by Joe Flannelly, who built it for them many years earlier, and by Flannelly’s lawyer and son-in-law, Hyacinth Keegan. Flannelly had attempted to have his daughter, Sally, marry into the Macdermot family, but

was rebuffed by Larry. Keegan is trying to remove the Macdermots and take possession of their property through his father-in-law and is aided and abetted to this end by the Macdermots' dishonest and deeply feared bailiff, Pat Brady. He realizes that "the days of the Macdermots were over" and that he must "ingratiate himself with Keegan, the probable future 'mather'" (173). This element of the plot comes to a head when Larry refuses Keegan's derisive offer for the estate.

As in almost all of Trollope's novels, the central plank is the problematic love plot. The greater part of the novel hinges on the relationship between Feemy, who walks "as if all the blood of the old Irish princes was in her veins" (11), and Captain Myles Ussher, "a Protestant, from the County Antrim" and "the illegitimate son of a gentleman of large property, who had procured him the situation which he held" (27). Ussher represents a morally corrupt version of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. Much of the narrative is concerned with Thady's well-meaning but ineffective attempts to hold him to account on his sister's behalf, but Thady procrastinates until finally – and disastrously – confronting Ussher when he believes he is abducting Feemy. He attempts to block him by hitting him with a heavy stick and accidentally kills him. In a single blow Thady achieves what the local Ribbonmen have long threatened to do. He subsequently flees and is given shelter by the Ribbonmen in return for taking the oath. Too honest to stay in hiding, Thady turns himself in and is tried and convicted of murder, wrongly convicted for having committed a political crime, an act of Ribbonism, when in fact he was trying to preserve his sister's honour and to prevent what he thought was her abduction. A better description of his crime would be unintended manslaughter with no political intent. The pleas of the local priest on his behalf are in vain as the magistrates feel they have to make an example of him by condemning him to death. The novel ends on a hopeless note with Thady's hanging, his father's madness, and Feemy's death during the birth of Ussher's child (a detail removed from later editions as it was considered too strong for Victorian tastes). There is no sense, whatsoever, of justice having been done. Thus this first novel sets the foundation for a thematic preoccupation with justice and its lack, which would become a staple of all of Trollope's output and not just of his Irish novels.

The descriptions in the novel of the "impoverished town of Mohill" is a cutting indictment of the utter lack of justice in the Ireland to which Trollope was witness. The reader is taken inside a cabin and brought face to face with:

A sickly woman, [...] suckling a miserably dirty infant. [...] Two or three dim children – their number is lost in their obscurity – on a few rotten boards, propped upon equally infirm supports, and covered over with only one thin black quilt – is sitting the master of the mansion; [...] And now you have counted all that this man possesses; other furniture has he none – neither table nor chair, except that low stool on which his wife is sitting. Squatting on the ground – from off the ground, like pigs, only much more poorly fed – his children eat the scanty earnings of his continual labour. And yet for this abode the man pays rent. (126-27)

The tone of indignation is heightened by the use of the present tense which indicates that the novel is commenting, albeit indirectly, on the current state of Ireland. Blame

for this situation is laid at the door of the absentee Anglo-Irish Lord Birmingham, “a kind, good man, a most charitable man!” who helps everyone except his own people:

Is he not [...] a vice-presiding genius for relieving destitute authors, destitute actors, destitute clergymen’s widows, destitute half-pay officers’ widows? [...] In short, is not every one aware that Lord Birmingham has spent a long and brilliant life in acts of public and private philanthropy? ‘Tis true he lives in England, was rarely in his life in Ireland, never in Mohill. Could he be blamed for this? Could he live in two countries at once?” (128)

The scornful tone of Trollope’s description takes much from Edgeworth’s biting portrayals and Lever’s mocking depiction of Owen Leslie in *St Patrick’s Eve* (1845).

If the *Macdermots* gives voice to Trollope’s frustration with the lack of justice available to the majority Catholic underclass in Ireland, *The Kellys and the O’Kellys* offers a more optimistic rewriting of the earlier work. The novel revisits many of the legal issues raised in the *Macdermots* and marries the judgments offered by the enactment of a local, improvised system of justice with a wider vision of equity suggested through this fictional work. If, in the *Macdermots*, Thady’s destiny is determined by an informer’s false words, his sister’s refusal to speak, and by his own loose, incautious words, in *The Kellys and the O’Kellys*, it is the violent threats uttered by the villain, Barry Lynch against his sister, rather than his actual deeds, that bring about his undoing. Lynch’s punishment is enforced by the local community leaders: the Protestant Landlord, the Catholic Doctor, and the Anglican clergyman – and it is shown to be thoroughly deserved. It also carries the narrator’s endorsement even if it rides roughshod over legal niceties.

The legal thread – and the battle, ultimately for land – is a key element in the novel. This is underlined in the opening chapter which features Daniel O’Connell’s trial for conspiracy in Dublin as witnessed by Martin Kelly. At the same time, Trollope sympathetically portrays Martin Kelly as a representative of a consolidating Catholic farmer class as well as “a staunch Repealer” who “had gone as far as Galway, and Athlone, to be present at the Monster Repeal Meetings” (6) and who showed “patriotism by paying a year’s subscription in advance to the *Nation* newspaper” (37). However, the issue of repeal returns only sporadically in the novel and is not nearly as important as the theme of Ribbonism was in the more politically engaged *The Macdermots*. This is because Trollope had sympathy for the motives that lay behind the demands for land reform but no time for the calls for Repeal.

If the *Macdermots* closed on a hopeless note, describing a country blighted with violence, informing, distrust, and injustice, in his second novel, Trollope offers instead, an imagined, wished-for Ireland, a vision of a place where the industrious are rewarded, where landlord and tenants can cooperate, where social progress and a modicum of justice is possible, and where the community knows how to deal with those who do not play to the rules.

But this, to an extent, was an escapist vision written during the ravages of famine, a topic Trollope would eventually take on twelve years later in 1859 in *Castle Richmond*, at times a politically upsetting and even morally offensive work. If the concern of the first two novels was to somehow do justice to the Irish of all social levels, here Trollope's principal concern is to stridently defend British administration of the country during the Famine. One of the key themes of *Castle Richmond* and of the series of letters he wrote earlier in the *Examiner* in defence of British Famine policy is that of the limits of charity, of philanthropy. And while it is easy to condemn him for heartlessness, he does pose a question which is important today: How best can problems of hunger, homelessness, starvation, famine be addressed by those who are fortunate to live in comfort? Is it wrong to argue for complex long-term economic change which will not, however, offer much immediate succour? In our own times of austerity these are not irrelevant questions.

Although *Castle Richmond* masquerades as a love story, what remains with the reader are the sporadically described realities of Famine Ireland that ultimately linger long after the humdrum romantic plot has been forgotten. As Stephen Gwynn commented, the Famine descriptions bear

the stamp not of invention but of dreadful reminiscence. Trollope had evidently seen that ravenous glare somewhere in his comings and goings. ... *Castle Richmond* is the *locus classicus* in literature for description of the Irish famine; for it renders not only the facts of destitution but the state of mind among those who were not destitute, reproduced with a simplicity that makes one rub one's eyes. (Gwynn 77)

The narrative offers a heartrending description when Herbert, the protagonist, enters an unfurnished cabin and finds there a mother dressed in "some rag of clothing", seated on the wet earth, darkness, a child in her arms. It is extraordinary how this vision of impending death slowly takes shape before the eyes of Herbert and of the reader:

But as his eyes became used to the light he saw her eyes gleaming brightly through the gloom. They were very large and bright as they turned round upon him while he moved – large and bright, but with a dull, unwholesome brightness, – a brightness that had in it none of the light of life.

... Her rough short hair hung down upon her back, clotted with dirt, and the head and face of the child which she held was covered with dirt and sores. On no more wretched object, in its desolate solitude, did the eye of man ever fall. (358)

From a writer who underlined Irish injustices in his previous two novels, lambasting the Anglo-Irish for their lack of responsibility and the English for their lack of interest, a reader might well have expected a similar denunciation as to the causes of this lamentable state of affairs. Instead we get a generalization as to the devastating effects of famine as seen throughout the country:

In those days there was a form of face which came upon the sufferers when their state of misery was far advanced, and which was a sure sign that their last stage of misery was nearly run. The mouth would fall and seem to hang, the lips at the two ends of the mouth would be dragged down, and the lower parts of the cheeks would fall as though

they had been dragged and pulled. There were no signs of acute agony when this phasis of countenance was to be seen, none of the horrid symptoms of gnawing hunger by which one generally supposes that famine is accompanied. The look is one of apathy, desolation, and death. (358)

Herbert does not know what to do and rather uselessly offers coins and promises to send help. But, as the narrator notes, “when the succour came it was all too late, for the mother and the two children never left the cabin till they left it together, wrapped in their workhouse shrouds” (362). Trollope is not afraid to look directly at the hunger and starvation but, very differently to Dickens, whom he parodied as “Mr Popular Sentiment”, he admits to the inevitability of the sympathetic and charitable reaction to such awful suffering while hoping to instill in his readers a sense of the greater necessity for an economical response (rather than a short-term charitable one which more often than not is of greater benefit to the giver and his conscience than it is to the receiver). He confronts the reader with these sketches, not to elicit easy sympathy, nor to turn his gaze on Famine victims for aesthetic ends; rather he hopes to take the reader beyond sympathy and to take a sterner stand, a position based on economics. Just as it seemed for a time that no kindly intervention could save Herbert and his family from ruin – so too the Irish must submit to the omniscient justice that has handed down such a tough but ultimately improving sentence upon them. No social class is spared, all must learn their lesson and ultimately rejoice “that the idle, genteel class has been cut up root and branch” and that the poor peasant “has risen from his bed of suffering a better man” (68). But what about the peasant who does not rise from suffering? Necessary collateral damage? Just as it pains Mr Pendergast to bring so harsh a judgment on people like the Fitzgeralds who deserve better, so too it troubles Trollope to deliver such a severe verdict on the Irish in his novel: “It was sad and piteous. Stern and hard as was the man who pronounced this doom, nevertheless the salt tear collected in his eyes and blinded him as he looked upon the anguish which his judgment had occasioned” (216).

The fact is, however, that Herbert and his family *are* rescued from what seems like a certain doom while huge numbers of the starving Irish poor are not. The Fitzgeralds *are* saved because of the intervention, not of providence, but of an act of justice which sees the English conspirators and blackmailers being found out and rightful land ownership being reasserted. No such just reprieve is possible for the mass of Famine victims depicted in the narrative. Despite its attempt to establish a parallel between the family plot and the national calamity, ultimately, because of its insistence on the fatalistic economic-providentialist reading of the Famine, the novel only renders full justice to its privileged protagonists. Despite the insistence on the long-term economic solution, Trollope ultimately asserts that, given the incontrovertible abundance of suffering and death, all that could be done was done and all that can be done is to argue that it is God’s will or worse that the “extermination” was somehow necessary:

Change is good: It is with thorough rejoicing, almost with triumph, that I declare that the idle, genteel class has been cut up root and branch, has been driven forth out of its

holding into the wide world, and has been punished with the penalty of extermination. The poor cottier suffered sorely under the famine, and under the pestilence which followed the famine; but he, as a class, has risen from his bed of suffering a better man. He is thriving as a labourer either in his own country or in some newer – for him better – land to which he has emigrated. He, even in Ireland, can now get eight and nine shillings a-week easier and with more constancy than he could get four some fifteen years since. But the other man has gone, and his place is left happily vacant. (68)

There is a dangerous blindness in this cynical extrapolation which attempts to justify the horror by claiming that the country is, a decade later, on a sounder economic footing. Trollope is guilty here of what might be generously described as effecting a willful disconnect between the piteous suffering to which he is a reliable witness, and its causes. He fails to accept the logical conclusions of what he describes and absolves those who were in positions of responsibility. The justice that he evoked and sought for Ireland and the poorer Irish in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* is reduced here to justice for the Anglo-Irish while the starving natives are left with little more than pity, pathos, and the camouflage of Providence, which is used to justify the economic absurdities of Ireland in the Famine years.

A second major element of Trollope's involvement with Ireland is to be found in his English novels and stories set in England, but featuring a variegated collection of Irish characters in major and minor roles. The most famous is the sensitively drawn Phineas Finn, who stands out against a tradition of English stereotyping, and is a properly individualized Irish character seen developing throughout the long course of the Palliser novels which cover several decades of private and professional life.¹ But there are many other noteworthy characters, such as the loud, objectionable Mrs. Greene in the story "The man who kept his money in a box" (*Tales of All Countries*) whose Irishness is conveyed only through her "considerable brogue superinduced by her energy" (*Complete Shorter Fiction* 253). Another Irish virago, Mistress Morony, plays a cameo in *The Struggles of Brown, Jones Robinson*, a short novel, published in the *Cornhill* in 1861 and 1862. Onesiphorus Dunn, a more positive if still minor Irish character is to be found in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* where he appears as a 'stout gentleman' who is "usually called Siph by his intimate friends." A likeable free-loader, Dunn is "an Irishman, living on the best of everything in the world, with apparently no fortune of his own, and certainly never earning anything." Although a figure of almost no consequence, Trollope cannot resist fleshing out his Irish character:

He did not borrow money, and he did not encroach. He did like being asked out to dinner, and he did think that they to whom he gave the light of his countenance in town owed him the return of a week's run in the country. He neither shot, nor hunted, nor fished, nor read, and yet he was never in the way in any house. He did play billiards, and whist, and croquet – very badly. He was a good judge of wine, and would occasionally condescend to look after the bottling of it on behalf of some very intimate friend. (546)

1 I have written extensively about Finn (and his foil Laurence Fitzgibbon) in *Writing the Frontier. Anthony Trollope between Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015, 138-174.

The marginal literary Irishman, Mr Molloy, whom we encounter in “A Turkish Bath” (*Editor’s Tales*) is far less social adept but offers (among other things) a far more complex window on Trollope’s complicated relationship with the Irish. He is depicted as trying (and failing) to make his way as a writer in London (as Trollope himself did before his move to Ireland) in a story that hints at minority issues that were risky for Trollope to treat in fiction, most prominently, Irishness and homosexuality. Narrated by an unnamed editor, the story tells of his encounter with Molloy in a Turkish bath and of their subsequent meetings at the editor’s office during which Mr. Molloy unsuccessfully attempts to have some of his articles published. Resolution comes when the editor visits Mr Molloy’s home and is informed of his “madness” by his hardworking wife.

The depictions of both the Turkish Bath and of the Irishman’s state of undress suggest a sexually ambiguous, border-line situation. Turkish baths had only recently been introduced into Britain and Ireland by the Scottish diplomat and politician David Urquhart, who had been greatly impressed by the system of dry hot-air baths in use in Spain, Morocco and in the Ottoman Empire, and had described them in his *The Pillars of Hercules* (1850). But they were controversial. In choosing to locate his story in the Jermyn Street Turkish Baths, built under Urquhart’s direction, Trollope would have been very conscious of the lively contemporary debate about the physical and moral benefits or risks of the baths that he describes with “delicious wonder.” He was well aware of the exotic aura of the sauna, a semi-respectable twilight arena for middle-class men to meet and enjoy the attention of what the narrator describes as “those Asiatic slaves who administer to our comfort” (*Complete Shorter Fiction* 516). While most users were respectably married Victorian gentlemen, a minority would have been attracted by the Sauna’s Oriental (a by-word for homosexual) allure.

A detailed sketch is given of the gentlemen’s bathing house, with close-ups of the semi-naked men, their towels and seating arrangements:

some there are who carry it under the arm, – simply as a towel; but these are they who, from English perversity, wilfully rob the institution of that picturesque orientalism which should be its greatest charm. A few are able to wear the article as a turban, and that no doubt should be done by all who are competent to achieve the position. We have observed that men who can do so enter the bathroom with an air and are received there with a respect which no other arrangement of the towel will produce. (515)

The narrator acknowledges that it is “not every man who can carry a blue towel as a turban, and look like an Arab in the streets of Cairo, as he slowly walks down the room in Jermyn Street with his arms crossed on his naked breast”, but concludes “that the second towel should be trailed. The effect is good, and there is no difficulty in the trailing which may not be overcome” (515).

The sauna was also seen to offer protection against what Teresa Breathnach calls “the harried and polluted streets” to middle-class men who believed “that cleanliness was central to the fight against both physical and moral decline, and ultimately, against the threat of the “great unwashed” (Breathnach 164). This protective screen

is violated by the unwanted intrusion of the cigar-smoking Irishman whose very presence would have conjured up images of dirty, diseased, dying and dead Irish from the Famine, still present in the Victorian collective memory at the time of this story (1869).

Noting that “men do depend much on their outward paraphernalia”, the reader is encouraged to pay close attention to clothes codes, to observe the “stout, middle-aged gentleman clad in vestments somewhat the worse for wear, and to our eyes particularly noticeable by reason of the tattered condition of his gloves” (514). The narrator’s social superiority to the down-at-heel Irishman is underlined in his comment that a tattered glove is “the surest sign of a futile attempt at outer respectability” and in his asking if there is “an editor whose heart has not been softened by the feminine tattered glove” before stressing that in “this instance the tattered glove was worn by a man.” The digression about the “feminine” glove suggests that there is something sexually “different” about this Irishman whose cigar he nonetheless accepts. While a cigar is sometimes just a cigar (to appropriate Freud) in this context in which much is necessarily left unsaid, it is not outlandish to intuit that it suggests more.

The day after the encounter, the editor receives a visit from Molloy in his office and notes the same tattered glove and the same plump middle-aged man who is “tattered” (shabby, worn, disordered) not only in appearance but also in his behaviour. In what he calls “the little ruse” of tricking the editor, Molloy behaves shabbily, but beneath there is a more complex disorder, his “madness” (which is hard to credit given his sane determination in seeking out the editor). The nature of the disorder is not resolved in the story. The early sections of the narrative suggest that his presumed homosexuality – which seems to be what the editor/narrator initially finds attractive about him – is the cause of his ruin, but many of the later parts and especially the descriptions of his wife and children, and his wife’s blunt assessment of her husband’s condition – “Her husband was a madman” (529), run against this initial impression. Trollope shies away from pushing the homosexual option and concludes the story in terms of the Irish journalist’s mental derangement. This is to duck the issue but clearly Trollope felt he could not push it any further. This ending comes, however, only after awkward unanswered questions have been raised for the reader to ponder.

What the story stages is a veiled study of homosexual desire in a homoerotic *locus par excellence*. It also presents a surprising reversal of gender roles. Where we usually expect the marriage of a strong Englishman with a weak Irish woman – a commonplace allegory of union in generations of Irish novels – here we find a feminized Irishman utterly dependent on his masculinized English wife. She is the “strong hearty-looking” domestic breadwinner “with that mixture in her face of practical kindness with severity in details, which we often see in strong-minded women who are forced to take upon themselves the management and government of those around them” (529). Mr Molloy exemplifies Ernest Renan’s description of the Irish as an “es-

entially feminine race" (Renan 8), and Trollope here is playing with the ideas about the Celts and the Saxons that were being enunciated by Matthew Arnold in articles in the *Cornhill Magazine* (where the two writers often appeared in the same issues) and later collected as *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. Molloy's wife, on the other hand, incarnates the typically "Saxon" qualities he lacks. But this scenario is further complicated by the English editor's evident attraction to the semi-naked Irishman and his "peculiar and captivating grace" (517).

At a key moment in their exchange, Trollope has the narrator slip from the "we" of public decorum into the private first-person singular. This singular form usage is unusual in a story pointedly told in the plural, a choice which Trollope justified in the *incipit*: "our readers, we hope, will, without a grudge, allow us the use of the editorial we. We doubt whether the story could be told at all in any other form" (514). Why could it not have been told in another form? It is odd that for the bulk of the narrative Trollope eschews a first or third-person singular and thus a more intimate, layered and complex narrative voice and presence and relies on the impersonal "we." He subsequently chooses to disrupt the cohesive "we" relationship established between narrator and reader presumably because in attempting to deal with sexual ambiguity and homosexuality he felt such taboo subjects had to be placed at a distance from a first-person singular narration that might have been more clearly connected with Trollope himself. Thus the author/narrator establishes his credentials as part of the conservative "manly" majority of his readers, only to subtly undermine this position by the shift from the collegial "we" to the individual "I" of prohibited desire. This happens twice: firstly when the narrator realizes the stranger is Irish: "I detected just a hint of an Irish accent in his tone; but if so the dear brogue of his country, which is always delightful to me " (517); secondly when he describes Molloy offering him a cigar and then comments on his attractiveness: "I accepted his offer, and when we had walked round the chamber to a light provided for the purpose we reseated ourselves. His manner of moving about the place was so good that I felt it to be a pity that he should ever have a rag on more than he wore at present" (518).

On these two occasions the editor uses the "I" form to express admiration for Molloy's Irishness and his sexualised physical presence. These two moments are out of sync with the stiff-upper-lip of the first-person plural narrative. It is as if the first-person plural voice functions like the much-talked-of clothes in the story – it presents the public man with his decorous and manly public thoughts while the first-person singular corresponds to the naked man, and is used to communicate private and forbidden thoughts. Society is built on the decorous third-person but beneath the surface lurk very real desires and thoughts that subvert the public front and which Trollope, as far as he believes is possibly without censure, attempts to explore:

"And yet," said we, "men do depend much on their outward paraphernalia."

"Indeed and they do," said our friend. "And why? Because they can trust their tailors when they can't trust themselves." (517)

Trusting convention allows society to keep functioning according to Victorian mores but occasionally, and this story is a good example of it, Trollope allows a ray of light to fall on alternative lives and lifestyles, counter discourses and on the complications that lie below the surface.

Quite independent from whatever sexual ambiguities are present here, the fact remains that the editor can only appreciate the Irishman as an individual when he sees him out of context, literally "in the flesh." Repeatedly in his fiction, Trollope returns to the difficulties encountered by Irish writers (and Irish politicians) in making themselves heard in England. And as someone who experienced similar rejection himself, he is sympathetic.

Trollope's more complex stories (Irish and not) are written with a knowing reader in mind, one with the capacity to read between the lines of his risky counter-hegemonic narratives and to find much lurking within its shadows. In this sense, the Irish stories are representative of all his output and offer significant evidence of a writer who is not afraid to be indelicate (something he was accused of by Thackeray when the latter rejected another "risky" and partly Irish story – "Mrs General Talboys" – for *Cornhill*) nor to challenge the "squeamishness" of his times. So it is wrong to see Trollope as a resolute champion of the status quo, a comforter to the conservative, an un-conflicted imperialist; fairness impels us to focus on his capacity to swim against the current on a variety of political, social, gender and race issues. Which is not to say that he is not also innocent of throwaway or sometimes more considered stances – enunciated in private correspondence but also in his fiction – which undermine much of this. In reality, Trollope was an unconventional figure, a wavering, often conflicted public and private man who vacillates between endorsing commonplace views, but also one capable of offering unexpected counter-readings of a variety of subjects, including Ireland.

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“THE SOUL WITHIN ME BURNED / ITALIA, MY ITALIA, AT THY NAME”: WILDE’S EARLY POEMS AND HIS FASCINATION WITH ITALY

Donatella Abbate Badin

Oscar Wilde’s life and production are closely associated with France as the work of many critics has amply shown (Satzinger, Lottman, Stokes) and it is only too apt that Paris should have honoured him, though belatedly, with a major exhibition at Petit Palais (2016-2017). A hitherto less explored influence is the life-long love affair with Italy, a country that had a great importance in Oscar Wilde’s life and literary production.¹ Three components of his interest in the country, corresponding to three phases of his life, are prominent in an evaluation of the Italian effect on Wilde, namely the aestheticism of the poems following his early visits, the sensationalism of the plays set in Italy (*The Duchess of Padua* and *A Florentine Tragedy*) and, in later life, the outright attraction for a society that was considered more permissive and where Wilde had misplaced hopes of being able to live his life fully, without subterfuges. All three components should be borne in mind in order to fully appreciate the intimate and idealised relationship Wilde entertained with Italy, a relationship which evolved over time but remained constant. The dozen or more poems regarding Italy, which are the subject of this article, may be a minor aspect of his production, but they already reveal an artist imbued with the aesthetics of his age and vitally connected to its concerns thus permitting an assessment of the multiple roles Italy played in British and Irish imaginations.

The poems of his youth, in which he distilled the impressions, emotions and thoughts of his first visits in the seminal Oxonian period, form a multifaceted corpus that can compete with other better known literary views of Italy although, as Ian Small remarks in his introduction to Wilde’s *Complete Works*, “Reviewers did not recognize Wilde as a new and significant mediator of Italian or Greek culture as they had Swinburne or Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning” (“Introduction” xxv). Wilde himself took his role as a poet seriously, expecting that fame would come to him through poetry, and although his only renowned poem is *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, a careful study of the two neglected topics, his early poetic production (examined by Nick Frankel in relation to the poet’s national identity) and the influence of Italy, may provide many surprises concerning Wilde’s precocious craftsmanship and multitude of interests, while baring the contradictions and binary oppositions of the writer’s nature.

1 The reception and influence of Wilde in Italy have been exhaustively studied by Masolino D’Amico and Rita Severi while most other studies concerning Wilde and Italy are of a biographical nature, regarding Wilde’s experiences in southern Italy in the last three years of his life (e. g. Arcara, Dall’Orto). Not much has been written, however, on the representation of Italy in Wilde’s works.

Wilde and Italy

Italy was the country to which Wilde's mother, Jane Elgee, who had taken up the Italian nom-de-plume of Francesca Speranza, attributed her origins.² With such an inheritance it is not surprising that the writer would long for Italy all his life visiting it eight times altogether at critical moments of his existence³ and writing about it in letters, poems and plays.

Wilde, who was in contact with the Parisian intelligentsia during his frequent stays, and spoke and wrote the language fluently to the point of composing *Salomé* in French, was not equally conversant with Italian culture, except for his devotion to Dante. During his first visits to Italy, he was merely a tourist, contemplating artefacts of the past but distant from the cultural life of the moment. As he spoke no Italian, he had few contacts with local people apart from the occasional lovers of his last period. During his time in jail, however, perhaps foreseeing the possibility of retiring to Italy, he started studying Italian. In 1897 he requested an Italian grammar book, a conversation manual, and a dictionary. Among his other book requests were Dante's *Commedia* in the original and in translation, accompanied by critical works on the subject, Goldoni's comedies in the original, and Baggi's *Prosatori italiani*, an anthology of Italian prose writers (Wright 320). While in Naples with Douglas (1897), he took lessons in conversation three times a week and could proudly write to More Adey: "I am getting rather astonishing in my Italian conversation. I believe I talk a mixture of Dante and the worst modern slang" (*Letters* 966-67). His contacts during the months he spent in Naples were not limited to "rent boys" as he also came in contact with some poets and intellectuals among whom he sought translators for *Salomé*, which he hoped to have staged in Italy with Eleonora Duse in the main role. The scandal that was attached to his name, however, made it difficult for him to be accepted among his peers. The novelist Matilde Serao, for one, fiercely snubbed him in the influential Neapolitan daily, *Il Mattino*, which she had founded.

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- 2 Wilde's mother, Speranza, had changed her name from Frances into Francesca "regarding," as Ellmann writes, "the new name as a brilliant vestige of the Elgee family's origins in Italy, where – according to what she maintained was a family tradition – they had been called Algiati. From Algiati to Alighieri was an easy backward leap, and Dante could not save himself from becoming Jane Elgee's ancestor" (6).
 - 3 Wilde had first visited Italy with his mother and brother as a young boy. The sojourns in Italy in which the Italian poems originate took place in summer 1875 and spring 1877 (with J.P. Mahaffy). He returned to Italy in May 1894 (Florence with Douglas); Sept. 1897 to Jan. 1898, Naples, Capri, Sicily with Douglas; twice in 1899: February from Nice to Genoa, to visit his wife, Constance's tomb; April from Switzerland to S. Margherita; 1900, two weeks travelling in Sicily with Harold Mellor, one of his wealthy admirers who invited him to stay with him in Gland (Switzerland) and to visit Palermo and Rome with him.

Wilde's early travels to Italy

Much like the young men of the classical Grand Tour with their "bear-leaders", the twenty-year-old Oscar visited Italy in 1875 with his former Trinity Classics Tutor, J.P. Mahaffy, taking in Venice, Padua, Verona, Milan, Bologna and Florence, but stopping short of Rome for lack of money to his bitter regret, as he bemoaned in the poem "Rome Unvisited".⁴ In the second trip, after following Mahaffy to Greece via Genoa and Ravenna, he finally reached Rome, where his Catholic friend, David Hunter Blair, had arranged an audience with Pope Pius IX. On that occasion he also visited Naples, where he was to return after his release from prison.

The Italy of his "boyish holidays" ("Hélas" 156) which took place during Wilde's Oxford years, had been, as for the young men of the past, a virtual "academy" where he would steep himself in the spirit of the Renaissance, which he had been introduced to by the contrasting teachings of Pater and Ruskin.⁴ The time he spent touring Italy, producing poems that conveyed the seduction of the Mediterranean, but also experiencing the lure of the Catholic religion, were fundamental in honing his aestheticism.

Youthful Oscar's travel impressions are conveyed by both his letters home and the poems he composed in the late seventies, all of them revised and collected by him, mainly in the section titled "Rosa Mystica" of *Poems* 1881, after their individual publication in journals and magazines. Together they constitute a sort of *carnet de voyage* , a travel account where Wilde experiments with many themes and modes, and seeks for his voice.

The letters, chiefly addressed to his parents during his first voyage to Italy, contain few personal touches and, on the whole, are rather conventional in the images of Italy they project and the time-worn epithets they use. The poems, which often draw from the letters, instead, contain more elaborate personal impressions conveyed in a dazzling language and staging an array of selves. Clearly, Italy, besides being an inescapable subject for a budding poet, had also had a stronger emotional impact than appears in the letters, making him declare effusively in "Sonnet on Approaching Italy" (also known as "Salve Saturnia Tellus" from a verse of Virgil's *Georgics*) that his soul burned at the name of "Italia, my Italia" which was "the land for which my life had yearned" (27).

The dozen or more poems inspired by his travels number among his earliest poetic endeavours, published mostly in student journals (e.g. the Trinity College *Kottabos*) but also in the influential *Dublin University Magazine* or *The Month and Catholic Review*. Surprisingly, as Frankel points out, the journals were all Irish, although at that

4 While both Ruskin and Pater preached the doctrine of aestheticism, Ruskin coupled beauty in art to morality while Pater to hedonism; the former found his ideal in the Gothic and the Middle Ages, the latter in the Renaissance. They would have especially disagreed over the idea that the production of beauty could be an end in itself: for Ruskin, self-justified amoral art was anathema. For more insights into the differences between Wilde's two masters see the chapter devoted by Richard Ellmann to the topic.

time Wilde had already moved to England (119). The only one of his Italian poems to appear in England was “Ravenna” (Newdigate prize, 1877), which like other prize-winning poems was published by Thomas Shrimpton of Oxford in 1879.

The representation of Italy in *Poems* 1881

Wilde’s compositions inspired by Italy, an important part of the 1881 collection of poems, have not been recognized as a discrete group and are included in the customary dismissal of his early poetry, being considered insincere, sophomoric, and a vain display of a student’s newly acquired tools. Yet, this group of compositions deserves special attention, if not for the quality of the verse, then at least for the richness and complexity of the topics explored. The Italian poems, actually, dwell on unusual Italian themes – not only blue skies or art and antiquities, but also the temporal power of the Pope, the new Italian state, Dante, and the pains of exile – telling us much about the poet and his times and, especially, about the views that were held in Ireland on post-Risorgimento Italy. Moreover, they do it with a virtuoso technique that shows Wilde’s precocious mastery of formal matters, displaying for instance, as Joseph Bristow remarks, a “classically informed knowledge” of Shelley and Swinburne, of English Romanticism and Pre-Raphaelite poetry that he often imitates or even plagiarizes (74).

The young Oxford student came to Italy at the height of his aesthetic phase and, in his reaction to Utilitarianism, he saw the country as one where beauty (including that of religious practice) was part of everyday life. In this phase of his life, when being surrounded by beautiful objects (as, for instance, by his famed “blue china”)⁵ was of the utmost importance, the beauties of Italy are an incentive to match them with the beauty of verse. Wilde exploits all the literary conventions regarding Italy, all the rhetorical devices in his possession. He piles simile upon simile, accumulating enumerations to create an impression of riches appealing to all the senses, playing with synaesthesia much before perfecting these techniques in *Salomé* or in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The poems are overwritten but dazzling in their excesses. There is a plethora of crimson and gold; of colours and sweet sounds; of sunsets, dawns and moonlight; of nightingales and lilies. As Ellmann wrote, these colours and symbols “recur often enough to suggest that he wants them to echo and re-echo”, creating a sort of “personal pageant” (66). Wilde, in effect, sees nature through the prism of wealthy artefacts and materials (gold, silver, rubies, sapphires), which figured so prominently in the decorative arts of the Gilded Age.

Wilde’s construction of Italy in the sonnets and longer poems is created through impressions – a painter’s brush stroke coupled with a musician’s harmonies – depicting

5 As a student at Oxford, after buying two large vases of Sèvres porcelain, Wilde was supposed to have remarked “I find it harder and harder every day to live up to my blue china” (reported by Ellmann 45).

a country where lushness of colours and sounds dominates all spheres, as in this cloying extended metaphor describing a sunset in his prize poem "Ravenna":

The sky was as a shield that caught the stain
Of blood and battle from the dying sun,
And in the west the circling clouds had spun
A royal robe, which some great God might wear,
While into ocean-seas of purple air
Sank the gold galley of the Lord of Light. (53-54)

"Sonnet written at Genoa," in which "oranges [...] / Burned as bright lamps of gold [...] / Like silver moons the pale narcissi lay" and "curved waves [...] streaked the sapphire bay" (33) may well be the epitome of Wilde's style in this period for the brightness of precious minerals, the presence of emblematic flowers, the opposition of sun and moon, the variety of colours. Anything apt to awaken sensuous responses in the audience is resorted to. One gets the impression that Wilde was not enamoured with Italy, but with his ability to create beautiful, bejewelled images of Italy. Yet often the display of sensuous imagery is a device used to introduce a contrast with the poet's aspirations to simplicity and spirituality, as in this poem when the singing of a "young boy-priest" reminds him of Christ's Passion, "The Cross, the Crown, the Soldiers, and the Spear" (33).

Paganism and spirituality in the poems

Several of the poems frame a Christian or spiritual core within a sensuous semi-pagan aesthetic structure. "Graffiti d'Italia," with its three parts ("San Miniato," part I and "By the Arno" parts II and III), counters personifications (moon, dawn and morning) and mythical and symbolic objects (the nightingale, the lily) with the poet's meditative mood as he ascends towards the house of Fra Angelico "who saw the heavens open wide" (6). As Ellmann, a fine detector of Wilde's contradictions, wryly sums up, "San Miniato" presents Fra Angelico "among the nightingales, and among the unchastened oleanders and myrtles. The Christian scene is more than faintly subverted by the pagan birds" (56).

Wilde's solid classical background can be detected in the frequent recurrence of Greek mythology and a pastoral atmosphere used per se or as the background to spiritual revelation. This is particularly noticeable in "Ravenna", intended for an academic audience. Immersed in the pagan natural world that surrounds the city, the narrator of the poem perceives that "once again / the woods are filled with gods we fancied slain" and dreams a "Hellenic dream" of "goat-foot Pan" and "startled Dryad maid" (50), of "laughing shepherd-boy/ Pip[ing] his reed" and of "Lethe's waters, and that fatal weed / Which makes a man forget his fatherland" (47). The dream, however, is interrupted by the chiming of the bells and the speaker is brought back to thoughts of "black Gethsemane" and a more spiritual dimension (50).

Many of the Italian poems are, indeed, structured around the theatrical pose of a tormented believer (as Wilde actually was at the time), torn by the dialectical opposi-

tion of soul and the senses. We tend to forget that, as Ronald Schuchard writes, “[t]he encrusted portrait of Wilde as priest of paganism, apostle of aestheticism, host of homoeroticism and victim of Victorian culture” must also “accommodate the image of Wilde as spiritual voyager” (371).

The desire to be in Italy, in point of fact, besides having the usual motivations – climate, the enjoyment of nature, and of the common European heritage of art, culture, and history – is strongly linked to Wilde’s life-long fascination with Catholicism that reached a peak in the mid-seventies and recurred throughout his life, culminating in his deathbed conversion. Rather than a thought-out theological conviction, however, at this early stage his interest in Catholicism was of an aesthetic nature. In a letter to his friend William Ward written during the first visit to Italy, he urged him to “feel the awful fascination of the Church, its extreme beauty and sentiment” and expressed the desire to “seek the shelter of a Church which simply enthral[s] me by its fascination” (*Letters* 31). “The very word fascination,” writes Ellis Hanson, “resounds throughout Wilde’s letters and fiction, often in a Roman Catholic context” (267). Being at Oxford in the wake of the Oxford movement and closely connected to people captivated by the aestheticism of Catholic rituals affected Wilde’s attitude towards religion and, consequently, his idea of Italy. His two visits came at a time when he contemplated “going over”; at Oxford he consorted with High Church people or even converts to Catholicism. This phase culminated in the 1877 visit to Rome and the audience with Pope Pius IX, arranged and paid for by his friend David Hunter Blair, which, however, failed to lead to a conversion. Indeed, almost in the same days, he was visiting the graves of Keats and Shelley in the Protestant cemetery of Rome and writing in a secular drift about the two poets, while also conceiving the long poem “Ravenna” which is quite critical of religion, being a politically correct composition intended to earn him the Newdigate prize.⁶ Wilde himself ironized about his being caught “in the wiles of the Scarlet Woman” (*Letters*, 30-31), at the same time confessing, “I have suffered very much for my Roman fever” (31). The poems are a report of these sufferings and vacillations.

The longing for Rome “unvisited” – clearly not an antiquarian Rome, but the Rome of the Popes – is represented as a “steep and long” climb on the “sacred way”, a painful pilgrimage ending with the offer, on his side, of “a barren gift of song” and of the experience of the “dark night of the soul,” the condition of being unable to reach “Him who now doth hide his face” (“Rome Unvisited” 10). His ascent to San Miniato (“See, I have climbed the mountain side”) is also like a pilgrimage culminating in the theatrically desperate lines “My heart is weary of this life / And over-sad to sing again” and in the prayer to the Virgin Mary, “Show to the world my sin and shame” (“San Miniato” 6). The sin the persona of the poet feels guilty of is that of letting himself be

6 The Newdigate prize instituted in 1827 in memory of Sir Roger Newdigate, was, and still is, awarded to undergraduate students of the University of Oxford for the best composition in verse.

attracted by the sensuous beauty of the world, of indulging in "dear Hellenic hours" drowning "all memory" of Christ's "bitter pain" ("Sonnet Written in Holy Week at Genoa" 33).

Wilde's religiosity, however, was not exempt from aestheticism. Sumptuous ceremonies fascinated him. What he most desired to see in Rome "unvisited," for instance, were the magnificent rituals in the Vatican:

When, bright with purple and with gold,
Come priest and holy Cardinal,
And borne above the heads of all
The gentle Shepherd of the Fold. ("Rome Unvisited" 8-9)

On the other hand, the pomp of the Easter ceremonies in St. Peter's, symbolised by those same "silver trumpets" he had yearned to hear in "Rome Unvisited," leads the poet to contemplate the simplicity of Christ's life:

My heart stole back across wide wastes of years
To One who wandered by a lonely sea,
And sought in vain for any place of rest. ("Easter Day" 37)

The description of an Annunciation by Beato Angelico seen in Florence exalts the sobriety of the painter's execution, as compared with the speaker's elaborate fantasies drawn from his classical repertoire: the myth of Danae being made pregnant by "a rain of gold" or of Semele's "white limbs" being caught by fire. The depiction of the "supreme mystery" of the Annunciation elicits instead an image of great simplicity matching the austerity of the painting:

Some kneeling girl with passionless pale face,
An angel with a lily in his hand,
And over both with outstretched wings a Dove. ("Ave Maria" 41-42)

Politics: An Irish Bias

Wilde's religious fervour, whether favouring simplicity or pomp, does not only add spirituality to his poetry but also strikes a political note. The pagan joy, conveyed by lush imagery throughout "Sonnet on Approaching Italy," conflicts with the flat allusion to the recent political events in Italy, namely the Pope's purported imprisonment in the Vatican:

But when I knew that far away at Rome
In *evil bonds a second Peter lay*,
I wept to see the land so very fair. (27)

Fervent Catholics in Ireland and elsewhere in the world were shocked by the Pope's self-imposed captivity when the temporal rule of the Church ended with the birth of a unified Italy, with Rome as its capital. Wilde, too, as an Irishman, often voiced mixed feelings about the Italian Risorgimento: Rome in "Urbs Sacra Aeterna" is a "city crowned by God, discrowned by man" and defiled by "[t]he hated flag of red and white and green" (35). In "Italia," the conquest of the country is described as a failure

and Italy as “fallen” in spite of the fact that “clamorous armies stride / From the North Alps to the Sicilian tide!” because “Rome’s desecrated town / Lies mourning for her God-anointed King” (38). By taking this position Wilde goes against the opinions held by liberal-minded intellectuals at Oxford and in England who were generally in favour of unified Italy expressing admiration for the heroes of the Risorgimento and the new king. The repeated occurrence of lines like the above in Wilde’s poetry, therefore, counters the tenets of his intellectual milieu, but if Wilde’s stance is contextualised bearing in mind his Irish origins, it will not appear surprising. There had, actually, never been much understanding between Italian and Irish nationalists, and when the new Italian state tried to make Rome its capital, anti-Italian sentiments became widespread in Ireland influencing also a Protestant Irishman as Wilde was.⁷

Far from being “the first intellectual from Ireland” dismantling “imperial ideology from within its own structures,” as Kiberd purports (32), in these poems Wilde appears, on the contrary, as a supporter of the imperial dream of papacy and, possibly, of other forms of imperialism. As “questions of Catholicism slip into questions of Irishness” (Frankel 120), his Irishness comes to the fore in the Italian poems, while the poetic production that followed his move to England in 1879 “embrace[s] England as a topic” and shows the desire to “inhabit an English cultural tradition,” as Frankel argues (123). In poems such as “Ave Imperatrix,” writes Frankel, “the poet seems to inhabit an England imagined as the visible center of the British Isles” (123), while in “The Conquest of Time” the use of the pronoun “We” “identifies the poem’s speaker as English, himself subject to the process of imperial decline” which the poet sorrowfully perceives. Both the Italian and English poems can thus be seen to be tinged at times by imperialist sympathies, but the 1881 edition of *Poems* shows an important distinction between the poems published in Ireland, where Wilde espouses the positions of his fellow-Irishmen, and those published in England where he speaks from an English point of view even when addressing Italian subjects. In “Ravenna,” intended for an official, Protestant audience, the Oxford jury of the Newdigate prize for example, he exults that “Dante’s dream is now a dream no more” (51), in other words that Italy is finally a country and not a geographic entity, and he celebrates with enthusiasm the coronation in Rome of Victor Emmanuel II, the first king of united Italy, whose entrance in the new capital had made the Pope a prisoner of the Vatican:

at last
 Italia’s royal warrior hath passed
 Rome’s lordliest entrance, and hath worn his crown
 In the high temples of the Eternal Town!
 The Palatine hath welcomed back her king,
 And with his name the seven mountains ring. (“Ravenna” 51)

To Hunter Blair, who complained about his changed position, Wilde replied “You must know I should have never, never won the Newdigate if I had taken the Pope’s

7 See Barr, Finelli and O’Connor on the complex relationship between Ireland and the Italian Risorgimento.

side against the King's" (Hunter Blair 137-8 quoted by Ellmann 91). However, his position towards Italy in "Ravenna" was not the only occurrence of a change of heart dictated by opportunism. When the 1881 volume was published, an anonymous reviewer of *The Spectator* commented on Wilde's inconsistencies: "In one poem Mr Wilde breathes out execrations against Italy for the irreverence done to the Pope and in another panegyricizes Mazzini for driving the Pope out of Rome" (*The Critical Heritage* 36). The poem mentioned is "Humanitad," a rather garbled philosophical and political composition, in a long section of which Wilde celebrates Mazzini and a moment of the Italian Risorgimento in which the children of the "most blessed among nations and most sad" had risen at the call of the republican politician. The day he commemorates is that of the battle of Aspromonte⁸ in which for the "dear sake" of "Our Italy! Our mother visible! / [...] the young Calabrian fell." The short battle pitted the Republicans, who were trying to fulfil the dream of a unified Italy with Rome as its capital, against the Monarchy that protected the frontiers of the Papal states betraying thus, as Wilde implies, the revolution. Gone is Wilde's former staunch defence of the Pope's rights to rule over Rome and its territory! The poem actually exalts Mazzini, "the great triumvir," for the role he had played in 1849 and 1862, attempting both times to free Rome from the Pope,⁹ an event which, when it finally took place in 1870, filled Wilde with indignation. Mazzini, instead, is termed emphatically as the one "Who on Rome's lordliest shrine / lit for men's lives the light of Marathon, / and bare to sun-forgotten fields the fire of the sun!" His feat of bringing liberty to Rome makes him superior to the conquerors of ancient times:

[...] no mightier conqueror
 Clomb the high Capitol in the days of old
 When Rome was indeed Rome, for Liberty
 Walked like a bride beside him. ("Humanitad" 99)

Comparisons, like the one above, between the past, "when Rome was indeed Rome", and the present are a popular *topos* in the literature regarding Italy, but Wilde uses the standard of the past to measure different and opposing modern realities. While the enemy of the Pope is exalted in "Humanitad," in "Urbs Sacra Aeterna," Ancient Rome that "ruled the whole world for many an age's span" is belittled in comparison to its present role as the city where pilgrims converge to "kneel before the Holy One, / The prisoned shepherd of the Church of God" (35). That same "Holy One", so exalted and pitied in several poems, however, is ridiculed in "Humanitad" as "an old man who grabbed rusty keys" (99) or as "a vile thing" lurking "within / Its

8 Aspromonte is a mountainous region of Calabria where in 1862 the Italian King's army defeated a group of republican followers of Garibaldi and Mazzini who were attempting to free Rome from the Pope and make it the capital of Italy. Very few rebels escaped and Garibaldi was wounded and imprisoned.

9 Mazzini had played an important role in the establishment of the short-lived republic of Rome in 1849, becoming the leader of the triumvirate that ruled over it. In 1862, shortly after the partial unification of Italy, he joined forces with Garibaldi in his failed attempt to make Rome the capital of Italy.

sombre house, alone with God and memories of sin" (100). Similarly, the Church, for which Wilde had felt so deeply, is defined here as "That murderous mother of red harlotries" (100).

Wilde, raised in Dublin by a nationalist mother sympathising with Catholicism, but attending Protestant schools (Portora and Trinity), had absorbed both the Catholic hostility towards the Risorgimento and the new Italian state, and the Anglo-Irish admiration for these same objects. The contradictory allegiances of his society are reflected in his poetry. One must not, however, consider Wilde a hypocrite playing the devout Catholic or the fierce anti-clerical depending on his targeted audience. "Contradictoriness was his orthodoxy", writes Ellmann, quoting Wilde's admission that "My next book may be a perfect contradiction of my first" (143). And so were his poems, sometimes condemning modern Italy, sometimes exalting it; lamenting the fate of the Pope or singing paeans to the conquerors of Rome; favouring bright paganism and deriding grey religion or professing his longings for faith and asceticism; and ruining his enjoyment of sensuous beauty. As John Sloan argues, the contradictoriness may be attributed to his origins: "Caught between the clashing irreconcilable claims of Protestant and Catholic nationalism, and of Englishness and Irishness, [h]is is the anarchy of the mind and heart" (104). Or, more simply, the reason for the contradictions may be, as Frankel suggests in his article, the place of publication of the poems. Most Italian poems were first published in Irish magazines and addressed Irish audiences. What cannot be contested is that Wilde was able to see both sides of a question and identify with them using different viewpoints as triggers for the production of an aesthetic object, an ambition much more important than consistency or truth to one's feelings. No matter what side Wilde took, however, the poems show that his interest in Italy was keen and multi-faceted although his loyalties were changing.

Wilde and Dante

The great veneration Wilde showed for Dante as a poet of visions and of exile is another aspect of his interest in Italy. Dante, "the supreme modern poet" who had explored "all the complexities of the modern soul" is constantly present in his thoughts and poetry, a source of inspiration and a subject for his writings. The Italian poet had been a household name since Wilde's earliest years as his mother, Speranza, who claimed a hypothetical kinship with the Alighieri family, had translated some of his poems (Wright, 57). The Italian poet features prominently in Wilde's early poetry as well as in his prose works, especially in the essays of *Intentions*, in "The Soul of Man under Socialism" and, especially, in *De Profundis*, as both Dominic Manganiello and Jay Losey have illustrated. Indeed, "The figure of Dante," writes Manganiello, "casts his shadow over Wilde's imagination from the outset of the latter's literary career" (394).

It was the theme of exile to which Wilde particularly responded, creating, as Losey argues, "an aesthetic of exile" (430) in tune with the rhetoric of exile, whether politi-

cal, religious, artistic or linguistic, which resonates in much Irish literature. The young student had read the *Divine Comedy*, a cult text among the Victorians and the Pre-Raphaelites, and was familiar with Cacciaguida's prophecy in *Paradiso* XVII, 58-60, in which Dante's grandfather foretells the poet's future exile: "Tu proverai sì come sa di sale / Lo pane altrui e com'è duro calle / lo scendere e il salir per l'altrui scale" (in Sinclair's translation: "Thou shalt prove how salt is the taste of another man's bread and how hard is the way up and down another man's stairs"). Wilde had first referred to this prophecy, also reproducing Cacciaguida's pun on the name of Dante's patrons, the Scala (meaning stairs in Italian), in an 1875 letter to his mother where he describes Dante as "weary of trudging up the steep stairs [...] of the Scaligeri when in exile at Verona" (*Letters* 11). The words from the letter reappear in the first-person sonnet spoken by Dante, "At Verona," inspired by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's narrative poem, "Dante at Verona", and the eponymous painting, as well as being quoted in the elegiac prize-poem "Ravenna," a long section of which is dedicated to Dante who had lived, died and been buried in the city. In both poems Wilde dwells on the humiliation of Dante's politically motivated exile which, as Jay Losey points out, "has become a literary paradigm of the artist pitted against institutional authority" (429). A personal touch is added in the longer poem as the speaker establishes a kinship with the Italian poet by addressing him by name;

Alas! my Dante! thou hast known the pain
of meaner lives – the exile's galling chain,
Oh How steep the stairs within king's houses are,
And all the petty miseries which mar
Man's nobler nature with the sense of wrong. ("Ravenna" 48)

In the sonnet, the lines about the stairs (which reappear verbatim in "Ravenna") had offered the occasion for a further pun on the name of Dante's patron, Cangrande della Scala, meaning in Italian "the great Hound of the stairs":

How steep the stairs within Kings' houses are
For exile-wearied feet as mine to tread,
And O how salt and bitter is the bread
Which falls from this Hound's table. ("At Verona" 46)

Notwithstanding the facetiousness of repeated puns, the sonnet conveys the anguish of the Italian poet who feels betrayed by his native city and longs for death, thus providing a parallelism for the theatrical death wish often voiced by the persona of Wilde in his early poems. In this first Dantean visitation, Wilde indeed prophetically identifies with Dante's plight long before experiencing personally the "salt and bitter bread" of alienation and exile. Even in those early days as an Irishman in England, in spite of his efforts to fit in, Wilde was an outsider trying to compensate for a sense of otherness through his eccentricities. If to this we add that his sexuality did not conform to the prevailing norms of masculinity, we may understand that he could easily sympathise with Dante's exclusion, implying that he, too, in spite of his popularity at Oxford, had known the bitterness of something like exile. One of his masks, in fact, was that of the non-conformist and the outsider.

Another aspect of Dante's influence is Wilde's use of ecstatic visions often of women and of salvific love. The closing lines of the sonnet "At Verona", in which Dante states that he possesses "what none can take away, / My love, and all the glory of the stars" (46), besides alluding to the vision of stars which concludes each section of *The Divine Comedy*, also offers the occasion for comparisons with the Irish poet's own aspirations: love of a Beatrice-like woman and a glimpse of something uplifting like Dante's stars.

Unlike Dante's visions of Beatrice, however, the women he describes in the early poetry are closer to the women of the "fleshly school of poetry" like, for instance, the marble-throated lily girl of "Madonna Mia" in front of whom he feels "o'ershadowed by the wings of awe / Like Dante when he stood with Beatrice" (118). Allusions to Beatrice are also to be found in "La Bella Donna della Mia Mente" or in "Flower of Love", in which Wilde bemoans his sensuous love for a woman because it has kept him from the sort of visions Dante had had:

[...] Had I not been made of common clay
I had climbed the higher heights unclimbed yet, seen the fuller air, the larger day
.....
I had trod the road which Dante treading saw the suns of seven circles shine,
Ay! perchance had seen the heavens opening, as they opened to the Florentine.
("Flower of Love" 126)

Unlike the missed vision in "Flower of Love," in "Amor Intellectualis" Wilde has a seven-fold vision, echoing the seven planetary heavens in Dante's *Paradiso*, which, he claims, is the most important finding of his literary explorations. The intertextual dialogue between poets becomes polemical in the sonnet "A Vision", in which Dante is reproached for not including in his underworld the three great Greek playwrights, Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. Wilde feels it is his duty to put things right by creating his own classical Pantheon and rewriting a scene where Dante interrogates Beatrice as to the identity of three hieratic figures.

As much as Wilde at this stage enjoyed identifying with Dante, whether as a lover, a visionary poet, or an exile, it is only in the bitter days of his imprisonment that *The Divine Comedy* became vital for him. The allegory of the descent into hell in order to re-emerge in a Paradise of love and divine revelation held his attention especially in the composition of *De Profundis*, as Joseph Losey has amply demonstrated in his "The Aesthetics of Exile" which also studies the presence of the Italian poet in Wilde's essays and prose work.

Keats and Homoeroticism

The theme of exile in Wilde's youthful poetry, however, was not only limited to Dante: Italy, indeed, is consecrated as the land of literary exile by the long section of "Ravenna" dedicated to Byron as well as by the two sonnets "The Grave of Shelley" and "The Grave of Keats," written after a visit to the Protestant Cemetery in Rome.

The sonnet on Keats, indeed, can be said to have escaped the general neglect of Wilde's early poetry for the one often-quoted line: "The youngest of the Martyrs here is lain, / Fair as Sebastian, and as foully slain" (36) in that it introduces a theme which is latent in Wilde's early writings, the sensuous attraction for the male body as exhibited in Italian art and in real life. The key lies in the allusion to St. Sebastian, a homoerotic symbol as may be deduced from the explanatory note to the sonnet:

As I stood beside the mean grave of this divine boy, I thought of him as a Priest of Beauty slain before his time; and the vision of [Guido Reni's] Saint Sebastian came before my eyes as I saw him at Genoa, a lovely brown boy, with crisp, clustering hair and red lips, bound by his evil enemies to a tree and, though pierced by arrows, raising his eyes with divine, impassioned gaze towards the Eternal Beauty of the opening Heavens. (36)

Throughout his visit to Italy, Wilde had been aware of the erotic attraction of Italian art. His first published prose piece, a review of the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in London (*Dublin University Magazine*, July 1877) displays his attraction for the limbs of beautiful boys who could compete with "the Charmides of Plato":

Guido's St. Sebastian in the Palazzo Rosso at Genoa is one of those boys, and Perugino once drew a Greek Ganymede for his native town, but the painter who most shows the influence of this type is Correggio, whose lily-bearer in the Cathedral at Parma, and whose wild-eyed, open-mouthed St. Johns in the 'Incoronata Madonna' of St. Giovanni Evangelista, are the best examples in art of the bloom and vitality and radiance of this adolescent beauty. ("The Grosvenor Gallery 1877" 6)

One of the causes of Wilde's love for Italy, the admiration for the masculine body which was sublimated in the many lines of aestheticizing enthusiasm in his writings of the 1870s, would be acknowledged overtly in his later life and confirmed by his repeated visits to the country. However, this admiration found no echo in his writings apart from a few letters to friends. His early writings, instead, and especially the Italian poems, converted the necessity to conceal and disguise into "something rich and strange."

While, as Ian Small writes in his Introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of the *Poems and Poems in Prose*, "[m]ost accounts of Wilde's writing have tended to be dismissive of his early works, particularly the poetry, which has often been regarded as second-rate and derivative" (xv), these juvenile poems must be seen as evidence of his variety of interests and moods and of his precocious craftsmanship. They mix the aestheticism of his impressions of natural scenery, art and cityscapes with bouts of often theatrical self-searching. Human love and divine love, paganism and mysticism go hand in hand, while intimate religious verse alternates with political religious verse (in support of the Pope) which, in its turn, is in contrast with public political verse (in support of the Italian king). In politics, he goes from monarchical feelings to mild republicanism. The attractions of the flesh contrast with an aspiration to ascetical simplicity. Pan, Christ and Eros call in turn for his enthusiastic attention. *The stark contrasts in this exploratory phase are indicative of Wilde's wavering between various constructions of self and Italy, and bear testimony of the confusion re-*

garding his views on life and his role as an artist in the early years of his career. Such contradictoriness, however, should not be regarded as a shortcoming, but as a sign of Wilde's belief in the autonomy of art and in the superiority of lying and wearing masks as opposed to reflecting reality. As Wilde quipped, "Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known" ("The Soul of Man" 142).

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BEYOND TRANSITION: ELIZABETH BOWEN'S *SEVEN WINTERS*

Elena Cotta Ramusino

The present essay intends to analyse *Seven Winters – Memories of a Dublin Childhood*, an autobiographical account of Elizabeth Bowen's early winters in Dublin, both as a text *per se* and as a counterpart, or "a minor intertext" (Stewart 334) – as it has long been considered – to her more extended autobiographical work, *Bowen's Court*¹. *Seven Winters* and *Bowen's Court* came out in the same year and are now published together, thus forming an interesting macrotext in Elizabeth Bowen's autobiographical writing.

An extremely productive writer, author of novels, short stories and occasional prose ranging from articles and reviews to introductions and afterwords, Elizabeth Bowen also tried her hand at writing autobiography. If *Seven Winters* and *Bowen's Court* are her most famous ones, they are not her only autobiographical pieces. In early 1972 she had shown her literary executor, Spencer Curtis Brown, two chapters of an autobiography which was to be entitled *Pictures and Conversations*, a project that was interrupted by her death. Following her will, Curtis Brown published it posthumously in 1975. Hermione Lee collected "Pictures and Conversations" in *The Mulberry Tree – Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* (1986) in a section entitled "Autobiography", and she chose to put before it "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met", an autobiographical sketch Bowen wrote in 1944, shortly after the death of Sarah Barry, Bowen's Court housekeeper, the 'character' of the title. Taura Napier also includes *A Time in Rome* in Bowen's "declared works of autobiography" (Napier 78), while Neil Corcoran defines it as "her only travel book" (Corcoran 19); neither Napier nor Corcoran mention "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met" among Bowen's autobiographical texts.

Bowen's Court is a bulky autobiographical volume. It is both her family's history through the Big House the family had identified with, being the account of the history of a building encompassing the history of her family and her class, and her deflected autobiography. According to Taura Napier's definition, this is a characteristic mode of Irish female autobiographers and a "useful theoretical model that has particular resonance for the self-narratives of Irish women [...], a narrative mode in which the protagonist is ever present yet not apparently central, where the author resists being identified as the heroine of her work" (Napier 70). *Bowen's Court* traces the history of her ancestors from the arrival of Colonel Bowen from Wales and her family's later building of the Big House, to Elizabeth Bowen herself, the last descendant. In the "Afterword" the author wrote for the second edition of the book in 1964, she revealed

1 Quotations from the volume *Bowen's Court and Seven Winters* will be followed by page number in brackets.

to her readers that the house no longer existed: being no more able to maintain it, she sold it to a neighbour, who destroyed it, so that "it never lived to be a ruin" (459).

Although in *Bowen's Court* she recourses, where she can, to documents and family papers, she admittedly blends history and story, reality and imagination, thus providing a self-conscious intentional mode to her approach to autobiographical writing: "I have made the frame of this family history from hearsay and some certain retrieved facts" (452). As Napier argues, it is "all the more interesting that in recalling her family's history she also articulates a description of her autobiographical method – 'the version that most appeals to me' – that entails moulding history and legend into a more pleasing pattern" (Napier 79). Bowen herself reflected on the art of autobiographical writing in an essay she wrote on the topic in 1951². Here she defined contemporary autobiography as made "[o]ut of impressions" (Bowen, "Autobiography" 204) and as deriving "from query, being tentative rather than positive, no longer didactic, but open-minded [...] mobile, exploratory" (Bowen, "Autobiography" 201), thus giving a frame of personal creativity to the writing of autobiography. This personal creative approach to autobiographical writing goes hand in hand with the reticence that she cultivated as to personal exposure, so that, while allowing that *Seven Winters* "could be called a fragment of autobiography", in the introduction she wrote for the 1962 American edition of the volume, Elizabeth Bowen made it clear that "it is as much of my life story as I intend to write – that is, to write *directly*" (Foster, "Prints" 154, emphasis added), a statement which recalls what she had already expressed in "Autobiography": "The author seeks expression [...] but *self-expression* only at one remove" (Bowen, "Autobiography" 200).

While *Bowen's Court* takes into consideration her ancestors and her family in history, *Seven Winters* focusses on the early period of her own personal history; it is an insight into a child's experiences, thoughts and imagination, and especially into her relation to a defined area in Dublin. "If Bowen's Court is constructed as a site of history, Dublin is a site of memory" (Stewart 336), and in a way space and time overlap in Bowen's autobiographical writing. Both *Bowen's Court* and *Seven Winters* testify to the importance of places in Elizabeth Bowen's aesthetics: places are even more important than characters in her fiction, they are the original embryos of her writing. According to the seasonal divide of young Elizabeth's life, Bowen's Court was the place where she spent her summers, while the house in Dublin existed only in winters: "I used to believe that winter lived always in Dublin, while summer lived always in County Cork" (465), therefore space and time intertwine and mingle so that she was unable to understand that she had been born in Dublin: "But how? – my birthdays are always at Bowen's Court" (466).

She spent her first seven years in Ireland. When she was seven, her father had a serious breakdown and Bowen's mother and Elizabeth were ordered to leave him

2 "Autobiography", first printed as "Autobiography as an Art" in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, now in *Afterthought – Pieces about Writing*, 199-204.

alone to recover. So they went to England, where they lived in many different places, frequently changing hotels and houses, thus totally reversing a life of fixed and secure habits and its resulting certainties. *Seven Winters* ends on the watershed of her father's illness: "When I was seven years old, Herbert Place was given up: my father's mental illness had to be fought alone; my mother and I were ordered to England" (512).

Autobiographical writing in wartime

Both *Bowen's Court* and *Seven Winters* were written during the second World War: The former was begun in the early summer of 1939 and finished in 1941, the latter was a sort of spin-off of Bowen's *Court*, and both were published in 1942. Both centered on houses; they were written in London at a time when houses were daily destroyed. Both, characteristically, keep destruction away from their narratives and from their houses. The war years favoured a recourse to memory: the turmoil, instability and danger brought with them the need to reflect on the past, origins, roots, in search of stability and comfort. As Bowen herself wrote in December 1942, "War makes us more conscious, anxiously conscious, of the value of everything that is dear and old" (Bowen, "Christmas" 128). Memory is a bulwark of civilization and of the survival of the self: "To survive, not only physically but spiritually, was essential" (Bowen, "Post-script" 193).

The war, then, "precipitated a vogue for precocious autobiography" (Foster, "The Irishness" 117); it represented, for Elizabeth Bowen as for several other writers, the moment of crisis which usually triggers the exercise of memory and the re-examination of one's own past to which autobiographical writing is related. She "turned to autobiography in search of the continuities of private life that [...] the random effects of war threatened to extinguish or [...] render irrelevant" (Grubgeld 36).

It is not by chance, then, that during the war years Bowen devoted herself mostly to autobiographical writing, to which short stories and a novel, *The Heat of the Day*, started in 1944, are to be added. She lived mainly in London, where she was an air-raid warden and experienced the destruction, loss and fear brought about by the German air-raids on the city. She also travelled to Ireland on an assignment for the British government to report on Irish opinions about the war.

In her short stories of the period, houses, so dear to Bowen and so relevant to the Anglo-Irish class she belonged to, are subject to the threat of war, they are always at risk, or destroyed, or they barely or only partly survive. The daily destruction brought about by the war pervades all her writing of the period,³ not only her short stories, but

3 In a letter to Virginia Woolf dated January 5th, 1941, Bowen wrote: "When your flat went did that mean all the things in it too? All my life I have said 'Whatever happens there will always be tables and chairs' – and what a mistake" (Bowen, *The Mulberry Tree* 216-17). An observation echoed in Bowen's short story "Sunday Afternoon", first pub-

also articles and prefaces, which makes a striking contrast to the permanence of the houses she recalls both in *Bowen's Court* and in *Seven Winters* – “The search for indestructible landmarks in a destructible world” (Bowen, “Postscript” 194)

In the essays and introductions of those years or those immediately following, she often mentions the hallucinatory atmosphere of the war and “the state of lucid abnormality” (Bowen, “Postscript” 191) in which everybody lived. It is the need to cling to saving memories, “[t]he search for indestructible landmarks in a destructible world” (Bowen, “Postscript” 194) that makes Elizabeth Bowen “look back from an ‘anaesthetized and bewildered present’ to a lost stability and innocence” (Lee vii), from war-time London to Bowen’s Court and to her Dublin childhood winters in *Seven Winters*.

The drive to the past is the subject of “The Bend Back”, an essay dealing with nostalgia, which Bowen wrote in 1950, where she reflects on the sense of dislocation, acknowledging that it can be projected out not only in space, but also in time. The desire for an elsewhere has turned for many contemporaries into a dislocation in time: “we have shifted our desire for the ideal ‘elsewhere’ from space to time” (Bowen, “Bend” 58), that is, to the past. Once again, space and time seem to overlap.

The child and the city of Dublin

In the same essay she wrote that “one invests one’s identity *in* one’s memory” (Bowen, “Bend” 56, original emphasis). Interestingly, the identity she constructs in her autobiographical writings is never only nor mainly her own individual identity, but rather the identity of her family and of her class. The child of *Seven Winters* is aware of “some unwritten law of our time and class” (499) and shares this collective identity. The urban spaces of *Seven Winters* are perceived as a microcosm constituted by a very small portion of central Dublin, encircled by the Canal, where the Bowens’ home is, at Herbert Place. It is such a small area that, when her dance teacher selects her for “a sort of gala or exhibition at the Rathmines Town Hall” (501) – further south – a “rare cab” has to be summoned, because her mother, like “several other mothers – [does] not know how to find” (501) the place. Her Ascendancy microcosm is also set apart from the “red roads” south of the Canal and their well-to-do-houses. The richness of these mansions, where she was sometimes invited for parties, “with their frosty gardens and steamy conservatories” (502) filled her governesses with awe but was despised by her mother, as the expression of new, competing social forces: “Quite often, one’s cab crossed the canal, for the spreading mansions along the red roads [...] vied with the cliff-like blocks round Merrion Square” (502).

In her childhood topography the Liffey acts as a divide, with the Four Courts “where my father went every day” (477) painted on the canvas of the north side: “It seems likely that we never walked on the quays – certain districts of Dublin being ruled out

lished in *Life and Letters of To-day*, July 1941: “‘I must ask you – we heard you had lost everything. But that cannot be true?’” (*Bowen's Court* 619).

as 'noisy' – and that we did not venture to cross the Liffey. So the North side remained *terra incognita*" (477). It remained so "till I went one day to a party in Mountjoy Square" (477); the actual visit to the square cancelling her feeling that "Sackville Street had something queer at the end" (477). The "canvas" north of the river is "pierced and entered only by the lordly perspective of Sackville Street", now O'Connell Street, "the widest street in the world" (473). The choice of the word 'canvas' recalls her past desire to become an artist, which may account for the relevance of the visual in her writing.

Although "[a]ll here stood for stability" (493), even not far from St Stephen's Green there were "ruled-out parts of one's own city" (477), unknown areas which held in store more threats than "any swamp or jungle" (477). They had "canyon-like streets that could intimidate me" (477), streets "massed with [...] architectural shadows" (478) which made Dublin "cryptic" (477). The word 'canyon' seems associated to threat in Bowen: she uses the same word in the "Postscript By The Author" (October 1944) to *The Demon Lover* when recalling what living in London during the war was like – "[w]alking in the darkness of the nights of six years (darkness which transformed a capital city into a network of inscrutable canyons) one developed new bare alert senses, with their own savage warnings and notations" (Bowen, "Postscript" 196). Readers are seemingly reassured and told that "My fear was not social – not the rich child's dread of the slum" (478), but, rather, that it was physical, something similar to claustrophobia: "something might shut on me, never to let me out again; something might fall on me, never to let me through" (478). It is, indeed, the fear and repulsion aroused by the impropriety of poverty – "It was a charnel fear, of grave dust and fungus dust. [...] I had heard of poverty-rotted houses that might at any moment crumble over one's head" (478). The safe alternative is to stay on familiar ground: "Only on familiar pavements did sunshine fall" (478).

Aware of their belatedness – even her father's monumental and exhausting work on *Statutory Land Purchase* to which he dedicated sixteen years was outdated just before being printed – the Anglo-Irish live in the past, "[t]he twentieth century governed only in name; the nineteenth was still a powerful dowager" (493), and are obsessed with family history as a means of asserting claims to legitimacy.

Protestant Anglo-Irish decline haunts *Bowen's Court*, and is envisioned in the fate of the house, but the child seems not to perceive it at the time of *Seven Winters*: "[t]he tyrannical grandness of this quarter", that is, the area around Lower Baggot Street and Leeson Street, close to St Stephen's Green, "seemed to exist for itself alone. Perhaps a child smells history without knowing it – I did not *know* I looked at the tomb of fashion" (492) – the reference here being to the end of Grattan's Parliament and the Act of Union. The time of History thus speaks through the space of the present, but the tensions and turmoils of contemporary history are excluded from *Seven Winters*, as they would in some way erode the sense of permanence the author strove to create in the text.

Only slowly, through governesses, does Elizabeth as a child begin “to perceive that Ireland was *not* the norm, the usual thing” (484), but she does not even perceive that hers is a minority community: “It was not until the end of those seven winters that I understood that we Protestants were a minority, and that the unquestioned rules of our being came, in fact, from the closeness of a minority world” (508). Such awareness anticipates the coming of age of Bowen’s consciousness of her past and social class.

Timelessness and Permanence

Although Elizabeth Bowen is, famously, “a great novelist of unhappy childhoods” (Foster, “The Irishness” 122), the childhood portrayed in *Seven Winters* is not unhappy, rather, it shares a quality of magic timelessness whose rendering is one of the major accomplishments of this text: “Stretched across the roof lines of Upper Baggot Street I see a timeless white sky, a solution of sunshine in not imminent cloud – a sky for the favoured” (483). Moreover, the way Bowen introduces the seasonal divide of her whereabouts – “By taking the train from Kingsbridge station to Mallow one passed from one season’s kingdom into the other’s” (465) – has the quality of fairy tales, even if her mother was “reserved in the telling of fairy tales [...] for fear that I might confuse [fairies] with angels” (472). This might be justified by her mother’s constant preoccupations about the health of her child’s mind, the most relevant being about her learning to read: Elizabeth was not allowed to do so until she was seven, as her mother was worried that the effort might tire her brain.

As is typical of Bowen’s writing, also in this memoir not only houses but also objects – “the materiality of the everyday” (Stewart 349) – play a major role: “On the whole, it is things and places rather than people that detach themselves from the stuff of my dream” (470). Houses and household objects, “tables and chairs” (Ellmann 145) are a means through which the past can be recovered because they are bearers of the past: in Bowen’s wartime writing their presence act as a continuity in the face of destruction.

Seven Winters is a very static text, in which there is almost “no progress” (Breen 122). The perspective is not one of chronological development, rather, the recollection of repeated habits has “the effect of increasing the feeling of timelessness” (Breen 123) irradiating from this memoir. Its structure contributes to this effect, as, rather than presenting a development, it “contains a number of vignettes that appear comparable to the experiences depicted by Virginia Woolf in ‘A Sketch of the Past’” (Stewart 340). Moreover, as Victoria Stewart argues, “*Seven Winters* is largely built around visual memory, the memory of places and things” (Stewart 346), the visual element being, unmistakably, one of the features of Bowen’s voice and of Bowen’s writing: “I find myself writing now of visual rather than social memories” (470). In “Autobiography”, which keeps resurfacing in this essay as a metadiscourse on her autobiographical production, Bowen claims that the “‘I’ in the narrative [...] provides”

– more than “viewpoint or continuity” – “the visionary element in whose light all things told appear momentous and fresh” (Bowen, “Autobiography” 201), and this remark well applies to *Seven Winters*. Being an essential element of “the texture of existence” (Bowen, “Autobiography” 204), the visual element enables the ‘I’ to become aware of her life.

Seven Winters is pervaded by what Bowen herself, in a later essay, defined as “The semi-mystical topography of childhood”, which “seems to be universal” (Bowen, “Bend” 55):

The perspectives of this quarter of Dublin are to any eye, at any time, very long. In those first winters they were endless to me. [...] Everything in this quarter seemed out-size. The width of the streets, the stretch of the squares, the unbroken cliff-like height of the houses made the human idea look to me superhuman. (491)

This feeling of timelessness or, rather, of being out of time and out of space, of a sort of ‘semi-mystical universal topography’, is rendered through a careful use of language both in terms of lexical choice and of grammar. In fact, words are so qualified as to make them above space or time, thus pertaining to infinity, and the use of suffixes, superlatives, and indefinites – “to any eye”, “at any time”, “very long”, “endless”, “everything” – emphasizes this strategy. The emergence and establishment of a sense of absoluteness is achieved through references to space, time or objects: here the author deploys what could be termed as a language of measure – “long”, “out-size”, “width”, “height.” As a consequence of the absolute nature of the child’s thoughts and beliefs, her world is untouched by doubts or questions: “I took this for granted (as being the rule of cities)” (492). When she mentions Phoenix Park, for instance, she claims that it “was the largest park in the world” (473-74), just as Sackville Street was the widest.

Two instances of the absolute and naïve nature of the child’s beliefs reveal what she considered “the paragon status of her native country and city” (Huber 65). The first one is a reflection deriving from Bowen’s “pride of race”, which leads her to consider Dublin as “[t]he model of cities” (474) and Ireland the hypernym of all islands in the world, Britain included, thus inverting “the structural relationship of centre vs. margin” (Huber 65). She writes:

These superlatives pleased me almost too much: my earliest pride of race was attached to them. And my most endemic pride in my own country was, for some years, founded on a mistake: my failing to have a nice ear for vowel sounds, and the Anglo-Irish slurred way of speaking made me take the words “Ireland” and “island” to be synonymous. Thus, all other countries quite surrounded by water took (it appeared) their generic name from ours. It seemed fine to live in a country that was a prototype. England, for instance, was “an Ireland” (or, a sub-Ireland) – an imitation. Then I learned that England was not even “an Ireland”, having failed to detach herself from the flanks of Scotland and Wales. Vaguely, as a Unionist child, I conceived that our politeness to England must be a form of pity.

In the same sense, I took Dublin to be the model of cities, of which there were imitations scattered over the world. (474)

As Werner Huber, to whom this collection of essays is dedicated, commented, "[t]his equation based on a case of mistaken etymology presents an interesting reversal of perspective, as much postcolonial as it is ironic" (Huber 65).

Another absolute belief held by the child concerned brass plates: in Merrion Square "each door [...] bore its polished brass plate." For her, "this brass plate announcing its owner's name" was "the *sine qua non* of any gentleman's house. Just as the tombstone says '*Here lies*' the plate on the front door (in my view) said '*Here lives*'. Failure to write one's name on one's door seemed to me the admission of nonentity" (493-94).

This certainty leads to a recall of Bowen's first visit to London, which took place at the end of *Seven Winters*:

I remember my first view of London – street after street of triste anonymity. So no one cares who lives in London, I thought. No wonder London is so large; all the nonentities settle here. Dublin has chosen to be smaller than London because she is grander and more exclusive. All the important people live in Dublin, near me. (494)

The absoluteness of the child's experience and beliefs in *Seven Winters* is strengthened by a sense of permanence which, as Bowen wrote in "Pictures and Conversations", "is an attribute of recalled places" (Bowen, "Pictures" 287). Only places, even if and even more when they have disappeared, can aspire to permanence, a precious state for somebody whose life was characterized by early uprooting and a constant feeling of in-betweenness.

Dislocation was a topic Bowen utterly mastered and experienced on an everyday basis, due both to her belonging to the Anglo-Irish class and to her own personal history, "most at home in mid-Irish sea" (Foster, "The Irishness" 107), a "resident alien" (Corcoran 19), as Sean O'Faolain defined her, wherever she chose to live. In addition to this, and, crucially, being "a writer for whom places loom large" (Bowen, "Pictures" 282) and are central, "[m]ost of her writing concerns an effort to define a location and establish the illusion of permanence – in a world where she was highly conscious of being the last of a line, in insecure possession of a house" (Foster, "Prints" 2002: 150). Permanence is brought into being by the process of remembering, which is also essential to autobiographical writing.

Conclusion

She ends, not concludes, *Seven Winters* with her characteristic "withstood emotion" (Bowen, "Pictures" 268):

How should I write "*The End*" to a book which is about the essence of a beginning? [...] The end of our Dublin house, in actual time, places no stop to my memories. Only a few of these have been written here. I halted (not stopped) in the drawing room, for it was here that [...] the second phase of my memories had its start. (512)

Bowen's choice of the verb "halted" has the function of crystallizing the present, suspending it and extending it to timelessness, thus consigning it to permanence.

The permanence which dominates *Seven Winters* is accurately built in order to exclude contemporary history, life in progress, all the huge changes that subverted the author's life after her seventh winter. Permanence is instrumental in damming the flux of life, and the pain it brought along for her.

In conclusion, permanence – the permanence of recalled places – is sealed by the closing of the house at Herbert Place and the dissolution of the certainties depicted here. Thereafter a period of recurrent moves – from Ireland to England, from house to house – started, reversing her previous regulated life, so that the atmosphere of her lost childhood home (and world) appears suspended, almost out of time, a crystallized present beyond and before transition.

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THE HOUSE OF FICTION: DERMOT HEALY'S SHORT STORIES

Keith Hopper and Neil Murphy

It's in a neighbour's house fiction begins.
(Healy, *The Bend for Home* 3)

Introduction

Dermot Healy (1947-2014) is often regarded as a "writer's writer", and his work is certainly held in high esteem by his peers. Timothy O'Grady, for instance, claims that *A Goat's Song* (1994) is Ireland's "most ambitious novel since Beckett's *Trilogy*" ("Dermot Healy" 26), while Annie Proulx calls it "an exceptional novel, one of those rare books that permanently colour one's ideational map of place and human behaviour" (112). More generally, Patrick McCabe considers Healy's fiction to be "truly revolutionary work, and high literary art" (qtd. in O'Grady, "Only myself" 21), while the late Seamus Heaney hailed him as the poetic heir to Patrick Kavanagh: "Kavanagh was the poet of, as he said, 'the passionate transitory', bits and pieces of the everyday snatched out of time. He was the poet of praise for those things. It isn't just nature poetry, it's gratitude for the whole gift of existence in Healy" (qtd. in *The Writing in the Sky* DVD).

Despite these writerly accolades and comparisons, Healy's writing was consistently overlooked for the major literary prizes and, partly as a result of this neglect, he has not yet received proper international attention for his varied and ambitious body of work. Outside of Ireland, Healy is probably better known as a novelist, but he was also an accomplished poet, short story writer, playwright, screenwriter, director, actor, and editor (he founded two literary journals, *The Drumlin* and *Force 10*, and taught creative writing for various community groups). Ironically, Healy's prolific fluency across a range of forms and genres made him difficult to pigeonhole, and so his creative eclecticism has tended to complicate rather than enhance his critical reputation. Moreover, Healy was fascinated by borderlands and liminal states of mind, and he frequently transgressed the conventional boundaries between poetry, drama and fiction, and between fiction and reality. In all of Healy's work there is a productive tension between the representation of complex lives and events, and the neo-modernist desire to find new ways of expressing the rich subjectivity of these lives (a mode of discourse which we wish to refer to as *counterrealism*).¹ Though usually set in small

1 The concept of counterrealism was first mooted by Richard Kearney in *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (1988), where he uses it to describe an anti-realist mode of writing which explores the "fundamental tensions between imagination and memory, narration and history, self and language." For Kearney, the Irish authors within this recent counterrealist tradition – epitomized for him by Flann O'Brien, Aidan Higgins, the late Francis Stuart, John Banville and Neil Jordan – "share with Joyce and

provincial towns, Healy's fictional worlds perpetually approach the edge of myth, and his vivid sense of place is rendered with an almost shamanistic intensity. Consequently, these strange landscapes and fractured lives can sometimes appear rather alien to metropolitan critics, which may well account for some of the more tentative and confused responses to his fiction.

Since Healy's untimely death in 2014, however, a series of four books have been published by Dalkey Archive Press which attempt "to address the extraordinary neglect of one of Ireland's most gifted and industrious modern writers" (Murphy and Hopper xiv): *The Collected Short Stories* and an edited reprint of his debut novel, *Fighting with Shadows* appeared in 2015; *The Collected Plays* and a critical volume entitled *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy* came out in 2016. With the publication of these scholarly volumes, the time seems right for a proper critical reassessment of this singular but undervalued writer.

For the purposes of this article, we will examine *The Collected Short Stories*, and (re)consider Healy's achievements within the context of the Irish short story tradition. While Healy's short stories are immensely valuable in their own right, they can also be regarded as formative texts that offer crucial insight into the technically adventurous novels that followed. To this end, we will foreground some of the key formal strategies within the stories, and trace the evolution of Healy's counterrealist style over a forty-year period.² Thematically, we will also touch on a particular thread in this collection, one which centres on the idea of houses and dwelling spaces. On a naturalistic level this motif usually functions as an index of social class and mobility, but it can also act as a self-reflexive metaphor for the act of writing itself. More importantly, this governing motif gradually becomes an existential meditation upon the complex relationship between longing and belonging, or as Flore Coulouma has described it:

Healy expresses his characters' sense of place and longing for home through the recurring opposition between drifters, travellers and immigrants, on the one hand, and the imagery of houses and dwellings rooted in timeless landscapes, on the other. While the uncertain status of the drifter translates in the nostalgic longing for a home real or imagined, Healy also depicts movements in space and time as reflections of the cosmic motion of the universe. His contemplative, wandering subject finds wholeness in nature and transcends his exilic sense of place to reach a universal sense of home. (241)

Beckett the basic modernist project of transforming the traditional narrative of *quest* into a critical narrative of *self-questioning*" (83).

- 2 *The Collected Short Stories* is structured in three parts: the first section contains all twelve stories from Healy's debut collection, *Banished Misfortune and Other Stories* (1982); the second section contains seven occasional stories, which were published intermittently between 1972 and 2013 (these stand-alone pieces, drawn from a diverse range of sources, are gathered together in this volume for the first time); the final section consists of three appendices, including the original 1973 version of "First Snow of the Year", which differs quite considerably from the extant version published in *Banished Misfortune*.

"New Irish Writing"

In a typically iconoclastic essay entitled "The Hollow and the Bitter and the Mirthless in Irish Writing" (2008), Aidan Higgins bemoaned the moribund state of modern and contemporary Irish writing, while making idiosyncratic allowance for a few more formally adventurous works:

The modernist movement began and ended in Ireland, in full retreat before it had hardly begun, soon sunk out of light, making hardly a ripple. The old lies were merely being perpetuated and no great effort attempted to "make it new." Some exceptions: *Sailing, Sailing Swiftly* (1933) by Jack B. Yeats; *Murphy* (1938) by Samuel Beckett; *The Ginger Man* (1955) by J.P. Donleavy; *Felo de Se* (1960) (my first story collection); *Night in Tunisia* (1976) by Neil Jordan; *In Night's City* (1982) by Dorothy Nelson; *Banished Misfortune* (1982) by D. Healy. (Higgins 25)

Like many of the experimental Irish writers before him – including Joyce, Beckett, and Higgins – Dermot Healy first announced himself as a writer of intricate and innovative short stories. Although *Banished Misfortune and Other Stories* was first published in 1982, many of the stories in Healy's debut collection had already appeared in a number of newspapers and journals, including, most importantly, the "New Irish Writing" page of the *Irish Press*, edited by the redoubtable David Marcus. Marcus had been appointed literary editor of the *Irish Press* in 1968, and "New Irish Writing" quickly became a cultural institution, publishing new short stories and poems on a weekly basis, and helping to launch the careers of a whole host of contemporary Irish writers including Sebastian Barry, Dermot Bolger, John Boyne, Anne Enright, Hugo Hamilton, Desmond Hogan, Neil Jordan, Deirdre Madden, Patrick McCabe, Colum McCann, Mike McCormack, Eoin McNamee, Mary Morrissy, Philip Ó Ceallaigh, Joseph O'Connor, Lucile Redmond, Ronan Sheehan, and many others (Carty n.p.). The initial impact of "New Irish Writing" was consolidated in 1971 with the creation of the annual Hennessy Literary Awards, and by the subsequent publication of several anthologies of stories edited by David Marcus. Marcus also founded Poolbeg Press in 1976, specialising in new short story collections, and this coincided with the establishment of several other independent publishing houses in Ireland, including Wolfhound Press, the O'Brien Press, and the Irish Writers' Co-operative (of which more later).³ In retrospect, then, the mid-1970s and early 1980s saw something of a renaissance in the venerable but rather fusty tradition of Irish short story writing, and Dermot Healy was undoubtedly one of the key figures at the heart of this dynamic resurgence.

3 The Irish Writers' Co-operative was co-founded in 1975 by Neil Jordan, Desmond Hogan, Ronan Sheehan, Steve MacDonogh, Lucille Redmond, and several other aspiring young writers. Between 1975 and 1981, the Co-op published three collections of short stories, ten novels, and a dozen plays. It also promoted readings of poetry and prose and launched a literary magazine, *The Mongrel Fox* (after a phrase coined by the leader of the Fine Gael opposition, Liam Cosgrave, to describe party dissidents). The Co-op ceased publishing in 1983, but not before it had helped to launch the careers of several major Irish writers including Neil Jordan, Sebastian Barry and Dermot Healy. The Co-op's co-founder and chairperson, Steve MacDonogh, went on to found Brandon Press in 1982 (see MacDonogh).

Of the four Healy stories originally published in the *Irish Press*, two of them – “First Snow of the Year” (1973) and “Banished Misfortune” (1975) – won Hennessy Literary Awards, and would eventually bookend *Banished Misfortune and Other Stories*; the other two – “The Caretaker” (1972) and “This Side of Summer” (1974) – are reprinted in *The Collected Short Stories* (2015) for the first time. It is not entirely clear why the latter two stories were excluded from *Banished Misfortune*; however, in terms of Healy’s rapidly evolving style, he may well have considered them too thematically conventional or formally derivative.

“The Caretaker” – first published in the *Irish Press* (18 November 1972) alongside a poem by one of Healy’s early mentors, Seamus Heaney – is told from the perspective of the elderly caretaker of a decaying Big House, which is now up for auction:

A grey haze had built up on the meadow, and Willie could imagine the visitors and potential buyers hopping on their toes in the rain and the muck when the bidding would start. Men and women of all shades of opinion and dress had been to see him and the house these last six months. They were mostly foreigners or educated people who would be driven to despair at the thought of the work to be done. [...] One Irish couple had stuck in Willie’s mind – they’d arrived complete with shamrocks on St Patrick’s Day. Willie had taken to the young man immediately. He had a good pair of hands on him and an eye for beauty; what’s more, a love for trees – and that was what the house needed. (*Collected Stories* 132-33)

In many ways, “The Caretaker” would not look out of place in a collection by Seán O’Faoláin or Bernard MacLaverty – well-crafted, gently humorous, with a wry anthropological eye on the cultural mores of the time – but it does lack the formal and thematic edginess of Healy’s later work. The “Big House”, of course, is a quite common trope in Anglo-Irish literature, one “infused with the idea of history as a haunting, and with the notion of a continuing past of unease and insecurity, often implying guilt and repression” (R.F. Foster 95). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Big House genre was resurrected by writers such as Aidan Higgins, J.G. Farrell, John Banville, and Jennifer Johnson, and “The Caretaker” can certainly be read in this context. However, as we shall see, houses and homes – both empty and occupied – increasingly become a more personal and dynamic motif in Healy’s work. Indeed, at the end of Healy’s first published story, the literal handing over of keys to the young Irish couple is invoked as an obvious (and somewhat self-reflexive) symbol of cultural continuity and generational change: “It’s all yours now’, Willie said” (*Collected Stories* 137).

If “The Caretaker” bears traces of O’Faoláin, then “This Side of Summer” (first published 27 July 1974) is undoubtedly influenced by the Joyce of *Dubliners* (1914). The story centres on a young unmarried couple, Joe and Kate, who move in together to a new flat in the Dublin suburbs, much to the disapproval of her middle-class friends:

Had she been more at ease she would have been amused at their gravity as they chewed distastefully on the garlic bread she had cooked for Joe till it was nearly black. She would have enjoyed their obvious dislike for Joe and treated their remarks with irony, indifference.

—He had no teeth either, not a tooth in his head when I met him first, Kate was saying.

—That must have been interesting for you, the banker's girlfriend intoned with a mischievous smile. (*Collected Stories* 143)

The influence of *Dubliners* is everywhere apparent, from the free indirect style – where the primary narrator's voice gives way to the individual characters' point of view – to the use of the long em-dash (—) for dialogue instead of quotation marks. At the end of the story, the point of view flickers between Joe's morose self-absorption and Kate's chirpy self-awareness, and their joint epiphany is typically Joycean in its abrupt open-endedness:

Moments were too short. He sat and watched stiff and upright from his chair, the skin drawn tightly across the broken veins in his cheeks. Moments are far too short, he thought, and soon you and I must learn some new industry to bring us again into the world. He laughed a little. She brought in the dark steaming coffee, and never said a word, for it was easy to see that something was troubling him and he was always stubborn when it came to explaining, even frightened. (*Collected Stories* 145-46)

"First Snow of the Year" (first published in the *Irish Press* on 11 August 1973) won a Hennessy Literary Award in 1974, along with stories by Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, John McArdle, and Ronan Sheehan. The award that year was adjudicated by Edna O'Brien and V.S. Pritchett, and in her judge's report O'Brien commended Healy's story for its confident sense of rhythm – "It is told slowly, but has the tension of something about to snap" – while Pritchett found the use of language "very telling in its evocation of winter, rural poverty and passion intensified by loneliness" (Anon., "New Irish Writing Awards" 3). The original 1973 version of the story begins with an elderly postman, Jim Philips, waking up on the first day of his retirement and heading off to the local pub with his young friend Phildy. Beneath the hoary reminiscences and rambling gossip lies a palpable tension, as Phildy is still consumed with bitterness about having lost his girlfriend, Eli-Jane, to his former best friend, Pedey:

The postman realized that nothing could thaw out the hate in the young man's heart – it was the endless struggle and sin of their small society, the civil war between friend and friend, Phildy's mind was being eaten alive by the loss of a woman to another man, he could not explain or forgive, it was part of the weather of life that relaxes and freezes the pain in the soil. (*Collected Stories* 210)

That same day, Pedey – accompanied by the now-pregnant Eli-Jane – is burying his mother in a nearby cemetery, and the narrative fluidly cross-cuts between the chatter in the public house, the solemnity of the funeral, and the inevitable showdown between Phildy and Pedey, who are both tormented by grief and loss. At the end of the story, the old men in the pub glibly debate the merits of different potato dishes, while the younger characters try to negotiate a frightening world of jealousy and desire only partly within their control. As the writer Patrick McCabe remarked:

"First Snow of the Year" [...] possesses not only the same kinetic energy [as Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967)] but the same seamless blend of trance and the quotidian. It was the world I lived in and one that I recognised – but it hadn't been approached like this before. I mean, I never found much of Borges in

[Patrick] Kavanagh – but this! If he had read it, Francis Stuart would have perked up like a startled hare – pantheistic, unpatronising, the world's stained glass glimmering inside the eye of a dog. (30)

McCabe is undoubtedly thinking here of a provocative essay by Francis Stuart entitled "The Soft Centre of Irish Writing", first published in the *Irish Times* in 1976 and reprinted in 1978 as an introduction to *Paddy No More* – an anthology of contemporary Irish stories featuring work by several writers associated with the Irish Writers' Co-op, including Neil Jordan, Desmond Hogan, Lucile Redmond, and Dermot Healy. For Stuart, the history of the Irish short story is an ongoing struggle for signifying supremacy between "cosy" realists and "subversive" modernists: between conformists who wish "to preserve communal cultural standards and present the national identity," and dissidents who seek "to preserve the true purpose of art as an instrument for the discovery of alternative concepts and new insights" (Stuart 5-6). From this perspective, traditional Irish realism – exemplified for Stuart by "soft-centred fiction like Frank O'Connor's 'Guests of the Nation'" – is more easily consumed and assimilated by the dominant culture, and its conventional poetics enshrine an inherently conservative politics:

This writing – knitting would be a better word – is to the expected pattern or formula [...]. Familiar sayings and attitudes are echoed with a nudge of humorous intent, the curtains are drawn, the fire poked, and a nice little tale with a whimsical slant is about to be told. No passion, no interior obsession, no real or outrageous comedy as in Flann O'Brien, Joyce or Mr Beckett. (Stuart 7-8)

Stuart's polemical critique contains a whole series of binary oppositions, which manifest themselves, primarily, in the different attitudes to place. For realists, "Ireland" is insular and nostalgic – deferring "gracefully to the world they and their readers had inherited"; for modernists, it is expansive and forward-thinking – "widening, instead of narrowing, the thought patterns of our society." Consequently, there is a significant difference in the use of language: the idiom of realism is monological and familiar – "naturalistic, descriptive rather than probing, preoccupied with local colour" – whereas the discourse of counterrealism is dialogical and defamiliarizing: "it causes discomfort rather than cosy reassurance in the reader." For Stuart, this formal estrangement of language has Brechtian implications in the way that it self-consciously explores the gap between conventional representations and lived reality:

National energy, the will, not just to survive but to excel, can only be restored psychologically, which is to say within the imagination. In the past societies achieved this through their mythologies or religions. Today, it is [through] the shock of original writing that a community ensures its organic growth. (Stuart 6-9)

In light of this neo-modernist or counterrealist call-to-arms, it is worth noting that the 1973 version of Healy's "First Snow of the Year" is substantially different in style and structure to the final version published in *Banished Misfortune* almost a decade later – so much so, in fact, that both versions are included in *The Collected Short Stories* (3-11; 209-21). Each version has its own intrinsic merits, but for the purposes of illustrating the difference between a more conventional form of O'Faoláin-esque realism

and Healy's emerging counterrealist aesthetic, it is worth comparing the opening lines of both texts. Here is the opening paragraph from the original 1973 version:

It was Jim Philips' first day of retirement. He realized he was no longer a postman when he awoke, and looked at the stained boards that ran the length of his ceiling. Jim spent the entire morning retrieving his habits as a young man, stayed in bed till late and took his ease about the house, looked up the chimney to check for crows, remembering that time of perpetual youth and céilí music before life had propped him up on a bicycle till the end of his days, a messenger in three townlands. But it was a fine thing, he thought, to outlive your job that you could die in a time of your own making. He left his womanless bed with a light heart and laid out his drinking clothes before the fire, that he might be warm this day itself in Grady's. (*Collected Stories* 209)

In contrast, here is the refurbished opening from the revised 1982 version published in *Banished Misfortune and Other Stories*:

For a few bewildering seconds, Jim Philips, on the day of his retirement, queried late morning sounds he had not heard in years. Then his solitary sense of freedom began. He looked with leisure at the low pink boards that ran the length of the ceiling, yellowing at the fireplace, brightening by the window. Light was hammering on the broken shutter. Shadows darted across the mildewed embroidery of dogs and flowers. He cleared his womanless bed with a light heart, glad to have outgrown the ache in his smothered loins, outlived his job that he might die in a time of his own making. He nimbly laid his drinking clothes before last night's fire, coaxed first with paraffin, then whiskey. He hung his postman's uniform in the closet under the stairs. (*Collected Stories* 3)

Although this revamped opening is by no means the most radical change in the body of the text, it does indicate the aesthetic shift towards a more imagistic mode. Realist description and third-person narration now give way to phenomenological observation and impressionistic states of consciousness, mediated through free indirect discourse. Instead of a straightforwardly linear cause-and-effect plot, the new version favours juxtaposition and montage, frequently cross-cutting between multiple and often solipsist points of view, where memories, desires, and contingent sense impressions are continually conflated and confused (as is the case in all of Healy's novels). Throughout the reconfigured text, jaded idioms and flat expository phrases – he “laid out his drinking clothes before the fire, that he might be warm this day itself in Grady's” – are deliberately expunged, replaced by a series of defamiliarizing images which, as one critic observed, “slam the reader awake” (Redmond 6). When Jim ventures out of his lonely bachelor home after the opening paragraph, for instance, “He saw John and Margaret Cawley, the gypsies, stealing through the yellow gorse with rotten turf. Their children moved from clownish tree to clownish tree out of the wind” (*Collected Stories* 3). In this more fragmented and disjointed world, characters appear and disappear, and the gypsies play no further part until the very end, when Pedey and Eli-Jane – now called Owen and Helen – babysit for the Cawleys. Instead of the original, drily ironic ending – where the tipsy postman, in a reversal of the usual retirement ritual, gives away his watch – the new version ends on a more symbolist note of melancholic transcendence (set, significantly, in a gypsy tent rather than a settled dwelling):

They sat in utter silence. When the children woke, she spoke in gypsy talk to reassure them. He filled the stove with timber and turf, snow dripped from the black canvas. He laid his head on her shoulder and they kissed in a direct trusting manner. Soon John Cawley and Margaret Cawley came over the rocks singing dead verse. (*Collected Stories* 11)

"Banished Misfortune", the fourth and final story first published in the *Irish Press* (5 April 1975), earned Healy a second Hennessy Literary Award in 1976 (the other winners that year were Robin Glendinning, Ray Lynott, Ita Daly, Thomas O'Keefe, and Seán O'Donovan). The 1976 award was judged by Alan Sillitoe and Aidan Higgins, and in his rather cranky judge's report Higgins complained about "the lack of humour in the stories", insisting that their plots were too "predictable" and their diction too "dogged." Higgins reserved his most enthusiastic response for "Banished Misfortune" – "If there is a better account of modern, changing Ireland, I have yet to read it" – and praised it for its "felicity of phrasing, image-making, and magnanimity of view" (qtd. in Anon., "The New Irish Writing Winners" 3).⁴

"Banished Misfortune" centres around a young Northern Irish family, the McFarlands, who journey from the border county of Fermanagh to the west of Ireland on their summer holidays. The story is set in the mid-1970s, and although the Troubles are only fleetingly alluded to, the brooding force of the conflict thrums away in the background, colouring everyone and everything (in this respect, the story is something of an ur-text for Healy's 1984 novel, *Fighting with Shadows*). By the time McFarland, a traditional musician, and his wife Judy, a schoolteacher, finally get to Galway with their two children, the more relaxed atmosphere in the South gradually allows their repressed fears and desires to rise to the surface: "they had burrowed down so deep in anxiety that happiness was nearly hysterical" (*Collected Stories* 117). After a night of manic and drunken carousing, the primary mimetic narrative ends with Judy and McFarland cautiously re-pledging themselves to a shared future, in a world where the burden of history, and the ordinary trials of everyday living, can so easily grind people down:

Fear was so addictive, consuming all of a body's time and she wanted so much to share this vigil with him in Fermanagh but what could you give the young if they were barricaded from the present by our lyrical, stifling past? She said nothing, knowing she shared this empty ecstasy with a thousand others who had let their laziness go on too long.

4 Interestingly, and in sharp contrast to Aidan Higgins's fulsome praise, Seán O'Faoláin launched a rebarbative attack on Healy's story in a review in the *Irish Press*: "[Banished Misfortune] is a dubious case. Irish enough in its uncontrolled, undisciplined, auto-suggestive, onrushing, auto-intoxicated, pseudo-romantic, all but disorientated, often disconnected or unconnected logorrhoea. I mistrust it profoundly. It looks like a slab of a novel. It sounds like the Holy Ghost bawling down the blower to the engine room of a ship without a compass – in other words it sounds frightening like fake inspiration. But I am glad it is [included in this anthology]" (6).

"I left home too young, that's what bothers me", he spoke again. "There must be a thousand stories and songs about my own place that I hardly know. But when we return, woman, we'll try." (*Collected Stories* 123-24)

However, unbeknownst to the couple – and, indeed, to some readers (the point is quietly embedded within the imagistic brickwork of the text) – their home in Fermanagh has been burned down that very night, yet another casualty of the Troubles. The reason for the arson attack is left unsaid, although Seán Golden, in a perceptive reading of the story, has speculated that theirs is a "mixed marriage", i.e. the marriage of a Catholic and a Protestant, and so the motive is most likely sectarian (Golden 21). As in "First Snow of the Year", the narrative cross-cuts between multiple viewpoints, but it also flickers backwards and forwards in time and space, and as John Wilson Foster remarked, "The journey through history and geography becomes a form of meditation on Ireland's violent present and broken past" (1093). At the end of the story, the diegetic narrative suddenly shifts back in time to 1910, when the house was first built by McFarland's ancestor, Saul. In the poignant closing lines, we hear of Saul's hopes and dreams for the future, lovingly built into the design of the house:

In a foot of land there's a square mile of learning, Saul had said, and he had learned to build from a sense of duty to the beauty of the hilly Erne. [...] For in April of 1910, Saul had a bad back but nevertheless he had finished building a church in Donegal town and now with Bimbo Flynn the whistler he set about kissing the air and erecting his own house. And it was a house where the best sessions of music would be held [...]. And folks wondered about the ornamented porch that was built out front with the stained-glass windows, and there was talk of a church but when the last stones dried and you could hear the knock-knock of a thrush breaking a snail in his new garden Saul was a proud man. Always before daylight a man thinks of his destiny, as Saul did that last morning talking with the travellers in the half-light of the chestnut hill and he was glad to see that the cream-coloured mare of the gypsies was loath to leave the fine grass now that her time had come. (*Collected Stories* 124-25)

Critical Reception

When *Banished Misfortune and Other Stories* first appeared in 1982 – co-published by Allison & Busby (London) and the newly-founded Brandon Press (Co. Kerry) – reviewers were generally impressed by the ambitious scope of this relatively slim volume (only 111 pages in total). The stories are largely set in the borderlands of rural Ireland or in the diasporic communities of 1970s London (five of the twelve stories take place in England). Throughout *Banished Misfortune*, Healy demonstrates a deep sense of empathy towards the marginalized and the dispossessed, and the language is finely attuned to distressed and beleaguered states of mind (a key characteristic of his novels as well). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the early reviewers especially liked the more orthodox stories of Irish small-town life, such as "The Curse" (a Joycean coming-of-age story about a young boy provoked to an act of profanity by an unscrupulous but powerful older man), or "The Tenant" (about an amiable lodger falling foul of his petit-bourgeois landlords) – indeed, the latter story won the 1982 Tom-Gallon Trust Award, which is awarded for stories which are "traditional, rather than experimental, in character" (Anon., "New Irish Writing – Hennessy" n.p.).

However, some critics were less convinced by more obviously experimental and self-reflexive pieces such as "The Island and the Calves", about a mystical pilgrimage to a holy island – "His house that day took on more and more the appearance of an abandoned novel [...]. For at last he had authenticated the outside world, and each part was now suspended by itself and no longer needed a deity or an interpreter for a tiring audience" (*Collected Stories* 24) – or "Blake's Column", about a lonely and disgruntled book reviewer: "on his way home he bewailed writers undone by fawners, who in their need sought religious or spiritual advantage, ravaging the motions of their families, rather than deal with what their uncomplicated senses told them" (*Collected Stories* 48-49). Significantly, a number of reviewers seemed disconcerted by the creamy density of Healy's prose, while still admiring his sense of ambition. Peter Hazeldine, for instance, in the *PN Review*, thought that some of stories were "over-compressed, the language dense and intractable", but nonetheless praised Healy for his "willingness to take risks" (87-88). The anonymous critic in the *Kirkus Review* regretted certain "lapses into ineffectual prose-poetry", but otherwise considered it "a varied, occasionally impressive debut, especially when Healy's distinct talent for multi-voiced, overlapping drama surfaces" (Anon., Review n.p.). Similarly, Patricia Craig in the *Times Literary Supplement* suggested that "when he writes plainly, Healy can startle us with the vigour and perceptiveness of his observations", but in general she felt that "intense, wayward and romantic feeling predominates over simple craftsmanship" (642).

In one of the few academic critiques of *Banished Misfortune*, Robert Hogan considered Healy within the historical tradition of Irish short story writing, and compared him to some of his contemporaries from the now-defunct Irish Writers' Co-op, Desmond Hogan and Neil Jordan, whom he collectively dubbed the "Young Bucks":

The twelve stories in his collection are of various lengths and two manners. [...] "Re-prieve" [about a woman having an abortion in England] and particularly "The Tenant" are told in a conventional manner; the remainder, which really set the tone for the book, are written with a denser obliquity than that of Hogan or Jordan, and may owe something to writers like [Aidan] Higgins and [Tom] MacIntyre. (201)

In this context, Hogan argued that the attractions of Healy's free-flowing style "are its freedom, its individuality, and its suggestion of a sensitive, mysterious, and wildly inexplicable persona." Against that, Hogan cautioned, "the dangers are obvious: certain phrases lose their syntactical anchor so that their position gets puzzling, and their meaning murky; the public presentation of a narrative gets camouflaged, and indeed the narrative becomes less prominent than the narrating" (201-02). To be sure, Healy's imagistic style and impressionistic techniques can sometimes make for difficult reading, but the process is less "murky" or "camouflaged" than Hogan asserts. In particular, as Healy's style evolves, he begins to leave more and more room for the reader to participate in the construction of meaning. As Joanne Hayden remarked (in a recent review of *The Collected Short Stories*), "Healy is not always an easy read. Many of the stories reward second and third readings, often drawing on

multiple perspectives, shifting without warning between characters and locations, avoiding neatness and evading overt explanation" (Hayden n.p.). Or as Healy himself noted in an interview (speaking of his final novel, *Long Time, No See*), "I was trying to stay out of it and let the reader take over and run with it. So I would often put the meaning of a passage in, then take it out again" (Healy, "I try to stay out of it" n.p.). In this respect, Healy's oblique but carefully modulated texts need to be considered not just in the classical tradition of Irish short story writing, but in the broader context of experimental modernism (especially Joyce, Faulkner, Kafka and Borges). As Timothy O'Grady has argued:

They are less stories than rendered sensations of consciousness. [...] There is a lack of reference to a set of meanings, and no plot. Nor are there hierarchies. The sound of a bird or rushing water or the sight of the stretched leg of a hare can weigh the same as a kicking in a bank of snow or the wail of human loneliness. The trick to experiencing *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce said, was to read it aloud. I think the trick with these stories is to read them twice. Then you can take them in as breath. (O'Grady, "Only myself" 19-20)

Conclusion

For all of its perceived difficulties, *Banished Misfortune and Other Stories* clearly marked the emergence of a new and exciting voice in contemporary Irish literature. Over the next three decades, Healy produced four novels, a memoir, five collections of poetry, thirteen plays, and numerous essays and reviews. However, with a few notable exceptions, Healy rarely returned to the short story form after 1982. Although these forays into the short form became increasingly sporadic, Healy's later stories build on the themes and tropes of his earlier work, and continue his commitment to formal innovation. "Before the Off" (1999), for instance, is a remarkable piece of writing, a kind of *Under Milk Wood* for race-goers (the story is set in a public house during race day at an unspecified race course in rural Ireland). The structure and rhythms of this hybrid text lie somewhere between a short story and a radio play, with overlapping dialogue, stage directions, and dramatic scene changes woven into the fabric of the free-flowing narrative (at over 8,000 words it is by far the longest piece in *The Collected Short Stories*). Structurally and stylistically, "Before the Off" is strongly reminiscent of Healy's later novels, *Sudden Times* (1999) and *Long Time, No See* (2011), but it also stands out as a substantial work of art in its own right. As the writer Eoin McNamée commented: "The writing is spare, speech-driven. The dialogue an orchestra of the withheld. Such was his ear for the spoken word that he could take it anywhere he wanted, load it with meaning without ever losing the ring of true speech" (13).

Other late works, such as "Along the Lines" (2012), about an actor suffering a nervous breakdown, is a much shorter sketch, but it further attests to Healy's great love of the theatre and to his abiding fascination with fractured states of consciousness: "He stared out at the audience. It was a sad moment in the script, and the distress the audience saw in his face they read as part of the character's inner self as he approached the bad news" (*Collected Stories* 197). And in many ways Healy's final story before his death, "Images" (2013), brings us back full circle to the publication of

"The Caretaker" and "First Snow of the Year" some forty years earlier. In this haunting and evocative piece, a retired college lecturer spends his time taking photographs of abandoned old houses. Again, the central conceit bears witness to Healy's own ecstatic and existential vision of life and art, and foregrounds his lifelong interest in the problematics of representation:

At one old ruin fresh daffodils were shooting up among the debris in the garden.

Mortality is rife, he said, as he caught an image of the flowers.

After each photograph was taken he'd study the snap, tip his chin off the back of the hand that held the camera and look closely at the place in question.

Maybe, he'd say. Maybe. (*Collected Stories* 200)

As the elderly photographer later remarks (after he fancifully mistakes an old factory for a schoolhouse), "Reality is more complex than the imagination" (*Collected Stories* 205). In this respect, Healy's epistemological and ontological scepticism places him firmly in the self-questioning, counterrealist tradition of Joyce, Beckett and Aidan Higgins, which may partly explain his rather patchy critical reputation heretofore. As John Paul O'Malley recently argued (in a review of *The Collected Short Stories*):

I suspect the reason why Healy's work as a short story writer is even less celebrated than, say, his novels, his poetry, or his plays, is because they tend to break the rigid rules of the form itself. In Irish literature, this is a bit like blaspheming on the altar during mass. [...] If these stories haven't previously found favour with a popular audience, that's probably because the images contained within all of them are unsettling, violent and troublesome. But maybe that's the point: Healy doesn't want to make us feel warm or sentimental. Questioning everything – our past, our identity, our tribal allegiances, our quarrels, and our very existence – isn't supposed to be easy. But Healy's magisterial writing makes it a noble quest worth returning to. (22)

The fact that all of these neglected stories are now back in print offers renewed hope that Dermot Healy's significant but undervalued role in the history of the modern Irish short story may yet be properly recognised.

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**RACE AND ETHNICITY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC:
REVISING THE DISCOURSE OF NATION-BUILDING
IN COLUM MCCANN'S *TRANSATLANTIC*, SEBASTIAN BARRY'S
ON CANAAN'S SIDE AND COLM TÓIBÍN'S *BROOKLYN***

Sylvie Mikowski

We can find a lot of similarities between Colm Tóibín's 2009 *Brooklyn*, Sebastian Barry's 2011 *On Canaan's Side*, and Colum McCann's 2013 *Transatlantic*, three novels published by some of the most distinguished contemporary Irish writers in relatively the same period. Each in its own way explores the rich and long-lasting relationship between Ireland and the United States. Each of the stories, written by a male novelist, centers around a female protagonist who is forced or willingly decides to emigrate to the United States: Lily Duggan in *Transatlantic*, Lilly Bere in *On Canaan's Side* and Elis Lacey in *Brooklyn*. The three novels thus hark back to the tradition of the emigrant's narrative, laying stress on the historical reality of Irish female emigration. As a matter of fact, by the end of the nineteenth century, over half of all Irish immigrants to the US were women, many of them single and young, no other ethnic group coming close to that figure during that period (see Diner; Kennedy; and Miller). The three novels are situated at various moments in time but all make direct and precise references to historical events. McCann's skilfully interwoven plot-lines span a century and a half of Irish and American history, starting in 1845 with Frederick Douglass' historical visit to Ireland during which he met Daniel O'Connell, following the invitation of Richard Webb, the co-founder of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society. The story unfolds until 2011, when Lily Duggan's great-granddaughter Hannah, who lives in Northern Ireland, survives the loss of her own grandson, the casual victim of a sectarian murder that took place during the Troubles.

Sebastian Barry's own novel also stretches over a long period of history as the narrator-cum-protagonist Lilly Bere, née Dunne, survives three generations of relatives who are successively involved in four different wars: World War One, the Anglo-Irish War, the Viet-Nam War and the First Gulf War.

Even though the action of Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* does not span over several generations of the same family the way the two other novels do, the plot is also set against a historical backdrop, that of small-town Ireland in the 1950s, when so many young people had to leave home and go into exile, especially to the United States, in order to escape economic stagnation and cultural deprivation, a condition made even more difficult for young women facing a life in the margins of society if they could not find a husband.

However, beyond their depiction of the experience of female emigration at various periods of Irish history, a common feature set forward by the three narratives is also the encounter between the young female protagonists and other peoples, other ethnic groups, and through them between Irishness and Otherness. In each case, this encounter problematizes the notion of a distinct Irish identity as construed by nationalist discourse. The narrative of the journey to America thus allows each writer to pit the fate of Irish people, which nationalist discourse has historically tended to describe as one of oppression and discrimination, against that of other ethnic groups living in the United States, more particularly the Afro-Americans. What is more, the three novelists do not only stage their female protagonists' encounters with other racial and ethnic groups, but also their complete assimilation into a multi-ethnic society through marriage and child-bearing, giving birth to mixed-race subjects.

As a result, it may be argued that McCann, Tóibín and Barry depict America not so much as "a land of refuge" as implied by the biblical allusion to Canaan, but as the inverted mirror-image of sectarian, bigoted, nationalist Ireland, obsessed by an exclusive, homogeneous definition of Irishness. The entangling of American and Irish history is a means for the three writers to expose how nationalist discourse is conducive to the exclusion and rejection of all those people who are found not to match the essential determinants of national Irish identity, that is to say are not Catholic, white, or of Gaelic descent. In response, each novel in its own way stages and advocates hybridity, the crossing of the colour-line, the blending of racial, religious and ethnic identities. The novels also specifically question and critique the comparison established between the sufferings of Irish people forced by poverty and colonial oppression to emigrate to America, and those of the African Blacks, deported and enslaved, that was first claimed by such nationalist leaders as John Mitchell in the wake of the Famine. The emphasis laid in the novels on inter-racial and inter-ethnic relations, and on the crossing of the colour-line, is furthermore reflected at an aesthetic level by the three writers' taste for polyphony, multiple plots and coincidences, links which can be found either within the novels themselves, or among their other previous publications, and even with previous works by other writers.

To begin with, we can notice that the three protagonists's names – Lilly, Lily and Eilis – share the same etymology, as they all derive from the same name Elizabeth. Each of the three young women is thus presented as a 'lily', evidently suggesting the purity and innocence attached to their youth and inexperience, but also pointing to the whiteness of their skins. As a matter of fact, these young women's innocence has not so much to do with their ignorance of the realities of sex or love, as would be the case in a traditional novel of female education, as with issues pertaining to race and ethnicity. Those white 'Lilies' are indeed on the whole 'colour-blind', in the sense that until setting foot in America they had never met any other ethnic group but their own and were therefore ignorant of other peoples' histories of sufferings. As a result, their journey of discovery to America may be interpreted as an initiation into what Sinéad Moynihan, in a recent book, calls "other people's diasporas", adding that in recent

times she has noticed “Irish and Irish American artists’ increasing interest in representing ‘key moments’ in the history of the US racial and ethnic relations” (Moynihan 3).

The three novels under consideration may be said to share this interest and to confront their Irish protagonists with the realities of race-relations in the US. For example, Tóibín’s *Ellis* finds a job as a sales assistant at Bartocci’s, where she actually observes Afro-American women with her own eyes for the first time when the latter become allowed to shop in that store. She also seems to hear for the first time in her life about the persecution of European Jews during World War Two through the character of Mr Rosenblum, one of her teachers in night school where she takes a class in accountancy; she is so ignorant of other ethnic groups that “[s]he wished she could tell the difference between Jews and Italians” (Tóibín 82), whom she confuses because most of them are “dark-skinned with brown eyes” – again seemingly discovering the diversity of human types for the first time in her life.

In Barry’s *On Canaan’s Side*, Lilly Bere is rescued from her desperate wanderings through the American continent by Cassie, an Afro-American woman originating from Virginia, who gives her shelter and helps her find her first job as a cook. Through the way she reports that encounter, Lilly as a narrator reveals her ignorance of racial issues insofar as she does not refer once to her friend Cassie’s skin colour when describing her or evoking her life. It is only when Lilly, her friend Cassie and her future husband Joe Kinderman get on a streetcar and the motorman casts racial abuse at them: “Folk don’t like to see Negroes, all stuck in their faces, in general” (Barry 114), that Cassie’s blackness is eventually spelled out for the reader. Likewise, Lilly later marries Joe without being aware of his Blackness – she even believes at one stage that he could be Jewish: “He did tell me once also that he was Jewish, but I must confess, on having relations with him, that he was not a circumcised person, that I could judge” (Barry 134). Lilly’s confusion about race and ethnicity is compounded by the birth of her white-skinned child, even if years later the genetic trait reappears in her muleto grandson.

In McCann’s novel, Lily Duggan, initially a maid in the service of the Webb family, who actually hosted the real Frederick Douglass in Dublin, presents the same type of naivety as Lilly Bere when it comes to skin colour. But her ignorance also means that she is deprived of all prejudice, in keeping with the actual reception Douglass received during his historical visit to Ireland. McCann’s fictional rendering of Douglass’s visit to Ireland is indeed true to facts, especially when it comes to the warm welcome the Afro-American slave received on the part of Irish people and the close relationship he entertained with the great nationalist leader Daniel O’Connell. In a book published in 2012, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race*, in which he also details Daniel O’Connell’s involvement in the abolitionist movement, Bruce Nelson devotes a whole chapter to Frederick Douglass’ relation with Ireland, in which he reports that, in accordance with McCann’s fictional rendering, “Douglass loved O’Con-

nell all the more when they shared the stage at a Repeal meeting in Dublin and the Liberator introduced him to the throng at Conciliation Hall as “the Black O’Connell of the United States” (Nelson 87, a scene that McCann faithfully reproduces in his novel: “two days later, in Conciliation Hall, O’Connell brought him on stage and he thrust Douglass’s hand in the air: *Here*, he said, *the black O’Connell!* Douglass watched the hats go up into the rafters” [McCann 60]). McCann also truthfully echoes Douglass’ correspondence from Ireland, in which the run-away slave mentioned what seemed to him “the total absence of all manifestations of prejudice against me, on account of my colour” (Nelson 95): “When he sat up, on the boards, crowds came out of their houses just to look at him. They clapped his shoulder, shook his hand, blessed him with the sign of the cross” (McCann 64).

McCann’s fictional character Lily accordingly feels no hostility towards the Afro-American slave who is her master’s guest: what’s more, she grows inspired by his story, and taking her cue from him, decides to escape poverty and the early signs of the Famine by emigrating to America. She therefore walks all the way to Cork to the Jennings’ home where Douglass is now staying, in order to ask for the black man’s advice and support. When Isabel Jennings persuades Douglass to ride to Howth with her to greet the young servant farewell, the scene brings to the Afro-American’s mind a notice he has just read in a newspaper, offering a reward for a run-away negro girl. The incident, and the fictional rendering of Douglass’s impressions of Ireland, are used by McCann to skillfully introduce the problematic comparison between the sufferings of the Irish colonized by the British, and the Africans enslaved by the American colonists, an issue that was raised in the wake of the Famine by such nationalist leaders as John Mitchel. Indeed, in a scholarly article published in 2014, Peter D. O’Neill reminds us that Irish nationalists often used the word “slavery” to describe the plight of the Irish peasants under British imperialist domination and adds:

Mitchel partook of this convention. He wrote in *Jail Journal* that Irish Catholics were deliberately, ostentatiously debarred from executing the common civic office of jurors in any case of public concernment – that is to say, that they were not citizens in their own land – that is to say, that they are slaves – for there is no middle term. (O’Neill 322)

O’Neill even argues that Mitchel’s *Jail Journal*, which is held as one of the sacred texts of Irish nationalism, borrows from the style and structure of a slave-narrative:

Like the slave narrative, *Jail Journal* is a first-person-singular account of an escape from captivity – in Mitchel’s case, an escape to freedom in the USA following imprisonment by the British authorities. (O’Neill 321)

Interestingly, Douglass is reported to have first admired Mitchel but then to have been disgusted by the latter’s activism in defense of slavery. Peter O’Neill speaks of “the bitter irony that to tell his ultimately supremacist story of victimisation, Mitchel appropriated the slave narrative’s tropes of kidnap, of Middle Passage dehumanisation and commodification, of escape, and of liberation” (O’Neill 322). In his novel McCann echoes the contradictions and paradoxes induced by the problematic alignment of the condition of the colonized Irish with that of African slaves either, for example

when he has Douglass reflect that “The Irish were poor, but they were not enslaved” (McCann 81), or O’Connell confide to Douglass that “It burdened him terribly to hear there were many Irishmen among the slave owners of the South” (McCann 61), a clear allusion to John Mitchel’s support of slavery, in the name of Black people’s alleged racial inferiority (see, e.g., Quinn).

However, the parallel between the fate of the Irish and that of the African slaves remains a topical issue today, as is evidenced by the publication of David Lloyd’s edited book entitled *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas*. In his introduction, Lloyd defines “the Green Atlantic” as “the points of contact, overlap and cooperation” – as well as competition and exploitation – across the Atlantic or as “the relation between two historically oppressed peoples – the dispossessed and colonized Irish, forced into emigration and often indenture from the 16th century, and Africans captured and enslaved during the same period” (Lloyd xvi). Lloyd’s title itself is obviously an allusion to Paul Gilroy’s oceanic metaphor of the “Black Atlantic” employed to designate the Black diaspora (Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*). What is more, in his introduction, Lloyd acknowledges to be responding through this collection of essays to Noel Ignatiev’s provocative book published in 1995, *How the Irish Became White*, to which we can also find a reference in McCann’s *Transatlantic*. Indeed in an incident which establishes a bridge between the entangled novelistic time-lines, that of the Famine and that taking place in the present era, Hannah, Lily Duggan’s great-granddaughter, decides to sell the letter which was once entrusted by Lily’s daughter Emily to the care of the aviators Alcock and Brown, on the occasion of their first transatlantic flight, and addressed to the Jennings family who hosted Douglass in Cork. When a buyer applies, that man tells Hannah that he was “aware of the Douglass connection; it had, he said, become fashionable of late for the Irish to think of themselves tremendously tolerant; (...) The academic question was when, in fact, *they*, the Irish, had become white” (McCann 271), an obvious allusion to Ignatiev’s theory and to the current debates about Irish people’s attitudes towards racial and ethnic relations through history, both in the USA and at home. In the book previously mentioned, Sinead Moynihan remarks that the same issue just pointed out in McCann’s novel, that is to say the comparison between the Irish forced into emigration under British domination and the Africans’ deportation to America as slaves, was revisited over the recent decades. Frederick Douglass’s visit to Ireland was thus recently brought to the larger public’s attention through various interventions. She mentions for example a documentary film entitled *Frederick Douglass agus na Negroes bana* (“Frederick Douglass and the White Negro”) broadcast by the Irish-language television channel TG4 in 2008; or Donal O’Kelly’s play *The Cambria* in which, in her opinion, O’Kelly explicitly contrasts the welcome that Douglass received in 1845 with the contemporary treatment of African immigrants to Celtic Tiger Ireland (Moynihan 99).

In its own way, McCann’s novel also questions Irish people’s attitude to other races and ethnic groups, rather than focusing on the treatment of Irish immigrants to the

US and the racism they were the victims of. By contrasting Irish people's attitude towards Douglass during his historic visit to Ireland on the eve of the Famine, when Lily Duggan took her cue from him to make the crucial decision to emigrate, with the contemporary era when Lily's descendant is the casual victim of the Troubles, McCann forces the reader to ponder over the legacies of nationalist discourse. Through his skillful interweaving of narrative plots, the sectarian hatred that kills the distant descendant of Lily Duggan in 1978 is indeed connected with Douglass's reflections on the "Irish question" at the time of the Famine, and his doubts regarding the relevance of the comparison between his people and the victims of the Famine whom he encounters during his visit. McCann thus suggests that the same nationalist discourse which established those comparisons between the British government's attitude towards the victims of the Irish Famine and the racism against the African Blacks, was itself a breeding ground from which sprung a form of destructive and inhuman racism. By aligning and contrasting the time of the Famine, and the radical discourse of nineteenth-century Irish nationalists about the enslavement of the Irish peasants, with that of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, McCann is obliquely suggesting that religious and ethnic sectarianism in Northern Ireland was, and perhaps still is, a form of racism equal in its potency of hatred and violence to the one inflicted to the descendants of the African slaves. What is more, McCann's fictionalized Douglass is already witness, in 1845, to the complexity of the Irish problem, where the antagonisms and hatreds at stake in the conflicts to come, to which Lily Duggan's descendants are doomed to be the victims of, are already brewing: "The politics still confounded him: who was Irish, who was British, who was Catholic, who was Protestant, who owned the land, whose child stood rheumy-eyed with hunger, whose house was burned to the ground, whose soil belonged to whom, and why?" (McCann 80). As a result, through the prism of the American history of slavery and racism, McCann is not only able to critique the radical nationalist claim that established a kinship of fate between the Irish and the Blacks, but also to show that the same discourse was the breeding ground for the sectarian and racist implications of the Northern Irish Troubles.

To a various extent, the two other novels under consideration are underpinned by the same critical stance towards the sectarian and racist tendencies proper to Irish nationalism – and to all forms of nationalism anywhere. *Tóibín's Brooklyn* however is perhaps the narrative that stages the most ambiguous of the three female protagonists as far as their attitude towards race and ethnicity is concerned. Indeed, *Tóibín's* novel seems an apt illustration of Bruce Nelson's remark that: "Many historians describe nationalism as a force that was turned inwards, preoccupied overwhelmingly with 'Ourselves', expressing little, if any, interest in parallel movements for emancipation, in other parts of the world" (Nelson 11). As a typical provincial Irish girl growing up in Eamon de Valera's 1950s Ireland, crippled by a disastrous combination of economic protectionism, censorship and cultural obscurantism, Eilis Lacey has been told nothing of the history of other people's oppressions: Ireland's isolationism during

World War Two entails that she does not have a clue about the fate of European Jews, as mentioned above; and once in Brooklyn she discovers the reality of racial discrimination against Blacks. When she is sent over to Brooklyn, her mother puts her in the care of the Catholic priest Father Flood, who supervises the flock of Irish girls regularly sent overseas. He sees to it that they evolve in a strictly Irish environment, so as to make sure that the young women marry within their own circle and thus secure the homogeneity of their ethnic community and preserve their Irish identity. Eilis lives in a boarding-house run by an Irish landlady, together with other Irish girls, and attends Irish dances supervised by the priest. *Tóibín* thus suggests that despite a long history of discrimination on account of their nationality – especially at the time when the Famine caused the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Irish people across the Atlantic¹ – the Irish, once settled down in the US, have tended to regard other ethnic groups with similar suspicion and racial prejudice. Thus when Eilis's roommates learn that she will have to serve Afro-American customers in the department store she works in, they express their repulsion:

'I wouldn't like to serve them in a store', Miss McAdam insisted. 'God, I wouldn't either,' Patty said. 'And is it their money you wouldn't like?' Mrs Kehoe said. 'They're very nice,' Eilis said. 'And some of them have beautiful clothes.' 'So it's true, then?' Sheila Heffernan asked. 'I thought it was a joke. Well, that's it, then. I'll pass Bartocci's, all right, but it'll be on the other side of the street.' (*Tóibín* 122)

After she meets Tony, Eilis prefers to keep to herself the fact that she is dating an Italian boy, who, even though a white Catholic like herself, is nevertheless regarded as Other. Eilis herself experiences this otherness as she entertains ambiguous feelings towards Tony's family: on first being introduced to them, she finds them alien and strange, as is evidenced, thanks to the device of internal focalization, by the attention she pays to their physical appearance. *Tóibín* highlights his character's complete ignorance of other cultures; her Irish education among a homogeneous people is reflected by her surprise at other peoples' physical differences, as when she notices about Tony's relatives that "each of them had black hair and eyes that were deep brown" (*Tóibín* 153). Likewise, she is unable to enjoy the Italian food prepared by Tony's mother and finds it strange and even slightly repulsive: "Everything she tasted she had to stop and hold it in her mouth, wondering what ingredients had gone into it" (*Tóibín* 154). The disgust she feels on that occasion is equivalent to the nausea she experiences during the sea-journey to America, a physical expression of her mental and psychological disorientation caused by the encounter with otherness. It proves almost overwhelming and makes Eilis feel so uncomfortable that she feels like running away: "She realized she would love to run out of this room and down the stairs and through the streets to the subway to her own room and close the door on the world" (*Tóibín* 155).

1 As recorded by the famous folksong: "No Irish need apply."

In the end, even if Eilis discovers sexual fulfilment thanks to her Italian lover, she is torn apart between her attraction to him and the desire to marry a local Irish boy and to stay in Ireland, after she is forced to return home on account of her sister's sudden death. It is only because of a twist of fate, an ill-intentioned neighbour who threatens to reveal her secret marriage to Tony, that she finally decides to go back to New York and to become the wife of an Italian-American. This ending may be compared to George Moore's canonical short story "Homesickness", when the protagonist James Bryden, who entertained the idea of marrying an Irish girl for a while, finally decides to go back to New York while suffering from the pains of nostalgia for the rest of his life. In the same way as Moore's story was a bitter depiction of post-Famine Ireland as a waste land riddled by religious bigotry, poverty and moral inertia, Tóibín in this narrative points to the utter failures and contradictions of the nationalist, post-independence Irish state. Indeed, despite its claims to moral and spiritual superiority over foreign, and especially British lifestyles, its vindication of cultural exclusiveness, and its discourse of racial distinctiveness, Fianna Fáil's Ireland was simply unable to provide the necessary economic conditions to keep its population at home. Thousands of young people were thus driven to an often very painful exile. While the small town where Eilis was born and raised offers her nothing but boredom, cultural deprivation and the most narrow form of moral conformism, the conspiracy engineered by Eilis's mother and sister, with the help of the local priest, to pack her away to New York, with or without her consent, is a small-scale representation of the only plan the nationalist state was able to elaborate to meet its people's needs. That plan was emigration, with the added constraint that the young should cling to their Irish identity wherever they would be re-located. Tóibín's narrative of exile and confrontation with otherness should also be set against the background of Ireland's metamorphosis at the turn of the twenty-first century from a closed, homogeneous type of society, into one of the most globalized economies in the world, attracting new strands of immigrant populations originating from all parts of the world, and causing a profound redefinition of Irish identity and culture. In the book already mentioned, Sinead Moynihan argues that the rekindled interest in "other people's diasporas" that she recognizes among Irish artists should be set against the background of the wave of immigration into Ireland which followed the boom of the Celtic Tiger economy. In her words, this late interest is "a means of coming to terms with debates on race and immigration in contemporary Ireland" (Moynihan 3), adding that "one of the most palpable trends in Irish culture of the Celtic Tiger is the juxtaposition, literal or implied, of narratives of Irish culture of the Celtic Tiger is the juxtaposition, literal or implied, of narratives of Irish *emigration* to the United States with those of *immigration* to Ireland" (Moynihan 2).

Brooklyn can thus be read as another example of contemporary Irish artists' renewed interest for other people's diasporas, and as a critique of the nationalist emphasis on the homogeneity of the Irish people, defined by whiteness and Catholicism. In this way, Tóibín forces the reader to contrast the exclusive, racialised visions of Irishness that originated in the country's colonial past, with the realities of contemporary Ireland, in the same way as McCann's *Transatlantic*.

These nationalist “exclusionary conceptions of identity homogeneity”, to quote Bryan Fanning (Fanning 35), are also implicitly deconstructed in Sebastian Barry’s *On Canaan’s Side*. Barry’s work in general has often been described as relentlessly critical of Irish nationalism. Liam Harte for instance has denounced the author’s “revisionist agenda” (Harte 205), exemplified by its questioning of the notions of loyalty and loyalism. In this novel, Barry adds a new episode to the saga of the Dunne family, which started with the 1995 play *The Steward of Christendom*, staging Lilly Dunne’s father Thomas, an old man in a mental hospital raving like King Lear about his past crimes, when as a servant to the King at the head of the Dublin Metropolitan Police he bated to death the striking workers of the 1913 Dublin Lock-out.

His descendants are consequently doomed to pay for their father’s sins, as is the case for the young Lilly, who is encouraged by her father to marry a Black and Tan soldier, and consequently has to face banishment, exile and persecution. The republican struggle for independence and for the unity of the island is therefore depicted, as in McCann’s novel, as conducive to sectarian exclusion and rejection, except that discrimination in this instance is based on the citizens’ loyalty to one side or the other of the British/Irish divide. This is Barry’s provocative way of revising the narrative of the Irish struggle for independence, which in his view relied upon an exclusionary, segregating discourse meant to reject all those considered unfit to belong to the imagined community of Irish, Gaelic, Catholic, anti-British Republicans.

In this episode of the Dunne saga Barry, like McCann, displaces the critique of Irish exclusionary discourses by retracing Lilly’s fate, who escapes the terrors of the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War, only to confront the complexities of racial inequalities on the other side of the Atlantic. Like McCann’s *Transatlantic*, *On Canaan’s Side* highlights the place and role of the Irish community in the building up of the United States. But the novel also suggests the underlying contradiction between the nationalists’ claims of victimization on one side of the Atlantic, and the confrontation with other, equally or perhaps even more oppressed peoples, in America, in the wake of the steady flow of Irish emigration to the US. Lilly Bere’s brief encounter with Martin Luther King can be read as an echo to the encounter between Lily Duggan and Frederick Douglass in McCann’s *Transatlantic*, pointing to the same interrogations regarding the legitimacy of comparing the fate of the Irish with that of Afro-Americans, as conveyed by the notion of the “Green Atlantic.” Thus, while working for Mrs Woholan and her daughter, a rich East Coast Irish-American family of politicians probably based on the Kennedys, Lilly hears of King’s assassination in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. This allusion to the murder of the black leader suggests the discrepancy in the situation of the descendants of the Irish migrants and that of the descendants of the African slaves. Whereas the Woholan family, who are of Irish descent, have been able to rise to power and wealth, the descendants of former southern slaves, to quote from Martin Luther King’s famous speech “I Have a Dream”, are still persecuted and assassinated, like King himself. Lilly herself is allowed to thrive in America,

whereas her friend Cassie, the grand-daughter of a Georgian slave, meets with a tragic fate.

On the other hand, a very old Lilly discovers that the IRA gunman who was long ago in charge of eliminating her as well as her Black and Tan fiancée, has pursued her all along her very long life. This eerie life-long pursuit serves as a reminder of the archaic persistence of the sectarian violence engendered by Irish nationalism well into the last decades of the twentieth century, manifesting the haunting presence of the fathers' sins in the present times. In this regard, Barry like McCann hints at a parallel between the violence engendered by nationalist sectarianism in Ireland and the violence of racism in the US. Even though Lilly hangs on to the last to her vision of America as a land of Canaan, a refuge from the persecutions she faced in Ireland, the racial discriminations, the wars and the bereavement she encounters in the United States all deny this image of a promised land. According to Barry, religious bigotry, racial discrimination and hatred of the other fuel violence on both sides of the Atlantic. The fact that both Lilly's son and grandson fight in two American wars overseas, in Viet-Nam and Iraq, points to the United States' continuing history of imperialist interference, premised upon the racial and cultural superiority of the West, in the same way that issues of ethnic and cultural identities have continued to breed violence and conflict in Ireland well into the contemporary era. It reminds the reader that thousands of young Americans lost their lives in the name of their loyalty due to their nation, just like hundreds of Irishmen did. The name given to Lilly's grandson, William Dunne Kinderman Bere, thus encapsulates the complex heritage of racism, sectarianism and conflicted loyalties the Irish and the Americans combine as peoples and as nations. America is no better than Ireland in terms of conflict and violence, but Ireland should not be blind to the racist implications of the Protestant/Catholic, or Republican/Loyalist feud.

To conclude, we may say that in their novels, whose publications were almost concomitant, McCann, Tóibín or Barry use the traditional narrative of the Irish emigrant to the USA to raise questions regarding Ireland's attitude towards race and ethnicity, both in the past and in the present. The three novels suggest that, despite the realities of a history of oppression and suffering, based on the alleged racial inferiority of the Irish people, Irish nationalist discourse was itself the breeding ground for exclusionary, discriminatory attitudes. The general ignorance, blindness and altogether denial of Otherness induced by the discourse of Irish nationalism is embodied by the three innocent Lillies staged in those stories, who through their displacement are forced to compare and contrast their own identity with that of other ethnic groups. The historical perspectives adopted in the stories, either spanning several generations of the same family, or focusing on the 1950s, enable the novelists to cast a backward look to the times when nationalist discourse and the process of nation-building construed the notion of Irishness as a distinct race. This attempt to define Irish identity was justified before independence by the necessity to outline Irishness in contrast with Britishness, and even to allege of the superiority of the first over the

second. After independence, the obsessive wish to preserve the Irish from all kinds of foreign influence, whether it be in the field of the economy or of culture continued to induce narrow-minded views of national identity, until the turn of the 1960s. To quote John Brannigan in the introduction to his book *Race in Modern Irish Literature and Culture* published in 2009, “racial ideologies and racist practices have not only undergirded the Irish state and its defining cultural institutions and policies, often in muted and insidious forms, but have been central to the ways in which official discourses of ‘Irishness’ have been negotiated and contested in the cultural sphere” (Brannigan 5).

The three authors thus seem to advocate for the necessity to recognize the sectarian, exclusionary nature of the process of nation-building in Ireland, as the works of several historians, sociologists or cultural historians, some of them being quoted above, such as Bryan Fanning or John Brannigan, to which must be added Dermot Keogh, Steve Garner, Ronit Lentin,² and others, have recently documented at length. The need to reassess Irish people’s attitudes to “other people’s diaporas” and other people’s histories in general became more urgent in relation to the resurgence of racism in Celtic Tiger Ireland, at a time when the island was becoming itself a land of Canaan, a place of refuge, for many immigrants and refugees from Eastern Europe, Africa and elsewhere.

It is noticeable however that the choice of three female migrants as protagonists have enabled McCann, Tóibín and Barry to make them the mothers of generations of mixed-race subjects, in full contradiction with the discourse of racial homogeneity once prevailing in Ireland, or with the persistence of racial tensions in the US: a way for the three writers to claim a future when all boundaries, whether racial, ethnic, religious, national or cultural, will finally be overcome, on both sides of the Atlantic.

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2 See Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth-Century Ireland*; Fanning, *Racism and Social Change*; Garner, *Racism in the Irish Experience*; and Lentin and McVeigh, eds., *Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland*.

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WERNER HUBER TESTIMONIES

OBITUARY BY THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

We are deeply saddened at the passing away of Professor Werner Huber. Werner Huber was born in Hassloch, Rhineland Palatinate, Germany, in 1952 and studied English and German at the University of Mannheim, Amherst College, the University of Mainz and Trinity College Dublin. He received his PhD in 1980, with a thesis on James Stephens's early novels, from the University of Mainz and subsequently became a research assistant and assistant professor at the English Department of the University of Paderborn, where he collaborated closely with Rainer Schöwerling on the Corvey Library Project. In 1995, he received his *venia legendi* in English Philology with a Habilitationsschrift on Irish autobiographies of the twentieth century. After a short period at the University of Tübingen he became Full Professor of English Literature at the Chemnitz University of Technology in 1999, before being appointed Full Professor of English and American Language and Literature at the University of Vienna in 2005.

In Vienna, Werner Huber tirelessly promoted the cause of Irish Studies in his teaching and research, founding the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies in 2009 and initiating the Distinguished Chair in Irish Studies Programme, co-funded by the Embassy of Ireland and the University of Vienna, which brought a string of eminent scholars (such as Gerry Smyth, Séan Crosson, Robert Mahony) to our department. Through his involvement in the "Irish Itinerary" culture programme, he contributed to the city's vibrant cultural scene by welcoming numerous renowned Irish authors, film makers, and musicians, such as Medbh McGuckian, Julian Gough, Glenn Patterson, Lenny Abrahamson. He also brought two major Irish Studies conferences to Vienna. In 2009, he organized the Seventh Conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS) on the theme of "Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges"; Irish Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney accepted his invitation to deliver a celebrated keynote lecture on "Mossbawn via Mantua: A Reading with Commentary." Papers from the conference were published in two volumes, entitled *Contemporary Irish Film: New Perspectives on a National Cinema* (2011) and *Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges* (2012). In 2011, marking the centenary of Flann O'Brien's birthday, Werner Huber co-organized the inaugural conference of the International Flann O'Brien Society, with keynotes by Anthony Cronin, Frank McNally, Keith Hopper, Kurt Palm, and Harry Rowohlt. The conference resulted in a much-noted volume of Flann O'Brien scholarship, entitled *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies* (Cork UP). Plans to host the 2017 annual conference of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) sadly did not materialize due to his sudden illness.

Werner Huber's central role in the field of Irish Studies is further illustrated by his function of Vice-President for IASIL Europe (2000-2009), his membership of the

EFACIS Executive Committee (1999-2016), as well as his editorship of the EFACIS book series *Irish Studies in Europe* (six volumes, WVT). The enormous appreciation of his achievements as a champion of Irish Studies has come to the fore in numerous tributes pouring in from the Irish Studies community all over the world upon the news of his death. "We salute Werner as a world scholar in Irish literature and drama and as a steadfast champion of Irish studies and Irish culture within Europe and beyond," writes IASIL Chairperson Margaret Kelleher. "We will miss greatly his wisdom, his deep and quiet generosity to fellow scholars, and his infectious sense of humour."

Outside the field of Irish Studies, Werner Huber made notable contributions to the foundation and development of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE), whose president he was from 2001 to 2009, concluding his presidency as host of the Society's 2009 conference in Vienna on the theme of "Staging Interculturality." A book of the same title, with papers from the conference, appeared in 2010. His long-standing research interest in British Romanticism is reflected in his position as Secretary-Treasurer and Vice-President of the German Society for English Romanticism (1982-1996) and his influential co-edited volume on *Biofictions: The Rewriting of Romantic Lives in Contemporary Fiction and Drama* (1999). His broad expertise is further reflected in a large number of editorial board memberships (e.g. *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, *Irish Studies Review*, *Irish University Review*) and in his editorial work on numerous scholarly essay collections (e.g. *Intermedialities* (2007), *Self-Reflexivity in Literature* (2005), *The Corvey Library and Anglo-German Cultural Exchanges, 1770-1837* (2004)).

An engaging speaker, Werner Huber will be greatly missed by his students for his lectures and seminars in Film and Cultural Studies, where his enthusiasm for British popular culture (*Downton Abbey*, *Game of Thrones*) proved contagious and his dry sense of humour and attention to quirky details were much appreciated. Students benefitted from his excellent contacts not only in academia but also in the arts world. They had the unique opportunity of hearing talks by Academy Award nominees Lenny Abrahamson and Peter Morgan, as well as distinguished authors such as Claire Tomalin and Michael Frayn. A whole generation of students will fondly remember Werner Huber's annual London theatre "field trips", where the groundling experience in the Globe Theatre – sometimes in the pouring rain – was regularly followed by a convivial pint in the local pub.

Werner Huber was not only an exemplary scholar and charismatic teacher but also a kind, generous and inspiring supervisor and mentor, whose advice and continuous support will be keenly missed by his students and also by the junior colleagues who had the privilege of working with him. For those who knew him, he was a true "scholar and gentleman" – an amiable and "cultured all-round man", who leaves a large gap in the department's life and the university. We will always remember him with gratitude and affection. Our hearts go out to his wife Edith and his daughter Anna.

Dieter Fuchs, Julia Lajta-Novak, Sandra Mayer

IN MEMORIAM WERNER HUBER (1952-2016)

Klaus Lubbers

It was with great sadness that I noted Werner Huber's passing away on 28 April 2016 after a brief but acute illness of a rare kind. The international field of Irish Studies lost one of its pioneering spirits when he died. My sorrow was somewhat relieved when I came across the moving obituary written by his former colleagues and friends Rolf Breuer (Paderborn) and Martin Middeke (Augsburg) published in the communications of *Deutscher Anglistenverband*.

It was on a nice summer's day in the nineteen-seventies, while I was spending my first sabbatical semester at Amherst College, that my friend Donald White, head of the German Department, introduced me to a tall young gentleman who, by his own ingenuity, had found his way as student as well as teaching assistant into this elitist institution of learning. I have forgotten what we talked about, but after his return to Germany Werner Huber left Mannheim and joined me at Mainz where in the course of time I became his doctoral supervisor and had the good fortune to be able to recommend him to Rainer Schöwerling, who happened to be looking for an assistant. So he passed his formative postdoctoral period at Paderborn just at the time when the treasure trove in the princely abbey of Corvey was discovered, a sensational find containing, among other things, some 2,600 novels in English dating from the Romantic period, which involved him in an additional extended research project. His first call, to Chemnitz, proved – in retrospect – a stepping stone to the professorship he was offered ten years later at Vienna. On 21 December 2005 he wrote to me in his seasonal greetings:

Ich bin jetzt seit Anfang WS in Wien, und Ende Jänner werden wir wohl ganz übersiedeln. Atmosphärisch und studientechnisch ist das beim Vergleich mit der TH [Chemnitz] hier: Championsleague statt Regionalliga! Es macht einfach Spaß, ins Seminar zu gehen. Da die Lehrkanzel für ‚Irish Studies‘ ausgeschrieben war, gibt es dementsprechende Erwartungen.

Expectations which he more than fulfilled: for it was in Vienna that Werner Huber really hit his stride and spent the happiest decade of his life, to judge from the explosion of his scholarly activities as well as from the cheerful letters which he favoured me with. A climax came with his organization of the Seventh EFACIS Conference entitled "Ireland in/and Europe: Cross-Currents and Exchanges" on 3-6 September 2009. Werner Huber's sixtieth birthday was duly marked by a volume entitled *Ireland in Drama, Film and Popular Fiction*, collected by former students and colleagues.

Then, on 14 July 2015, a shocking letter reached me that was in line with the frankness, indeed candidness, of our long and close friendship:

Herzliche grüße auch mal wieder an Sie und nach Mainz!

Ich bin um mitte juni ganz plötzlich mit einem gehirntumor affiziert worden – teuflische Ironie: bes. trifft es mich sprache und sätze.

Small talk und standard situationen gehen OK, aber schwierige situationen dauern.

Wenn die wörter sollen sich erst mal erholen – dafür jetzt auch logopaedie.

Finally his last Christmas wishes:

in diese woche wegen MRT und Logopädie – dann Aphasia / Dysphasia – war ich im Hospital. Dazu kommen dramatic irony: 'kleine Anna' nun alles neue mit Sprechen, Worten und Sätzen.

Sad to say, it was glioblastoma, the most aggressive cancer that begins in the brain and whose progress even chemotherapy fails to arrest, that took him away from us.

In following Werner Huber's distinguished career, I perceive first of all the significant role he played in the thriving of international Irish Studies. In my younger years, a Hibernicist used to attend the conferences of the literature-oriented IASAIL (then still, I now feel, somewhat in a stage of academic tourism – despite such prominent scholars as Patrick Rafroidi, Maurice Harmon, and Heinz Kosok). And that was it. More ambitious European Hibernicists *could* read papers at conventions of the interdisciplinary ACIS (which is what I did intermittently from 1978 until 1995 without ever spotting another attendant from continental Europe). In his correspondence, Werner Huber repeatedly commented on the rapidly changing state of affairs in Irish Studies in Europe:

Wie Sie aus dem beiliegenden Programm sehen, ist die deutsche/deutschsprachige Hibernistik nur mehr vereinzelt in den Relikten der einstigen Hochburgen vertreten ... (11 September 2009).

Deutschland insgesamt stellt sich ... ins Abseits, denn rundherum blühen Centres of Irish Studies (Leuven, Prag, Skandinavien, Frankreich sowieso, Wien) (14 June 2010).

... Von EFACIS kommen z. Zt. stärkere Impulse als von IASIL (20 April 2011).

When looking back I also observe the incisive change in scholarly perspective from New Criticism to Cultural Studies that occurred between his generation and mine. While mine grew up in the tradition of philology and literary history, his was practically forced to break new ground. In this respect, too, Werner Huber's oeuvre furnishes a striking example – from his doctoral dissertation devoted to James Stephens from the point of view of reader-response criticism, then just around the corner, to his more recent intermedial research projects embracing all kinds of "texts" including films, and photos of David Beckham and Robbie Williams. In that respect, the former pupil has become his former master's teacher. For that as well as for his life-long gratefulness, I shall never forget Werner Huber, the witty gentleman from Rhineland-Palatinate.

Klaus Lubbers, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

TRIBUTE TO WERNER HUBER

Catherine Mignant

Werner Huber was one of the most enthusiastic promoters of Irish studies in Europe. He passionately believed in the merits of networking to reach collective excellence. Not only was he a member of the EFACIS Executive Committee for an exceptionally long stretch of seventeen years (1999-2016), but he was among the few people who contributed to the very invention of the Association. He was there when the European Federation was launched in Paris; he took part in its inaugural conference in Lille in 1998; the creation of the *Irish Studies in Europe* series was his idea and he became its devoted editor. In 2009, he organized the Seventh Conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies in Vienna and all participants cherish the memory of this truly memorable event. Werner never missed a conference or an executive committee meeting and his constructive and perceptive contributions were always welcome. His untimely death is a tragic loss to those who remember these early days and his warm support for any initiative likely to advance the cause of Irish studies in Europe and the world. A scholar of international standing, he also numbered among the best world experts in Irish literature and drama studies. His numerous publications testify to his outstanding contribution to research in that area. But beyond his professional talents, he was simply a good man. His quality of presence made him a man with whom it was a pleasure to work and his tongue in cheek humour delighted all those who knew him. He will be sorely missed by his colleagues and Irish studies friends.

Catherine Mignant, Professor of Irish studies at the University of Lille
and first president of EFACIS

FOND MEMORIES

Filomena Louro

All along the years I have been involved with Irish studies there were a great number of moments when we could feel we were making an effort to produce something valuable and fun. One of the pleasures and rich moments of my academic life was the opportunity to enjoy the company of Professor Werner Huber as a colleague and a friend.

For me it all started with a letter inviting me to join a group who would be meeting in Paris in the nineties, at the Collège des Irlandais, in 1996. There I met Paul Brennan, Claude Fierobe and many other colleagues invited from other European countries who made their way into the creation of EFACIS.

On the third meeting a new German colleague joined us, Werner Huber from the University of Paderborn. These early meetings at the Centre du Monde Anglophone, 5 rue de l'École de Médecine, and at Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille 3, gained a lot from the discreet presence of Werner Huber, and we established a sound basis for our current and thriving EFACIS group. I clearly recall how a subtle presence like Werner's made himself a key figure in our lively meetings.

These were spent in hot debate about the choice of model to follow, and Werner's contributions were always sound, reflexive, and promoting a forward-looking solution rather than a reductive compromise. In his proposals there was a solution where no one seemed to have to lose something to continue the debate. Rather the opposite, he was able to bring in differing views to agree with him, confident of having put in their share in the debate. It is due to his negotiations that Irish Studies in Europe came into being, with a first issue of the proceedings of the Fourth EFACIS conference in Braga, hosted by me in 2003.

I remember with fondness the lunches after the Steering Committee meetings where we could continue to enjoy each other's company and keep up to date on academic and personal matters. A good listener, Werner was also a good storyteller, discreet with his life and always ready to offer help and to acknowledge collaboration. Werner's memory will be with us who enjoyed his eloquence and academic achievements, his enthusiasm for literature, theatre, film, football and a friendly drink. A much respected colleague, a truly loved friend.

Filomena Louro, co-founding member of EFACIS

“YOU WILL HEAR FROM ME TWICE.”
REMEMBERING WERNER HUBER

Giovanna Tallone

The opening lines of Brian Friel's renowned and award-winning play of 1990, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, are a catalyst for memory and its intricacies. The protagonist-narrator, Michael, introduces the subject matter of the play: "When I cast my mind back to that summer of 1936 different kinds of memories offer themselves to me."

My mind is cast back to 1991, my very first IASIL (then IASIL) conference in Leiden. I tried to attend as many sessions as possible, enjoying the variety of critical approaches and the wide range of perspectives such an international event offered. On the last day of the conference, I listened to a paper given by Werner Huber on James Stephens's early novels. I have a distinct memory of the speaker's imposing figure, standing to deliver his paper with a captivating voice. Afterwards I tried to overcome my shyness and told Werner I had enjoyed his paper as I was currently doing some research on James Stephens, whereon he offered to send me a couple of articles he had written. About a week later I received an envelope from Universität Gesamthochschule Paderborn (where was Paderborn?) with the two essays he had promised and a covering letter which I still treasure:

Dear Ms. Tallone,

Sorry, I can't guess your first name.

I enclose two pieces of Stephensiana which may interest you.

Thank you very much for being an interested listener at Leiden.

Best wishes,
Werner Huber.

It was a pleasant surprise to realize that such intellectual generosity could exist; that research was not only private and selfish in a way, but carried out in order to be shared. Throughout the years, I found again that generosity in a variety of ways, and is also referred to in Margaret Kelleher's and Seán Crosson's obituaries.

Yet he was also the reserved, not very talkative gentleman who managed at the right time to engage you in conversation in the wide range of topics of his IASIL and EFACIS papers. And it was during the IASIL Conference in São Paulo in 2002, at an evening reception Munira Mutran had organized at her house, that Werner suggested joining EFACIS, something I had never really considered as the conferences clashed with my work commitments. But Werner turned out to be right: the perspective of EFACIS beyond literature, involving social sciences, politics and history would open a different point of view for someone like me.

My network of memories connects Werner to so many places – welcoming me at Budapest Airport with the group of IASILates on the way to Debrecen; at dinner at Britta Olinder's house in Gothenburg telling me about his dog; joining us at Malpensa Airport on his way to the Casa da Musica in Porto. The paper he gave in Porto on Martin McDonagh's film *Six Shooter* showed his developing interests in film studies where his "bovine and ovine images and metaphors" greatly engaged the audience.

However, the most enduring memory of Werner I have is related to the years in which he served as IASIL returning officer. Every year at the AGM he explained the election system starting with a formula that never changed over the years: "You will hear from me twice." Now this sentence is emblematic to me, of his role at the time, but more of the way in which his memory, his presence, his scholarship, his kindness and generosity live on. We will hear from him twice and over and over again, in his essays and books, but especially in the memories of all those who had the happy opportunity to meet him.

Giovanna Tallone, Independent Scholar

100 MYLES AND COUNTING: WERNER AMONG THE MYLESIANS

Paul Fagan

Flann O'Brien studies have undergone not only a renaissance but also something of a revolution over the past decade. From the founding of The International Flann O'Brien Society and its peer-reviewed journal *The Parish Review* in 2011 to international conferences in Dublin, Rome, Prague, Salzburg, Sydney, and Boston in far *Amuriky*, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in both the breadth and depth of scholarly activity on a writer whose achievements had for too long been marginalised or diminished. Few people can claim to have been a more influential driving or shaping force on this new wave of Flann studies than Werner Huber. Personally speaking, it was a pleasure and a distinct honour to work with him on the Flann project in his final years, and I am delighted to have the space here to give voice, on behalf of the members of The International Flann O'Brien Society, to the huge debt that those of us working in the field owe to him.

In 1977, Werner wrote his diploma thesis on 'Forms of Humour in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*' – a topic which, as he was fond of saying, was at that time in German academia "neither popular nor profitable", yet which bespoke his lifelong dedication to the author. His 1988 article 'Flann O'Brien and the Language of the Grotesque' remains a pivotal text in the field for the ways in which it opened up the generic textures and comic energies of *The Third Policeman* for more considered analysis.¹

At the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies, which he had founded in 2009, Werner hosted 100 Myles: The International Flann O'Brien Centenary Conference, the inaugural The International Flann O'Brien Society conference. Despite the success of subsequent symposia, the Vienna conference remains the largest academic event ever held on Flann O'Brien. This fact is attributable in no small part to Werner's expertise and dedication (it was he who came up with the conference's now iconic *100 Myles* title – in the on-site brewery of the Vienna University campus, as I fondly recall). The conference boasted papers and keynotes from 'Flanneurs' (Werner preferred the label 'Mylesians') hailing from three continents. Particularly befitting Werner's dedication to bringing together creative production and scholarly knowledge, the programme included a seemingly endless line-up of artists, authors, performers, and filmmakers. The conference resulted in the publication of *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies* with Cork UP, a prestige collection of essays that reflected the high standard of papers and critical debate at the event, and which Ruben Borg and I had the pleasure of co-

1 Werner Huber, 'Flann O'Brien and the Language of the Grotesque,' in Birgit Bramsback and Martin Croghan (eds.), *Anglo-Irish and Irish Literature: Aspects of Language and Culture*. Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1988. 123-30.

editing with Werner (as his former student, it was a relief to see his infamously scrupulous editorial skills turned on other people's writing, for a change). The collection was listed in *The Irish Times* top 10 non-fiction books of 2014.

In the conference's aftermath, Werner generously opened up the Vienna Centre for Irish Studies as a home for the burgeoning International Flann O'Brien Society, where it is still based six years later. As the society developed, Werner served tirelessly on the editorial board of *The Parish Review* (he got an endless kick out of the journal's title), always ready to provide not only his expertise and feedback, but also his time and support. It seemed like every time I walked into his office, he had uncovered a recording, a programme, or a letter from his Flann archives that cast new light on some issue being discussed in the journal.

The last talk I saw Werner give, when I chaired his Flann O'Brien panel at the 2015 Palermo EFACIS conference, was titled "Monty Python in the Viennese Woods': Flann O'Brien in Austria." The paper discussed Kurt Palm's bizarre, yet fascinating German-language cult Austrian film adaptation of O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*; a personal favourite of Werner's. It seemed a fitting, if small tribute to his memory, then, that the 2017 International Flann O'Brien Society conference should dedicate an evening of its programme to The Werner Huber Memorial Screening of the film at the packed-out Mozartkino Salzburg (generously supported by EFACIS), followed by a Q&A with the director Palm.

Like the many, many people whose lives were touched by his work and his company, we are extremely saddened by Werner's passing, but proud to have known him and his inexhaustible generosity, without which Flann studies would be a poorer thing, and The International Flann O'Brien Society and *The Parish Review* journal an impossibility.

Paul Fagan, Co-Founder and President
of the International Flann O'Brien Society

TO A FRIEND

Seán Crosson

I feel sad but honoured to contribute to this volume of Irish Studies in Europe in memory of Werner Huber. My contribution is based on a paper presented on a panel with Professor Werner Huber given at the Transatlantic Connections conference organized by Drew University, New Jersey, in association with the Institute of Study Abroad Ireland, in Bundoran in January 2014. During that time I was Visiting Professor in Irish cultural Studies at the University of Vienna, four of the most memorable months in my life to date. My time there (and in Bundoran) would not have happened without Werner's extraordinary generosity and friendship. Typical of Werner, the Bundoran conference was entirely atypical of Irish Studies academic events: it featured panels on surfing, food, and beer as well as the more established academic areas of literature and film. My own participation came further to Werner's invitation to join him at an event that reflected his own richly interdisciplinary interest in Irish Studies, an interest that was both inspirational and informing for myself. Our visit to Bundoran was rather circuitous; it was from Vienna via a trip to the West End in London to watch the musical adaptation of Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments*. As luck would have it, we barely made it in time for the show. Despite arriving over two hours in advance into Heathrow, problems on the London underground led to the closure of several lines and at one point it seemed we'd both be crushed to death as crowds of thousands arrived simultaneously at one tube station. Werner, of course, was unflappable as ever and seemed more amused than anything by it all.

Bundoran is about as far in Ireland from London in terms of both geography and social life as one could imagine. Werner's paper there, on one of his favourite topics – the films of Martin McDonagh and John Michael McDonagh – offered as ever an insightful and highly entertaining overview, so much so that he received an award on the final night for the best paper delivered. I have very fond memories of us walking along the stunning coastline of Bundoran discussing aspects of Irish film, theatre and sport (all great interests of Werner) conversations that continued throughout my time in Vienna. In a way these conversations never ended, despite Werner's passing. They live on in my own work but also in the research of so many fellow academics and students whose lives were touched by the work and extraordinary person of Werner Huber.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

Seán Crosson, Chair of EFACIS

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Jochen Achilles is Professor emeritus of American Studies at the University of Würzburg, Germany. His authored book publications include a study on the development of Sean O'Casey's plays in the context of modern drama and a book on the interface between the gothic tradition and psychological fiction, focusing on Sheridan Le Fanu. He co-edited numerous books, among them studies on contemporary Irish dramatists and representations of evil in fiction and film. Most recently, together with Ina Bergmann, he co-edited *Liminality and the Short Story: Boundary Crossings in American, Canadian, and British Writing* (Routledge 2015). His research interests include liminal cultural identities, the American short story, African American and Irish drama.

Donatella Abbate Badin, formerly of the University of Turin, is the author of numerous scholarly essays and books in the fields of nineteenth and twentieth-century English and Irish studies focusing especially on poetry, travel writing and the representations of Italy in English and Irish literatures. She has published extensively on G.M. Hopkins, Thomas Kinsella, Dickens, Seán Ó Faoláin, the Irish Gothic, Thomas Moore and twentieth-century women writers. Her specialization in the representations of Italy in literature has led her to an in-depth study of Lady Morgan's *Italy*, a text which she edited for Pickering and Chatto and on which she published a book and many articles. She has been a member of the Steering Committee of EFACIS and of the editorial board of *Studi irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*.

Elena Cotta Ramusino is lecturer in English literature at the University of Pavia. She has worked mainly on Irish literature, the twentieth century, modernism and autobiography. She has published on W.B. Yeats, Seamus Heaney, Elizabeth Bowen, Hugo Hamilton and Neil Jordan. Forthcoming is an essay on Richard Murphy's autobiography, *The Kick*.

Seán Crosson is the Acting Director of the Huston School of Film & Digital Media, NUI Galway. His publications include the monographs *Sport and Film* (Routledge, 2013) and *'The Given Note': Traditional Music and Contemporary Irish Poetry* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008), and the co-edited collections (with Werner Huber) *Towards 2016: 1916 and Irish Literature, Culture & Society* (Irish Studies in Europe 6; WVT 2015) and *Contemporary Irish Film: New Perspectives on a National Cinema* (Braumüller 2011). He is President of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS).

Paul Fagan is a lecturer in cultural studies and modernism at the University of Vienna and a Senior Scientist at Salzburg University. He is the co-founder and president of the International Flann O'Brien Society, as well as co-founder and series editor of the society's peer-reviewed journal *The Parish Review*. He is the co-editor, with Ruben Borg and Werner Huber, of *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies*, and with Borg and John McCourt of *Flann O'Brien: Problems with Authority*. He is currently working on

the edited volumes *Flann O'Brien: Gallows Humour* (with Borg), *Flann O'Brien: Acting Out* (with Dieter Fuchs), and *Irish Modernisms: Gaps, Conjectures, Possibilities* (with John Greaney and Tamara Radak), and is completing a monograph on *The Literary Hoax and the Irish Tradition*.

Joan FitzPatrick Dean is Curators' Distinguished Teaching Professor of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and recipient of the 2016 N. T. Veatch Award for Distinguished Research. Her books include *Beyond Realism: Experimental and Unconventional Irish Drama since the Revival* (2015, co-edited with José Lanthers); *All Dressed Up: Modern Irish Historical Pageantry* (2014); *Riot and Great Anger: Twentieth Century Stage Censorship in Ireland* (2004); *Dancing at Lughnasa* (2003); and earlier monographs on British drama. She was Fulbright Scholar at University College Galway (1992-93) and Fulbright Lecturer at Université de Nancy (1982-83).

Keith Hopper teaches Literature and Film Studies for Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education. He is the author of *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-modernist* (rev. edition, 2009); general editor of the twelve-volume *Ireland into Film* series (2001-2007); and co-editor (with Neil Murphy) of *Flann O'Brien: Centenary Essays* (2011) and *The Short Fiction of Flann O'Brien* (2013). Recent publications include co-editing (with Neil Murphy) a series of four books by and about the late Dermot Healy: *The Collected Short Stories* and an edited reprint of Healy's debut novel *Fighting with Shadows* appeared in 2015; *The Collected Plays* and *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy* were published in 2016. He is a regular contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*, and is currently completing a book on the writer and filmmaker Neil Jordan.

Declan Kiberd is Keough Professor of Irish Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He was for many years Professor of Anglo-Irish Literature at University College Dublin. He has published many books, including *Inventing Ireland*; *Irish Classics*; and, most recently, *After Ireland: Writing the Nation from Beckett to the Present*, which is the final volume of the trilogy. With P.J. Mathews, he co-edited *Handbook of the Irish Revival 1891-1922*. He has been a member of the Board of the Abbey Theatre, as well as Director of the Yeats International Summer School.

Mária Kurdi is Professor Emerita in the Institute of English Studies at the University of Pécs, Hungary. Her main research areas are modern Irish literature and English-speaking drama. Her books include *Codes and Masks: Aspects of Identity in Contemporary Irish Plays in an Intercultural Context* (Peter Lang 2000), and *Representations of Gender and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Irish Drama by Women* (Edwin Mellen 2010). With Donald E. Morse and Csilla Bertha she co-edited the book *Brian Friel's Dramatic Artistry: "The Work Has Value"* (Carysfort 2006). In 2009 also Carysfort Press brought out her edited volume *Literary and Cultural Relations: Ireland, Hungary, and Central and Eastern Europe*. With Miriam Haughton she co-edited the collection *Radical Contemporary Theatre Practices by Women in Ireland* (Carysfort 2015) and the 2014 issue of *Irish Theatre International*. Mária Kurdi has edited issues of the

Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies on Brian Friel and Arthur Miller respectively as well as a section in the same periodical on Caryl Churchill. In 2015 she edited a collection of Hungarian essays to mark the centenary of Arthur Miller's birth. Mária Kurdi is also the author of numerous articles on Irish drama and theatre.

Stefanie Lehner is lecturer in Irish Literature and Culture at Queen's University, Belfast, and Fellow at the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice. Her current research explores the role of the arts, specifically performance, in conflict transformation processes, with a focus on the Northern Irish context. She also researches and teaches on representations of trauma and memory in (Northern) Irish drama, fiction, film, and photography. She is author of *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature* (Palgrave 2011).

John McCourt is Professor of English literature at the Università di Macerata. The author of *The Years of Bloom: Joyce in Trieste 1904-1920* (2000), his most recent book, *Writing the Frontier: Anthony Trollope between Britain and Ireland*, was published by Oxford UP in 2015. *Flann O'Brien: Problems with Authority*, which he edited along with Paul Fagan and Ruben Borg for Cork UP, appeared in 2017. He is currently editing a collection of essays on Brendan Behan. He is a trustee of the International James Joyce Foundation and a member of the academic board of the International Yeats Summer School.

Sylvie Mikowski is "Professeur des universités" at the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne where she teaches Irish Studies and English Literature. She has published among others *Le Roman irlandais Contemporain* (Presses Universitaires de Caen 2004), edited *Histoire et mémoire en France et en Irlande/History and Memory in France and Ireland* (Presses Universitaires de Reims 2011), *Ireland and Popular Culture* (Peter Lang 2014), *Ecrivaines irlandaises/Irish Women Writers* (Presses Universitaires de Caen 2014) with Bertrand Cardin, and a special issue of *Imaginaires* on "Popular cultures today" (2015). She has also published numerous papers and book-chapters on various contemporary Irish writers, including John McGahern, Deirdre Madden, Joseph O'Connor, Roddy Doyle, Colum McCann, Sebastian Barry, etc. She was literary editor of the French journal *Etudes Irlandaises* from 2008 to 2014 and is currently vice-president of the SOFEIR, the French Society of Irish Studies.

Neil Murphy is Associate Professor of English at NTU, Singapore. He is the author of *Irish Fiction and Postmodern Doubt* (2004) and editor of *Aidan Higgins: The Fragility of Form* (2010). He co-edited (with Keith Hopper) a special Flann O'Brien centenary issue of the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* (2011) and *The Short Fiction of Flann O'Brien* (2013), and a four book series related to the work of Dermot Healy, including a scholarly edition of *Fighting with Shadows* (2015), *Dermot Healy: The Collected Short Stories* (2015), *Dermot Healy: The Collected Plays* (2016), and *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy* (2016) – all with Dalkey Archive Press, USA. His book-length study on John Banville will be published by Bucknell University Press in 2018.

Ondřej Pilný is a Professor of English and American Literature and Director of the Centre for Irish Studies at Charles University, Prague. He is the author of *The Grotesque in Contemporary Anglophone Drama* (2016) and *Irony and Identity in Modern Irish Drama* (2006), and editor of collections of essays and journal issues on subjects ranging from Anglophone drama and Irish literature to cultural memory and structuralist theory. His translations include works by J. M. Synge, Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, Brian Friel, Enda Walsh, and Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and *Hangmen*. He is the current Chairperson of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures and Vice-President of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies.

Having completed a three-year uni:docs fellowship and received her PhD in English and American Studies from the University of Vienna, **Tamara Radak** is currently preparing a monograph on "endgames" and anti-closural narratives in the novels of James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Virginia Woolf, and Ernest Hemingway titled *No(n)Sense of an Ending? Modernist Aporias of Closure*. Radak has been an invited lecturer at the Trieste James Joyce Summer School and the Vienna Irish Studies and Cultural Theories Summer School. She has published essays in *James Joyce Quarterly*, *European Joyce Studies*, *James Joyce Literary Supplement*, and the Flann O'Brien-themed *The Parish Review*. She is currently working on the edited volume *Irish Modernisms: Gaps, Conjectures, Possibilities* with Paul Fagan and John Greaney.

Hedwig Schwall is Director of the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies (LCIS) at the University of Leuven (<http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/lcis>) and Project Director of EFACIS. In this capacity she organized the translation project Yeats Reborn (2013-2015) (<http://www.yeatsreborn.eu>) now followed by a John Banville website combining translations with new academic material (<http://www.johnbanville.eu/>). Her research focuses on psychoanalytic approaches of contemporary Irish literature (Banville, Trevor, Ryan, Enright, Madden, Groarke et al.). She is on the editorial board of several journals of Irish literature and is now editing an issue on Irish text(ile)s for *RISE* (<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/rise>). She is working on a book about Affect in European art and literature.

Stephanie Schwerter is Professor of Anglophone literature at the University of Valenciennes. Previously, she taught Comparative Literature and Translation Studies at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Before moving to France, she spent six years in Northern Ireland, working at the University of Ulster and at Queen's University Belfast. Her research interest lies in Northern Irish Film and Fiction as well as in the intertextual links between Irish, French, German and Russian poetry. Among her publications count *Northern Irish Poetry and The Russian Turn* (2012) as well as *Literarisierung einer gespaltenen Stadt. Belfast in der nord-irischen Troubles Fiction vom Realismus zur Karnevalisierung* (2007), a monograph on the literary representations of Belfast in Northern Irish fiction.

Katherine Side is Professor at the Department of Gender Studies of the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. She is the author of *Patching Peace: Women's Civil Society Organizing in Northern Ireland* (ISER 2015). Her current research project is titled *Visualising Nationalisms: Re-Imagining Republican Photographs in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland*. It examines the production, reproduction and circulation of iconic images associated with the conflict and the post-ceasefire period in Northern Ireland. Her research is published in the *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, *Irish Political Studies*, *Irish Studies Review*, and *Irish Journal of Sociology*.

Gerry Smyth is Professor of Irish Cultural History at Liverpool John Moores University. He has published widely on various aspects of Irish literature and music. He is currently working on a book entitled *Joyces Noyses: Music in the Life and Literature of James Joyce*. Professor Smyth is also a musician, actor and playwright. In 2017 his play *Nora and Jim* had a ten-night run at the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival, and he is currently working on a new play on the life and work of Brendan Behan.

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