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Introduction

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This special issue of *Nordic Journal of English Studies* is devoted to the research in Irish Studies being carried out in Scandinavia by a group of scholars based in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as scholars associated—in one way or another—with Scandinavia. Denmark is represented by the University of Aalborg; Norway, by scholars affiliated to the Universities of Agder, the Artic University of Norway, Bergen, and Stavanger; and Sweden is represented by scholars from the universities of Dalarna, Göteborg, Stockholm, Södertörn and Umeå. Included also in this special issue is the work of two former students, who completed their Masters' degree in Irish literature at DUCIS (Dalarna University Centre for Irish Studies), Sweden—from Norway and China respectively. The collection also contains an article by Dara Waldron, Limerick Institute of Technology, Ireland, who recently presented his research at the Higher Seminar in Dalarna. Contributions by the Irish poet, Mary O'Donnell, who participated in the Nordic Irish Studies Network (NISN) conference, hosted by DUCIS in December 2012, are also included.

The research presented in what follows focuses on poetry, the novel, drama, film, folkmusic and politics, with a wide variety of topics addressed, including Darwinism, the Irish Literary Revival, space and place, landscape, mother-son relationship, postcolonial identity, cultural memory, trauma, hunger strikes, phenomenology, and poetic and political discourse. The collection begins with a contribution by Heidi Hansson, entitled "Kinship: People and Nature in Emily Lawless's Poetry," which re-contextualises the poetry of the Irish writer, Emily Lawless (1845-1913), against the framework of nineteenth century natural history, Darwinism and early ecological ideas. Hansson demonstrates the influence of Darwinism in Lawless's poetry and her acknowledgement of the interaction between the human and natural world. The article explores Lawless's recurrent theme of concern for the environment, and suggests that the dystopian awareness which Lawless expresses is often counterbalanced by images of nature as a source of restorative healing and power.

The poetry of Yeats is the focus of Charles I Armstrong's article, "The 'intimate enemies': Edward Dowden, W. B. Yeats and the Formation of Character." The article traces the intimate dialogue between Yeats and Dowden regarding the writings of George Eliot, Shakespeare and Goethe. Armstrong argues that Yeats is close to Dowden on a number of issues, and frames his findings by a discussion of Yeats's indebtedness to Victorian culture and ideas. Irene Gilsenan Nordin's article, "Space and Place in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh," explores the interrelated themes of space and place in the poetry of Yeats and Kavanagh, focusing on the idea of place as a creative force in relation to the act of writing. The article examines the different ways these two poets respond to their physical place of writing, where place is understood as a site in which identity is located and defined, and as an imaginative space that maps the landscapes of the mind.

The idea of the poet as "rythmanalyst" is the topic examined by Anne Karhio in "'All this debris of day-to-day experience': The Poet as Rhythmanalyst in the Works of Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon." The article focuses on the poetic journals or "journalistic poetry" of these three contemporary poets, and employs the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis to discuss the repetitive and changing nature of poetry in relation to experience. The article that follows, "'Second Time Round': Recent Northern Irish History in *For All We Know* and Ciaran Carson's Written Arts," by Ruben Moi and Annelise Brox Larsen, examines Carson's collection *For All We Know* (2008) in the context of the representation of Northern Irish history in the Troubles and asks "what" the poet is to write about in times of violence, as well as "why," and "when." The article argues that Ciaran Carson's collection is a "historical document," which gives an alternative view of life in Belfast and Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

The section which follows in the journal consists of three poems and a short story, by the cross-genre writer of fiction, poetry and short story, Mary O'Donnell. The first poem, "Forest, Snow, a Train," is what the poet calls a "Sweden" poem, written as a result of her visit to Dalarna in December 2012. O'Donnell explains she began the poem, unexpectedly, after she saw some atmospheric photo shots she had taken from the train on her way back from Falun, shots which had been sitting on her desk in Ireland all year, after her return. The second poem "Waking" is a

touching love poem, followed by the long poem, "An Irish Lexicon," which, as O'Donnell explains, is an attempt "to try to capture something about what I think of when I think of 'Ireland' as a place and culture." The poem is thus a personal account, and as O'Donnell continues, "it is probably a little critical of what we are told is supposed to be 'Irish,' and the Rebuke to Ideological Feminism may seem irritating to some, but I felt it was necessary." Part of the poem breaks into straight prose at that point. The final contribution by O'Donnell, "Wolf Month," is a short meditative piece, written as a result of the big snowfalls that fell in Ireland during the winter of 2011.

The contemporary Irish novel is addressed by two articles in the next section. The first article by Britta Olinder is entitled "The Northern Athens or a City Of Horrors? Belfast as Presented by Some Irish Women Writers." This article investigates how the city of Belfast is depicted in the work of Mary Beckett, Deirdre Madden, Anne Devlin and Christina Reid, and explores the urban spaces available to the different characters in the chosen works, against the background of a segregated city. The article focuses on the idea of people living closely together and sharing the same space and culture, while at the same time living in a space marked by class divisions, gender inequality and political disruption. The second article in this section is by Tyler Post, "Mourning Mothers: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Parental Relationships in Colm Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons*," and examines Tóibín's negotiation with traditional representations of the Irish mother, in his novel from 2006. Using the Freudian concepts of mourning and melancholia, the article demonstrates how the maternal and filial relationships explored in the novel can be understood as representations of repression, desire and mourning. Post concludes that Tóibín circumvents the traditional paradigm of Irish notions of motherhood, and offers the reader an alternative psychoanalytic representation of the relationship between mothers and sons.

Contemporary Irish drama is the focus of the following two articles. Michelle Carroll's article, "The Indeterminacy of Identity in Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark*," explores the idea of Irish identity politics in the context of postcolonialism, in Murphy's play. The analysis is informed by Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry in relation to colonialism, and demonstrates the struggle of the main characters in the play to define their Irish identity and come to terms with

their sense of alienation, in a hostile, industrial Coventry. Charlotta Palmstierna Einarsson's article, "The Meaning of Movement: Phenomenological Descriptions of Experience in Beckett's 'Heard in the Dark I,'" highlights the carefully described movements in Beckett's work. In her exploration of the short story, "Heard in the Dark I," she argues that through the medium of the text, the reader experiences movement as if performed or choreographed. Thus, she suggests, movement is kinesthetically meaningful and linked to a phenomenological understanding of the text bringing together experience and knowledge.

The two articles which follow focus on contemporary Irish film and the theme of trauma. The first article by John Lynch, "*Hunger*: Passion of the Militant," examines the British-Irish historical drama film *Hunger* (2008), which dramatises events in the Maze Prison in Belfast leading up to the 1981 Irish Republican hunger strike. The film is directed by British director Steve McQueen, and, in his analysis, Lynch considers the artistic practice of McQueen, in light of the theories of Deleuze and Guattari. He demonstrates how the film addresses the traumatic events of the hunger strike, using aesthetic techniques that go beyond the clichés of media coverage, to offer new ways of thinking about conflict and how resistance can be shown on screen. Dara Waldron's article, "'Pushing Yourself into Existence': Language, Trauma, Framing in Pat Collins's *Silence* (2012)," examines the film *Silence*—a mixture of fact and fiction—by the Irish documentarist Collins, as a film concerned with trauma and responses to trauma. The film explores the journey of the protagonist, Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, one of the film's screenwriters, a sound recordist who treks his way across Ireland to revisit his home on remote Tory Island, in the Donegal Gaeltacht, encountering various memories from his past as he travels. The article explores the film's resistance to the desire to frame traumatic experience, defined by an ethical "silence," which can be seen as an allegory of Ireland, in its acceptance of the limitations of language.

The role of popular music in the construction of communal belonging and cultural memory in contemporary Ireland is addressed by Bent Sørensen in his article, "*Listen*—Christy Moore's Old and New, Glocal Ireland." The article focuses on the music of Irish folk singer, songwriter and guitarist, Christy Moore, the former lead singer and one of the founding members of Planxty, a group founded in 1972, which

quickly revolutionised and popularised Irish music. Sørensen examines Moore's album, *Listen* (2009), as an example of "glocal Irish artefact and cultural text" in its reference to personal, communal and national history, while at the same time it reflects upon and critiques present cultural issues and events. The final article in the collection, Sissel Rosland's, "In Search of the People: The Formation of Legitimacy and Identity in the Debate on Internment in Northern Ireland," examines different concepts of "the people," constructed by various political groups in Northern Ireland in the debate on political internment without trial, introduced by the British Government in Northern Ireland in August 1971. Rosland argues that rather than reduce the escalation of violence, internment—and its accompanying political discourse of exclusionary concepts relating to "the people"—instead increased tensions and the gulf between the various political groups in Northern Ireland.

Kinship: People and Nature in Emily Lawless's Poetry

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Abstract

In both her prose writing and her poetry the Irish writer Emily Lawless (1845-1913) considers a number of environmental subjects, from mothing and dredging for shellfish and mollusks to gardening and the decline of the Irish woodland. A recurrent theme in her poetry is the concern for threatened environment, but dystopian images are balanced by portrayals of landscape as a source of spiritual wisdom and healing. Lawless's focus is often on more insignificant examples of the natural world such as moths, crustaceans or bog-cotton rather than more conventional representations of natural beauty. Lawless was a Darwinist, and several of her poems thematise the interaction between the human and the natural world, frequently reversing the power relationship between humans and natural phenomena. A re-contextualisation of her poetry within the framework of nineteenth-century natural history, Darwinism and early ecological thought brings to the fore her exploration of the connections between nature, self and national belonging.

Keywords: Emily Lawless, Irish literature, early twentieth-century poetry, nature poetry, ecological thought

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Irish writer Emily Lawless (1845-1913) published a number of poems on Irish subjects, many of them concerned with the natural world. The poems express an attitude to nature that is both scientifically informed and individually inflected, influenced by cultural as well as scholarly ideals. In relation to contemporary aesthetic and political movements, however, they appear quite old-fashioned. Approaching the natural world as real, she is out of step with the fin de siècle aesthetes who refer to nature almost exclusively in symbolic terms. By regarding nature as a field of study, she differs from pre-Modernist and Modernist writers who primarily use aspects of nature as a metaphor for the inner life of the mind. Insisting on Ireland as a natural, not only a cultural entity, she implicitly criticises nationalist endeavours that build on language, folklore and history but fail to attend to the realities of landscape, vegetation and animal life. In its concern with nature as nature, Lawless's poetry represents a retreat from modernity that may be dismissed as reactionary.

From a present-day eco-critical perspective, on the other hand, the rejection of symbolism in favour of representations of the natural world as real seems remarkably progressive. In both her prose writing and her poetry Lawless considers a number of environmental subjects, from mothing and dredging for shellfish and mollusks to gardening and the decline of the Irish woodland. Like many other post-Darwin poets, Lawless addresses the place of humans in the universe, the role of other organisms and species in the system and the theological implications of Darwinism. Instead of meditating on picturesque or spectacular landscapes, she pays attention to insignificant plants like the bog-cotton (Lawless 1902: 75-80), small creatures like "the nibbling crew" of rodents (Lawless 1902: 35) and moths (Lawless 1909: 44, Lawless 1914: 37). In several poems she considers the interconnections between natural and national history. Her use of Darwinian language underscores the instability of an anthropocentric world order by activating the idea of evolution. In emphasising the strong bond between people and the land she introduces an ecosystem's model for humanity's place in the natural world that anticipates the environmentalism of a much later day. In several of her poems, the central insight is that the boundary between the natural and the human world is only illusory.

Enumerating topics researched in ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty includes the question whether the values expressed in a particular text are "consistent with ecological wisdom" (Glotfelty 1996: xix). One of the most common charges levelled against the theory is that it might become "alarmingly prescriptive" (Mahood 2008: 6) and that it might justify redrawing the boundaries of the literary canon purely on the grounds of ecological soundness (Carroll 2001: 296). Such fears overstate the problem, and it is equally likely that ecocriticism, like other political paradigms, simply becomes a new approach to already-canonised works. In its unfashionable attention to nature as a physical reality, Emily Lawless's poetry can neither be regarded as an expression of late nineteenth-century Zeitgeist nor a ground-breaking new departure, and in relation to dominant strands in Irish culture it remains an anomaly. A re-contextualisation of her poetry within the framework of nineteenth-century natural history, Darwinism and early ecological thought can however uncover how her poetic connections between landscape, self and national belonging problematise dichotomies such as nature and culture, and illuminates the history of Irish ecological poetry.

In her introduction to the posthumous collection *The Inalienable Heritage* (1914), Edith Sichel describes Lawless's sources of inspiration as "the visible pagan Nature of the senses, and the search into nature which means science, and the search concerning Nature which means thought" (Sichel 1914: vi). The poems are formally uneven, especially in the later collections, and their effect relies on the governing idea rather than the poetic expression. Lawless was a Darwinist, and on one level her nature poetry is the literary corollary of her scientific interests. Throughout the nineteenth century, the main purpose of nature study was to discover and describe as many botanical and zoological species as possible in the attempt to understand the natural world by ordering it into categories. Lawless took part in these activities by reporting sightings of moths and butterflies to entomological journals and collecting plants for the second edition of the flora *Cybele Hibernica* (Praeger 1903: 290; Moore and More 1898: 193). She sent a Letter to the Editor of *Nature* with some observations of the jellyfish Medusa (Lawless 1877: 227), and Charles Darwin briefly corresponded with her regarding a theory she presented about plant fertilisation in the Burren (Lawless 1899: 605; Romanes 1896: 58). Even so, there is a tension in her work between the value of taxonomical studies and what can be learnt *about* nature, and the value of a spiritual connection with the land and what can be learnt *from* nature. In *A Garden Diary* (1901) she suggests that the boundaries between the two perspectives are disappearing so that they no longer "appear to us so absolutely impregnable as they once were" (Lawless 1901: 177-78):

> Given a mind that can feed on knowledge, without becoming surfeited by it; a mind to which it has become so familiar that it has grown to be as it were organic; a mind for which facts are no longer heavy, but light, so that it can play with them, as an athlete plays with his iron balls, and send them flying aloft, like birds through the air. Given such a mind, so fed by knowledge, so constituted by nature, and it is not easy to see limits to the realms of thought and of discovery, to the feats of reconstruction, still more perhaps to the feats of reconciliation, which may not, some day or other, be open to it. (Lawless 1901: 178)

The differences between scholarly and aesthetic approaches to the natural world are further explored in *The Book of Gilly: Four Months Out of a Life* (1906), where the young boy Gilly is caught between his tutor Mr Griggs who is engrossed in marine zoology and his friend Phil Acton who represents spirituality and sensitivity, rejecting positivist

science as limiting. Griggs is an "Avatar of the modern world, an embodiment of the scientific spirit, newly alighted upon one of the waste places of a darkened and unregenerate Past" (Lawless 1906: 169), and his main ambition is to collect information about marine species for his scholarly articles. Acton, in contrast, is "a born beauty-lover" (Lawless 1906: 112), and cheating life "of some of its prose was with him the first, the most spontaneous of instincts" (Lawless 1906: 180-81). In a passionate outburst against conventional nature study, Acton cries: "Rotten materialism! Rotten conceit! Rotten anything that could make a man suppose all earth, and sea, and sky were able to be summed up, packed away and settled by a handful of trumpery formula!" (Lawless 1906: 254). Acton's spiritual connection with nature is privileged in the novel, but in her own writing, Lawless attempts to reconcile Griggs-like positivism with Actonesque sensibility. As a result, she frequently transcends the boundaries of genre and style. Scientific detail and the theory of evolution inform her poetry and fiction, whereas her scholarly contributions are presented in an idiosyncratic manner that establishes a personal connection with the objects of study and conceals her actual expertise (Hansson 2011: 65). Paradoxically, Lawless's progressive ecological views owe a great deal to her exclusion from conventional scholarly networks. Ireland, in her view, is a natural and cultural entity where established forms of categorisation and rational explanations do not apply. In an 1899 article she characterises North Clare as "an interspace between land and water," a landscape that does not "strictly belong either to the one or to the other" (Lawless 1899: 604). The idea recurs on a metaphorical level in her contention that Irish nature must be approached on its own terms, not according to received scientific systems, and in her explorations of a Darwinian model of human identity where the boundaries between the human and the natural world are permeable.

Like many of her contemporaries, Lawless located true Irishness in the West, but unlike the writers of the Irish Revival, she was not particularly interested in folklore. As a member of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and a supporter of Unionist politics, she was skeptical of cultural nationalism, and instead turned to Irish nature to establish a framework for a national identity. Her first collection of poems is the privately printed *Atlantic Rhymes and Rhythms* (1898), republished as *With the Wild Geese* a few years later (1902). While the original title

draws attention to the nature poems, the later one emphasises the historical and political poems about Gaelic resistance to the Tudor occupation and the Irish soldiers who left for the continent after the Treaty of Limerick 1691. Several of the pieces however connect the political and the natural, anticipating the ecocritical expansion of "the notion of 'the world' to include the entire ecosphere" (Glotfelty 1996: xix). *With the Wild Geese* was followed by *The Point of View* (1909), privately printed and sold for the benefit of the Galway Bay fishermen and *The Inalienable Heritage* (1914). In these collections, Irishness persistently takes the form of a personal relationship with the land.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the attitudes of Romanticism had been largely supplanted by the ideals of Realism and Naturalism, and Darwin's theories made soulful expressions of the relationship between people and nature complicated. In Ireland nature poetry was however often politically charged. Despite being rather unfashionable, the nature poem continued to fill an important role in discourses of nationalism where it was frequently framed by issues of civic importance that made the natural world appear as a reflection of social realities. An alternative model was to produce a nostalgic image of a natural past free from social concerns with the help of poetic contemplations of landscape. In Lawless's poetry, nature is however neither presented as a mirror of society nor as civilization's Other, but as the very basis for the civic nation. The indissoluble bond between people and their environment is the central idea in several of the poems, as in "Clare Coast," where she contemplates Ireland's ability to inspire love and heroism regardless of its failure to nurture its people:

> See us, cold isle of our love!
> Coldest, saddest of isles –
> Cold as the hopes of our youth,
> Cold as your own wan smiles.
> Coldly your streams outpour,
> Each apart on the height,
> […]
> But the coldest, saddest, oh isle!
> Are the homeless hearts of your sons. (Lawless 1902: 9-10)

The poem is set in 1720 and the speakers are members of the Irish brigades in France. It is almost overloaded with negative images, and rather than celebrating the beauty of the West, Lawless draws a parallel

between the melancholy homesickness of the soldiers and the desolation of the land. When the poem was written, nostalgia had become understood as an emotional condition, but Lawless attaches to the seventeenth-century explanation of homesickness as a physical affliction to which soldiers in foreign service were particularly susceptible (Starobinski and Kemp 1966: 84; Boym 2001: 3). The pathological definition had its foundation in the belief that people were conditioned by their natural environments to the extent that dissolving the symbiotic bond could have fatal consequences. The concept is thus given an ecocentric dimension in Lawless's poem, since if identity is figured as a matter of rootedness, power is transferred to the land. The result is that the traditional relationship between humanity and nature is reversed.

The link between Ireland as a country of lack and loss and Ireland as a lost homeland is emphasised also in some later poems, like "A Bog-Filled Valley" where the poet herself appears to be the speaker:

> Sick little valley, meted out for sadness,
> Bent thorn-trees sparsely above your brown floods rise,
> Brimming full your streams are, brimming full, yet holding
> Little joyous commerce with the sun and skies.
> […]
> Yet, oh little valley, little bog-filled valley,
> I, who linger near you, grieving turn to part,
> In your bareness finding, in your sadness seeing,
> Something very tender, very near my heart.
> […]
> Finding in your bareness, seeing in your sadness,
> That which, going elsewhere, I shall find no more. (Lawless 1914: 47)

There is no attempt to transform the bog landscape to a place of beauty. As in "Clare Coast," negative images dominate. The valley is personified, but the human qualities it is bestowed are related to sickness and grief. The emotional correspondences between the speaker's sadness at leaving and sad appearance of the valley reinforce the idea that identity is rooted in the land. The theme is revisited on both a metaphorical and a literal level in "To a Tuft of White Bog-Cotton, Growing in the Tyrol," where the cotton-grass plant becomes a symbol of exile as well as a native Irish plant growing in the Alps:

> And is it thou? small playmate of the fens,
> Child of damp haunts, and pallid sea-borne fogs,

> Light flutterer over dank and oozy glens,
> White-tufted, starry friend of Irish bogs!
> What dost thou, tossed upon this mountain here,
> Flaunting thy white crest in this alien air? (Lawless 1902: 75)

The poem is dated 1886, and in his Preface to *With the Wild Geese*, Stopford E. Brooke points out that it was written "in the height of the Home Rule struggle" (Brooke 1902: xxiii), a time when land and landscape were particularly charged literary themes. Although the hope for the "winged form of Peace" (Lawless 1902: 80) that concludes the piece could be connected to the political situation at the time, there are no references to contemporary conflicts, however, and past bloodshed is only represented in an unspecific, half-mythological manner. As in the previous poems, Lawless is primarily concerned with the possibilities of actual and symbolic transplantation, and the contrast between the Alps and the Irish bogland as suitable environments for the plant draws attention to the ecological dimension of the question:

> Shall brawling torrent, lost to every beam,
> White with its spoil of glacier and moraine,
> Serve thee as well as some slow-moving stream
> Brown with its brimming toll of recent rain. (Lawless 1902: 76)

The images of growth and transplantation are a logical manifestation of Lawless's interest in gardening. In the mid-1890s she settled in Surrey, where she attempted to establish some Irish trees and plants in her garden. In the article "An Upland Bog," she describes the bog environment as an eco-system that relies on a precarious balance between soil, climate and different zoological and botanical species (Lawless 1881: 417-30), and her reflections in *A Garden Diary* reveal an awareness of the problems of re-creating such conditions:

> I have a profound affection for bog plants, which I hope some of them respond to, for they thrive fairly. Others are exceedingly difficult to establish, and rarely look anything but starved and homesick. Amongst these are the butterworts. Why the translation should so particularly affect them I have yet to learn, but the fact is unmistakable. Not all the water of all our taps, not all the peat of all our hillsides will persuade them to be contented. In vain I have wooed them with the wettest spots I could find ; in vain erected poor semblances of tussocks for their benefit; have puddled the peat till it seemed impossible that any creature unprovided with eyes could distinguish it from a bit of real bog. No, die they will, and die they hitherto always have. (Lawless 1901: 171-72)

The idea of an irreproducible eco-system that governs the poems about the lost homeland suggests an essentialist construction of Ireland and Irish identity. Such an interpretation is only partially off-set by poems like "To a Tuft of Bog-Cotton" where Ireland is established in the Tyrol. Depicting Ireland as a habitat for connected human and non-human lives that cannot be recreated elsewhere, Lawless employs an ecocentric perspective that suggests that humans cannot shape or control the natural environment.

The view of Ireland as a fragile eco-system recurs in the two dirges at the centre of *With the Wild Geese*. The destruction of the Irish woodland between 1600 and 1800 was the result of English colonial "policies of profit and prevention of their use by native armies" (Neeson 1997: 142). Lawless was well aware of how the Irish forests had been depleted by the need for fuel for iron foundries and the export of timber for ship-building and other purposes, as well as cut down by the Elizabethan armies so as not to provide shelter for the rebelling Irish (Lawless 1882: 543). In the "Dirge of the Munster Forest. 1581" (Lawless 1902: 35-37) the forest appears as the burial ground for the woodkernes killed in the revolt against Tudor centralisation led by Gerald, 14th Earl of Desmond. The poem's title installs the political context, but on the surface level, there is a notable absence of references to any social and political reality outside the woodland. The rebels are only one of the many species making up the "retinue" of the royal forest (Lawless 1902: 35):

> Bring out the hemlock! bring the funeral yew!
> The faithful ivy that doth all enfold;
> Heap high the rocks, the patient brown earth strew,
> And cover them against the numbing cold.
> Marshal my retinue of bird and beast,
> Wren, titmouse, robin, birds of every hue;
> Let none keep back, no, not the very least,
> Nor fox, nor deer, nor tiny nibbling crew,
> Only bid one of all my forest clan
> Keep far from us on this our funeral day.
> On the grey wolf I lay my sovereign ban. (Lawless 1902: 35-36)

The enumeration of the forest species expresses Lawless's belief that the loss of the forest "by no means entails the loss merely of the trees: it also entails the death or dispersal of a whole world of beings, which, having

thriven under their shelter, shares their fate" (Lawless 1882: 543-44). The forest is an ecosystem where different species perform various functions. This interdependence of different forms of life is given an emotional dimension in the poem when Lawless imagines how the plants and animals participate when the rebels are buried.

The wolf is excluded, however, and is conferred no human qualities like the "faithful ivy" or the "patient brown earth" (Lawless 1902: 35). In seventeenth-century thought, wolves and forest-dwelling rebels were linked together as dangers to English colonists, and there were rewards for hunting them down (Neeson 1997: 140). From an Irish nationalist perspective, the wolf was instead connected to predatory colonialism, as a pack-hunting animal that would gobble up vulnerable woodland creatures. As a poetic image, the wolf is overloaded with symbolic meanings that are absent in Lawless's poem. Instead, she constructs the wolf as fully animal, driven by animal urges and taking his place in maintaining the ecological balance of the forest, but devoid of anthropomorphic empathy or greed:

> The great grey wolf who scrapes the earth away;
> Lest, with hooked claw and furious hunger, he
> Lay bare my dead for gloating foes to see. (Lawless 1902: 36)

Discussing twenty-first-century Irish nature poetry, Jody Allen Randolph maintains that "the recovery of ecocritical perspectives is the recovery of history," and that poems about "losing a hillside" are centrally concerned with "losing a history, and even memory itself" (Randolph 2009: 57). There is a long tradition of double political-environmental meanings in nature poetry, and Lawless's poem might, for example be juxtaposed with Margaret Cavendish's "A Dialogue *between an* Oake, *and* a Man *cutting him downe*" (1653) where the oak asks the man with the axe why he wants to deprive himself of the protection the tree provides (McColley 2007: 102). Since oaks frequently symbolise royalty in Jacobite poetry and iconography, the tree doubles as a representation of Charles I, as Diane Kelsey McColley notes (McColley 2007: 102). In a similar way, "Dirge of the Munster Forest" historicises the loss of the Irish forest and shows how its disappearance leads to the loss of future opportunities as well as vital connections to the past. Although the poem's fable concerns the woodland and its creatures, the title connects nature and nation, and like the oak in Cavendish's poem, the forest shares the fate of a defeated

ruling order. As sanctuary for the rebels, it will be destroyed by the occupation forces, and seasonal rebirth is halted or precluded:

> Lay bare my dead, who died, and died for me.
> For I must shortly die as they have died,
> And lo! my doom stands yoked and linked with theirs;
> The axe is sharpened to cut down my pride:
> I pass, I die, and leave no natural heirs.
> Soon shall my sylvan coronals be cast;
> My hidden sanctuaries, my secret ways,
> No Spring shall quicken what this Autumn slays. (Lawless 1902: 36)

The Irish-language poem "Cill Chais" is a similar elegy to the lost woods, but Lawless was probably more influenced by a funeral song in John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) which builds on the same conceit of all wood creatures except the wolf participating in the ritual (Hansson 2007: 156). According to Edith Sichel, words and phrases in Lawless's works "generally recall the Elizabethans, and the verse of the Elizabethans it was whose poetry most affected and most influenced her" (Sichel 1914: vii). Similarities in world-view strengthen the connection, and the dirge of the forest relies on the Shakespearean concept that human events are reflected in nature. The same idea characterises "Dirge for all Ireland. 1581" where nature, not the people, mourns the colonised nation:

> Fall gently, pitying rains! Come slowly, Spring!
> Ah, slower, slower yet! No notes of glee,
> No minstrelsy! Nay, not one bird must sing
> His challenge to the season.
> [. . .]
> And ye, cold waves, who guard that western slope,
> Show no white crowns. This is no time to wear
> The livery of Hope. We have no hope.
> Blackness and leaden greys befit despair (Lawless 1902: 38-40)

In "Clare Coast" and "A Bog-Filled Valley," human emotions reflect the barrenness of the landscape but in the elegies, the relationship is the opposite. From an ecocritical point of view, the idea that nature mirrors events in the social world may appear worryingly anthropocentric. Ernest Augustus Boyd however interpreted the attitude as an articulation of "the Celtic imagination, which sees in the external world the evidence of the

common identity of all life, as manifestations of the Great Spirit; which peoples the streams and forests with supernatural presences serving to link this world with the regions beyond Time and Space" (Boyd 1916: 208-09). To place prominent Irish writers in a nationalist context was of paramount importance for Boyd and his early twentieth-century contemporaries, but his formulation indicates that an ecological framework is equally justified. Separation between nature and society is alien to Lawless's poetic thought, and if nature, culture and society are interwoven, it becomes logical that nature should respond to the conquest of the country by appearing in its bleakest aspect.

The natural world thus rarely symbolises life, growth or renewal in Lawless's poetry. Instead, Lawless establishes a connection between Ireland's violent past and its natural features by constantly foregrounding the landscape's aridity and cheerlessness, and death is a more common image than life. This is true also of poems without political reference, like "To that Rare and Deep-Red Burnet-Moth Only to be Met with in the Burren," where the setting is an unforgiving environment ruled by death, violence and desolation:

> Sparkle of red on an iron floor,
> In the fiercest teeth of this gale's wild roar,
> What has brought thee, oh speck of fire,
> Speaking of love and the heart's desire,
> To a land so dead?
>
> Rocks gaunt and grim as the halls of Death,
> Sculptured and hewn by the wind's rough breath,
> Fortress-shaped, fantastic things,
> Reared for some turbulent race of Kings,
> Kings long since dead.
>
> Wind-blown pools where no herbs grow,
> Streams lost and sunk in the depths below,
> Where scant flowers bloom, where few birds sing,
> Thou, thou fliest alone, thou fire-winged thing!
> Small speck of red! (Lawless 1914: 37)

But despite the accumulation of negative images, the poem celebrates life. Although the central idea is the dissimilarity between the moth and the dead landscape, the title undermines this contrast by specifying the unique interconnectedness between insect and habitat. On a symbolic

level, the moth becomes an image of defiance and survival, illustrating the possibility of love and beauty in the harshest of environments. On a literal level, it is an insect shaped by the conditions of a natural environment hospitable to only a very few species.

A similar literalisation characterises the poem "To the Winged Psyche, Dying in a Garden," where Lawless transcends the dichotomy between human and non-human by suggesting that sentience is not a human preserve. The title recalls Keats's "Ode to Psyche" (1819) as well as the Irish writer Mary Tighe's epic poem *Psyche, or, the Legend of Love* (1805), but in contrast to her predecessors, Lawless does not attach to the ancient myth of Eros and Psyche, nor does she build on the tradition of the soul materialised as a butterfly. These aspects are intertextually present, but the metaphor is literalised in Lawless's poem and the dying moth is a member of the Psychidæ or bagworm family, not a mythical being. As so often in Romantic poetry, the theme of Keats's ode is mutability, and the central paradox is the idea that the immortal gods can die when they are no longer worshipped. The themes of mutability and death surface in Lawless's poem as well, but the central paradox is the idea that the supposedly mindless moth possesses the secret of consciousness and sensation. In this way, Lawless reverses conventional power and knowledge positions so that the moth appears as the teacher and knowledge-bearer instead of an object for study. As a Darwinist, she was schooled in empirical research and the importance of observation, but she was also critical of the reductive properties of the scientific gaze (Hansson 2007: 57-63). The reversal of the gaze in the Psyche poem is one example of this distrust, made particularly poignant because of the common practice of pinning butterflies to the bottom of sample cases for display:

> Reft of beauty, there you lie
> Not yet dead, but left to die,
> [. . .]
> Stirs the thought could I but creep
> Inch by inch to where you lie,
> Narrow my gaze to an insect's eye,
> Listen and listen before you die
> [. . .]

> So I, even I, might understand
> Something of what it is to *be*,
> Some floating hint steal down to me
> Of that riddle of riddles—Sentiency. (Lawless 1909: 44)

One problem addressed in ecocriticism is the tendency to privilege allegorical and metaphorical readings, interpreting nature in literature "not for what it physically is but for what it conceptually means or can be made to mean" (Kern 2000: 9). Since the butterfly is such a prominent poetic symbol, both as an emblem of the soul and as an image of transience and transformation, Lawless's treatment of the moth stands out in its literalness. It is an example of an ecocentric representation of nature as physical reality rather than culturally determined sign where the referent is more real than the metaphor, to invert Simon Schama's formulation (Schama 1995: 61).

The boundary between humanity and nature is destabilised in a diametrically opposite way in the poem "Wishes," where the speaker yearns to be a part of the natural world to escape consciousness, responsibility and emotion. Human existence is rejected and non-human life-forms are privileged, but in contrast to the idea governing the poem to the Psyche moth, mindlessness is seen as nature's blessing:

> I would I were you, you scaly fish, swim-swimming in the sea,
> Or a fox upon the hillside there, a hunter bold and free,
> Anything but the man I am, crying, dear God, to thee!
>
> I would I were you, you black sea-weed, toss-tossing on the sea,
> Or you, or you, grey lumps of stone, which feel no misery
> I pray you make me as these, dear God, since better may not be! (Lawless 1914: 66)

Explorations of humanity's position in the chain of life are common in post-Darwinian poetry. Georg Roppen's defines evolutionary poetry as "a poetic interpretation of existence" (Roppen 1956: 458) often proceeding from the argument that human existence is no more exceptional and frequently less enviable than that of other species (Holmes 2009: 132-33). Although Lawless's treatment of nature in terms of blessed ignorance may seem to detract from the ecocentric valorization that characterises most of her nature poetry, it is actually another way of elevating the natural world. Instead of personifying nature with human traits, she asks to be relieved of the main attributes

that separate humans from other species. The poem not only asks to be part of nature but goes so far as to reject the human condition.

The idea of being one with the natural world finds its clearest expression in "Kinship: An Evolutionary Problem" where Lawless considers humankind as the sum of every stage since the beginning of life. The poem moves back through evolution, but there is no sense that humanity is the crown of creation, nor is there any attempt to romanticise nature. The theme is rather that the monstrous past is an integral part of the present makeup of humankind:

> Love thou thy kind! Yea, but that larger kind,
> The dumb, fierce, roving, nameless kind that live
> Scarce less within our frames? True kinsmen these,
> Only too near.
> [. . .]
> Threatening and ravenous, fiercely tooth'd and claw'd,
> With eyes which stir, and redly glare across
> The intolerable darkness. What of these?
> Are these our brethren? Yonder crouching form,
> Chattering, half prone, the inarticulate man,
> The two-legg'd wolf—is he my brother too?
> Another kinsman? (Lawless 1909: 46)

Comparisons between people and animals are normally applied to produce negative effects, and the practice was particularly charged in nineteenth-century Ireland, with the Irish given simian features in English cartoons. Introducing the theory of evolution complicates the issue, however. Although the violent language and repulsive images of previous evolutionary stages generate a sense of disgust that borders on misanthropy in the poem, the speaker is included and the central idea is the common origin of all life. Despite the abundance of negative imagery, there is no implication of self-loathing, and the poem leads up to the idea that God does not value human beings more highly than any other part of the creation:

> Only of this be sure.
> That He who ruleth hath no preference,
> No narrow choice, no blind exclusiveness;
> We and our kin, to the last drop of blood,
> The first dull dawn of hovering consciousness,
> Shall share and share. Aye, and not only we,
> But all the crowded denizens of Space,

> World after world, till the long muster-roll
> Be closed and sealed. (Lawless 1909: 50-51)

The poem foreshadows the ecocentric conception that humans do not master nature, but are part of it and ends on a note of equal complementarity between all life forms: "Now to our several tasks" (Lawless 1909: 51). Despite its potentially radical theme, "Kinship" is however unsuccessful as a poem, with poetic expression almost completely subordinated to the intellectual ideas. In Edith Sichel's view, Lawless's poetry is marked by formal ineptitude: "Form was not Miss Lawless's strong point, that is when she sought it" (vi) which means that "in the poems of thought the verse is often but the scabbard for the finely tempered blade of the idea" (Sichel 1914: vii). Perhaps this is the reason why her poems on evolutionary questions are not discussed in the most comprehensive treatises of Darwinian poetry in the twentieth century, *Darwin Among the Poets* by Lionel Stevenson (1932) and Georg Roppen's *Evolution and Poetic Belief* (1956). Neither is she mentioned in the more recent studies *Darwin's Plots* by Gillian Beer (2000) or *Darwin's Bards* by John Holmes (2009), despite the fact that both her poetry and her fiction repeatedly address Darwinian themes. In "Kinship" Lawless appears in her most cerebral poetic mode, and the poem is unwieldy in form, marred by uneven rhythm, archaic language and contradictory ideas. Its value lies in the way it functions as a theoretical framework for her attempts to erase the boundaries between human, non-human and landscape.

In Emily Lawless's poetry, the social and the natural world are inescapably connected, and the definition of national identity is grounded in the landscape. Ireland recurrently emerges as an eco-system where environmental conditions determine people's lives and character and hierarchical relations between humanity and nature are replaced by the vision of mutual dependence, frequently illustrated in the way natural and human events and emotions reflect each other. Landscapes and non-human species are primarily representations of the real, not cultural constructs and natural environments do not acquire meaning through people's relationships to them. The introduction of the theory of evolution provides nature with a history and the possibility of change that undermines the function of nature lyric as an escape to a timeless, pastoral world. At the end of the nineteenth century, such valorisation of the natural at the expense of cultural meanings made Lawless

embarrassingly unsophisticated. Today, her poetry can be re-evaluated as a remarkably prescient expression of ecological awareness.

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The "intimate enemies": Edward Dowden, W. B. Yeats and the Formation of Character

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Abstract

Stung by Edward Dowden's reluctance to endorse the Irish Literary Revival, W. B. Yeats distanced himself publicly from the TCD Professor. This act of distancing has largely been accepted by subsequent scholarship as a reflection of Dowden's lack of influence on Yeats. Despite obvious disagreements on some key points, this essay will argue that Yeats is close to Dowden on a number of issues, by tracing their intimate dialogue about the writings of George Eliot, Shakespeare and Goethe. The concept of formation of character—an English translation of the German *Bildung*—will prove central to their related responses to the question of what sort of life is best suited to further the development of literary gifts. These findings are framed by a discussion of Yeats's profound, and often underestimated, indebtedness to Victorian culture and ideas, and the essay also traces the biographical background to these two writers' changing relationship.

Key words: W. B. Yeats, Edward Dowden, Bildung, Unity of Being, Irish Literary Revival, Victorianism, Modernism, Shakespeare, George Eliot, Goethe

Victorianism has always tended to provoke strong reactions. The staunch, if selective, defense of Victorian values embraced by Margaret Thatcher and cultural critics such as Gertrude Himmelfarb presents the exception rather than the rule. More typical is the kind of denunciatory pigeonholing espoused by modernist writers in the decades following Queen Victoria's death in 1901. A defining instance is provided by Lytton Strachey's quartet of satirical biographies, published together as *Eminent Victorians* (1918). Yet Strachey's willful resistance to, and circumscription of, Victorian ideals did not appear out of the blue. Already in 1912, he was writing to Virginia Woolf of his hatred of the "set of mouthing bungling hypocrites" that were the Victorians (Woolf and Strachey 1969: 43). As Samantha Matthews has shown, Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907) and Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903) provided even earlier indictments of the era (see Matthews 2010). One might even posit that the reaction to "Victorianism"— understood as a phenomenon, with attendant values, more than an era— actually began before the end of nineteenth century, for instance in the

Decadent flouting of bourgeois conventions and critique of imperial verities in the 1890s.

Being an associate of figures such as Oscar Wilde, Ernest Dowson and Arthur Symons, William Butler Yeats was an active participant in the Decadent movement. His own autobiographical account of what he called "The Tragic Generation," in book four of *Trembling of the Veil* (1922), provided a defining interpretation of this counter-cultural group. Although occasionally patronizing about their illusions and effeteness, Yeats shared with his fellow members of the 1890s Rhymers' Club a strong resistance to the conservatism of the late Victorian establishment. His autobiographical writings have been read in light of George Moore's precedent, in *Hail and Farewell*, as well as later Irish-language autobiography (see Foster 1998 and Lynch 2009). The immense importance of Victorianism for Yeats's life-writing—particularly in the period from 1914 to 1922, which saw the writing and publication of not only the five books of *The Trembling of the Veil* (1921-22), but also the preceding *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1916)—has however not been sufficiently stressed. Here, as elsewhere, it is worthwhile to pay heed to George Watson's general remark: "Yeats cannot be understood without being placed firmly in the Victorian context" (Watson 2006: 56). This essay will use the context of post-Victorian reckonings with literary and familial precursors not only to frame Yeats's own autobiographical account of his relationship to the Irish critic and poet Edward Dowden (1843-1913),[1] but also as a lead to question the comprehensiveness and, to a certain extent, accuracy of that account. Both political allegiances and a complex familial dynamic will be shown to contribute to Yeats's own influential interpretation of their relationship. In a letter to Lady Gregory, Yeats once described Dowden as one of his father's "intimate enemies" (W. B. Yeats 1954: 352): While critics are justified in depicting also the relationship between W. B. and Dowden as being characterised by plenty of public antagonism, much of the time they were nevertheless in implicit dialogue—or "intimate"—in ways that have not been sufficiently acknowledged. As a leading critic of his day, Dowden was an authority on many writers either embraced or dismissed by Yeats as influences on his own career: in this essay, comparisons of their

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[1] For a judicious and informative potted biography of Dowden, see Chapman 1993: 169-70.

respective interpretations of George Eliot, Shakespeare and Goethe will provide key focal points. Contrasting understandings of what the Germans call *Bildung*—the notion of a gradual and to some degree self-conscious formation of character—will provide a pervasive theme that not only is essential to Dowden and Yeats's readings of Eliot, Shakespeare and Goethe, but also self-reflexively rebounds on how these two Irish figures understand their own literary trajectories.

Yeats became a neighbour of Dowden in Dublin in 1884, when their respective ages were nineteen and forty-one. The older man had long been a close friend of the poet's father, the painter John Butler Yeats, and had since 1867 held the Chair in English Literature at Trinity College Dublin. John Butler Yeats would pass on to his son a critical attitude towards the lifestyle and academic career pursued by Dowden at Trinity, yet early on Dowden gave W. B. encouraging praise for his poetry, and afterwards the two men remained on amicable private terms. The brief portrait of Dowden given in chapter 24 of Yeats's *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, written shortly after Dowden's death in 1913, expresses some gratitude towards the deceased. When Yeats was a young poet, he admits, "Dowden was wise in his encouragement, never overpraising and never unsympathetic, and he would sometimes lend me books. The orderly prosperous house where all was in good taste, where poetry was rightly valued, made Dublin tolerable for a while, and for perhaps a couple of years he was an image of romance" (W. B. Yeats 1999: 94). The main tone of Yeats's portrait is however grudging. He seeks to minimise the significance of Dowden's life-long friendship with his father, casting even their contact in the 1880s as a futile attempt "to take up again their old friendship," while claiming that later—as evidenced by Dowden's correspondence—"the friendship between Dowden and my father had long been an antagonism" (W. B. Yeats 1999: 94, 95).

Yeats primarily finds fault with Dowden for his intellectual allegiances. The latter's acclaimed biography of Percy Shelley—a figure who proved to be a life-long inspiration for Yeats—is not interpreted as facilitating a fertile meeting of minds: "Once after breakfast Dowden read us some chapters of the unpublished *Life of Shelley*, and I who had made the *Prometheus Unbound* my sacred book was delighted with all he read. I was chilled, however, when he explained that he had lost his liking for Shelley and would not have written it but for an old promise to

the Shelley family" (W. B. Yeats 1999: 95). Even more damning, for Yeats, was Dowden's devotion to George Eliot's novels: "Though my faith was shaken, it was only when he urged me to read George Eliot that I became angry and disillusioned and worked myself into a quarrel or half-quarrel" (95). A letter from early 1887 to Frederick Gregg—who previously had attended the Erasmus Smith High School in Dublin with Yeats—confirms that Yeats read *Silas Marner*, *Romola*, *Spanish Gypsy* and "a volume of selections" by Eliot around this time (W. B. Yeats 1954: 31), and was provoked not only by Eliot's naturalist rebellion against the aesthetics of beauty, but also her rationality and stress on morality.

Interestingly, no mention is made in that letter of *Daniel Deronda*, which surely would have appealed more to Yeats than any of the mentioned titles. According to Dowden's analysis included in *Studies in Literature, 1789-1877* (1878), the eponymous hero of Eliot's novel experiences a crisis, whereby he "has fallen into a meditative numbness, and is gliding farther and farther from that life of practically energetic sentiment which he would have proclaimed to be for himself the only life worth living" (Dowden 1878: 292). As Eliot herself puts it, Deronda's "early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder any persistent course of action" (307). Dowden's letters and quick critical response to the novel show that he responded keenly to Deronda's predicament. For the Irish critic this is however not merely the fate of an individual, but one representative of an age: "An entire class of persons must find this searching and exquisite study the analysis of their own private sorrow and trial, and will appropriate each sentence as a warning, a check, and a substantial instrument of help" (Dowden 1878: 292). Dowden's essay on "Victorian Literature," included in *Transcripts and Studies* (1888), reveals that he saw this as the characteristic intellectual problem of the era. Where Hazlitt identified the French revolution as the source of the spirit of the Romantic age, Dowden claims that Victorianism's defining struggle is with a "*maladie du siècle*" (Dowden 1888: 210), where moral relativity leads to the dissevering of the practical from the intellectual realm. Given this state of affairs, where no authority is absolute or self-evident, it is tempting to adapt a position where "to yield to circumstance, to accept one's environment seems inevitable; and men forget that in every complex condition of life we are surrounded by a

hundred possible environments" (Dowden 1888: 170-1). Dowden is not without sympathy for those who are stuck in this predicament, such as for instance the French poet Sully Prudhomme, whose "unhappiness exists from the lack of a cause, a creed, a church, a loyalty, a love, to which he could devote his total being, knowing that such devotion is the highest wisdom." Prudhomme is "a born eclectic, and the only remedy he can apply to his malady is more eclecticism" (Dowden 1878: 427).

For Dowden, only a decision that can have no firm theoretical footing, but entails embracing a practical commitment, can provide a way out of this existential aporia. The increasing strength of his commitments to democracy, Unionism and a sense of professional ethics in the 1880s and 1890s appear to signify a willful escape from a state of metaphysical paralysis. They may not have been entirely successful, and Dowden's early description of himself—in a letter dated July 6, 1876—as a man who "serve[s] many masters" and wears a "coat [. . .] of many colours" bears evidence of an attitude that may itself be deemed to be eclectic (Dowden 1914b: 120). This provides a key to understanding why he could only grudgingly and awkwardly accept Daniel Deronda's endorsing of the cause of Israel in Eliot's novel, and freely expressed—as we shall see—his skepticism concerning Yeats's nationalism. Although there are differences in emphasis, Yeats's autobiographical account of the 1890s indicates that he, too, was subject to this *maladie du siècle*. Book three of *The Trembling of the Veil* shows him being frustrated in his quest for a Unity of Culture, as "image called up image in an endless procession, and I could not always choose among them with any confidence; and when I did choose, the image lost its intensity, or changed into some other image" (W. B. Yeats 1999: 215).

Yeats felt uneasy about his autobiographical account of Dowden's role in his life. In a complex, intellectual *ménage à trois,* Yeats in the *Reveries* not only seems to be demonstratively rejecting Dowden as a mentor, but also attempting to drive a wedge between John Butler Yeats and his old friend, even as he insists upon his own closeness to his father. A letter to J. B. Yeats dating from this period shows that Yeats was anxious about how his father would respond to all this:

> I am rather nervous about what you think. I am afraid you will very much dislike my chapter on Dowden, it is the only chapter which is a little harsh, not I think, really so, but as compared to the rest, which is very amiable, and what is worse I have used, as I warned you I would, conversations of yours. [. . .] I couldn't leave

Dowden out, for, in a subconscious way, the book is a history of the revolt, which perhaps unconsciously you taught me, against certain Victorian ideals. Dowden is the image of those ideals and has to stand for the whole structure in Dublin, Lord Chancellors and all the rest. They were ungracious realities and he was a gracious one and I do not think I have robbed him of the saving adjective. (W. B. Yeats 1954: 602-3)

Daniel T. O'Hara has drawn attention to the manner in which Yeats's autobiographical writings use his friends and associates as dramatis personae in a tale of the author's own intellectual maturation: "His friends and relatives become [. . .] metaphors of possible selves whose differences from one another point to and outline that 'simplifying image' of the creator—Yeats's anti-self—he needs to recognise and understand" (O'Hara 1981: 47). The autobiographical account given of Dowden presents Yeats as being drawn towards, but then decisively rejecting, a less than fully satisfying intellectual exemplar. Thus it depicts a kind of personalised version of the psychology Yeats promulgated in *A Vision,* where every individual must choose between false and true masks in order to facilitate the authentic cultivation of the self.

Yeats's one-sided and patronising depiction of Dowden in the *Reveries* has not been devoid of influence. Thus Terence Brown, for instance, primarily reads Dowden through the lens provided by Yeats, and derides the critic—whose international stature arguably has not been equalled by any subsequent Irish literary scholar—as "a second-rate sensitive mind" (Brown 1988: 35). The narratives of history are always shaped by the victors, and by both espousing Unionism and dismissing the Irish Revival, Dowden effectively doomed himself to a scapegoat position outside the mainstream of modern Irish cultural history. If even Yeats has been (again in the words of Terence Brown) "seen to exhibit 'the pathology of literary unionism'" by essentialising Irish critics, and therefore "must, it seems, pay the price before the bar of history" (Brown 1996: 288), then Dowden—who never made a comparable investment in the institutions, history or traditions of Ireland—must suffer an even more ignominious fate. Certainly he could see his own marginal position already in the 1880s, defensively describing himself—in a letter to Aubrey de Vere, on 13 September 1882—as "a low half-breed Irishman" (Dowden 1914c: 185). Given the current post-nationalist tenor of much criticism, it should however be possible to readdress his alignment in

Irish literary history from a less exclusionary point of view, where Dowden's commitment to universalist rather than nationalist tenets—dismissed by Brown as "verging on the neurotic"—might even be granted some value (Brown 1988: 43).

Also by virtue of being defined as a representatively Victorian, Dowden was being cast by Yeats as a marginal figure on the losing side of literary and cultural history. Yeats's attack on him predates Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* by only two years, and enacts in part the same generational struggle against unfashionable forefathers. Yeats alludes to the importance of such struggle for the entirety of his *Reveries over Childhood in Youth* in a letter to his father, on Boxing Day in 1914: "Some one to whom I read the book said to me the other day: 'If Gosse had not taken the title you could call it *Father and Son*'" (W. B. Yeats 1954: 589). Like his friend Gosse before him, Yeats is engaged in an act of rebellion, rewriting his own history in a way that revises, and marginalises, the views of his Victorian precursors. His mixed feelings for his father also colour and complicate his view of Dowden: unhappy with the parental role played by his feckless but intellectually brilliant father, Yeats's autobiographical writings show him seeking other father figures—even as he tries to reassure his father, and justify his choices in light of the aesthetics handed down by John Butler Yeats.

Where Yeats's memoirs cast their disagreement over Eliot in the late 1880s as signifying a decisive parting of ways, critical scholarship on Yeats's biography reveals something more akin to a series of skirmishes over a longer period of time. Perhaps the most important and defining of these is the controversy pitting Yeats and his associates within the Irish literary Renaissance against the Trinity professor in public debate. In an essay first published as "Hopes and Fears for Literature" in 1889, and later reprinted as the introduction to *New Studies in Literature* (1895), Dowden ungenerously parodied the leading lights of the movement as "flapping a green banner in the eyes of beholders and upthrusting a pasteboard 'sunburst' high in the air" (Dowden 1895: 18). Yeats came to see the polemical use in having such an opponent, mixing faint praise with vehemence in his responses. Although Yeats granted that Dowden was "one of the most placid, industrious and intelligent of contemporary critics when he writes on an English or a German subject," he lamented that his prejudiced criticism of Irish writing was "doing incalculable harm" (W. B. Yeats 2004: 289).

This debate fed into Yeats's later, autobiographical portrait of Dowden. In a letter to his father—stemming from early 1916—Yeats describes his chapter on the TCD professor as

> not hostile, [. . .] merely a little unsympathetic. It is difficult for me to write of him otherwise; at the start of my movement in Dublin he was its most serious opponent, and fought it in ways that seemed to me unfair. He was always charming in private but what he said in private had no effect on his public word. I make no allusion to these things but of course they affect my attitude. (W. B. Yeats 1954: 606)

Kathryn R. Ludwigson has claimed that the Irish literary movement was characterised by three tendencies that were anathema to Dowden: "the Celtic, the nationalistic and the esoteric" (129). Longer perspectives should however alert modern readers to that several of the views Yeats was battling against at this point were not all that far removed from positions he would later embrace. Philip Marcus's has shown that, while Yeats and Dowden had in fact been in disagreement about the value of contemporary Irish literature since the 1880s, even at the high point of the debate there was considerable common ground: "Dowden's position and Yeats's own coincided at several points: the need for correct judgments unblurred by patriotism, the desirability of infusing Irish culture with the 'best ideas of other lands,' and the goal of stylistic improvement in Irish literature" (Marcus 1970: 108). Having a high-profile Anglo-Irish opponent with strong Unionist sympathies was obviously very useful in strengthening Yeats'a nationalist credentials, but he and Dowden were in fact closer to one another than appearances suggested.

The next important flashpoint in this literary relationship occurs early in the next century. During the spring of 1901, Yeats visited Stratford-on-Avon. Attending the Spring Festival of Shakespeare plays staged by Frank Benson's company, he prepared for a planned critical essay on Shakespeare by immersing himself in the available criticism on the poet and playwright. Dowden's early monograph *Shakspere: His Mind and Art* (first published in 1875) had ensured its author international fame, and this study was given close attention by Yeats. The work done during and after this visit would strongly influence the shape of Yeats's most Shakespearean play, *On Baile's Strand* (1904), and also bore tangible, and more immediate, fruit in the essay "At Stratford-on-Avon" (1901). The latter essay is relatively scathing about

Dowden's work on Shakespeare, finding it bourgeois and narrow-minded. The Dublin academic is cast as an apologist for the coarsely pragmatic values of the British Empire, against which Yeats pits a more generous and adventurous tradition of Merry England. Most critics have been satisfied with paraphrasing Yeats's views on this matter. In an otherwise thoughtful account of Yeats's use of Shakespeare, Neil Corcoran allows himself only a moment of doubt before pressing on:

> Yeats castigates Dowden's criticism as a kind in which characters such as Coriolanus, Hamlet, Timon and Richard II are reproved for their behavior, so that the plays become exercises in self-correction for audiences and readers. If we suspect that Yeats is unjust to Dowden, the suspicion will not survive a reading of his *Shakspere,* where Shakespeare is indeed characterized solely as a means towards the formation of character. (Corcoran 2010: 29-30)

For Corcoran Dowden's work on Shakespeare boils down to an act of "strenuous moralizing" (Corcoran 2010, 30),[2] and as such it provides a purely negative example that only could sting Yeats into doing otherwise.

The letters Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory from Stratford in 1901 provide a hint, however, of that matters are more complicated than this. True enough, on 25 April Yeats allows Dowden a place of prominence among Shakespeare critics only on dismissive terms: "The more I read the worse does the Shakespeare criticism become and Dowden is about the climax of it. I[t] came out [of] the middle class movement and I feel it my legitimate enemy" (W. B. Yeats 1954: 349). Writing to Gregory from Sligo a few weeks later (on May 21), though, Yeats is in a more appreciative mood: "I think I really tell for the first time the truth about the school of Shakespeare critics of whom Dowden is much the best" (W. B. Yeats 1954: 350). If the work of Yeats's father's friend were of no use at all to the poet, then surely a very different assessment would have been made.

Corcoran's conflation of the idea of a "formation of character" with judgmental nit-picking may provide a key to untangling this apparent contradiction. The former is a powerful and encompassing idea, deriving from the German notion of *Bildung*, and as such a key concept for the

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[2] Corcoran later claims that Yeats's "concept of tragic joy [. . .] originates in a further revulsion from the moralizing of Dowden" (49).

German Romantics, Goethe and Schiller that also is at the heart of the modern, Humboldtian idea of the university (see Bruford 2010). As a Trinity Professor, Dowden perceptively grasped that his métier involved something more fundamental than a mere inculcation of technical skills. If he identified the wider notion of what both he, as a university teacher, was seeking to communicate as a kind of "moralism," this was not to be mistaken for a mere following of conventional rules. The same goes for the creative writer:

> Let us remember that a chief function of the poet is to free, to arouse, to dilate the consciousness of his reader. [. . .] It is his part to be through his finer sympathies and through his imagination a moral pioneer, discovering new duties of the heart or hand or head. But to quicken a new life in men, he is sometimes compelled to wage war against a morality that has stiffened into mere routine. (Dowden 1888: 248-9)

This explains Dowden's repeated defenses of authors such as Whitman, Goethe and Percy Shelley, despite the moral opprobrium this incurred upon him from some Victorian contemporaries. Of Charles Baudelaire, Dowden commented that "in truth so much of cheap zeal and noisy claptrap have found their centre in the word 'progress', [. . .] that it is hardly surprising that a writer hating imposture, dreading delusions, and conscious of singular gifts should sever himself from the popular movement" (Dowden 1878: 411).

A notion of "formation of character" that can embrace such skepticism and iconoclasm is not to be mistaken for the moralism of the mob. It also has close connections with Yeats's stress on the necessity of vigilantly cultivating the self, evident for instance in the desire—in "Meditations in Time of Civil War"—that the example of "Sato's gift, a changeless sword" might "moralise / My days out of their aimlessness" (W. B. Yeats 1997: 206). To be sure, Yeats in 1901 does have a serious disagreement with Dowden. Much of it concerns the Shakespearean figure of Richard II, whom Dowden reads as a limited character, caught up in his own fantasy world and unfit to rule. There are interesting anticipations of his reading of the character of Daniel Deronda, but ultimately Dowden finds the deposed king to be irredeemable. For the Irish critic, there is such a thing as an "artist in life": this is someone who "seizes upon the stuff of circumstance, and, with strenuous will and strong creative power, shapes some new and noble form of human existence" (Dowden 1881: 172). Richard has "a kind of artistic relation

to life," but since it is utterly passive he cannot be deemed a true artist. For Yeats, on the other hand, the deposition of Richard II does not entail that Shakespeare sees him as being inferior to worldly figures such as Bolingbroke or Henry V:

> To suppose that Shakespeare preferred the men who deposed his King is to suppose that Shakespeare judged men with the eyes of a Municipal Councillor weighing the merits of a Town Clerk [. . .]. He saw indeed, as I think, in Richard II the defeat that awaits all, whether they be Artist or Saint, who find themselves where men ask of them a rough energy and have nothing to give but some contemplative virtue, whether lyrical phantasy, or sweetness of temper, or dreamy dignity, or love of God, or love of His creatures. (W. B. Yeats 2007: 79)[3]

Where Dowden emphasises that the historical plays depict a world where pragmatism and cunning are necessary, Yeats embraces idealism and a non-purposive vitality of soul.

For Dowden there is no full severance between these opposing sets of values. His Shakespeare was neither bluff businessman nor imperial administrator, but rather someone who tried to bridge the very gap between contemplative and practical that Yeats would later (in his chapter on Dowden in the *Reveries*) see as endemic to the character of the Trinity Professor. Despite Yeats's claims, Dowden himself very clearly expresses that there are limits to Shakespeare's sympathies with characters who are merely practical and successful in the ways of the world:

> We discern that in his secret heart he knew there was a more excellent way. "The children of this world," Shakespeare would say, "are wiser in their generation than they children of light." Let us borrow from the children of this world the secret of their success. Yet we cannot go over to them; in spite of danger and in spite of weakness, we remain the children of light. (Dowden 1881: 349)

Where Yeats, in this essay, presents himself as steadfastly opposing Dowden, he is often merely rephrasing his ideas or giving them an extra twist. Thus the former, for instance, points out that "Fortinbras was, it is likely enough, a better King than Hamlet would have been," but argues against this that Hamlet—like Coriolanus and Richard II—was in fact

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[3] William M. Murphy argues that Yeats's view on Richard uncannily echoes that of his father, expressed in a letter to Dowden several decades before (see Murphy 1978: 98-100 and 229-30).

"greater in the Divine Hierarchies" (W. B. Yeats 2007: 78). This clearly echoes Dowden's claim that "Hamlet, who failed, interested Shakspere; Fortinbras, who succeeded, seemed admirable to him, but in his presence Shakspere's sympathies and imagination were not deeply moved" (Dowden 1881: 350). Dowden finds a similar structure underlying several of Shakespeare's historical plays, thus preparing the ground for Yeats's Shakespearean "myth," which "describes a wise man who was blind from very wisdom, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness" (W. B. Yeats 2007: 81).

Yeats is at this time interested in creating an absolute distinction where Dowden sees tension, interrelatedness and the ability to "borrow" from the other side. In his 1898 essay "The Autumn of the Body," for instance, Yeats drives a firm wedge between related dualisms. In sonorous sentences the material world is cast off, together with everything that smacks of trade, industrialism or modernity. "Man has wooed and won the world," Yeats intones, "and has fallen weary, and not, I think, for a time, but with a weariness that will not end until the last autumn, when the stars shall be blown away like withered leaves" (W. B. Yeats 2007: 141). Yeats's understanding of Richard II is in agreement with this languorous and decadent apocalypticism, as is also his later symbolist play *The Shadowy Waters*. But the mood will not last. Yeats soon grows wary of praising contemplative virtues that do not issue in action. Although critics are not in agreement about the continuity, or lack of it, between the Yeats of the 1890s and his later, more acclaimed work,[4] the poet himself is adamant that a significant change takes place. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a strong commitment to the theatre is accompanied by a growing sense of that he has left the style of his early work behind. In Yeats's own accounts, this is cast as a gendered shift from femininity—"sentiment and sentimental sadness, a womanish introspection"—to a more manly form of writing (W. B. Yeats 1954: 434). Although no evidence remains to document their conversations during these years, Kathryn Ludwigson comments that "Dowden would have approved the change taking place in Yeats

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[4] There is an argument for the essential unity between early and late Yeats in Ellmann 1964. For a more fractured reading of his career, where Yeats's critical comments about his early work play a more defining role, see for instance Brown 2001.

during the first decade of the twentieth century, a change which Yeats's father, however, forcefully opposed" (138). Ludwigson draws attention to a letter of John Butler Yeats to his son—undated, but possibly written in 1906—where the father explains the son's change in emphasis as follows: "You are haunted by the Goethe idea, interpreted by Dowden, that a man can be a complete man. It is a chimera—a man can only be a specialist" (J. B. Yeats 1999: 70).

In the *Reveries,* Yeats criticised Dowden for abandoning "that study of Goethe that should have been his life-work" (W. B. Yeats 1999: 193). Despite being president of the English Goethe Society from 1888, Dowden never wrote a major monograph on the German poet, and his published work on the author of *Faust* is accompanied by the admission that—due to linguistic and cultural barriers—"one always advances in any literature except one's own with uncertainty and difficulty" (Dowden 1895: 152).[5] Dowden's critical accounts of Goethe's life and career are nevertheless noteworthy, and focus squarely on the maturation of Goethe's character: Dowden seeks to identify where the turn toward maturity occurred, and what constituted its essence. For the Irish critic, this turn entailed the discarding of the limitless desires and egotism of the *Sturm und Drang* movement for a more well-grounded position. One aspect of this is "the Goethe idea" referred to by Yeats's father. In Dowden's words: "by degrees it became evident to Goethe that the only true ideal of freedom is a liberation not of the passions, not of the intellect, but of the whole man: that this involves a conciliation of all the powers and faculties within us" (Dowden 2008: 6386).[6] For Dowden, this provides justification for the administrative work performed by Goethe at Weimar: only by immersing himself in practical affairs, could the author of *Faust* become a whole man and artist.

In "The Stirring of the Bones," the fifth and final installment of *The Trembling of the Veil,* Yeats gives measured acknowledgement to the importance of Goethe's ideal:

> I still think that in a species of man, wherein I count myself, nothing so much matters as Unity of Being, but if I seek it as Goethe sought, who was not of that species, I but combine in myself, and perhaps now as it seems, looking backward, in

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[5] A more extensive explanation is given in Dowden 1914a: 194.

[6] Perloff 1971 contains a brief, but rich, account of how Yeats's interpreted Goethe via the mediating instances of Dowden and Walter Pater.

> others also, incompatibles. Goethe, in whom objectivity and subjectivity were intermixed, I hold, as the dark is mixed with the light in the eighteenth Lunar Phase, could but seek it as Wilhelm Meister seeks it, intellectually, critically, and through a multitude of deliberately chosen experiences; events and forms of skill gathered as if for a collector's cabinet; whereas true Unity of Being, where all the nature murmurs in response if but a single note be touched, is found emotionally, instinctively, by the rejection of all experience not of the right quality, and by the limitation of its quantity. (W. B. Yeats 1999: 268)

This is actually a grudging admission, expressed in the terminology of types and phases articulated in *A Vision,* of a proximity of thought. The Goethe Yeats here recognises as an ancestor of his own idea is clearly identifiable as being marked by Dowden—or at least Yeats's interpretation of Dowden. For the previously discussed chapter on the latter in the *Reveries* works with the same distinction between intellect and emotion, citing Yeats's father's claim "that Dowden believed too much in the intellect" (W. B. Yeats 1999: 96).

Like Yeats, Dowden granted *Wilhelm Meister* a crucial place in his understanding of Goethe, devoting a separate, lengthy chapter of *New Studies in Literature* to this work. Dowden's reading does not focus on Yeats's dichotomy of choice versus instinct, insisting instead that "we must be on our guard against reducing a book so full of reality and life to an idea or an abstraction or a theory" (Dowden 1895: 151). Furthermore, Goethe's hero cannot follow a single, rational plan in his process of self-discovery: "the way is long: delusions, snares, wanderings must be experienced; by error he must be delivered from error" (154). Yeats's critique of the "intermixed" nature of subjectivity and objectivity in Goethe seems to paraphrase the German writer's own critique of the Beautiful Soul, a sensitive representative of religion in *Wilhelm Meister* whom Goethe claimed—in a passage quoted by Dowden—to be the embodiment of "the most delicate confusion between the subjective and the objective."[7] A less tortuous and covert form of appropriation is evident in Yeats's turn away from indefinites and abstraction in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the words of Dowden: "A life of emotion which cannot be converted into action is, according to the teaching of Goethe, a life of disease. William is to be led in the end from vain dreaming to wholesome practical activity" (Dowden 1895: 161). It is here Yeats's famously Nietzschean interpretation of his self-

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[7] Goethe in a letter to Schiller, 18 March 1795, quoted in Dowden 1895: 169.

transformation may be somewhat misleading. Writing on 15 May 1903 to John Quinn—who had introduced him to Nietzsche—Yeats expressed his dissatisfaction with his own collection of essays entitled *Ideas of Good and Evil*:

> The book is too lyrical, too full of aspirations after remote things, too full of desires. Whatever I do from this out will, I think, be more creative. I will express myself, so far as I express myself in criticism at all, by that sort of thought that leads straight to action, straight to some sort of craft. I have always felt that the soul has two movements primarily: one to transcend forms, and the other to create forms. Nietzsche, to whom you have been the first to introduce me, calls these the Dionysiac and the Apollonic, respectively, I think I have to some extent got weary of that wild God Dionysus, and I am hoping that the Far-Darter will come in his place. (W. B. Yeats 1954: 403)

Thus a decisive shift in Yeats's career—affecting not only his critical work, but also his poetry and drama—is presented as having a Nietzschean mould. Yet Nietzsche never grew "weary of that wild God Dionysus," and never reduced the dichotomy of Apollonian and Dionysian to one exclusively concerning the creation and transcendence of forms. A much closer fit is actually provided by Dowden's account of Goethe's insight of February 1798, just after completing the first book of *Wilhelm Meister*: "Goethe made a characteristic and highly significant entry in his diary: 'Bestimmteres Gefühl von Einschränkung und dadurch der wahren Ausbreitung'—*a more definite sense of limitation and thereby real expansion.*" This, for Dowden, constituted "the most important lesson of life learnt by Goethe during the ten years of service at Weimar" (Dowden 1895: 152).

Yeats was himself performing a "service" of a kind during this stage of his career, through his indefatigable work devoted to founding an Irish national theatre. In a 1908 issue of the periodical *Samhain*, expressing "First Principles" for the theatre, he drew a parallel between the theatre's future and his own development:

> what I myself did, getting into an original relation to Irish life, creating in myself a new character, a new pose—in the French sense of the word—the literary mind of Ireland must do as a whole, always understanding that the result must be no bundle of formulas, not faggots but a fire. We never learn to know ourselves by thought, said Goethe, but by action only; and to a writer creation is action. (W. B. Yeats 2003: 118)

Limiting himself to the local, institutional level in this way caused some strain, and for a while Yeats the poet receded from public view. Goethe too founded a theatre, in Weimar, and it would have been easy for both Yeats and Dowden to have seen in the Irish poet's busy endeavours during this time a parallel to the German's efforts.

For Dowden, there was also a latent parallel to his own use of his gifts on a local level, through the toil of his academic post at Trinity. Yet like John Butler Yeats, who always questioned Dowden's acceptance of the professorship, Dowden waa aware something had been lost in the process: his gift of poetry. Despite the early publication of his *Poems* (1876), the workmanlike demands of his full-time job effectively spelt out the demise of Dowden's career as a creative writer. An early letter, dated 29 July 1874, distinguishes the "life absolute" of Dowden's poetry from the "life provisional" of his critical prose (Dowden 1914a: 108). Time would confirm that the poetry's focus on "something rugged and untamed. A strength behind the will" (Dowden 2010: 46) could not be maintained with equal intensity amid the daily rigours of Dowden's academic life. Regret over this process is tacitly evident in Dowden's appraisal of the contrast between Matthew Arnold's early work as a poet and his later critical fame, in a passage that echoes his own analysis of the character struggles of Shakespeare's history plays: "A thoughtful observer might have predicted long since that the poet, the shy, refined elder brother in Mr Arnold's twofold nature—would have withdrawn, saddened and unnerved" (Dowden 1888: 209). On the other hand, the demise of this figure entailed that "the stirring, effective, and happier younger brother, the critic, came forward and played a brilliant part in the world." Yet for Dowden "these elder brothers are dear to us by virtue of the very qualities that lead them to shade. [. . .] our heart reverts fondly to the elder brother, the vanished poet" (209).

It is from this vantage point, and not just in the light of political disagreement, that one must frame Dowden's concern for Yeats's professional priorities. In a letter to Rosalind Travers, 14 April 1907, Dowden notes the frequency of Yeats's visits: he "comes and goes and is always intelligent and interesting" (Dowden 1914c: 351). Further, Dowden recalls a recent visit, which was filled with "an amusing account of the wars of the Theatre." In the eyes of Dowden, Yeats "is a little losing his finer self in 'movements' and petty leadership. Still he smiled over the whole story, and was only half engaged in the strife. I wish that

he were wholly out of it, and consulting his genius" (350-1). This encounter is replete with irony, in light of the fact that Yeats's commitment to the theatre in many ways follows the example of Goethe (and Daniel Deronda) as advocated in Dowden's critical prose. A poem such as "The Fascination of What's Difficult"—with its acerbic impatience with "Theatre business, management of men"—shows that Yeats did not submit to this discipline without frustration (W. B. Yeats 1997: 92). But his commitments would not allow him, for many years, to fully pay heed to the "vanished poet" within. That figure could only resurface through a process of consolidation, which in many ways led Yeats to embrace the forms of settled respectability that he—and even more his father—had derided in Dowden. Not only marriage and fatherhood, but also a comfortable existence in a Dublin suburb, would at later stages be embraced by Yeats.

As early as in 1910, though, Yeats was granted an annual Civil List Pension by the British authorities. During the same year this was followed, somewhat surprisingly, by Yeats seriously considering taking over Dowden's professorship at TCD, when the elder man experienced health problems. Compared to the controversy of the mid 1890s, this was a more complicated and mediated episode, providing an ironic epilogue to the history of relations between the two men: Yeats harboured understandable doubts about whether academic life was the right thing for him, and Dowden entertained equally justified concerns about the younger man's suitability for scholarship and lecturing. Yeats was both flattered and interested, though. The timing was good for him, as this marked the beginning of a period where he sought a more settled and secure existence: his "wandering life," as he described it in a letter to Sydney Cockerel on 22 September 1910, was beginning to appear untenable in the long run (W. B. Yeats 1954: 551). Where he formerly had derided Dowden for having embraced a bourgeois and provincial life, Yeats from now on was starting to take a cooler look at the long-term effects of a bohemian existence. In the end, though, Dowden decided against retiring in 1910. His death in 1913 led to a brief revival of this question, but it was clear that those in power at Trinity did not consider Yeats a serious candidate for the job. Soon after, pressed by Yeats's father, his sisters pushed through the posthumous publication of a collection of Dowden's late verses entitled *A Woman's Reliquary.* With some justification, Yeats protested that this book would do nothing to

forward the Cuala Press's reputation or finances. Consciously or not, his criticism of Dowden's verse as being merely local and as showing evidence of poor craftsmanship echoed the very terms the latter used to belittle the writings championed by the Irish literary Renaissance in the 1890s.

The second half of Yeats's career would see him adopting positions much more in tune with Dowden's ideals for poetry, and also embracing Irish Protestantism in outspoken ways that were more provocative and extreme than Dowden's Unionism of the 1880s and 90s.[8] Yeats became, in fact, more of a cosmopolitan writer, adopting motifs from classical philosophy and Renaissance art in a manner that would have been unthinkable during his early, concerted focus on Irish themes. Yeats also decisively left behind the idea of having a merely instinctual or emotional basis for his work, in his attempt to become a philosophical poet. Thus the antagonism between the two seems at least in part a matter of timing, as the common ground is quite considerable. The question of what sort of life is best suited to the further the development of literary gifts may be one that they frequently answered in differing ways, but their answers did in fact vary over time—and the way in which they framed the question was in fact very similar. Both came to aspire to a unified existence, where the aesthetic distance of writer or critic was to be transcended through a life of action. The more one reads Dowden closely, and on his own terms, the more does his affinity with the famous son of his close friend come to the fore. Their relationship is, as such, typical for that between many modernists and Victorians: As time passes, it is becoming evident that differences between Modernism and Victorianism that initially seemed crucial increasingly reveal themselves as having been overemphasised in comparison to undeniable proximity. Edward Dowden is in fact more modern than Yeats let on, while Yeats himself is also far more Victorian than he tended to admit.

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[8] My account of the later stages of their relationship is indebted to the biographical narratives of Foster 1998 and Murphy 1978.

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The Place of Writing in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh

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Abstract
This article addresses the theme of place in the poetry of W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh, focusing on the concept of place as a physical and psychological entity. The article explores place as a creative force in the work of these two poets, in relation to the act of writing. Seamus Heaney, in his essay "The Sense of Place," talks about the "history of our sensibilities" that looks to the stable element of the land for continuity: "We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories" (Heaney 1980: 148-9). Thus, in a physical sense, place is understood as a site in which identity is located and defined, but in a metaphysical sense, place is also an imaginative space that maps the landscapes of the mind. This article compares the different ways in which Yeats and Kavanagh relate to their place of writing, physically and artistically, where place is understood as a physical lived space, and as a liberating site for an exploration of poetic voice, where the poet creates his own country of the mind.

Key words: place, space, history, poetic voice, home, writing, Yeats, Kavanagh, Heaney

> Irrespective of our creed or politics, irrespective of what culture or subculture may have coloured our individual sensibilities, our imaginations assent to the stimulus of the names, our sense of place is enhanced, our sense of ourselves as inhabitants not just of a geographical country but of a country of the mind is cemented. It is this feeling, assenting, equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind, whether that country of the mind takes its tone unconsciously from a shared oral inherited culture, or from a consciously savoured literary culture, or of both, it is this marriage that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation. (Heaney 1980: 132)

In his collection of essays, *Preoccupations* (1980), Seamus Heaney echoes Yeats where he states that poetry "is out of the quarrel with ourselves and the quarrel with others is rhetoric" (Heaney 1980: 34). In addition to the quarrel with oneself, the poet, in the act of writing, is also influenced by the actual physical place of belonging. As Heaney puts it: "One half of one's sensibility is in a cast of mind that comes from belonging to a place, an ancestry, a history, a culture, whatever one wants to call it. But consciousness and quarrels with the self are the result of what Lawrence called 'the voices of my education'" (Heaney

1980: 35). According to Heaney, this dialectical process is at the centre of the creative process—the bringing together of the two opposing forces, on the one hand, the geographical and historical, and, on the other hand, the psychological and transcendent. He develops this idea of place and the creative process further in his collection *The Place of Writing* (1989) in the following discussion about the work of art:

> [. . .] to work is to move a certain mass through a certain distance. In the case of poetry, the distance moved through is that which separates the historically and topographically situated place from the written place, the mass moved is one aspect of the writer's historical/biographical experience, and each becomes a factor of the other in the achieved work. The work of art, in other words, involves raising the historical record to a different power. (Heaney 1989: 36)

The raising of the poet's historical or biographical experience to the different power of art is likened to Archimedes's claim that he "could move the world if he could find the right place to position his lever" (Heaney 1989: 19). It is this sense of positioning in relation to the place to which one belongs, and the place from which one writes, that interests me in the following exploration of the place of writing in the work of Yeats and Kavanagh.

I would like to begin with an extract from a letter by W. B. Yeats, written to his father, on July 16, 1919. He writes as follows:

> I am writing in the great ground floor of the castle—pleasantest room I have yet seen, a great wide window opening over the river and a round arched door leading to the thatched hall [. . .]. There is a stone floor and a stone-roofed entrance-hall with the door to winding stair to left, and then a larger thatched hall, beyond which is a cottage and kitchen. In the thatched hall imagine a great copper hanging lantern [. . .]. I am writing at a great trestle table which George keeps covered with wild flowers. (qtd in Hone: 1943: 319)

Yeats, (born in Dublin, in 1865), was writing these lines from Thoor Ballylee—a medieval tower on the banks of the River Cloon, in the Barony of Kiltartan, in County Galway. He had bought the tower two years previously, in 1917, for thirty five pounds (Jeffares 1992: 40), on the recommendation of his great friend, and fellow Irish Literary Revivalist, Lady Gregory, who lived nearby at Coole Park, and he had it restored as a place of retreat for himself, his new wife George, and their

young family.[1] The tower, dating from the fourteenth century, was originally a Norman keep, descending from the great line of the de Burgos, the Anglo-Norman family who established themselves in Connaught in the thirteenth Century, and ruled over much of that part of Ireland. It consisted of four floors, connected by a winding stairway that was built into the seven foot thickness of the massive outer wall.

Thoor Ballylee became for Yeats a powerful symbol, both in his personal and in his professional life. It was a retreat from the turbulent political events of the day—a "blessed place" where he could be with his family and write poetry. If, as the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues, "place is security and space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (Tuan 2008: 3), then one can say that for Yeats, Thoor Ballylee combined both—it was a place of security that at the same time offered the freedom of creative space. In a letter to a friend, Olivia Shakespeare, in 1926, Yeats writes:

> We are in our Tower and I am writing poetry as I always do here, and, as always happens, no matter how I begin, it becomes love poetry before I am finished [. . .] as you can see I have no news, for nothing happens in this blessed place but a stray beggar or a heron. (Yeats 1954: 714-15)

He writes about the tower in his poem "My House," (from the longer poem "Meditations in Time of Civil War," published in *The Tower* in 1928), as follows:

> An ancient bridge, and a more ancient tower,
> A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall,
> An acre of stony ground,
> Where the symbolic rose can break in flower,
> Old ragged elms, old thorns innumerable,
> The sound of the rain or sound
> Of every wind that blows;
> The stilted water-hen

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[1] In a letter to his life-long friend, Maud Gonne, written in May 1918, before moving into the tower, Yeats writes: "We hope to be in Ballylee in a month & there I dream of making a house that may encourage people to avoid ugly manufactured things—an ideal poor man's house. Except a very few things imported as models we should get all made in Galway or Limerick, I am told that our neighbours are pleased that we are not getting 'grand things but old Irish furniture'" (Yeats 1992: 393-4).

Crossing stream again
Scared by the splashing of a dozen cows;

A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,
A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,
A candle and written page.
[. . .] (Yeats 1990: 247)

Yeats began negotiations to buy Ballylee Thoor a few months after the Easter Rising of 1916. It was a time of great political upheaval, not only in Ireland. In Europe, the Battle of the Somme had broken out, and the following year, 1917, the Russian Revolution began. In Ireland, the War of Independence started in January 1919, and went on until July 1921, to be followed by the outbreak of the Irish Civil War, 1922-23. It is against this background of violence and civil unrest that we can understand the importance of Thoor Ballylee for Yeats. It was not just an empowering imaginative force in his writing, but also a symbol of stability—a symbol of a more ordered existence, a stay against confusion, which offered a counterbalance in a time of political and social uncertainty. He wrote of the symbolism of Ballylee in his poem "Blood and the Moon" (from his collection *The Winding Stair and Other Poems,* 1933) as follows:

Blessed be this place,
More blessed still this tower;
[. . .]
I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare
This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my ancestral stair;
That Goldsmith and the Dean, Berkeley and Burke have travelled there.
[. . .] (Yeats 1990: 287)

For Yeats, the tower was a monument to a heroic past; it was a romantic longing back to an ancient civilisation, the dignified life-style of the aristocracy, and the disappearing Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, whose lifestyle and values he greatly admired. He also admired the values of the peasant classes, representing harmony and simplicity. In his view, these two groups were in sharp contrast with the newly emerging Irish Catholic middle-classes, such as those he derided in his poem "September 1913," from the collection *Responsibilities* (1914): "What need you, being come to sense, / But fumble in a greasy till / And add the halfpence to the pence / And prayer to shivering prayer,

until / You have dried the marrow from the bone" (Yeats 1997: 48). The "you" addressed here being the mercantile middle classes, whom Yeats considered greedy, money grubbing and petty, and who—with their ostentatious and vulgar ways—represented everything that he abhorred.

Situated in the far West of the country, far from the metropolitan, Anglicised East, Ballylee was an artistic and symbolic appropriation of what Yeats considered to be the real Ireland. The tower was placed in a historically and mythologically resonant landscape, which appealed to Yeats's artistic sensibility, and satisfied his desire for ancestral continuity. It was his heroic response to ugly materialism and symbolised the promise of the permanence of art. In Ballylee, he wrote *A Vision* (1925), where he developed his elaborate philosophical system of the gyres, explaining the journey of the soul, and providing himself with a system that he regarded as a "stylistic arrangement of experience," an important insight into the workings of the creative imagination (Yeats 1989: 25). In Ballylee, he also wrote his collection, *The Tower* (1928), containing many of his highly acclaimed poems, such as "Sailing to Byzantium," where the speaker longs to escape from the physical constraints of an ageing and decrepit body, into an ageless world of art. The poem begins with the well-known lines: "That is no country for old men. The young / In one another's arms, birds in the trees, /—Those dying generations—at their song," and the second stanza continues the theme of longing to escape: "An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick, unless / Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing / For every tatter in its mortal dress" (Yeats 1990: 239).

The tower was not just a physical place of writing for Yeats, but also a psychological space where he could endeavour to write the kind of poetry he longed for, which—as he puts it in "The Fisherman," from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917)—would be "as cold / and passionate as the dawn" (Yeats 1997: 59). The tower was not just a place of residence; as Heaney states, Yeats's "other addresses were necessary shelters but Ballylee was a sacramental site, an outward sign of an inner grace. The grace here was poetry and the lonely tower was the poet's sign. Within it, he was within his own mind" (Heaney 1989: 24). When Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923, for what the Nobel Committee called his "always inspired poetry," which "gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation," he referred to the tower in his acceptance speech, given in Stockholm on 15 Dec, 1923 (later published as *The*

Bounty of Sweden in 1925). In his speech, he quotes some lines from his poem "The Stare's Nest by My Window" (Yeats 1991: 580). This poem is a good example of the place of poetry, both physically and existentially. The poem was written at Ballylee during the Civil War, and, in his notes, Yeats describes the background to the poem and how the fighting between the two rival Civil War groups—de Valera's Irish Republican Army, on the one side, and the Nationalists, on the other—came right up to the door of the tower. He explains: "Before they were finished the Republicans blew up our 'ancient bridge' one midnight. They forbade us to leave the house, but were otherwise polite, even saying at last "Good-night, thank you," as though we had given them the bridge" (Yeats 1990: 642).

"The Stare's Nest by My Window" was inspired by what Yeats calls an "overmastering desire not to grow unhappy or embittered, not to lose all sense of the beauty of nature" (Yeats 1990: 648). The poem begins with the image of honey bees building in the loosening masonry of the tower walls, and calls on the bees to build instead in the empty nest left behind by the stare at the speaker's window (the stare is a local name for the starling). The second stanza continues:

> [. . .]
> We are closed in, and the key is turned
> On our uncertainty; somewhere
> A man is killed, or a house burned,
> Yet no clear fact to be discerned:
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.
>
> A barricade of stone or of wood;
> Some fourteen days of civil war:
> Last night they trundled down the road
> That dead young soldier in his blood:
> Come build in the empty house of the stare.
> [. . .] (Yeats 1990: 250)

The poem contrasts the contemplative life of the poet, in his quiet tower, with the troubled world outside, where the "dead young soldier in his blood" is "trundled down the road" in the darkness. Focusing on the healing powers of nature, the speaker concludes by suggesting that in the face of violence and death, with the heart "fed on fantasies" and grown "brutal from the fare," that nature can teach us a lesson. The image of the honey bee coming to build in the empty house of the stare evokes the

promise of new life that will—in time—emerge from destruction and decay.

In the physical sense, the poem is an example of writing firmly situated in the experience of place and time—Ireland, at the time of the Civil War. But, also, in the existential sense, the poem demonstrates the place of poetry as something that, for Yeats, could unite intellect and art in a single vision, what he called "holding reality and justice in a single thought" (Yeats 1989: 25). It is an example of the poet's attempt to fit his experience of the world into an intellectual framework to give it structure and meaning. It is poetry as an act of defense against the physical world of lived experience, and the chaos of the war and violence going on all around.

From Yeats tower at Ballylee, I want now to cross the country to the parish of Inniskeen (translated from the Gaelic meaning "peaceful island") in County Monaghan, to where the poet Patrick Kavanagh was born in 1904. Kavanagh, generally considered one of the most influential poets since Yeats,[2] began his professional writing career in 1939, the year of Yeats's death. Just as Ballylee Thoor was the writing place of Yeats, Inniskeen was the writing place for Kavanagh, but in a very different sense. Kavanagh was the son of a shoemaker cum farmer, one of a family of ten, who finished school when he was thirteen years old to work as an apprentice shoemaker to his father, and help on the family's small farm. In contrast with Yeats's backward glance to a disempowered colonial caste that he claimed kinship with, Kavanagh ignored history and recent political upheavals, and focused instead on the here and now of the simple everyday. He gave voice to the recently decolonised Catholic underclass, and as such his work represents a postcolonial turn in Irish poetry. He tapped into the consciousness of the majority of his countrymen, and, as Heaney expresses it, "raising the inhibited energies of a subculture to the power of a cultural resource" (Heaney 1980: 116).

Kavanagh wrote about the ordinary comings and goings of the rural community among which he lived, about the experiences of farm life, the spraying of the potatoes, the cutting of the hay, the milking of the cows, and so on. And in his poetry he gave the unremarkable countryside

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[2] Apart from poets like John Montague and Seamus Heaney, poets touched by Kavanagh's example include Eavan Boland, Paul Durcan, Desmond Egan, Eamon Grennan, Michael Hartnett, Brendan Kennelly and James Liddy. See Allison 2003: 57.

around Inniskeen a remarkable presence in the Irish literary landscape. If Yeats's place of writing was the tower, Kavanagh's writing place was the cottage; and his early poem, "My Room" (Kavanagh 1964: 29), where simplicity is woven together with Catholic iconography, can be read in sharp contrast with the lofty tower of Yeats's poem "My House." Kavanagh's poem begins with a basic physical description of the room: "10 by 12 / And a low roof / If I stand by the side wall / My head feels the reproof." Overshadowing this image of confined space, with the bed "in the centre / So many things to me," are five holy pictures: "The Virgin and Child / St Anthony of Padua / St Patrick our own / Leo XIII / And the Little Flower"—a very ordinary scenario in any rural Irish Catholic household at that time. However, the concluding lines of the poem transform this ordinary space into something extraordinary:

> My room is a musty attic
> But its little window
> Lets in the stars.
> (Kavanagh 1964: 29)

Kavanagh looked for the spiritual in the commonplace, finding it in the most unexpected places, as in his poem "The Long Garden" where he writes: "In the sow's rooting where the hen scratches / We dipped our fingers in the pockets of God" (Kavanagh 2000: 17). He gave a face to the mundane places around Inniskeen by naming them, and, in naming them, he gave them new meaning. He writes in *The Green Fool* (from 1938):

> There were good names on these hills even though their soil was sticky and scarce of lime. Poets had surely put the names on them. Translated from the Gaelic they were: "The Field of the Shop," "The Field of the Well," "The Yellow Meadow," "The Field of the Musician." (Kavanagh 2001: 204)

The act of naming itself was important, as he writes in his poem "The Hospital":

> Naming these things is the love-act and its pledge;
> For we must record love's mystery without claptrap,
> Snatch out of time the passionate transitory. (Kavanagh 2000: 119)

Less reverentially—and in a typically depreciating manner—he writes of the name of the townland in which he was born: "The name of my birthplace was Mucker [. . .] the name was a corrupted Gaelic word signifying a place where pigs bred in abundance [. . .]. Around our house there stood little hills all tilled and tamed" (Kavanagh 2001: 8). In his poem "Shancoduff," he writes about these same hills, giving them new dimension and light:

> My black hills have never seen the sun rising,
> Eternally they look north towards Armagh.
> Lot's wife would not be salt if she had been
> Incurious as my black hills that are happy
> When dawn whitens Glassdrummond chapel.
>
> My hills hoard the bright shillings of March
> While the sun searches every pocket.
> These are my Alps and I have climbed the Matterhorn
> With a sheaf of hay for the three perishing calves
> In the field under the Big Forth of Rocksavage.
> (Kavanagh 2000: 8)

Kavanagh rejected the romantic idealisation of the rural that had inspired Yeats and the writers of the Celtic Twilight. He rejected the idioms that promoted a unified national myth, and was critical of Yeats and the Revivalists, whom he claimed professed "to be so frightfully Irish and racy of the Celtic soil," but who were guilty of constructing "a thorough-going English-bred lie" (Kavanagh 2003: 306). He writes unsentimentally of his childhood experience as "the usual barbaric life of the Irish country poor. [. . .]. Poverty is a mental condition [. . .]. Poverty has nothing to do with eating your fill everyday; [. . .] the real poverty was the lack of enlightenment to get out under the moon" (Kavanagh 2003: 307). He was fiercely critical of post-independent Ireland's nationalist discourse and the hypocrisy of religious pieties, and in *The Green Fool* (1938) he refers to the whin bushes—or the gorse that grows wild all over the countryside, especially in areas of poor land—as the "Yellow flame-blossoms of the whin [that] lit bonfires all over the landscape; [. . .] as persistent and fertile as sin and disease" (Kavanagh 2001: 8), suggesting that like the whin bushes, sin and disease were rampant everywhere—not least in the eyes of the Catholic Church.

Kavanagh's long narrative poem, *The Great Hunger* (1942), focuses on the blighted lives and the spiritually impoverished existence of rural life, and begins with the often-quoted line, "Clay is the word and clay is the flesh." The poem traces the frustrated and emotionally unfulfilled life of its central character, Patrick Maguire, who, feeling a prisoner on the land, demands: "Who bent the coin of my destiny / That it stuck in the slot?" He continues, remembering happier times in his youth:

> I remember a night we walked
> Through the moon of Donaghmoyne,
> Four of us seeking adventure—
> It was midsummer forty years ago.
> Now I know
> The moment that gave the turn to my life.
> O Christ! I am locked in a stable with pigs and cows forever.
> [. . .] (Kavanagh 2000: 40)

A similar anti-pastoral theme is explored in his well-known poem "Stony Grey Soil," which shows the bitterness of a wasted life, stuck on the farm:

> O stony grey soil of Monaghan
> The laugh from my love you thieved;
> You took the gay child of my passion
> And gave me your clod-conceived.
> [. . .]
> You sang on steaming dunghills
> A song of cowards' brood,
> You perfumed my clothes with weasel itch,
> You fed me on swinish food.
>
> You flung a ditch on my vision
> Of beauty, love and truth.
> O stony grey soil of Monaghan
> You burgled my bank of youth!
> [. . .] (Kavanagh 2000: 13)

While Kavanagh's physical place of writing was Inniskeen, the psychological place of his birth as a poet was Dublin, where he moved, when he was thirty five years old, in order to make a living as a writer. In his *Self-Portrait*, he writes of Dublin city as follows: "I came to Dublin in nineteen thirty-nine. It was the worst mistake of my life" (Kavanagh

2003: 307). Nevertheless, it was in Dublin that he gained confidence as a writer and was able to look back and get a clear perspective on his original place of writing. He describes this realisation as follows:

> For many a good-looking year I wrought hard at versing but I would say that, as a poet, I was born in or about nineteen-fifty-five, the place of my birth being the banks of the Grand Canal. Thirty years earlier Shancoduff's watery hills could have done the trick, but I was too thick to take the hint. Curious this, how I had started off with the right simplicity, indifferent to crude reason, and then ploughed my way through complexities and anger, hatred and ill-will towards the faults of man, and came back to where I started. (Kavanagh 2003: 313)

Kavanagh's early work was a poetry of protest, mired in disenchantment and frustration, but his later work is celebratory and visionary. In his poem "Is," we see him at his best, as he rises above the resentment and bitterness to focus on the existential and transcendent:

> The important thing is not
> To imagine one aught
> Have something to say
> [. . .].
> The only true teaching
> Subsists in watching
> Things moving or just colour
> Without comment from the scholar.
> To look on is enough
> In the business of love.
> [. . .] (Kavanagh 2000: 124)

Kavanagh came to realise the importance of just seeing: "To know fully even one field or one lane is a lifetime's experience. In the world of poetic experience it is depth that counts and not width. A gap in a hedge, a smooth rock surfacing a narrow lane, a view of a woody meadow, the stream at the junction of four small fields—these are as much as a man can fully experience" (Kavanagh 1977: 8). He placed great importance on the Parochial mentality which dealt with the "fundamentals" of experience, something which he saw as the direct opposite to the provincial:

> The provincial has no mind of his own; he does not trust what his eyes see until he has heard what the metropolis—towards which his eyes are turned—has to say on the subject [. . .]. The Parochial mentality on the other hand never is in any doubt

about the social and artistic validity of his parish. All great civilisations are based on parochialism [. . .]. Parochialism is universal; it deals with the fundamentals [. . .]. In Ireland we are inclined to be provincial, not parochial, for it requires a great deal of courage to be parochial [. . .]. To be parochial a man needs the right kind of sensitive courage and the right kind of sensitive humility [. . .]. (Kavanagh 1952: 1)

To conclude, the importance of place resonates in the work of both Yeats and Kavanagh, and is closely related to the practice of poetry, as embodied by both of these poets. For Yeats, the challenge of poetry was "to hold in a single thought reality and justice," where the poetic was a redress to the political. Heaney, in discussing Yeats as an example, points out that he shows how "art can outface history, the imagination can distain happenings once it has incubated and mastered the secret behind happenings" (Heaney 1980: 99). But that was not to say that the imagination took preference over "happenings." As Heaney expresses it: "Yeats bore the implications of his romanticism into action: he propagandized, speechified, fund-raised, administered and politicked in the world of telegrams and anger, all on behalf of the world of vision" (Heaney 1980: 100). He "donned the mantle—or perhaps one should say the fur coat—of the aristocrat so that he might express a vision of a communal and personal life that was ample, generous, harmonious, fulfilled and enhancing" (Heaney 1980: 108). Apart from his "reactionary politics," contempt for members of his own middle-class, his "silliness" and pretentiousness, his most exemplary moments are those when "this powerful artistic control is vulnerable to the pain or pathos of life itself" (Heaney 1980: 109). We see this, for instance, in "Sailing to Byzantium," or his transformation of the violence of war into the healing power of nature, in the "The Stare's Nest by My Window." The place of poetry, for Yeats, is when it offers consolation and shows understanding of the common humanity that unites us all. He writes:

If we understand our own minds, and the things that are striving to utter themselves through our minds, we move others, not because we have understood or thought about those others, but because all life has the same root. Coventry Patmore has said "The end of art is peace," and the following of art is little different from the following of religion in the intense preoccupation it demands. (Yeats 1980: 7)

For Kavanagh, the place of writing was located in the local and in the power of art to show basic humanity in all its facets; and while he did not reach acclaim until after his death, and never reached the heights of

fame achieved by Yeats, he nevertheless was an important influence of the young Irish poets that came after him, especially poets like Heaney who had their roots in the rural experience. To return to the metaphor of Archimedes: both poets "move the world," but the lever used in each case is positioned differently. Kavanagh knew his physical place of writing—Inniskeen—intimately, and for him this lever was placed more directly, in the concrete, emotional and intimate, while for Yeats his positioning was in the abstract, intellectual and conceptual, and mediated through symbols. Interestingly, while Yeats could combine the physical writing place of Thoor Ballylee with the creative writing space of poetry, Kavanagh had to escape from Inniskeen in order to find his creative writing space. This new space—at a physical distance—allowed him the freedom and creativity to revisit in the landscapes of the mind the physical place of poetry that he had left behind in frustration and anger so many years earlier. Above all, Kavanagh demonstrates the need to return: "Now as I analyse myself I realise that throughout everything I write, there is this constantly recurring motif of the need to go back" (Kavanagh 1967: 205). This motif is addressed in his poem "Advent," in the call to "return to Doom / The knowledge we stole but could not use," which concludes:

> And the newness that was in every stale thing
> When we looked at it as children: the spirit-shocking
> Wonder in a black slanting Ulster hill
> Or the prophetic astonishment in the tedious talking
> Of an old fool will awake for us and bring
> You and me to the yard gate to watch the whins
> And the bog-holes, cart-tracks, old stables where Time begins. (Kavanagh 2000: 66)

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"All this debris of day-to-day experience": The Poet as Rhythmanalyst in the Works of Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon

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Abstract

This article examines the work of three Irish poets, namely Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon, and particularly focuses on their poetic journals or journalistic poetry. The word "journal" bridges private and public discourses. Its root is the Latin diurnālis, pertaining to anything taking place "daily," and thus to repetitive action, record-keeping or reporting carried out by private individuals in the form of a diary (latin diārium), or to journalism contributing to public communications or discourse. To examine the poetic journals of these three writers, the article employs the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis to discuss the rhythmic, repetitive and changing processes of both poetry and the social and phenomenal experience.

Key words: Irish poetry, poetic discourse, place, space, journals

I

"I cannot believe [. . .] that any artist can be good who is not more than a bit of a reporting journalist," W. H. Auden famously stated in his commentary on Herbert Reid's work on P. B. Shelley (Auden 1996: 132). For Auden of the political 1930s, a poetic sensibility had to be balanced with the journalistic, with an engagement of the world of "news," to be of genuine social *or* literary value. Louis MacNeice commended Auden for precisely this quality, for being "a journalist poet" though not "journalistic" (quoted in Stallworthy 1995: 227). MacNeice as well as many of his followers was well aware of the tightrope walk required for such balance, and the justification for poetic art in a society which appears to thrive on more utilitarian uses of language, and puts pressure on artists to act as interpreters and recorders of that which lies outside their work. In what follows, I will examine the works of three Irish poets, Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon, and their work that explores that tension between not only the artistic integrity of the individual poet and the surrounding society but also, and—more specifically—between poetic and journalistic uses of

language. The word "journal" is itself one that bridges private and public discourses. Its root is the Latin *diurnālis*, pertaining to anything taking place "daily," and thus to repetitive action, record-keeping or reporting carried out by private individuals in the form of a diary, latin *diārium*, or as journalism contributing to public communications or discourse. Its proximity to the word "journey," from *diurnāta*, meaning a day's time or a day's work, further highlights how such record-keeping should be seen as a process rather than a closed narrative—the journal as journey is, by definition, an ongoing and unfinished undertaking.

Terence Brown quotes W. B. Yeats in his introduction to Derek Mahon's *Journalism* (Brown 1996), a collection of the latter poet's occasional prose writings; in a letter to Robert Bridges, Yeats was markedly apologetic not only when comparing a recent article and poetry, but even his text's relationship with a more carefully considered essay, and asked that it not be judged "as you would judge an essay meant to be permanent. It is merely [. . .] journalism [. . .] and done more quickly than I would like" (Brown 1996: 13).[1] While the two poets differ considerably in their treatment of the everyday in poetry, Yeats's views on a certain ephemeral nature of journalism are not dissimilar to those of Louis MacNeice, whose introductory note to his *Autumn Journal* explains how he was "writing what I have called a Journal. In a journal or a personal letter a man writes what he feels at the moment" (MacNeice 1979: 101). Similarly, the jacket blurb of Muldoon's *The Prince of the Quotidian,* referred to as his "January Journal," notes how the volume emerged after the poet's resolution to write "a poem each day" for a month, a process markedly distinct from his usual, slower pace of poetic composition.[2] Derek Mahon, again in a similar strain, quotes Cyril Connolly, for whom "[l]iterature is the art of writing something that will be read twice," whereas "journalism is what will be grasped at once," and that "a magazine, even such a first rate one as [Cyril Connolly's] *Horizon*, is of its nature ephemeral," (quoted in Haughton 1979: 269, 274). In other words, the format of the journal appears to

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[1] On Yeats's relationship with the everyday, and his dismissal of the "journalistic" in poetic craft, see Charles I. Armstrong 2013: 13-26.

[2] In the Arts Lives *RTÉ* documentary *Paul Muldoon—Atlantic Man*, the poet says: "I write very little. I write maybe a dozen poems a year. Every three or four years there are forty or fifty of them. And that's a book" (*Atlantic Man*: n. pag.).

require the speeding up of the processes of poetry, and allows for a more transitory or oscillating glance of the surrounding world than the denser and more carefully crafted forms of lyric expression.

Consequently, the present essay seeks to examine the ways in which the three poets have shared certain preoccupations over the significance of poetry in contemporary society in general and, more specifically, to understand how the rhythms and ruptures of the everyday may connect with those of poetry—or how poetry may respond to them. In the works discussed below such connections are seen, in turn, to either compromise or to reaffirm the value of poetic expression. And while critics have often been more reserved in their praise when comparing the longer and more journalistic works of these poets with their more condensed lyrics (with the notable exception of MacNeice's *Autumn Journal*), or at least more carefully or solicitously crafted verse, they occupy a critical place in their production as texts concerned with the processes connecting poetry with the social and the phenomenal. To look at the three Northern Irish poets' preoccupation with the everyday also veers away from the paradigm of art and poetry versus politics which for a long time dominated any scholarly discussion of poetry's engagement with its historical and social contexts in Ireland's North. As Charles I. Armstrong has already argued in his essay on everyday epiphanies in contemporary Northern Irish poetry, in recent years an engagement with the quotidian, or "a sense of day-to-day normality or business as usual [has] frequently presented [. . .] a salutary alternative to the unpredictable violence of the Troubles" (Armstrong 2011: 125).

The following discussion on the relationship between the everyday and the poetic in the work of MacNeice, Mahon and Muldoon will also draw on the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, more particularly, on what was to remain his final published volume, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (originally published in French as *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, 1992), Lefebvre's fourth contribution to the series *Critique of Everyday Life*, (begun as early as the 1940s). Though he is better known for the landmark work *The Production of Space*, and its outlining of spatial practices and representations, it is Lefebvre's work on the coming together of the temporal and the spatial in *Rhythmanalysis* which will inform this reading of the poetic journals, inasmuch as it particularly well enables an understanding of poetry as not distinct from, but part of the processes of

personal and social experience. Rhythm, an integral part of poetic discourse as employed in the works of the three poets appears particularly suited, I would suggest, for an investigation of the relationship between aesthetics of a verbal art and its perpetual dialogue with the non-poetic, everyday domain.

Lefebvre's analysis of rhythms and repetitions connects with the work of other twentieth century French philosophers of space and spatial practices. His views on social control exercised through what he called "dressage," or the imposition of organised rhythms and patterns on human life, echoes Michel Foucault's views on spatial control; similarly, his awareness of practices of freedom and creation within such systems of control are not dissimilar to those of Michel de Certeau's "tactics" of everyday life, working from bottom-up to resist top-down or "strategic" exercise of social authority.[3] In short, these left-wing thinkers have typically viewed the category of the everyday through the dialectics of power and authority, versus freedom or resistance, fixed forms of control versus the possibility of subversion. For the Lefebvre of *Rhythmanalysis*, both power and freedom have their rhythms, and it is the task of the rhythmanalyst to be attentive to the rhythmic "noises" and "silences" of the body as well as the world outside it, of individual actions as well as various structures of law and commerce (Lefebvre 2004: 19-20). It is the tension between repetition and difference in the rhythms of everyday life that allows for the poetic (in the sense of the Greek poiēsis, making or creating)—for Lefebvre:

> no rhythm without repetition in time and space [. . .]. But there is no identical absolute repetition, indefinitely. Whence the relation between repetition and difference. When it concerns the everyday, rites, ceremonies, fêtes, rules and laws,

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[3] Derek Schilling has pointed out how the emergence of the everyday in post-World War II French philosophy has in recent years been keenly adopted by scholars in the English speaking academic world, where the "cultural turn" has proved a fruitful ground for a category which "allow[s] for a rehabilitation of ordinary practice while precluding the wholesale reinstatement of anthropocentrism" and helps circumvent some of "the limits of language-based paradigms." At the same time, he highlights that the everyday was by no means a predominant paradigm in the thought of this period, as philosophers were generally more focused on "the legacy of phenomenology on the one hand and structuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis on the other" (Schilling 2003: 23-24).

> there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference. (Lefebvre 2004: 6)

The observing of rhythms also blends the spatial and the temporal, or makes it possible to observe places through temporal experience "[the rhythmanalyst] makes himself more sensitive to times than to spaces. He will come to 'listen' to the house, a street, a town" (Lefebvre 2004: 22). In other words, the experience of places and phenomena must be understood as certain temporal fluxes, and nothing in the material world escapes the transforming, yet repetitive impact of rhythmic change: "An apparently immobile *object*, the forest, moves in multiple ways: the combined movements of the soil, the earth, the sun. Or the movements of the molecules and atoms that compose it" (Lefebvre 2004: 20). Marjorie Perloff has similarly commented on the use of repetition in poetry, and stressed how "repetition in the continuous present [. . .] assures difference, for no repetition, whether of word or deed, can ever produce an exact replica of a now lost original" (Perloff 2002: 183). The format of a poetic journal, in its registering of the rhythms of the everyday through the rhythms of poetic form, is particularly suited for exploring the patterns of the quotidian domain through literary language. In the journals of MacNeice, Mahon and Muldoon, the negotiation between the sometimes subtle, sometimes dramatic variations between repetition and difference in the poetic and the non-poetic, and also the verbal and the non-verbal, is a consciously adopted strategy in attempting to understand the complex and somewhat labyrinthine interrelationship between life and poetry.

II

Autumn Journal, as MacNeice informs his reader in the prefatory note to the sequence, was written "from August 1938 until the New Year," a time during which Britain and Ireland, with the rest of Europe, were increasingly coming to terms with the possibility of another war (MacNeice 1979: 101). MacNeice's ambition was, in the autumn of 1938, to produce a longer autobiographical poetic work, which, Jon Stallworthy writes, "would admit the impurities of the world, the flux of experience, in a documentary form that, for all its seeming spontaneity, would be directed into patterns on a page—as images on film—by the invisible imagination" (Stallworthy 1995: 228). The everyday rhythms of

the poem are thus constantly measured against a crisis disrupting quotidian routine, or threatening the sense of security that such routine might signify. As well as such alterations of routine and emergency or exception, the poem is preoccupied with the role of art and poetry in describing these processes, and the possibility of their efficacy in a time of crisis. At the same time, the poem's wider historical perspective is measured against another state of exception, that of the ending love affair between MacNeice and Nancy Coldstream; a personal crisis mirrors the looming historical upheavals.

The MacNeice of *Autumn Journal* explores the concreteness and singularity of experience, while repeating the diurnal cycles and rhythms of everyday life: meals, urban transport, newspapers, radio, telephones, routines of factory workers and industrial production both follow and create such rhythms, and are constantly interrupted and modified by that which is extraordinary and distinctive. As Edna Longley puts it, the journalism of *Autumn Journal* relies on "everydayness turning strange" (Longley 1988: 63). MacNeice's familiarity with Greek philosophy, most notably Plato, Aristotle and Heraclitus, impacts his observation of these processes, but does not lead to the adoption of an abstract, philosophical perspective above the level of everyday experience, any more than any preference of the purely aesthetic is allowed to supersede the messy confusions of life. This is consistent with the poet's long-held beliefs on the relationship between life and art. As he noted in a letter to Anthony Blunt in 1926, "I don't believe in pure anything. Anything pure is an abstraction. All concretes are adulterated" (quoted in Walker 2009: 204). Rhythm and repetition, however, allow the poet to perceive patterns in the flow of observed phenomena, and thus also help negotiate the dichotomy between the abstract and the concrete.

The observed rhythms of the sequence are replicated in the formal aspects of the poem, like in its use of the "elastic kind of quatrain," as the poet himself called it (quoted in Stallworthy 1995: 233), the almost exhausting repetition of lines beginning with "and," and the extensive use of lists. As Neil Corcoran has observed, "repetition at the formal or technical level can be thematically functional in MacNeice," and also becomes "one way of defying what his work frequently finds repetitively wearying in the actual, inevitable repetitions of living" (Corcoran 2009: 216, 221). In much of MacNeice's poetry, repetition allows for formal control and questioning, as well as the employment of an almost musical

patterning which helps keep in tension the forces of fixity and flux in his verse, or, as the poet himself put it, help "impos[e] on flux an architectonic" (quoted in Corcoran 2009: 223). Rhythm and repetition in MacNeice thus have many, sometimes mutually contradictory, manifestations, signifying entrapment, monotony and claustrophobia as well as poetry's potential for a certain kind of subversive vitality. Corcoran draws attention to "[. . .] the brilliant repetitiveness of the rhetoric of 'Autumn Journal' with its hammering polysyndeton—the word 'And' repeated propulsively again and again and again" and notes how "in 'Autumn Journal,' history makes poetry happen. In that poem the time itself is link and rivet as MacNeice's journal, and journalistic, dailiness of a London both claustrophobic and exhilarating is darkly shadowed by looming European catastrophe" (221). The rhythms of everyday London as simultaneously "claustrophobic" and "exhilarating" are expressed both formally and thematically. It is the use of repetition specifically which makes it possible for MacNeice to reflect on the tensions between "journalistic dailiness" and varying degrees of difference, and artistic or literary creation. Repetition, in other words, signifies both that which is monotonous and the possibility of breaking away from its force field, not through aesthetic detachment but through the constant process of encounter and change between poetic discourse and the world with which it connects. In *Autumn Journal* repetitive monotony, "The reflex action or dog or sheep / Being enough for normal avocations / And life rotating in an office sleep / As long as things are normal" (MacNeice 1979: 121), is modified through the energies inherent in the repetitions, "the rhythm which the intercrossing / Coloured waters permanently give" (135).

Michael Moir suggests that Henri Lefebvre's distinction between "representational spaces" and "representations of space" (as outlined in *The Production of Space*) as characterised by top-down authoritative control versus lived, imaginatively conceived creativity, help understand MacNeice's engagement with religious authority, and religious spaces (Moir 2012: n. pag.), as well as other forms of embodied, ideological control. These perspectives seem to be harder to distinguish in *Autumn Journal*, however, which draws its energy from the interplay of rhythm and repetition as monotony or exercise of political or commercial structures of power, and of the patterns discerned in the plurality of "lived" experience in pre-war London. Here, the poet is situated not quite

in a "lonely centre from which to launch didactic and other excursions," as Edna Longley says of his shorter lyrics, but is embedded within the field of perception and pattern from which the poem grows through "a series of links that evolve into a great chain" (Longley 1988: 61, 66). It is such a centre that Lefebvre's rhythmanalyst occupies: "The rhythmanalyst will not be obliged to *jump* from the inside to the outside of observed *bodies*; he should come to listen to them *as a whole* and unify them by taking his own rhythms as a reference: by integrating the outside with the inside and vice versa"; "he must simultaneously catch a rhythm and perceive it within the whole, in the same way as non-analysts, people, *perceive* it. He must arrive at the *concrete* through experience" (Lefebvre 2004: 20-21, his emphases).

The journal as daily record also allows MacNeice to perceive details and rhythms accumulatively through the rhythms of the calendar days, weeks and months. A specific date, relying on the "public" rhythming of everyday experience through the calendar in Lefebvre, is both dependent on repeatable structures, signs and symbols of a calendar year, and the importance of discerning any specific date from others. The concepts of weeks, months and years are based on rhythmic patterning of time, a dynamic acknowledged by MacNeice, who approaches it through a questioning of Platonic philosophy:

> For me there remain to all intents and purposes
> Seven days in the week
> And no one Tuesday is another and you destroy it
> If you subtract the difference and relate
> It merely to the Form of Tuesday. This is Tuesday
> The 25th of October, 1938. (MacNeice 1979: 124)

Here, *Autumn Journal* echoes the 1933 poem "Sunday Morning," which similarly questions whether one can "abstract this day and make it to the week of time," though the earlier poem's Sunday is discussed as a "self-contained" instant of illusory time outside, rather than as a part of, the repetitions of the weekdays (MacNeice 1979: 23). The existence of any "Form of Tuesday," as an unchanging form, is challenged by MacNeice's preference of Aristotelian, but even more poignantly, Heraclitean thought, which refuses the certainty of fixed form and acknowledges that "we cannot make any corner in life or in life's beauty, / That no river is a river which does not flow" (MacNeice 1979: 102). It

is through rhythm and repetition that we understand the concept of Tuesday while telling one Tuesday apart from another.

The operations of society and commerce, the business as usual of everyday trade and communication, also seek to absorb any specific crises threatening such processes, perhaps most poignantly through mass media: as Lefebvre notes in his chapter on "The Media Day," "[p]roducers of the commodity information know empirically how to utilize rhythms. They have cut up time; they have broken it up into *hourly slices*" (Lefebvre 2004: 48, Lefebvre's emphasis). In *Autumn Journal* their role in accessing events outside the immediate field of experience is also constantly underlined. For Lefebvre, the mechanised rhythms of mass media seek to erase that which is exceptional (or singular or unique) in life, as it seeks to present its content as a commodity (Lefebvre 2004: 50). The singular, as reported through mass media, taking place in a location other than its representation, is rendered, if not meaningless, at least lacking in the subtlety and substance, or the complexities of immediate experience. The pre-World War II crises threatening MacNeice's London are a part of a routine which will go on regardless of valuable news content: "[. . .] Newsboys driving a roaring business, / The flapping paper snatched to see / If anything has, or has not, happened" (MacNeice 1979: 116). Even those moments in the media day which should signify a break from the routine become a part of a mechanised experience that fails to break free from the operations of the media market place: "They are selling and buying the late / Special editions snatched and read abruptly / Beneath the electric signs as crude as Fate" (MacNeice 1979: 109).

In section XXI the poet explicitly questions not only the ultimate value of everyday life but also of aesthetic and artistic practice:

> And when we clear away
> All this debris of day-to-day experience,
> What comes out to light, what is there of value
> Lasting from day-to-day?
> I sit in my room in comfort
> Looking at enormous flowers—
> Equipment purchased with my working hours,
> A daily mint of perishable petals.
> The figures of the dance repeat
> The unending cycle of making and spending money,
> Eating our daily bread in order to earn it

And earning in order to eat.
And is that all the story,
The mainspring and the plot,
Or merely a mechanism without which not
Any story could be written? (MacNeice 1979: 143).

The repetition of the phrase "day-to-day" and its rhyming with the "away," in the first line of the section, underlines the anxiety motivating these lines: when the more trivial concerns with mundane existence are "cleared away," what is it that will sustain us, and poetry, from one day to the next? The repeated words thus assume an alternative meaning depending on context, signifying the ephemeral quotidian or the everyday on the one hand, and, on the other, the process of time which will ultimately test that which retains its value in the midst of the "debris" of modern life. Furthermore, the contrast between "dance" and "unending cycle" set the rhythms of art against the mundane and numbing repetitions of a mechanised, commercial society. Here MacNeice interrogates the dynamics between the quotidian and the literary or the aesthetic, and the rhythm and repetition manifested in the "figure" of dance, or in the cyclical dynamics of production and consumption. In short, *Autumn Journal*'s constant interweaving of the rhythmic repetitions of the everyday, of commerce, industry, media and political systems with MacNeice's belief in the vitality of poetic language, its own oscillation between rhythmic repetition and difference in responding to these systems results in poetry which is part of the society around it, yet not subservient to its more functional processes. "Like the poet," writes Lefebvre, "the rhythmanalyst performs a verbal action, which has an aesthetic import. The poet concerns himself above all with words, the verbal. Whereas the rhythmanalyst concerns himself with temporalities and their relations with wholes" (Lefebvre 2004: 24) in *Autumn Journal*, the poet becomes the rhythmanalyst.

III

Unlike the two other poets discussed in this essay, Derek Mahon does not explicitly set out to write a journal or diary in poetic form. Nevertheless, his first two collections after *Antarctica* (1985), namely *The Hudson Letter* (1996) and *The Yellow Book* (1997) mark a shift in poetic style from "the high formalist thing" towards "finding some of the

values of free verse" (quoted in Haughton 2007: 225), and also a development of what Haughton characterises as "a dialogical monologue in continuous, discursive style, cast in a tonally unstable idiom that is often cacophonous, inelegant, and prosaic" (Haughton 2007: 226). As Haughton goes on to argue, in *The Hudson Letter,* Mahon, repeatedly drawing on Yeats, also sets himself apart from the canonical Irish poet's project: "Yeats insisted on the gap between the poet and the man 'sitting down at the breakfast table,' while Mahon seeks to establish the rapport between them, the breakfast voice and 'dream / of redemptive form'" (Haughton 2007: 244). I will here focus on the latter of the two collections, however, as it was, as Haughton observes, the one the poet composed while Mahon was compiling his edited collection of *Journalism* (Mahon 1995), and in which he attempted to "combine poetry and journalism" (Haughton 2007: 269)—with the different sections of the volume repeatedly referring back to Mahon's journalistic pieces.

The Yellow Book, just as *Autumn Journal*, negotiates between the personal and the more social or communal sense of the word "journal," and finds its register half way between the autobiographical mode of a diary and a record or public discourse. The volume was preceded by the writings Mahon collected in his notebook (titled "Scrapbook 1996-1997" in the Emory archives), which, Haughton argues, shows that the work was designed as "an architectural whole," despite its apparent structuring around "quickly written notes" (Haughton 2007: 271). The tension between the public and the personal is recognised by Mahon in the reference to Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle,* in a section with the same name; for Wilson, it was "the private imagination in isolation from the life of society" which propelled the writing of modernists like Yeats, Eliot and Joyce (quoted in Haughton 2007: 270). Such isolation becomes somewhat more poignant and less creatively attuned in the era of new media technology, however, as these media, designed to facilitate the interaction between individuals, are seen to serve no purpose other than their own impersonal functioning; in the *fin-de-siècle* twentieth century society, "computer talks to computer, machine to answering machine" (Mahon 2011: 198). And if Mahon considers *Autumn Journal* as expressing "the most extraordinary visual and tactile sense of the period" of the late 1930s (Mahon 1996: 22-23), *The Yellow Book* similarly registers the ethos of late twentieth century Dublin through an immersion

in the details of its parks, streets and buildings. It also reflects Mahon's attempt to address, through poetic language, the discrepancy between practical "uselessness," as David G. Williams calls it, of artistic endeavor, and the culture of "sensationalism" and "instant gratification" which characterises the contemporary condition, and a re-negotiation of "the artistic tension between emotion and form" (Williams 1999: 115). *The Yellow Book* is a modernist poem on postmodern culture: Mahon's densely referential style developed in the 1990s and the mix of "idioms and voices from a variety of sources—commercial, demotic, journalistic and literary" (Williams 1999: 112) may address a condition and aesthetics which is characteristic of the late twentieth century urban culture. However, underneath there is always a sense of absence, nostalgia and loss of faith.

Mahon also shares both MacNeice's and Muldoon's concern over the role and value of poetry, seen under pressure from the monotony and banalities of everyday life and the mechanical and consumerist impulses of the late twentieth century postmodern society. In lines not entirely dissimilar to MacNeice's quoted above, Mahon expresses concern over the value of poetry and art in the postmodern consumer society:

> What, in our new world, have we left to say?
> Oh, poets can eat now, painters can buy paint
> but have we nobler poetry, happier painting
> than when the gutters bubbled, the drains stank
> and hearts bobbed to the clappers in the sanctuary? (Mahon 2011: 202)

While MacNeice's poem remains, for the most part, in the simple present tense, Mahon's more nostalgic melancholia constantly slips into past tense in expressing a distaste for the "pastiche paradise of the postmodern" (Mahon 2011: 202). Mahon's varied and flexible use of iambic pentameter and rhyme similarly serves a purpose similar to MacNeice's "elastic quatrains"—they act as a way of alternating rhythm with occasional rupture, and balancing pattern with the uneven flood of experiences the poet is seeking to record.

Rhythms of the body, of nature and of modern technology are constantly measured against each other in Mahon's 1990s poetry. In *The Hudson Letter* the city's sounds include "the plaintive, desolate cab-horns on Madison and 5th: / and [. . .] Daisy Cunard's nightingale," "the first bird and the first garbage truck" (Haughton 2007: 276), and the

poet/speaker is engaged in the routines of the everyday, punctuated by the real and imagined intrusions of media and the natural world: "I make coffee and listen for the news at eight; but first the nightingale" (Mahon 2011: 162). In *The Yellow Book*, the poet situates "night thoughts" in the moment when "we lie smoking between three and four / before the first bird and the first tour bus" (Mahon 2011: 195). Natural sounds, especially those made by a bird with such strong symbolic connotations with artistic inspiration as the nightingale, participate in the cyclical rhythms of night and day.

Mahon's isolated artist/philosopher observes the rhythms of the world around him from a spatial distance, from the "attic room" of "Night Thoughts," "Axels Castle" and "Smoke," Elizabeth Bowen's imagined observing of early morning Dublin in "At the Shelbourne," to the German philosopher's tenement "up there above the promenade" in "Schopenhauer's Day." For Henri Lefebvre's "rhythmanalyst," such a distance may be necessary to perceive the dynamic movements he seeks to understand:

> In order to grasp and analyse rhythms, it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely: be it through illness or technology [. . .]. A balcony does the job admirably, in relation to the street, and it is to this putting into perspective (of the street) that we owe the marvellous invention of balconies [. . .]. In the absence of which you could content yourself with a window, on the condition that it does not overlook a somber corner or a gloomy internal courtyard. (Lefebvre 2004: 27-28)

Where MacNeice of *Autumn Journal* situates the solitary speaker in the midst of the plethora or phenomena addressed in the poem, Mahon's existential outsider has placed himself in the margin. The trope of a view from a window, or a room above the street life of the urban setting is by no means a new one for Mahon; in the earlier "Rage for Order" (*Lives* 1972), for example, the poet is positioned outside the world perceived below, "the fitful glare / Of his high window is as / Nothing to our scattered glass" (Mahon 2011*: 47*).

The two first sections of *The Yellow Book*, "Night Thoughts" and "Axel's Castle," place the decadent poet in his studio by Dublin's Fitzwilliam Square, with a view across the street into the park in the middle of the Georgian buildings. The poet's quest for inspiration reaches out to the natural life of the park, to the history of the square, and locations and literary works in temporal or geographical distance. In

"Night Thoughts," the time of day is first specified as "between three and four" in the morning, and the season as April, but, as the poem moves on, the time shifts to morning and the season to "November," and memory intrudes by taking the speaker to childhood "Co. Antrim or Co. Down." The temporal and spatial disorientation is echoed by the poem's constant change of register between lyrical harmony and prosaic discord, and between nostalgia and present-day harsh reality; from the exaggerated iambic sway of "My attic window under the shining slates / where maids slept in the days of Wilde and Yeats," or "Sententious solitude, ancient memory, night / and silence, nobody here, but even as I night-write / blind in a bedside notebook," the poet moves, without missing a beat (or at least an end-rhyme) to "crane light where the 'construction industry' / throws up new office blocks against the sky," and "Never mind the new world order and the bus tours."

Temporally and spatially, both "Night Thoughts" and "Axel's Castle" move between present day, remembered past (childhood), and the historical narratives of the turn of the twentieth century, between different times of day (night-time between three and four, early morning, day, nightfall/"dusk." Experiences of media and technology are repeatedly referred to as signifiers of the ails of present-day society or the more pleasant visions of the past, in line with Fred Davis's characterisation of nostalgia, "The Beautiful Past and the Unattractive Present" (Davis 1979: 18). The rhythms of present-day Dublin, its commuters, tourist buses appearing at regular intervals, and daytime business where "computer talks to computer, machine to answering machine," are phenomena which keep the poet in his studio from hearing his own thoughts; he prefers "[n]ight thoughts" (Mahon 2011: 195) and "night/and silence" (196), as daylight business hours hinder creativity: "Only at dusk Athene's owl will fly" (197).[4] Night-time opens room for silence required for memory and nostalgic reflection. Of the present-day outside world, only the park of Fitzwilliam's square, the walled enclosure of nature, allows the poet to find rhythms which inspire rather than disturb. But even the rhythms of nature are buried under man-made

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[4] Here, the Gallery Press edition of *The Yellow Book* and the later version published in *New Collected Poems* in 2011 differ. In the first version of the poem, we have the more direct Hegelian reference is to "Minerva's owl," representing the owl accompanying Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, signifying historical wisdom in hindsight for the German idealist.

noise, as "[T]he first bird" coincides with the arrival of tourists and traffic; the "first of dawn [which] whitens a locked park, lilac and hawthorn / dripping in wintry peace," but "crocus, daffodil" are followed by "air brake and diesel/chug" (Mahon 2011: 195). It is the leaving of tourists and nine-to-five commuters which makes the poet's imagination reach out across the street, where "Beyond the iron railings and the little gate / perhaps a fox stirs, and dead leaves conflate / in a dried-up fountain crisp packet and matchbox."[5] Now, the park reaches the poet's imagination, and he allows it into his room: "dead leaves up here too, lamplight night and day." The alternation between day and night, light and darkness, the present and the past, and the intrusion of visible and audible reality versus the remembered or imagined elsewhere (in "Axel's Castle," he refers to the famous armchair traveller Des Esseintes) rhythm the poet's life and creative efforts. For Lefebvre, the view from above allows for the discerning of "diurnal rhythms" and reveals how regular rhythms and repetitions characterise the day, at night-time, however, "arrhythmia reigns" (Lefebvre 2004: 30-31). It is this irregularity and unpredictability of the night-time, its independence of the rhythmic, mechanic, functions of society which appears to give Mahon's nostalgic poet the possibility of his melancholy creativity; Mahon's *recueillement* thus requires temporal as well as spatial distance from the daily rhythms of the city.

Mahon's estranged decadent may leave his poems open to the criticism of Caren Kaplan, who, in *Questions of Travel*, characterises modernist exile as a celebration of "singularity, solitude, estrangement, alienation, and aestheticised excision of location in favour of locale— that is, the 'artist in exile' is never 'at home,' always existentially alone, and shocked by the strain of displacement into significant experimentations and insights" (Kaplan 1996: 28). Mahon's views could be seen to be characterised by nostalgic indulgence, romanticised cosmopolitanism, aesthetic detachment and ahistorical individualism. His *fin-de-siècle* aesthete may revisit the tropes linking the modernist exile with the postmodern traveller, both equally separating themselves,

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[5] Mahon's poetry has repeatedly been attracted to the life of discarded things, famously in "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford," or the sonnet "The Mute Phenomena," where the poet asks "What do you know / Of the revolutionary theories advanced / By turnips, or the sex life of cutlery," and claims that "[a]lready in a lost hubcap is conceived / The ideal society" (Mahon 2011: 76).

Kaplan stresses, from the social and material realities of the places they occupy. Mahon is, however, markedly ironic about his own sense of nostalgia, like in section XI, "At the Chelsea Art Club," where he concedes that he may be "finally turning into an old fart" (rather sardonically rhymed with "art" in the following line) (Mahon 2011: 214). And importantly, as Haughton notes in his discussion of section XIX, "On the automation of the Irish Lights," "The poet's sense of desolation at the automation is part of his broader response to the encroachment of new technology" (Haughton 2007: 306): it is specifically the lack of human agency in the late twentieth century context which troubles Mahon.

IV

Muldoon's *The Prince of the Quotidian*, one of those interim collections, which the poet has mostly published with Gallery Press, rather than Faber and Faber, takes up from the season where MacNeice concluded his long poem, the beginning of a new year; the jacket blurb acknowledges MacNeice as precedent in calling the volume "January Journal," a record in poetic form of a single winter month in 1992. The 31 poems, 12 of which are sonnets, are set in New Jersey and the surrounding east coast U.S., with intermittent intrusions of remembered or imagined Ireland. The collection's date of publication coincides with that of *The Annals of Chile*, the poet's first Faber collection, fully registering his relocation in the U.S., and would prefigure the writing of suburban America into his 1998 collection *Hay*.

Like MacNeice and Mahon, Muldoon's journal expresses a slight trepidation with the interrelationship between poetry and the mundane contexts out of which it emerges, and which it attempts to weave into a meaningful literary composition. The medium of a poetic journal itself is, again, an embodiment of such concerns, an interface between the world of the distilled lyric and everyday experience. But, while the poems of MacNeice and Mahon, despite their division into numbered or titled sections, are formally closer to long poems, and register the experience of the surrounding world in structured but flexible flowing, more narrative verse, Muldoon's *Prince* adopts the form of a sequence—or "diary sequence" as Clair Wills calls it—with its sonnets and short lyrics, despite a certain amount of narrative glue between the poems. At the

same time, it is the embeddedness in the everyday, Wills points out, which separates the diary from Muldoon's other collections, as the journal engages with "'quotidian' encounters, events and actions, as well as exploring everyday rhythms of speech and thought" (Wills 1998: 161). These rhythms of "speech and thought" are negotiated through the rhythmic patterns of poetic form itself, in Muldoon's use of "traditional verse forms such as sonnets, terza rima, couplets and so on," and the apparently nonchalant language of the poems allows words and expressions to fall into a technically complex yet seemingly effortless, chiming pattern (Wills 1998: 161).

Formally, it thus seeks to negotiate the relationship between the intensity of lyric moments of epiphany, and the contexts outside the realm of poetry from which those moments might arise; but as Armstrong stresses, in this volume "transcendence is rendered acutely problematical" (Armstrong 2011: 117). The practice of "versifying," of composing poetry and finding rhyme, positions the poet in an intersection between the perceived non-verbal world and the verbally constructed realm of a poem, and is addressed in the nineteenth poem; here, the extensive use of quotation marks underlines the act of creating as an act of selecting and attempting to find the appropriate diction to "expand" on what is already there:

> Not for nothing would I versify
> 'The Alchemist and Barrister', rhyme (pace Longley) 'cat'
> with 'dog', expand on the forsythia
> that graces our back door: 'humdrum', 'inadequate',
>
> 'inconsequential journalese', 'a klieg light
> masquerading as the moon'; none will,
> I trust, look for pattern in this crazy quilt
> where all is random, 'all so trivial' (Muldoon 1994: 29)

"Not for nothing," the speaker tells us, but the double negative of "Not for nothing" already raises doubt over whether "nothing" could become "something." Why rhyme "cat" with "dog," or "expand," through poetic expression, on the phenomena of the natural world of suburbia? The rhymes and rhythms of poetry in Muldoon's sequence seem less interlaced with repeated rhythms perceived in quotidian existence than something which might—or indeed might not—render the apparent triviality of that setting worthy of poetry. In *The Prince of the Quotidian*,

rhythmic repetition in everyday life is suggested rather than enacted formally in the poems: the long lists and reverberations of MacNeice and Mahon make way for single mentions of breakfasts, dinners, drives and evenings watching television, which seem to stand for, rather than embody, through repetition, a life of mundane, recurring events. At the same time, the "crazy quilt" stands for both the experienced quotidian surroundings addressed in the poem and the text of the poems themselves. The off-hand remark, "none will, I trust, look for pattern," conveys both a simultaneous hesitance over the significance, or not, of converting such experience into poetic language and form, and a challenge to Muldoon's readers who, by the mid-1990s, would have been accustomed to scanning Muldoon's collections for elaborate configurations of metre and rhyme. But the images and short threads contributing to the larger fabric of the poems may not be enough to keep it together; such doubts are expressed through an accusing voice in the 30th poem:

> I look out the kitchen window. A cigarette burns
> In the midst of the pyracanthus:
> 'What's with you, *a mhic*?
> Apart from the 'eel-grass and bladderwrack'
>
> There's not an image here that's worth a fuck.
> Who gives a shit about the dreck
> of your life? Who gives a toss
> about your tossing off?' (Muldoon 1994: 40)

The distinctively Irish idiom, with the vocative "*a mhic,*" specifically draws attention to the distinction between the intensely inscribed, literary landscape of Ireland, and the apparent triviality of the imagery available in suburban America; the exceptions of "eel-grass and bladderwrack" are also imports from Ireland, referring to Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's collection *Feis*, mentioned in a previous poem. As Wills highlights, the diary sequence associates triviality with the everyday life in New Jersey, whereas "news" of deeper significance are of Irish origin. The global culture of media and commodification which rhythm everyday existence through entertainment and commerce is, in *The Prince of the Quotidian*, set against the rhythms of poetic discourse—Wills here quotes Wallace Stevens's "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words": "It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality" (Wills 1998:

160). Lefebvre echoes such a dynamic in "The Media Day," where he notes that the fragmenting and rhythmic effects of mass media can be seen as oppositional to creativity as a form of subjective freedom: "The present is a fact and an effect of *commerce*; while presence situates itself in the poetic: value, creation, situation in the world and not only in the relations of exchange" (Lefebvre 2004: 47). Lefebvre's "poetic" is here more akin to the Greek *poiēsis*, making or creating, rather than the aesthetics of a verbal art form, but his ideas of the illusory, commodified "present" of the media and "presence" as an opening for creative and situational response also characterise Muldoon's poetic concerns in *The Prince*—can poetry meaningfully engage with the here and now in the midst of global media culture, which, at least superficially, allows access to any place, any time?

The voice of section 30 is identified as that of the ubiquitous talking horse or "horse-head" of Muldoon's *oeuvre,* in the final poem of the sequence; this is the voice that, in "Gathering Mushrooms" (*Quoof*, 1983), "spoke this verse: / [. . .] *If sing you must, let your song / tell of treading your own dung, let straw and dung give a spring to your step*" (Muldoon 2001: 106). *Quoof*, the collection registering the troubled liaison between poetry, the body and their political functions during Northern Ireland's hunger strikes, stands in stark contrast with the middle class comforts of *The Prince of the Quotidian*; in the final stanzas of the latter collection:

> the horse head folds his horse-hide parachute
> till it's no bigger than a glove:
>
> he slaps my cheek; 'Above all else, you must atone
> for everything you've said and done
>
> against your mother: meet excess of love
> with excess of love; begin the Feast of Saint Brigid.' (Muldoon 1994: 41)

The presence of Brigid Muldoon, which dominates *The Annals of Chile*, enters the collection on the eve of February 1st, St Brigid's Day, brought by the horse-head which now parachutes itself into New Jersey. The demand for a personal and cultural sense of responsibility, or "atonement," with the half-playful slap of a cheek bridges the flippant quotidian and the painfully profound, as well as the geographical-temporal distance between memory and actuality. In Muldoon's poetry,

the actual and/or phenomenal, rather than crystallising itself in transcendental epiphanies, is usually absorbed into the larger, rhythmed cyclical patterns of his poetic *oeuvre*, or as Fran Brearton notes, into one "Great Wheel" (Brearton 2004: 45).

While the full centripetal pull of that wheel does not quite reach *The Prince of the Quotidian*, it haunts its engagement with the mundane quotidian realm; rhythm and rhyme are in this collection the makings of poetry, rather than part of the at times tedious repetitiveness of the everyday embedded in the journals of MacNeice and Mahon. If, as Wills notes, there is a risk of "over-reading" *The Prince*, which "is for the most part a light, even slight work" (Wills 1998: 167), it is specifically this tightrope walk, the simple registering of the mundane on the one hand and, on the other, its "over-reading," which aligns the concerns of the collection with those of the two older poets.

V

"Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm," Lefebvre contends (Lefebvre 2004: 15). The poet as rhythmanalyst is immersed in this interaction, but is also cognisant of its consequences to his own art, certainly in the journalistic works discussed above, as they immerse themselves in the specific loci of pre-war London, fin-de-siècle Dublin, and suburban New Jersey. All three poets explicitly express, in their journals and "journalistic" writing, a preoccupation with the relationship between poetry, or poetic expression, and the more quotidian concerns. MacNeice seeks for that which could be of lasting value in the midst of the "debris of day-to-day experience." Mahon's existential anxieties relate to the apparent superficiality of late 20th century society as he asks "[w]hat, in our new world, have we left to say?" Muldoon's doubts, typically worded through an act of poetic ventriloquism, are expressed by the accusing voice of the horse-head, for whom "[t]here is not an image here that's worth a fuck." In all of the texts discussed above, the interrelationship between self, poetry and the world also carries to poetic form, and to the use of rhythm and repetition in expressing, challenging and transforming the rhythmic and repetitive elements of everyday life and the surrounding society. The form of the poetic journal, it's connotations with the recording of daily events and with

autobiographical expression, as well as its somewhat ephemeral nature in relation to the more carefully crafted, condensed lyric, is adopted as a medium especially suited for describing the processes through which poetry emerges.

For Lefebvre, rhythm as an overall term can bring together seemingly disparate elements and phenomena of experience and society, and rhythmanalysis should take into account both the exercise of power and control, as well as acts of resistance; between these lie the small scale encounters of everyday life, of systems of transport, news broadcasts and meal times. The repeated references to poetry or the poetic in Lefebvre's work underline that creative element of the Greek *poiēsis,* an act of imaginative engagement with the world. Lefebvre's rhythmanalyst

> seems close to the poet, or the man of the theatre. Art, poetry, music and theatre have always brought something [. . .] to the everyday. They have reflected on it. The creator descended to the streets of the city-state [. . .] they assumed city life. The rhythmanalyst could, in the long term, attempt something analogous: works [oeuvres] might return to and intervene in the everyday. (Lefebvre 2004: 25).

Addressing the processes of life or poetry through rhythms thus requires an engagement with the concrete phenomena that the poet or the rhythmanalyst, or the poet as rhythmanalyst, encounters. MacNeice's stated refusal to "abstract [his beliefs] from their context" (prefatory note), in the poem which is "about nearly everything which from first-hand experience I consider significant" underlines the way in which the poetic journal is embedded in its social, historical and material contexts, and lies at the intersection of the lived and the aesthetic.

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"Second Time Round": Recent Northern Irish History in *For All We Know* and Ciaran Carson's Written Arts

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Abstract
This paper analyses how Ciaran Carson's *For All We Know* (2008) adds to other disciplinary approaches to the challenges of re-presenting the past. The representation of history is a controversial field, as much of the radical tradition of history debates in Marx, Derrida, Foucault and Kristeva indicates. Controversies over history are also prevalent in Belfast and Northern Ireland where history seems to have intervened upon the life of individual people more brutally and insistently than in most other places in the Western world in the latter decades of the last century. Carson is one of the many acclaimed poets who try to come to terms with the almost incomprehensible historical predicament of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. What is the poet to write about in times of murder and mayhem? Why? How? How does poetry relate to the representations of the past and the emergence into unknown futures? Carson has endured the tragedies, the turmoil, and their bearings upon the peace-emerging society in Belfast throughout his whole life. *For All We Know* constitutes a historical document, which in its poetic creativity and formal strategies, supplements other attempts to account for life in Belfast and Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Key words: Ciaran Carson, For All We Know, Irish Poetry, Northern Ireland, Belfast, Marx, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva

Ciaran Carson's remarkable volume of poetry *For All We Know,* from 2008, is an important historical document, "as the jittery present became history," as the poem "Peace" (55) states. This poem strikes the nerve, atmosphere and uncertainties of the pivotal historical turning point in the Troubles of Northern Ireland, just as much as the volume's multivalent title indicates collective wonder about knowledge, with assonances that range from the bible to popular music. Carson's volume of poetry attempts to understand by aesthetic means the past from which it stems. In the multiple writing of the histories of the Troubles in Northern Ireland Carson's volume of poetry constitutes a book of written arts and a document of history.

History, in Ireland, South and North, is not a finished project, nor a stable object. Few philosophers have contributed more to critical discourses on the concept of history than Karl Marx. His radicality,

historical and dialectical materialism, and his theories of international solidarity and class struggle reoriented the principles for thinking history. His revolutionary theses, as Jacques Derrida and Terry Eagleton argue, still have contemporary relevance, regardless of Fukuyama's postulation of the end of history and today's prevalence of conservatism and neoliberalism.[1] Marx's revolutionary ideas offered a powerful ideological dynamo to the discussions about the past and the energetic debates of social engagement that have continued since the 1960s, a decade that also witnessed the Paris rebellion and the recrudescence of civil war in Northern Ireland. Derrida's scepticism of Western metaphysics, origins and rigid categories of research disciplines, opened up to myriads subversive histories of the suppressed and the marginalised. Foucault's introduction of the many histories of cognition, punishment and sexuality gave priority to the significance of competing discourses for reconstructions and reconsiderations of the past. Kristeva's blending of semiotics with psychoanalytics widens this pluralised perspective within the radical tradition of liberating accounts of history from old structures. Kristeva's focus on text and the feminine has altered the patriarchal myopia. The grand narratives of history have been splintered in the wake of these philosophical projects. The study of past dates, personages and events has been expanded with an interest for immaterial phenomena and cultural contours. Chronology is no longer the only imperative, and traditional historical sources have been supplemented with arts and popular culture. Feminist interests have readdressed patriarchy. The significance of language and textual characteristics in the writing of history can no longer be ignored. The previously suppressed, and supposedly marginal, more recently have come to supplement the traditionally dominant and central. History is no longer what it used to be; it has become contested and plural.

Perhaps this contention and pluralisation of history is nowhere in Europe more tangible than in Northern Ireland, since the explosion in 1968 of the historically strained relations between Ireland and England that had been temporarily curtailed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. "The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish Question is so important for the social movement in general," Marx proclaimed

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[1] See Jacques Derrida's *hauntology* (Derrida 1994), and Terry Eagleton's vindication of Marx (Eagleton 2011). See also Fukuyama 1992.

(quoted in Golman and Kunina 1972: 284).[2] Ireland assumed an increasingly pivotal role in the writings of Marx and Hegel. This revolutionary Marxist tradition manifested itself in the Irish republican and socialist leader James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army and his engagement in the Easter Rebellion, 1916. Eamonn McCann has maintained the Marxist position in the Troubles (McCann 1993). Irish history has, however, been contentious for a long time before Marx's radical theories and has predominantly been divided along the traditional dichotomy of nationality, religion and politics. Poets offer different voices and views of historical events, both during the Irish Revival and the Troubles.

Throughout the Troubles from 1968-1998, poets contributed considerably to the writing of histories in and of Northern Ireland. How writers in Northern Ireland contributed continuously to writing the histories of their own place and time as they unfolded day by day has been convincingly argued by Michael Parker, in *Northern Irish Literature, 1956-2006: The Imprint of History* (2007), and John Goodby, in *Irish Poetry since 1950: From Stillness into History* (2000). No writer could possibly escape the horrendous conditions of his or her own situation. The lines of life and death in troubled times fill the poetry of 1995 Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney, of Paul Muldoon, Maeve McGuckian, Ciaran Carson, Michael Longley, Padraic Fiacc, James Simmons and Frank Ormsby.[3] To some extent their struggle with history and poetry, violence and verse, war and arts echoes the aesthetics challenges of the poets of the Irish revival, in particular the concerns of W. B. Yeats, in the stern face of the Easter Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War. As the poetry of Yeats, Irish and English histories, as well as the later rounds of revisionism succinctly reveal, the versions of these events depend upon a range of different positions and criteria.

The Troubles and the Easter Agreement of 1998 introduced new concerns, and retrospection provides alternative evaluation of the past.

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[2] For easy excess to the question of Ireland in Marx's writing, see "Marx and Engels on Ireland," in the *Marx and Engels Internet Archive*: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/ireland/index.htm. Accessed 20 May 2014.

[3] See their respective poetry, or anthologies, such as Ormsby 1992; Ormsby 1979.

David McKittrick et al., in *Lost Lives* (2006) offer a unique scholarly and factual presentation with maps and statistics of 3720 victims of the Troubles: it is the great book of the dead of the Troubles. Graham Dawson's comprehensive *Making Peace with the Past: Memories, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (2007) examines how individual and collective memory of a divided society deal with the enormous death toll and the widespread violence and conflict. Susan McKay's *Bear in Mind These Dead* (2008) offers a gripping insight into the lives of friends, families and communities, the damaged, the missing, the dead and those who barely survived. These three examples focus on the future, by accounting for and trying to come to grips with the complex history and human loss of the recent past. Still, poetry offers yet another dimension, and Ciaran Carson's *For All We Know* (2008), which is the focus of this essay, is not only important in the retrospective making sense of these disastrous three decades in modern European history, but his poetry also connects with Marx and subsequent radical discourses on history.

The title of Carson's historical document emphasises by its sense of laconic oxymoron exactly the opposite of what it says, that is how little we know. This is an appropriate ambivalent statement on the quest for knowledge in and of the past, and on the mêlée of fact, fiction and truth during the Troubles and their aftermath. What do we know, of ourselves, of our fellow beings, of the society in which we live, of the afterlife, and of the past processes that form our sense of self, the shape of society and the ideologies and metaphysics of our specific time and place? Such philosophical speculations upon the human condition are strengthened in the volume's title, by its allusions to the bible, for example 2 Corinthians 5: 1-21, and Romans 8:28, and the concomitant religious questions of divine omniscience and human ignorance. Allusions of the title also suggest a secular world of sweet music and romantic film, first and foremost to Karlin, Royer and Griffin's soft rock song, "For All We Know," composed for the 1970 film, *Lovers and Other Strangers,* and popularised by Shirley Bassey in the UK and by the Carpenters in the US. This song is the second hit with this title: J. Fred Coots and Sam M. Lewis's "For All We Know" from 1934 has figured in the charts at different times, with artists such as Hal Kemp, Isham Jones, Dinah Washington, Nat King Cole and Rosemary Clooney. The inquisitive affirmation of the title, which combines the sacred and the secular in a statement of collective wonder, runs like a refrain throughout the verses:

"for all I knew" (Carson 2008a: 49), "for all I know" (56), "that I don't know the half of it?" (81), "as I knew by the end" (110). The title and its re-modulations, which point to the limitations of human reason and the uncertainty of the human condition, also include the questioning of history, the personal as well as a public that runs throughout the poems. As opposed to discourses on history and facts, assertions and affirmative notes of McKittrick, Dawson and McKay, Carson's volume captures the intellectual quandary and emotional trauma of uncertainty—can we trust what we think we know, from the numerous presentations, fabrications and retractions of facts and statements, and our own memory?—apart from not knowing at all. *For All We Know* becomes a historical document on the doubt and precariousness of ordinary life during the Troubles.

Carson's book was published in 2008 to great critical acclaim. The volume was selected as the spring choice of the Poetry Book Society, and was shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize, the Costa Poetry Award and the *Irish Times* Poetry Now Award. The aesthetic aspects of the book were acclaimed by many. Alan Jenkins highlights Carson concern with form and describes him as "a poet of exceptional formal dexterity and élan, a kind of one-man Irish OULIPO" (Jenkins 2008: 6). Aida Edemariam comments upon the connection between form, war and history:

> Artistic purity of purpose is a laudable thing to hang on to in a war zone; but perhaps it is also a fantasy, or an aesthetic form of bad faith. Carson's poems reveal the impossibility of this kind of transcendence even as they strive for it: part of the impact of his poetry about the Troubles is that it is so troubled, all jagged edges, terse, harsh; but also, importantly, because it is full of all the layers of meaning and history, often contradictory, that the simplest words can carry. (Edemariam 2009)

Edemariam's assessment captures well the complex and paradoxical nature of Carson's verses, and their confusing and contradictory form. In fact, the redoubling, elusive and multi-shifting form of this narrative poem sequence complicates the contents to such a degree that a concise outline of story and plot might be helpful. A series of seventy poems in *For All We Know* charts the love relationship of Nina and Gabriel, from their early courtship to Nina's death, against the background of the Troubles. This complexity represents on a formal level the chaos and confusion experienced by people in a society in civilisatory crisis, a

creative dimension of narrativity, which is normally always left out in chronological, logical and argumentative accounts of history. It can be argued that such formal presentations of private and public history characterise poetry much more than other types of historical documents.

For All We Know renders a great love story. The collective "we" of the title suggests wide existential and social significance. However, the first person plural pronoun concerns primarily the two lovers in Belfast. Each of the seventy poems could all be read as separate instalments of their love story. This love story is one of great possibilities and complexities—features of love that are reflected in the poem's composition. Carson explains:

> For some years, off and on, I'd been trying to write a conventional love poem, but all my efforts seemed false and contrived, and my suspicions that I was temperamentally incapable of doing anything in that genre seemed confirmed. [. . .] I began to think of the project as a journey into a mysterious forest of language and translation. Besides my native city of Belfast, the poems are set in the cities I have visited: Paris, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden. And the lovers in the poems often wonder who they might be, what they are to each other, and how they remember each other. I found myself telling a story of the stories they tell each other, and the translations they make of each other. (Carson 2008b: 5)

This love poem, as indicated by Carson, is an unconventional one. Novelty in form reflects the poet's artistic temperament, but also emphasises the sense of unique love—contrary to the love motif, for instance, in Yeats's poetry, which is predominantly marked by unattainability. Furthermore, the faithful use of couplets in these verses solders the love of the couple, just as the extended fourteen-syllabic lines indicate their expansive love, and the sonnet variations of 14, 28 and 56 lines indicate the variety of their amorous experiences. This aesthetic account of individual love relations articulates an alternative to the Marxist views on base materialism, mass society and political transformation. Carson's poetic love narrative also distinguishes itself in other ways. Against the background of any history on the Troubles, mostly focusing on accounts of atrocities, violence, hatred and murder, Carson's *For All We Know* focuses on love in the conflict.

This love story is, nevertheless, entangled with troublesome history: "Again you are trapped in the smouldering streets" (Carson 2008a: 40). Many of the titles vibrate more with the Troubles of Belfast than echo the troubles of their relationship: "Treaty" (19, 68), "The Assignation"

(22, 71), "Never Never" (38, 89), "Fall" (35, 85), "Collaboration" (41, 91), and "Peace" (55, 105). The atrocities and the atmosphere of the Troubles surround and impinge upon the love relationship, sometimes leaving the lovers daunted and incapacitated—victims to the great powers of history, in line with Marx's ideas of history. Foucault, alternatively, addresses the relationship between power and knowledge in more detail. He applies the concept "power/knowledge" to denote the conjunction of power and knowledge throughout his histories of clinics, madness and sexuality. On the one hand, an individual or a group—Nina and Gabriel in Carson's love poem—are simultaneously defined by others, and, to some extent, have to accept to be someone that others have defined, to be objectified. On the other hand, power may be connected to those who define their own identity; people—Nina and Gabriel—have the power to define themselves, and knowledge may produce subjects instead of objects. In Northern Ireland, during the Troubles, identity and love could frequently depend largely upon the power/knowledge of others, as much as that of the individual. Throughout the poetic presentation of the love relations between Gabriel and Nina, helicopters hover incessantly over the scenes (Carson 2008a: 23, 25, 29, 65, 73), surveillance and suspicion are prevalent (30, 41, 55, 69, 90, 91), and double agents appear frequently (33, 52, 56). The two lovers become objects, often suspicious ones, in the eyes of the authorities, the police, the paramilitaries and the divided communities, and sometimes even in their own eyes: "we became our own shadowy police watching us" (18). Belfast is a battlefield that also affects their intimate love relations. The couple are besieged by the Troubles, their rendezvous are often disrupted, and their friends often disappear: "We were sequestered in The Crown after the explosion" (85), and "We were in the Ulster Milk Bar I think they blew up back in the Seventies" (24), two of the poems record. Explosion precipitates upon romance in "Fall": "I watched your lips frame a silent NO / as the bomb went off at the end of the block and drowned all // conversation" (35). "Revolution" describes episodes of the Troubles: "The spinning mills going up in an avalanche of flame, the vacillating gun-turret of the Saracen tank. The tick and tack of the Remote Bomb Disposal Unit" (73). Another example of this is seen in "Second Take," "Most of the witnesses we knew then are dead if not gone," or "they were given a new identity" (33). "Peace" captures problems and frustration after the Easter Agreement: "the

disabled guns that still manage to kill" (55). The lovers seem victims of history also when they go abroad. Episodes in Paris, Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden often take place with WW2 as a backdrop, just as WW1 often was Yeats's backdrop in his poetry. Undoubtedly, all the episodes of the Troubles intensify the romance, and function as a metaphor for the relationship between the two lovers, but also reveal how the events that make history shape the fate of individuals. Nina and Gabriel often seem powerless victims to the forces of history in a Marxist sense. In Foucauldian terms, they are often objectified by the power and knowledge of others, whether these others are defined as persons, social institutions, cognitive structures or political discourses.

Nina and Gabriel live in times when the powers that be impinge upon them. But they are also self-empowering individuals. They demonstrate many of Foucault's redefinitions of the relations between power and knowledge. Power and knowledge may be connected to subjects who define their own identity and who resist or interact creatively with the powers that impinge upon them. Although the Troubles to a large extent define the conditions of the two lovers, they refuse to become merely the victims of war. Nina and Gabriel's love stays strong among the many divisions and opposing forces. They manoeuvre deftly in the information power play and among double agents—is one of them, or are both of them double agents themselves? They improve their own situation in many ways. Their jobs are inspiring and allow for professional stays abroad. They define their own identities and relationships and they overcome tragic circumstances, cognitive strictures and the historical challenges of their own time. They assume knowledge and power and subjectify themselves in Foucauldian terms. The sense of history in *For All We Know* is also not less confining than Marx's idea of history. Nina and Gabriel facilitate their daily lives, for instance, with the first Apple computer (29), by the development of modern means of transportation and tourism, and by shopping for second-hand clothes (25). The gender balance in the poem also generates a sense of self-empowerment from historical strictures. But it has to be admitted that traditional roles between man and woman remain intact to some extent. Their relationship is seen mainly from Gabriel's perspective, rendering him the subject, and Nina the object of their love relations: He is the "I," while Nina is the "she" in the poems. Still, their stories are not only his stories. Nina is an equal partner: she leads an

independent professional life, her family history is on par with his, her separate voice is heard as clearly as his, and her stories provide narrative equilibrium. Nina subjectifies herself and acts in a textual space that has been theoretically described by, among others, Kristeva. Thus the relationship breaks with the conventional gender balance, which is so often reinforced in communities in conflict, and often retained in various accounts of conflict. Carson's *For All We Know* is not only a great love story, it is also a love story that departs from many historical confinements, in a series of poems that offer an alternative historical document.

The overall organising form of the volume also reflects and interweaves romance and history. Carson's book is divided into two parts, each containing thirty-five poems—perhaps a figural mark of their years together. All thirty-five titles of the first part are repeated in the second part of the book. Both sections begin with "Second Time Around" and end with "Zugzwang." Such a structure of separation and repetition strikes a number of possible interpretations. First of all, the division of the book into two separate parts suggests the dichotomy and the union of two individual lovers. In the larger context of Irish history, this binary structure also captures the many divisions that surround the couple: the bipartite condition of Belfast, the strained relations between Ireland and England, the powers of the Allies and the Axis of WW2, and perhaps, in the intertextual fray, the pitting of the themes of history and love in Carson against the same themes in Yeats's poetry. This creative two-fold structure also relates to the couple's own subjectification. In many cases, the poems refer more directly to the couple's family and history, while others contribute to the creative constitution of self, more by intertextual allusiveness. Furthermore, the binary composition reiterates the volume's couplets into a larger format, inviting bifocal readings and re-readings of the double poems, and replaying some of the musical motifs that echo throughout the collection. This reflects the book's sense of Kristevean intertextual duplicity, while the double structure also connects with Marx's statements on the repetitions of history.

The repetition of structure, titles and love story references two of Karl Marx's famous statements from the first paragraph of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Luis Napoleon*. The first statement is that history repeats itself, "first as tragedy, then as farce." The second is the

statement that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."[4] Three poems in *For All We Know*, in both sections, include the word "second": "Second Time Round" (Carson 2008a: 15, 63), "Second Hand" (26, 76), and "Second Take" (33, 83). "Second Time Around," the title of the first poem in the first part of the book, is repeated as the first poem in the second part of the book, and appears as a paradigmatic poem in the volume. This enacts the legacy of Marx and engages with alternative awareness of recording history. It also suggests a second aspect to history: literature.

Both "Second Time Around" (15-16) and "Second Time Around" (63-64) offer touching stories of love. The first poem portrays a romantic evening dinner with reminiscence of earlier blissful moments. The second poem retains the same atmosphere—is it perhaps the same evening, perhaps another similar evening, or a different occasion?—but evokes different memories. The fourteen couplets emphasise the amorous two-someness of the lovers, and conjoin across the divide of pages, time, cultures and life. The admixture of French and English languages and the snippets of an old French ballad, possibly associated with war memories—"*La nuit s'approche*"—strengthen ambience and communion. Colloquial idioms and easy conversation place the two lovers as equal. The hermeneutic possibilities of bread, in the first conjugal sonnet: "The crust should crackle when you break the bread," "the bread you bought that morning not yet broken," (15, 16), and of car driving in the second poem: "I am learning to drive on the wrong side of the road / in your Renault 5 Alpine," "when the man looms into the windscreen in a split second" (63, 64), include a range of erotic, sacred, cultural and morphological interpretations in the first poem, and a sense of erotics, gender role change and journeying in the second. The shadow sonnets conjoin and complement each other in affectionate and artistic harmony. However, as the title and all the reminiscence suggest, this is most likely a second attempt to maintain the relationship, a rebirth of old

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[4] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." *The Marxist Internet Archive*: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm. Accessed 20 May 2014.

passion. This sense of secondness includes the history in which the lovers live as much as their own personal histories.

"Second Time Around" incorporates the memories of the two lovers in a larger panorama of history. The couple end their romantic dinner "spreadeagled on the patchwork double quilt / following the dips and gradients of the staggered repeats / four widow aunts had stitched into it fifty years before // the last war, one of them your ancestor" (15-16). Love and death, peace and war, ancestry and reproduction are woven together by enjambment and lacunae with sensitive textile touch in these verses. Their car drive ends as "a man looms into the windscreen in a split second / rain pouring from his glistening black ulster and black helmet" (64). The final four words allude forcefully to Northern Ireland in its naming of overcoat and description of headgear. Thus, the two redoubled sonnets point towards WW2 and the Troubles, the two periods of conflict and violence that continuously shadow the two lovers, throughout the poetic narrative. These multiple reiterations of title, love, form and history connect with Marx's statement on the tragedy and farce of history. Carson's generation of secondness and Marx's adage also correspond with WW2 and the Troubles, two continuations of the tragedies of WW1 and the Irish War of Independence that can easily be seen as farcical in a resigned view of the human condition. The shadow of WW2 and the explosions and deaths of the Troubles also impinge upon the lovers in a way Marx would recognise: "Men make their own history [. . .] but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."[5] Men and women are often objectified by war, a prevalent theme also in much poetry of the Troubles, where we see a pitting of the individual as second to grander narratives. Yeats's play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan,* for instance, can be seen as one of such primary texts that explores this narrative (see also Coughlan 1991: 88-111). Many of these aspects of "Second Time Around," and *For All We Know,* run tangential to Marx's two statements regarding the repetitive unfolding of history, and the circumscribed position of the individual in a larger picture. Nevertheless, second thought normally suggests insight and critical renewal, and Carson's poetry also vibrates with renewed ideas of Marx's theses.

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[5] See footnote 4 above.

In Foucauldian terms, the couple in "Second Time Around" constitute themselves as subjects in this two-folded poem, and the surrounding verses, and thereby uphold their own power, according to what they know. Nina and Gabriel make their own stories and form their own identities and life, under difficult historical circumstances. Formation of self and relationships requires diverse knowledge and personal fortitude in times of war and in relations across divides. The two lovers speak different languages but share a culture of multi-discursive awareness in times and places of war and complex alliances: France during WW2, and Northern Ireland during the Troubles. The two lovers also liberate themselves from Marx's subjugation of the individual to the grand forces of historical circumstance. In Carson's presentation of the story of the lovers the chronology is complicated and intermingled. Their time perspective is determined by emotional intensity and personal memory, more than clock tyranny and calendar confinement. Their love story starts somewhere in the middle by celebrating their love; the beginning and the end of their time together is secondary. The second line of the first "Second Time Around" reads: "It was our anniversary, whether first or last" (15). They create their own time and define their own significance. The two lovers are also less confined by their own conditions than Marx indicates. The couple's self-empowerment corresponds better with Foucault's allowance of the possibilities of the individual in his continuous address to relationships between power and knowledge, than with the objectification of individuals in Marx's historical materialism. Carson's imaginative recapitulation of the position of individual lovers in troubled times and places also runs parallel to Foucault's inclusion of literature and arts as historical sources in his many critical re-readings of history.

"Second Time Around," the first and the second poem, register Marx's resigned articulation on repetitive history and respond to Foucault's deregulations of knowledge and power structures. The poems also record a second dimension of history, an aesthetic one to which Marx's historical materialism does not pay much heed, both to which Foucault's activation of alternative historical sources opens up. The double initial poem, as so many of the poems, also records a lot of recent history in literature, not least Ciaran Carson's own oeuvre. "Second Time Around" contains its own history of literature. There is an obvious allusion in the title to Yeats's "The Second Coming," with all the

thematic concerns and stylistic novelty of the 1923 Anglo-Irish Nobel Laureate's canonical poem. This reference also activates for meditation the similarities and differences between the poetry of Ireland at war in 1916-1923 and the poetry of the Troubles. Most, perhaps all, of Carson's poems in the volume record a history of literature. Other pivotal poems reflect on history in the context of Ireland North and South, then and now, or from a larger geographical perspective. Some other examples are "Collaboration" (41) and "Peace" (55), which take the 1995 Northern Irish Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney's poems "Punishment," and "Whatever You Say," as their points of departure, and "Michael Longley's "Ceasefire," which relates directly to Heaney's "Peace;" "Filling the Blank" (104), which recites the traditional Irish poem, "I am Ireland," and "Le Mot Just" (77), which echoes Flaubert's incessant quest for the right word. Most of all, "Second Time Around" records by creative strategies Carson's own oeuvre. Its first sentence, "*Ce n'est pas comme le pain de Paris*" (15) sets the note for this self-referentiality that runs throughout the volume. Firstly, the French of this line echoes "La Je-Ne Sais-Quoi," and the priorities of multilinguality in Carson's collection *First Language* (1993). Secondly, the French language and ambience in this volume references the importance of French language, literature and culture to Carson's poetics, which manifest itself most distinctly in his translations of Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Mallarmé in *The Alexandrine Plan* (1998) but appears consistently in his writing. Thirdly, the italics of the French line suggest a concrete source of quotation, a concretisation of French in general, or a citational trick to send critics searching for a source that does not exist. "*Le pain*," which reappears in the poem as "*baton*" and "bread" raises the dough of "Loaf" in *Belfast Confetti* (Carson 1989: 13-18). The "patchwork double quilt," which reappears as "*the broderie anglaise* bodice" (63), records the poem with the eponymous title that ends *The New Estate* (Carson 1988: 70-71), and "Patchwork" that ends *The Irish for No* (Carson 1987: 59-63), as well as the metaphor of textility that weaves itself in all volumes of Carson—the great cartographer and chronicler of cultural contours of Linnenapolis Belfast. "*L'heure bleue*" (Carson 2008a: 63) recirculates the widespread colour and crepuscular setting of day that appear in numerous poems, and possibly points to the many ekphrastic aspects of Carson's poetry. Both poems, "Second Time Around," record histories of literature and Carson's own poetry. Their formal features also relate to

history, both one of literature and the one of the historical conditions from which this literature stems.

Radical novelty adds energy and change to the secondarity of Carson's two poems "Second Time Around," and *For All We Know*. The poems endeavour, very successfully, to tell an old story in a new mode, as Carson's explication of the volume's coming into being confirms: "I'd been trying to write a conventional love poem, but all my efforts seemed false and contrived [. . .]. I began to think of the project as a journey into a mysterious forest of language and translation" (Carson 2008b: 5). Love in the wars constitutes a genre of its own, and many texts can be categorised as clichés. Carson's knowledge of convention and his imaginative powers, his second thoughts on the creative challenge, result in renewal. This symphony of varied sonnets with prolonged lines suits the thematic concerns of self-empowering lovers under duress of historical circumstance, as Carson's innovative use of the sonnet renews the flexible conventional form, and distinguishes itself from the experimental use of the sonnet in the poetry of fellow poets from Northern Ireland, such as Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon and Michael Longley. This radical novelty, which stems from canonical insight, and which bears upon our understanding of history and adds a source to the accounting of events in Belfast during the Troubles, has a second source. Carson's citation of Glenn Gould on the form and functions of fugue as the volume's epigraph—"*Fugue must perform its frequently stealthy work with continuously shifting melodic fragments that remain, in the 'tune' sense, perpetually finished*" (Carson 2008a: 11)—suggests a second formal method to the composition of the two "Second Time Around" poems and the whole volume. Gould's statement also runs parallel to a nuanced and complex view of history. *For All We Know* flashes its own status, both in ground-breaking content and form, as a historical document that records the literature and artistic moods that are frequently omitted from other types of history.

Carson's great love story of Nina and Gabriel contributes to recording how "the jittery present became history." The war setting keeps them in an objectified position, whereas the romance motif provides them with an opportunity to construct themselves as subjects, not entirely victimised by the Troubles. Their conjugation also presents a parity of esteem and a gender balance their surroundings seem to lack. *For All We Know*, with Nina and Gabriel at the centre of this new

narrative, offers a different and imaginative story of the well-known dramatic events of life in Belfast during the Troubles that can be studied in the reports by historians, politicians, researchers and reporters. Carson's Foucauldian challenge of old concepts of history and power, and its post-structuralist innovation of text and narrativity, revitalises Marxist theses, and indicates new ways of understanding history. Carson's creative poetry focuses on the love and imagination of two ordinary people who enjoy arts and culture, and who refuse to be overwhelmed by a limited idea of their own time and place, in opposition to the focus on religious Manichaeanism, national concerns, class struggle and individual frailty. The volume also records its own literary history, from Yeats to Carson himself. "Second Time Around," in fact, could be seen as a symbolic title for traditional history reconsidered from other perspectives. This poem presents the wisdom, creativity and change to be taken from previous texts, a sense of Kristevan radical poetics. This type of intertextuality not only allows for alternative articulations, but also signals a transposition of signifying systems and the struggle for discursive positionality—the criteria for historiography that often go unstated. Such a self-conscious and novel narrative of historical representation, which records by poetic creativity the moods, emotions and mentalities of both sexes in a particular troubled place and time, constitutes a historical source. Carson's *For All We Know* is an admirable work of art, and it is also a historical document.

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Forest, Snow, a Train

Mary O'Donnell

On the journey from Falun, farmstead roofs
pulled down the snow, their shoulders
tucking white sheets
around ledges and barn doors.

The train hissed along the forest edge.
Daily sleet slopped in headlines against the glass,
became a television from the 60s
lined with interference, sky, snow, tree,
sky, snow, tree, and the houses—yellow or red—
whooped a morse code of comfort. Once, the forest
called out to the train, stop, for heaven's sake, stop!,
but the crystal weighted spruces were swallowed
by horizontal lines, the day's deepening hurry.
        And it would not stop.

The forest's sharp nose was sniffing our warmth,
old bones at the edge of a clearing clicked
with the need for flesh, our blood,
a fire for the coming night.
The train pushed on, and the trees larruped
windy meltings as the carriage sheared south.

On overhead racks, wrapped gifts
of Swedish glass seemed insincere,
artifacts in ice, small candles,
and berried woollen hats and gloves
for those who waited,
        at home in the dark.

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Waking

Mary O'Donnell

These mornings
as you make your peace with final days of work,
you bend over my pillow, kiss me.
I, blear-faced, swim in the blue of your eyes,
could be that new bride, the one
you imagined you'd married, the treasure
you risked your life to bring back
to shore from some foreign place,
to spend time with on days
I thought would never come.

Your dream of me, my vision of you,
peculiarly jumping land and ship.
Now we are here, amazed by buoyancy and roots,
ship and shore there for our taking.
The shore is wilder than you thought,
a dancing garment woven during your absence,
imprinted with words, my monkish work
from the heart's scriptorium.

But journeys did not part us,
nor working contradictions of our tuning.
That jangle gave some purchase to the task.
Anharmonic, opposites, lured as Sirens lured
the strapped Odysseus, the difference being
that our earth tilted slightly, currents changed,
and we were pulled to one another,
lovers with no laurels, home.
It has taken so long to get here. Wake now.
Wake to new doing, to new pauses in new days.

I cannot sleep for the joy of it.
Nights sparkle, Catherine Wheels spatter light

as much as a shimmering dawn in the Aegean
once stirred the eyes of the man who travelled,
only to return to Ithaca.

An Irish Lexicon

Mary O'Donnell

(A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, L, M, N, O, P, R, S, T, U)[1]

Twilight, and the deer are grazing in the Phoenix Park.
Someone dreams of Arkle, Beara, Drumlins, Errigal.
A poet writes of Dubh Linn, Lonndubh, Belfast,

Glens of Imal, Antrim, The Downs,
Devil's Bit, Vinegar Hill, The Hook, Bannow,
Ships, helmets, Ogham, Newgrange,

Dawn chorus, dawn light, grave passages,
Burren limestone, dolmen, capstone, and Dowth.
In school they speak of Flight, Grammar, Imram,

Lir, Marian, Naoise, Oriel, in the Dáil it's Partnership,
Rights, salmon, Taoiseach/Toscairí.
Sea fog and frost are rolling in. Land holds its breath.

<div align="center">*</div>

The SOMEONE, the TEACHER, the POET,
the POLITICIAN weave a dialogue of badger-bait,
bull-bait, dog-fight, and greyhound,
Cú, Cuchullan, Dun Dealgan, Eamhain Macha,
Tháinig long ó Valparaiso, tá tír na n-óg
Ag cúl an tí, tir alainn trina céile,
Mise Eire, Micheal Ó Suilleabhán,

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[1] The Irish language alphabet has only 18 letters.

The Long Hall, The Brazen Head, The Oliver
St. John Gogarty, The South Pole Inn, Omagh bomb,
Gugán Barra, Guests of the Nation, La Mon,
Oedipus Complex, Lough Swilly, Anna Livea,
National Museum, Síle na Gig, jigs and reels,
Riverdance, Liberty Hall, the Limerick pogrom of 1904,
the bee-loud glade, the beehive hut, Georgian Dublin,
Liberty Hall rebuilt and scaling the clouds,
Custom House, Guinness, the fighting boys of Annabelle's,
Fairview Park, The George, Dawn Run, the Curragh.

Wren Women, Glencree, Synagogue, Germans and Jews,

Wicklow Jail, ghosts, Kilmainham,
        Dawn executions in Dublin,
the Disappeared, Jean McConville, 1994, Abercorn, poteen,
the Black Pig's Dyke, De Valera, Crazy Jane,
Old Croghan Man at rest in the his glass box,
clean as a newborn, renewed for viewing by MILLIONS.
Arigna, slit nipples, The Clonskeagh Mosque,
laundries, the Imam, Good Shepherd Convent,
CPRSI, Bessborough, the Protestants of Cork in 1921,
Monaghan 1974, Belfast Agreement, Fish on Friday,
Good Friday Agreement, that blackbird over Emy Lough,
gold at Clontibret, ghost estates in Laois, a haunted house
in Lucan, golden apples of the sun, whatever-you-say,
oil off Cork, Daghda, the Boyne, UB-65,
September 1913, extra points for Honours Maths,
Gaelscoileanna, Bodhráns and spoons, harp-making
in Portlaoise jail, piebalds in Jobstown, free buggies
for immigrants, free curtains, money-for-old-rope-
single-mothers-of-four, Arkle, Beara, a wherewithal
for bags of coal, turf, as a wretched frost descends.

And yet we have a fabled coast, where sea-cattle plunge
into the WAVES. Inland, hill-sprites on DRUMLINS,
pismires on the bog, all CELT and tribe in South Ulster,
further north there's ERRIGAL, but speak not,

SAY-NOTHING, for words will never count so much as
gesture.

Flight of the Earls, O'Neill in Rome, Michael Robartes,
Kenny in D.C., Irish artists in New York,
bringing-It-All-Over-there, the knowledge,
the Gathering, the sliver of salmon, the sucked thumb,
Fairtrade, Taltainn, free-range eggs, free-loaders,
curlews, buzzards, Lissadell.

Twilight, and the deer are grazing in the Phoenix Park.
Someone dreams of Arkle, Beara, Drumlins, Errigal.
On the Curragh, whin bushes dream, and horses
are stabled for the night. Frost bites down.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Celts

The exotic myth of origin, spread its cloak
from Eire to Scotland, Wales, Brittany, Galicia.
Even today, defies the MONGREL MIX.

I'm an Irishwoman (*you're Irish? I love
The way you people speak!*). Then part Scotwoman,
part Norman-maid, part O'Donnell on the way home
from KINSALE, some fragment of embattled clan,
lingering in Limerick, not a Donegal gene in my bones.

IT DOES NOT MATTER, WHAT WE FORGET,
AND MYTH IS NOT EXOTIC, (in text-speak this is
SHOUTING, but to stretch the letters high,
to break the stifled code of poetries on the Island
of the Mongrel Mixture of frayed saints and devils.
Search for SCHOLARS. All gone to homes
in America's universities. The saying used to go,
"At least, we're not British" as the gombeen men
set up their 70s supermarket empires in ribboning

suburbs, ran despite themselves away from rural,
Catholic, the West, in denial until Robinson
hit the Presidency: how we rejoiced at her inauguration,
at the chewed-wasp faces of Lenihan and Haughey.

But in denial till then,
I AM *A* BECAUSE I AM NOT *B*. I AM IRISH
BECAUSE I AM NOT BRITISH

<div align="center">*</div>

Máthair mo Chroí[2]

Front line of the defence, a line with no power
unless in the home, twisting sons into priests,
daughters to carers like themselves. Mine simmered.
EDUCATION! she cried, IT'S CARRIED
LIGHTLY ALL YOUR LIFE, MY DAUGHTERS!
In old age, educated, with three university
degrees, her modesty comes from knowing
we know nothing when facts are put to bed,
and all that's left is the heart-thorn of experience,
although she does not refuse her HAUTE COUTURE,
smudge-pot colours brightening her eyes at eighty-six,
alive and equivocating to the end, but moved
by *The Deer's Cry, The Fox-Hunt*,
music from the culture dancing in her soul.

Mise Eire and O'Riada once strung and boomed
through the house of my girlhood, between Acker Bilk
and Renata Tebaldi. Music, she said,
WAS PORTAL TO THE SOUL.
And so she taught her daughters, guiltless.

<div align="center">*</div>

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[2] Literally, "mother of my heart," this is a common cliché derived from traditional songs and poems in Ireland.

Mise le Meas[3]

Everybody knew the telephone girls listened in.
You had to be careful, and women
having affairs around the town learned fast.
The phone was not safe, and the local MI5
custodians of half-baked morality liked to chatter.
But this was Monaghan. Nobody had affairs
in the 1960s, did they? Nobody committed suicide,
did they? Nobody was gay. Some parents
had a copy of TANTRIC SEX, beside
THE CATHOLIC MARRIAGE, secreted in the high
wardrobe, and Mary McCarthy a presence
in that east-facing bedroom, where my parents could see
foxes at play in the high field,
beyond wind-tilted knots of holly trees.

But the telephone girls, those telephone girls,
how they tattled in the town! They knew
who owed what to whom, who in HIGH POWER
was doing his secretary, and the garda known
to lightly squeeze a woman's breast, great paw
in through the car window as he advised her
on traffic conditions.

Hear them, that Irish sibilance: *Putting you through now. . .*
Hello Clones, call for you . . . ah how are ya Elsie, not a bad day,
yesterday was pure shockin' . . . right now, call waiting . . .
Caller? Putting you through now . . .

<div align="center">*</div>

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[3] The official way of signing off a Government letter, it means "Yours, respectfully" but even today is associated with indifference, anonymity and unaccountability.

Rebuke to Ideological Feminists
*"I was not one of the popular feminists who knew what a sound-bite was
. . . never took the Contraceptive Train north,[4] nor went to Greenham
Common . . ."* (the poet, 2013)

We never moved as one, ladies, girls, women,
to suggest that it was otherwise would be a lie.
Today, some of you are CIVIL as any servant,
as IVORY-TOWERED as any ruminating scholar,
as unsmiling, grim and frightening as women would be
who thirty years ago spent time contemplating cervixes,
took classes in How Not to Smile All the Time.
Too much smiling—agreed—too much compliance
and willingness. You can be anyone you want!
Self-invent, renaissance women all!
We'll help you on the way to smash that glass ceiling!

(*If we are to believe the weekly Elle, the woman of letters is a
remarkable Zoological species: she brings forth, pell-mell, novels and
children.*
We are introduced, for example, to Jacqueline Lenoir (two daughters,
one novel); Marina Grey (one son, one novel); Nicole Dutreil (two sons,
four novels), *etc*).

But what does it mean? *This: to write
is a glorious but bold activity; the writer is an "artist,"
one recognises that he is entitled to a little bohemianism …*[5]

Even so. It does not include the ordinary women
getting on with ordinary lives, the ones who wrestle
infant feet into little shoes, who wipe up puke, wipe shitty bums,
clean the rooms where some of you work out the policies.

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[4] "The Contraceptive Train," as it was known, was boarded in Dublin's
Connolly Station in 1971 by a group of feminists who then travelled to Belfast
to buy contraceptives that were at that time illegal in the Republic. They then
returned that afternoon and brandished their purchased, daring the Customs
Officials to challenge them.
[5] From Roland Barthes. 1957. *Mythologies*. Editions du Seuil, Paris.

But make no mistake: Let no women believe
that they can take advantage of this pact without having first
submitted to the eternal statute of womanhood.
Women are on the earth to give children to men;
let them write as much as they like, let them decorate
Their condition, but above all, let them not depart from it …[6]

Some of you never recognised that we were not so helpless,
despite biology, so victimised, or speechless,
nor saw that we were ON YOUR SIDE.

The suspicion often fell that *this* was how you wanted it:
you, on the band-wagon, questioning the language
(*that* remains a GOOD IDEA).

A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship
at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals
its fundamentally narrative *character. This relationship*
involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient,
listening objects (the students).[7]

The sexuality, the *mode d'emploi* of every bloody thing
not quite your business. Your business was—is—
JUSTICE, FAIRNESS, HUMAN RIGHTS, not
CONDESCENSION AND KNOWING WHAT WAS
BETTER FOR YOUR MINIONS.

The battle goes on—ladies, girls, women. The principle remains correct
and this enquiry asks that you get your hands dirtied in the ordinary
smut, break your own networks and move into the favellas, the country,
wherever the road is twisted and UNTHINK IS IN CHARGE, get
working with the people, SEE WHERE JUSTICE IS DONE and learn
from that. Or: remember Orwell, that thing about everyone being equal,
But some are …? He got it right, all charged up with a memory of native

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[6] Roland Barthes. 1957. *Mythologies.* Editions du Seuil, Paris.
[7] Paolo Freire, 1972. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Penguin Education.

male backsides skinned by the bamboo rod, released from prison to
impoverished wives who soothed it all with mashed banana.
M—A—S—H—E—D   B—A—N—A—N—A .

                                    *

So Unthink the Englishmen were let loose.

But to each generation its Unthinks. Unthink the Nation,
the State, the Federation, the Republic, the Monarchy,
the Commune, the Parish, the County, the GAA, League,
Union, Association, Gathering, Meeting, in every unstarry
constellation where people meet there's a Mr. Unthink,
partered by Ms Unthink and all the Littler Unthinkums.

All Unthinking how they need LOVE, how LOVE rules the world,
how LOVE is everything and we surely ALL LOVE one another,
thee-most-bee-ewt-iful-word in thee world! But the same one
all the same for man-woman, mother-child, child-parent,
bro and sis, covering the spectrum as if it were one colour.

It ain't one colour Ma'ams: it's not black, it's not white,
it's all and any hut, it hides so deeply it's like Mars the planet,
people wondering if there ever was life, and if liquid water
ever flowed in that barren territory. That's what LOVE is.

And then love flows into politics. Into ideals. Into agendas.

Enter: Stage Right: The Leader of the Women's Forum
come to speak to the Constituency, plus the Chief Female Poets,
*addressing the great iambed on cross-rhyme
and good-tempered rhyme, on Being one's Own Best Critic,
                  on Seizing Permissions.*

Stampede Stage Left: the confused massing women,
all apparently worrying about window cleanliness,
toilet-bowls, children and curries.
                        Until: behind them,

a quieter entering: the old, the weak,
the sick, the confused, the mad, the neurotic, the demented:
such fill the stage, while behind them again serried lines
of workers, bee-women, the soft hum of labour, creased brow,
compliant to the nature of life's business:
love of the task that transforms.
                                    The only love, perhaps.

                                    *

Twilight, and the deer are grazing in the Phoenix Park.
Someone dreams of Arkle, Beara, Drumlins, Errigal.
A poet writes of Dubh Linn, Lonndubh, Belfast,

Glens of Imal, Antrim, The Downs,
Devil's Bit, Vinegar Hill, The Hook, Bannow,
ships, helmets, Ogham, Newgrange,

Dawn chorus, dawn light, grave passages,
Burren limestone, dolmen, capstone, and Dowth.
Whin bushes on the Curragh toss and dream

as the wind untethers them. Horses are stabled
for the night. A fox runs close to the ditch,
beyond the steady shearing of evening cars, headlights.

Frost trembles on the air, falls firm across the land,
cooling an ardour of wintry argument.
The earth rounds in on its prayer to itself.

Wolf Month

Mary O'Donnell

One January, the whole country turned to photography. Those without power-cuts or burst pipes, chilled white wine in the snow on New Year's Day. All the way to the Dublin mountains, a virginal day dressed in pure white, and the silence that accompanied it, were mystical.

The month was named after Janus, the ancient Roman deity, guardian of doorways, gates, and beginnings, and protector of the state in time of war. Janus looks both backwards and forwards: backwards to a world lying fallow and reflecting on past events, forward to spring and new growth. It is my favourite month—with the chance of storm and rain, or quiet and pearl-grey skies, the earth trickling and moist, only robins, sparrows and the eternal crows of north Kildare as companions during the day.

Later in history, the Anglo-Saxons called it Wolf Month because wolves entered the villages in winter, searching for food. I name it Peace Month, because Christmas is over, and for the first weeks of each new year, the atmosphere on the roads is calm. There is nothing more to spend on, decorate, or post out.

In this coldest month, hibernating animals still sleep. Plants are resting. Only the Snowdrop—that most virginal of plants—pushes thrilling, modest little heads through the chill soil, the centre of each plant sparked with tiny threads of yellow. If the winter has been mild, daffodils and outdoor hyacinths will nudge up in lusty spikes—a hint, like the "fragrance" of the first line of a Haiku poem, of what's to come. Yet they never unsheathe themselves until temperatures are optimal and the regal yellows and purples of March are underway.

My cousin the painter shares my enthusiasm for January. There is nothing left to celebrate, she remarked, nothing to feel you must be jolly about when you're not in the mood, nothing that involves extra work. There is, simply, a quiet ease that fills her with the hope for new canvasses, but none of the pressure of enforced commerciality.

The fuss is over. Families that came together have dispersed again and each nucleus is left to its own devices to reflect brightly, or with

O'Donnell, Mary. 2014. "Wolf Month." *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 13(2):107-108.

melancholy, on what may have occurred over the recent season. Perhaps not to reflect, but to move in a different current that has little to do with social diktats.

January mirrors the aspect of the human personality that is inward-turning, which does not test itself against the external. There is the possibility of oneness but also of detachment from tribal celebration, remembering that the wheel of life and fortune also offers the solace of rest—all the better for growth. If I want to celebrate, there's always Little Christmas, or Women's Christmas, a scaled-down gathering, inclusive of women. It also coincides with the Christian Epiphany which marks the visit of the Magi to the child Jesus, but on a secular level, signals, for some, a realisation of great truth. It is probably no coincidence that the Hindu term Darsana is also connected to "epiphany," or visions of the divine.

It is not just a time. It hovers beyond the temporal. The sun has passed through the winter solstice and earth has begun its upwards tilt to light. The spectrum is pure. Whatever is in shade seems darker; what is in light, flares with colour. The branches of the birch are like the hull of a boat, strong, curving broadly, the bark mottled with ochre, grey and brown; the oak is sturdy, branches still decked with Christmas lights that flicker softly in the breeze at night. These trees are enshrouded in silence. They have nothing to say, beyond *endure, endure.*

Never look back for long. Memory is too tricky a guide to be completely reliable. The purpose of the past is to urge us forward a little. Come New Year's Day, I plan and project, looking forward. But for those few weeks, I don't want to do very much about the plans. This is the time of year I live truly in the present, in days—for where else, to paraphrase Philip Larkin, is there to live?—living within the short cycle of light, and the alchemy of sloe gins in the evening. Each day, every hour, a minute, a second inscribes itself on me—yes, Time's emissary is calling; but I too inscribe something in return: the sense of myself passing through, the sense of my labours in time, in a specific place in this chill, Northern hemisphere, and the clarity that this sometimes brings.

(January 2012)

The Northern Athens or A City Of Horrors? Belfast as Presented by Some Irish Women Writers

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Abstract
Few cities have changed so much over the last century as Belfast. This is mainly due to industrialisation and de-industrialisation and not least to the three decades of the Troubles. For women the same period has meant the gaining of the vote, opportunities to work outside of the home and growing independence. My purpose here is to investigate the pictures of Belfast in the work of some Irish women writers and the urban spaces available to their characters, considering the segregation of the city. The idea of an urban culture is cohesion, of people living closely together and sharing the same space and culture, while Belfast in the twentieth century has been marked by class divisions, gender inequality and political disruption. I will investigate *A Belfast Woman* by Mary Beckett, a novel by Deirdre Madden and plays by Anne Devlin and Christina Reid for the different neighbourhoods in Belfast they present and the role there of gender and class barriers.

Key words: city, urban culture, landscape, community, the Troubles, segregation

The prosperity of Belfast at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century was the reason for giving the city the extravagant designation "The Northern Athens," also recycled in the mid-twentieth century to emphasise the promising flourishing of Northern Irish literature and pictorial arts, while it was the Troubles that in the last third of the century made people flee the city in fear and horror.[1] Against the bare background facts that Seamus Heaney—like many others—left for good to settle in the South of Ireland, while Michael Longley stayed and still lives in Belfast, and John Hewitt, after his fifteen years as Director of the Herbert Art Gallery in Coventry, returned in the heat of the Troubles, we will see what picture we get of Belfast by reading Mary Beckett's short story about a Belfast woman, Deirdre Madden's contradictory descriptions of the city through the main characters of her

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[1] Focusing on the arts "'The Northern Athens' and After" was the title John Hewitt gave his contribution to *Belfast: The Making of a City* (Hewitt 1983: 71-82).

novel *One by One in the Darkness,* or through the different characters in plays by Anne Devlin and Christina Reid.[2]

In these literary works I have been looking for descriptions, impressions, experiences and opinions of Belfast but also, more generally, for what the nature of a city is, as distinguished from a village or small town. What is the essence of a city culture? These are issues discussed in the course of a seminar series on the concept of the metropolis in literature, a context in which I had chosen to deal with Belfast as a metropolis. It might not be the first term that comes to mind in this case, so what do we mean by "metropolis"? Is it to be defined as a capital or a city of a certain size, or something more specific as a centre towards which other towns or villages are directed? The original meaning of the word in Greek is "mother city," and it described the place from which colonisers were sent out. This is a definition still used in certain postcolonial discourses and often denotes the whole of a country, like France or England, in relation to its earlier colonies. As the capital of the six counties forming Northern Ireland, Belfast is undeniably the centre of a province. At the same time, it is directed towards other capitals, towards Dublin, and not least towards London, the real metropolis, especially in colonial terms, since Ireland was England's first colony.

What, then, about urban areas as such, and what was the origin of these? In the classical drama of antiquity we can notice that, in a very general sense, tragedies took place in palaces among people of great political importance; comedy was a city play, acted out between bourgeois people, merchants and artisans, while the pastoral or burlesque took place in the countryside, staging shepherds and buffoons, respectively. In a historical perspective, at least as far back as the Latin writers, the city, basically the metropolis or, simply, Rome, was seen as the centre of civilised life and of the arts, while the countryside was notorious for ill-mannered people and rude customs. In addition, the formerly walled-in city was a refuge, offering protection. Gradually the city was, however, regarded as a hotbed of vice—in English literature we can think of Milton, or Blake as in his poem on London.[3] When the ideas

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[2] See Russell (2010: 1-2), and for the development of Hewitt's perception of Belfast see Olinder 2012a.

[3] Blake, however, makes the distinction between the reality of industrialisation with its "dark Satanic Mills" and the utopian city to be built "in England's green

of Rousseau became generally accepted, country life tended to be preferred to that of the city. With Romantic poetry this will be further enforced in descriptions of Nature as innocent, idyllic and picturesque.[4] This is something that applies still more to the picture of Ireland, in setting off things Irish in contrast to English industrialisation and city life. "True" Irish identity and culture were represented as rural or connected to and originating from rural idyll.[5]

So how are we to look upon Belfast? As a strongly industrialised city in the nineteenth and early twentieth century it has actually often been compared to Manchester or Liverpool, i.e. more English than Irish. Few cities have changed so much in the course of the last century as Belfast, mainly due to rapid industrialisation followed by de-industrialisation coupled with decades of conflict and violence. To women, the same period brought the vote, possibilities for professional work and growing independence. But then we have to take into account that the place of women was traditionally within the home, while men could move about freely, especially in towns and cities—a pattern that still exists in many countries today. This difference between men and women increased with growing urban spaces, often divided as public and private between men and women, but was countered by the developing freedom for women.

The very idea of urban culture is about the bringing together of people from different backgrounds. The urban space is ideally seen as multicultural, in contrast to segregation, whether for ethnic, religious, class or gender reasons. Seeing the traditional divisions in Northern Irish society, Belfast is all the more interesting to explore, and this is why I have here chosen to investigate women's views of the city. A general idea of how Belfast is presented in literature can be found in A *Belfast Anthology*, edited by Patricia Craig and published in 1999, including almost two hundred writers, some of them appearing in several different contexts. Since she has excluded drama, the plays by Devlin and Reid that I have examined are not represented, but there is a passage from

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and pleasant land," i.e. the new Jerusalem (Blake 1978: 62). Note that Heaven, the final paradise is a city, the perfect utopian place.

[4] Cf. Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973).

[5] See e.g. *Transformations in Irish Culture* by Luke Gibbons (1996), the introduction by Irene Gilsenan Nordin and Carmen Zamorano Llena to the collection *Urban and Rural Landscapes in Modern Ireland* (2012: 1-13), or Martin McLoone's *Irish Film* (2000).

Anne Devlin's short stories in *The Way-Paver* (Devlin 1986). Deirdre Madden is not included. Mary Beckett is represented by a paragraph from *Give Them Stones* (1988), but not from *A Belfast Woman* (1980). Craig has, however, quoted most of Kate O'Brien's eight pages on Belfast in *My Ireland* (1962), split up to illustrate seven different issues. It is a very good choice, and even if Kate O'Brien is not a Belfast woman, I think she offers an excellent point of departure in this context. O'Brien begins her presentation of the city with a couple of anecdotes, followed by an interestingly selective history of Belfast, naturally, not to be compared to Dublin but with stark contrasts:

> [. . .] it was the nineteenth century and big business—the big business of shipbuilding and linen-spinning—which finally created the rich and famous city, and cursed her with an all-round ugly look—pretentious here, mean there, dirty and haphazard mostly everywhere. A brazen kind of ugliness, if you like, which is disconcerting, and represents, as one soon finds, neither the voices nor the manners of the citizens. (O'Brien 1962: 97)

There are, however, other things she appreciates about the city:

> For one thing, it is packed with real faces—no two alike. And it is full of light. At noon in Belfast, even in bad winter, one seems to be in the presence of the full light of the sky, and all the inexcusable buildings around and including the City Hall stand leisurely back from the wide, white-gleaming pavements so that you can mock them at your ease. And the flower-barrows on the kerbsides are radiant and the women in charge of them witty and friendly to match. There often is wind blowing, salty from the Lough—and hats fly off and newspapers flap, and cornerboys make soft local jokes. (O'Brien 1962: 98)

The difference between "the inexcusable buildings" and the ugly look of the city, on the one hand, and the people, the life and the light in it could not be greater. Here, there is no high-falutin reference to classical Greece, but neither is there any of the fear and terror that we will find in the writers discussed below, since Kate O'Brien describes a period before the thirty years of the Troubles. She speaks about "a civic quality" as "just an expression of energy and love of life," something that "has always enriched and sweetened Belfast writing, the best of which has usually been strongly regional, and because of that, laced with a peculiar humaneness and good sense, qualities not primary ever in the best writing of Dublin or Munster" (O'Brien 1962: 98). What she emphasises is the fact that a city is not only made up of streets and buildings, but of

the experiences and attitudes of a large number of individual men and women, influencing one another's lives. This is something that also stands out very clearly when looking at the women writers I have chosen to discuss.

Mary Beckett

Although the protagonist of the story in Beckett's "A Belfast Woman" is a Catholic herself, she lives in a Protestant street, because of her husband's family.[6] As she tells her story, we get a graphic description of the different cultures of Belfast: In a Catholic area there is a lively relationship between the women, going in and out of each other's houses, with the men who are out of work, gathering around the corners, while the Protestant streets are quiet and deserted, since the women keep to their own houses and the men are at work.

The woman's earliest memory as a little girl is from a crisis in 1921, when the family's house was burnt down and they had to get out in the middle of the night, taking refuge with her grandmother. Fourteen years later, a letter arrives containing a threat to burn them out from there. She is reminded of these two incidents when, on a beautiful morning half a century after the first occasion, she finds another menacing letter inside the door. First, she leaves her home to seek refuge with her son's family, but on second thoughts decides to go back and stay put. After a while, however, something strange happens. Her Protestant neighbours begin moving out. To her surprise, the woman finds that it is their turn to be threatened. Not long after, Catholics start moving in with ensuing change of social relations.

The story closes on an episode when a man comes round trying to sell Venetian blinds. She declines because she wants to be able to see out, and she points to the sunset, "bits of red and yellow in the sky and a sort of mist all down the mountain that made it nearly see-through" (Beckett 1980: 98). The man looks at the view and remarks that Belfast has "the most beautiful sunsets in the whole world," and it is "because of all the smoke and dirt and dust and pollution," adding that "if the dirt and dust and smoke and pollution of Belfast just with the help of the sun can

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[6] Here, the short story in the collection of the same title is discussed, Beckett 1980: 84-99.

make a sky like that, then there's hope for all of us." Afterwards, when the woman is alone again, she cannot help laughing in spite of menacing letters and the general situation. What he had said was true: "There is hope for all of us. Well, anyway, if you don't die you live through it, day in, day out" (99).

Belfast is here, then, seen from the inside of a woman's deeply painful experiences of the division of the city into Catholic and Protestant streets. This is a segregation representing different attitudes to the space of the street, and a segregation that time and again erupts in violence. In the end, with the only real description of the city, we get an example of Belfast humour in its hopefulness in spite of all.

Most of the other stories in the collection are set in the countryside, with visits to Belfast limited to the market and the bus station. In "The Master and the Bombs," the only other exception, a woman is feeling "useless and unwanted and of dwindling instead of growing" (Beckett 1980: 79). There is, however, one occasion when she is standing downtown at a pedestrian crossing among the crowd waiting to cross, "and when we were let cross I got an excitement out of the pushing two-way jostle of people and I felt it mattered only to be alive and to use every bit of one's life" (79). The excitement of being one in a crowd of unknown people is a genuinely urban feeling.

The last story in Beckett's collection *A Belfast Woman*, "Failing Years," is set in a city, but it is about a Belfast woman married in Dublin. As an ageing widow she longs back to her young days in Belfast. Even if it is set in Dublin, there is one passage of urban feeling that need not be related to any specific city. It is a memory of her husband, as they

> [. . .] strolled round arm-in-arm looking at shop windows. It was a mild night and hundreds of people were doing the same. Nora became aware of a light, bubbling sound rising from the streets and she realised it was people laughing all over town. So she began having an affection for Dublin as one can grow fond of someone else's child. (Beckett 1980: 108)

This refers, then, indirectly to "her own child," which is still Belfast, the city she loves, and again depicts a true urban experience of a fellowship with strangers.

Deirdre Madden

Madden's novel, *One by One in the Darkness* (1997), is mainly set in the countryside, but also leaves room for different experiences of Belfast, made by several of the characters. Thus, as a child, the mother in the family feels that Belfast is a noisy, grimy, ugly place, but later when she attends teacher training college there, she finds that the city also had the special attraction of its position and the varied activities represented by the large number of houses, and the different kinds of work. The city

> [. . .] had a beautiful position, tucked in between the mountains and the sea. The rows and rows of terraced redbrick houses, with the mills, the yellow gantries of the shipyards, the spires of the churches, and the bare slopes of the Black Mountain together gave the city its atmosphere. [. . .] she decided that when she was qualified, she would do her best to find a job in Belfast, rather than go back to Ballymena as was expected of her. (Madden 1997: 116)

Later Cate, one of her three daughters, is more ambivalent, looking at Belfast while driving into the city. She has to concentrate on the traffic, while lorries are thundering past on either side. But she registers the large posters outside a church, a cemetery in the distance, and Belfast Lough beyond that. She likes the docks and the yellow gantries, but the Lower Falls makes her uncomfortable, "she always felt nervous and conspicuous and was afraid that something would happen there" (Madden 1997: 85).

Her eldest sister, Helen, lives in Belfast where she works as a lawyer defending terrorists. This leads to an account of one of the many murders, this time with a taxi driver as the victim, making the streets of the city a stage for crime. At the same time, she helps a friend to plan for the first visit to Belfast of his London partner. How to avoid his being put off by "seeing soldiers all over the place; and the barracks all fortified and stuff; that's going to frighten the life out of him. And what if anything happens? I mean, what if a bomb goes off, or the car gets hijacked or something?" (56). But everything is carefully planned and works out. The partner, Steve, does not care about

> [. . .] the checkpoint at the airport, and once we got on to the motorway, we just barrelled up to the city. My luck was in: you know what a marvellous evening it was yesterday. Belfast Lough was like glass, the sun was on the mountains, it couldn't have been better. Steve couldn't get over how beautiful it was, and that sort of made

> up for the city being so ugly when we got into it. He says it reminds him of Manchester, and fortunately, he likes Manchester. (56)

The whole visit is so successful that Steve wants to come and live in Belfast. So to dissuade him, he is to be shown the other side of the coin. This time when David

> [. . .] collected him at the airport, he didn't drive into Belfast by the motorway, but went over the Divis mountain, through Turf Lodge and then down on to the Falls Road, pointing out the heavily fortified barracks and all the other things which, before, he would have been at pains to conceal. [. . .] [Later] he took himback over to West Belfast, took him through the narrow web of streets, showed him the Republican murals on the gable walls around the lower Falls, then took him over to the Shankill and showed him the Loyalist murals. (57)

From several angles of vision, then, Madden's novel points to aspects such as what Edward Soja, the postmodern political geographer and urban planner, terms "synekism," or "urban agglomeration" (Borch 2010: 118), as well as to the energy of large working places like the shipyards. At the same time, these descriptions enhance the beautiful situation and surroundings of Belfast while they show other features as ugly, frightening and downright revolting. The heart of the matter is the question whether the city with its conflicts, crime and elements of war can at all function as a community or not.

Anne Devlin

What does Belfast look like in *Ourselves Alone* (1986)? The title of the play is he English translation of "Sinn Fein," the name of the Irish Republican movement, but here applied in a feminist spirit. This is a play first performed in 1985, at the Liverpool Playhouse, and the Royal Court Theatre, London. It is about two sisters and their sister-in-law, trying to find some meaning in their lives among Republicans, in the period after the hunger strikes of Bobby Sands and others. The action of the play is mainly set in Andersonstown, West Belfast, where the Republican Club is characterised by power struggles and violence, from which the women seek protection in the sister-in-law's home. But both the father and the brother-husband are menacing when they turn up, and outside in the street the hammering of bin lids on the pavement is heard every now and then. This is a warning that British soldiers are on their way, and on one

occasion we also see the soldiers force their way in to search the house. Most scenes are marked by fear, with people listening for threatening sounds, surreptitiously sneaking away, so as not to be seen in the wrong place.

Even if Devlin very clearly declares that the setting is mainly Andersonstown, West Belfast, she does add "but also Dublin, a hotel room, and John McDermot's house in South Belfast, near the university and the Botanic Gardens" (Devlin 1986: 11), an area of the city with a Protestant majority. One scene there takes place in a children's playground. The younger sister, Frieda, and her partner, are trying to catch the falling autumn leaves before they reach the ground, since every leaf caught means a happy day next year. But also in a safe area like that, Frieda, with her Republican background, is pursued and harassed; even the police have complaints that the two of them are causing a disturbance. Then, a brick is thrown through their window with a menacing note for her, stating that this is a Protestant street. The reality behind the different addresses is to set off the contrast between them but especially to demonstrate that the essential arena for the three women in focus is still the private room, a traditionally gendered scene.[7]

When, in *The Long March* (Devlin 1986a) Devlin turns to a TV play, a more flexible medium without the constrictions of the theatre, the setting moves as a taxi travels between West Belfast and Stranmillis, showing Republican quarters near the Falls Road, with their murals from the hunger strike period, also giving glimpses of the Royal Victoria Hospital, and Divis Flats, proceeding towards Great Victoria Street and on to the University area. At other times, the focus is on the centre with the City Hall and the streets around it, with security gates locked. The stage directions meant for a TV production can prescribe the scenes to take place much more out of doors, thus evoking a very particular Belfast atmosphere of the time, with effects like church bells, mixed with helicopter motors, and joggers passing outside Queen's Bookshop.

The climax of the play comes the week before Christmas 1980 with a go-slow action of the men emptying the rubbish bins, while the state of some of the hunger strikers is critically deteriorating, and threatening demonstrators, with torches alight, are screaming and chanting: "Brit

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[7] Cf. Enrica Cerquoni, "Women in Rooms: Landscapes of the Missing in Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone*" (2007).

lovers out out out!" Finally, Father Oliver arrives to tell them that the hunger strikers have accepted the terms offered.

Two short scenes in the drama, one from a hotel in Belfast, and the other from "a colonial drawing room" in London, differ from the rest of the play, by providing glimpses from weddings, which should be symbols of unity but here indicate disharmony. The play ends with a picture of the moon over West Belfast which is presented as a place for conflict, but also with awkward attempts, like Father Oliver's efforts, at bridging the controversies.

To conclude this discussion of Devlin's work, it is worth mentioning her later play, *After Easter* (1994). This play was looked forward to with great expectations, when it was first to be performed in Northern Ireland at the Lyric Players Theatre. The performance was however, met with disappointment and harsh criticism.[8] The beginning and end of the play take place in England, but the larger part is set in Belfast, represented in a great variety of scenes: convent, hospital ward, a sunny family yard and the inside of a home, which is suddenly besieged and in a state of crossfire; in other words a city to long for and to get away from. It is shown with its violence, threats, menacing sounds during a wake, in an atmosphere of irony and humour, mixed with fear. We see social engagement, but also a deeply segregated society, close to a state of war. The city of Belfast is seen as a refuge, but also a dangerous place to escape from.

Christina Reid
Christina Reid's three plays from the 1980s are very much Belfast plays. *Tea in a China Cup* (1987) covers the period from 1939 to 1972, switching back and forth with changes in lighting, indicating changes of time and place. While Beth has married into an elegant house up on the Lisburn Road, symbolised by a velvet sofa on the stage, here indicating a wealthier area than Beth's original home, the main scene is the little Protestant house of her grandparents, later inhabited by her mother, Sarah. An important feature here is the wall with first the portrait of the grandfather, in a First World War uniform, later with the addition of his

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[8] See Cottreau 2006: 325-35. For a more extensive analysis of the play see Olinder 2012b: 73-81.

son, also in uniform, killed in the Second World War, and finally his grandson in his army uniform, posted to Germany as a motor mechanic: "three generations for King and Country" (Reid 1987: 23) as the grandfather proudly exclaims. The first scene makes it clear—although it is first taken as a joke—that the new cemetery is strictly divided into Catholic and Protestant plots, demonstrating how segregation continues even after death.[9] An important line of action in the play is the parallel lives of Beth and her Catholic friend, Theresa, emphasising the differences in their upbringing and opportunities, as well as the respective prejudices of their backgrounds. The divisions in the city are not only between Catholics and Protestants, or rich and poor, but also between Catholic poverty, relying on social assistance, and Protestant genteel poverty, refusing such help to keep up appearances and the family pride, represented by the almost proverbial "tea in a china cup." The initial stage direction states that the action is set in Belfast, but there is only one direct reference to a street, the above mentioned Lisburn Road. It is, however, the whole context, the family history, people's reactions, behaviour, and relationships that make the play a presentation of Belfast.

Another play, *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989), is much more explicit, not only in the title which refers to the now 77 year-old Dolly, once topping the bill for singing and dancing in the halls as "The Belle of the Belfast City." Here the opposites are those who can enjoy life versus the moralists who cannot but only seem to enjoy judging the other lot. The singing and dancing, particularly of the good old days, are contrasted by the demonstrations of the time in which the play is set, i.e. the mid-eighties. The family shop is in East Belfast, in a side street that the army has closed to traffic, but the city and its streets are mentioned throughout the play. When young Belle, the coloured granddaughter, born in England, arrives for the first time in Belfast, we get her fresh impressions of the city, and we can see the wide differences in her perceptions and expressions of them from those of other characters. Belle is also the one to observe that, apart from the very centre of the city, many people know only their own neighbourhood. This reveals the strict

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[9] Another kind of division is seen when comparing Beth's mother Sarah's intense pleasure at hearing the Orange bands practising for the twelfth of July, with the horror felt on similar occasions by the Catholic characters in Madden's novel discussed above.

division of the city, which, in turn, means that it is partly lack of knowledge of "the other" that leads to lack of empathy. The moralist racist is confronted by the fact that his cousin, Belle's mother, gets her daughter outside marriage, with a black Baptist preacher who had been thrown out by that same cousin and mother-to-be for being "a sanctimonious American bible-belt prig" (Reid 1989: 15). The play offers a full variety of political opinions, from hard core National Front members in Nazi uniforms, to the many nuances of Liberal views. The varied accents are also explicitly mentioned from Irish, Northern Irish, Scots, Northern English, ordinary English, to Aristocratic English, as an important feature of each of the characters. Since one of them is deaf and dumb, sign language also plays a role in the play, adding to the urban variety. This mixture is also characteristic of Belfast, even if a mix of different dialects or languages must be a feature of most big cities these days. The play provides a light-hearted picture of Belfast and its inhabitants, reflecting the good old times, while at the same time this is set off by the general unrest, and especially by the callous insensitivity of the National Front member of the family.

Conclusion

Urbanists like Edward Soja will say that a city is the combination of three elements: a place, time as expressed in its history and a social community aspect (Borch 2010: 115). In other words, a city is the effect of a great many people interacting, in constant development of the place where they live, and their sense, individually, of being one among many. This is also what we have seen in Mary Beckett's short stories, Deirdre Madden's novel and Anne Devlin's and Christina Reid's plays, where Belfast is occasionally represented as one big criminal area, but most of the time a place for human encounters. This is so, even if the feeling of common interest as an essential aspect of urban unity is lacking— sometimes also within the same group. The conflicts of the past are seldom mentioned explicitly in these works, even if they lie heavily on people's minds, but most important is, of course, the ongoing conflicts. The picture of Belfast presented to us as readers and audience is, thus, ambiguous, multifaceted, at times very attractive, but all too often the opposite. The difference between, on the one hand, urban life with its freedom but also, mainly due to the Troubles, its dangers and limitations

and, on the other hand, the beautiful surrounding landscape is clearly marked. The city's function as an administrative or cultural centre looms in the background, but in these literary works, the city is mainly seen from a number of individual points of view, those of the writers and of their created characters. The many subjective images make up a composite picture of Belfast as a city to long for, but also a city people intensely want to get away from, as from a life that has gone wrong.

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Mourning Mothers: A Psychoanalytic Reading of Parental Relationships in Colm Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons*

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Abstract

Modern Irish literary criticism is routinely concerned with representations of gender and power, and the multitudinous forms that they assume within Irish literature. This paper examines Colm Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons* (2006) and its negotiation with traditional representations of the Irish mother and son, and how it challenges key assumptions about their role and function in Irish literature. In doing so, this paper argues for the primacy of a psychoanalytic reading, one which employs the theoretical framework of mourning and melancholy, as formulated, first by Sigmund Freud and, more recently, by Julia Kristeva. The paper proceeds to illustrate that the maternal and filial relationships, as represented in *Mothers and Sons,* exist as elaborations of repression, desire, and mourning, and thus can be understood as processes and metaphorical representations of the unconscious imaginary. The paper concludes that Tóibín circumvents the traditional paradigm of Irish notions regarding domesticity, gender, and power, by proffering an alternative representation of mothers and sons, one which ultimately engages with concerns that are most commonly associated with the territory of the unconscious.

Key Words: Colm Tóibín, Mothers and Sons, Irish literature, mourning, melancholia, Freud, Kristeva, psychoanalytic theory

Introduction

Traditional representations of women in Ireland are key concerns in modern Irish literary criticism, with many feminist critics decrying the conventional stereotypes of women in both their representation and function. Irish literature, according to Claire Connolly, has been saturated with images of "Mother Ireland, wild Irish girl, gentle colleen, old hag, [and] wise woman" (Connolly 2003: 3), which marginalises women as static, one-dimensional caricatures. These relatively codified representations of Irish women have been typically aligned with anti-British sentiments or Irish political ambitions, helping incite young Irishmen into action to protect their *mother*land. Commenting on the impoverishing effect that these historic traditional representations have had, John McCourt summarises:

> At best the mother's role [was] to facilitate the development (more usually, the lack of development) of the relationship between father and son, or to offer compensation to the son for the omissions or the sins of the father. While embodying whatever emotional core exists in the home, mothers and sons are always placed in a subordinate role and are rarely afforded the space necessary to understand—much less fulfill—their individual needs. (McCourt 2008: 151)

Against this backdrop, Colm Tóibín's collection of short fiction *Mothers and Sons* may be viewed as negotiating with traditional representations of the Irish mother and established conceptualisations of the Irish domestic sphere. By removing fathers from their superimposed positions within the family, *Mothers and Sons* not only accentuates the primacy of the relationship alluded to by the title, but also thereby galvanises new potentialities for the role of both mother and son. Furthermore, as Kathleen Costello-Sullivan states: "mothers are not so much lost as made present through the aching absence of their representation, or alternatively, by the aching representation of their absence" (Costello-Sullivan 2009: 123).[1] Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons* thus problematises traditional representations of the Irish mother by essentially proposing a different modality, one in which the mothers' presence invokes their simultaneous absence: a somewhat paradoxical notion, but one which gains mounting significance when examining the representation and function of mothers, and their influence on their sons in Tóibín's fiction.

Granted that Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons* does anticipate, and present scenes that hinge upon the Irish mother or son achieving individual freedom, usually from overtly patriarchal social structures in Irish society, many of the stories refuse to conform to such reduced and simplistic expectations (Iyer 2006). The concluding story "A Long Winter," for instance, not only depicts a recalcitrant alcoholic mother who freezes to death in the winter snow, but afterwards also foreshadows her corpse as being ostensibly devoured by vultures: a consequence for her hasty decision to abandon her family. Of equal importance however, the sons represented in the collection refuse to fully recognise or acknowledge their mothers, but rather they engage in psychological contestations: attempts to navigate, undermine, or surmount the overbearing motherly presence. Consequently, *Mothers and Sons* not

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[1] Although made with specific reference to *The Heather Blazing*, this quotation may equally be said true of *Mothers and Sons.*

only mediates between traditional and modern expectations concerning Irish representations of mothers and sons, but in its ambivalence, it also reformulates questions regarding the complex function and role of mother and son relationships in Tóibín's oeuvre.

Having briefly positioned *Mothers and Sons* in the cultural milieu of Irish representations of domesticity, it is equally constructive to situate the collection within Tóibín's oeuvre as a constituent of an organic whole. Reflecting on the writing and publication of *Mothers and Sons,* Tóibín states:

> You think, anything except that last book, you need to wash it out of yourself completely, and one of the really useful things here, I suppose, is that I was able to go back for *The Heather Blazing*, for *The Blackwater Lightship*, and for the book of stories, *Mothers and Sons*, to a strange sort of subterranean Irish tradition [. . .]. It's a sort of melancholy tradition. (qtd in O'Toole 2008: 200)

Following this statement however, Tóibín is increasingly ambiguous in defining what constitutes the "subterranean Irish tradition" of "melancholy." His closest attempt is to assert that it exists in the work of various Irish writers and that it incorporates "the business of the rural, just being brought up somewhere so remote, with a family all around you" (qtd in O'Toole 2008: 200). The ambiguity in Tóibín's definition may be complemented when juxtaposing it with his collection of essays, *Love in a Dark Time,* specifically where he states: "The strongest images in Irish fiction, drama and poetry are of brokenness, death, destruction. The plays are full of shouting, the poetry is full of elegy, the novels are full of funerals" (Tóibín 2002: 26).[2] This not only provides a convincing backdrop for the "melancholic tradition" and the "business of the rural [. . .] with a family all around you," but also for *Mothers and Sons* as a collection: these stories are not concerned with families marked by tenuous terms of contentment, but rather by the certainty of "brokenness," "death" and "funerals."

Acknowledging both the cultural and literary context of *Mothers and Sons,* this essay argues that the collection exists both as a reactionary text against traditional Irish representations of mothers and sons, and as a

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[2] McCourt also highlights this particular passage from *Love in a Dark Time*, and argues that "*Mothers and Sons* writes to the agenda Tóibín perceives as being common to boy gay literature and Irish writing" (McCourt 2008: 149).

metaphorical elaboration of the unconscious interplay of mourning that constitutes strains within the mother-son relationship. When approaching *Mothers and Sons* through the lens of psychoanalytic criticism, it reveals how parental relationships function within a matrix of grief, symbolically transfiguring the mother into an object of loss, which, in turn, threatens the hitherto tenuous autonomy of the son's ego. Facing the possible threat of trammelled psychological development, the son, out of necessity, must repudiate the mother and disavow her stranglehold that threatens to pull him into melancholia: back into the womb of asymbolia existence. Therefore, rather than existing simply as idolised surrogates of Mother Ireland, in *Mothers and Sons* the mothers are foremost represented through their disembodied duality as a haunting presence/absence: a function with which the son must not only cope with, but eventually overcome, in his own tortuous psychological development. When privileging the unconscious undercurrents that exist between mother and son, both their representation and function in Tóibín's fiction may be convincingly interpreted within the framework of the psychoanalytic tradition, vis-à-vis mourning and melancholia.

Approaching Mourning in Mothers and Sons
In Tóibín's fiction parental relationships are often represented in terms of the psychological dissension that exists between mother and child: fissures, which frequently structure the protagonists' internal motivation, culminating in, and helping force them into, moments of subtle self-realisation. Mother and child relationships, as characterised above, are clearly privileged thematically in Tóibín's *The South* (1992a)*, The Heather Blazing* (1992b), *The Story of the Night* (1996), *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999), and *Mothers and Sons* (2006). In addition, Tóibín makes candid reference to his ongoing engagement with this particular theme, both in the entitling of numerous literary works,[3] as well as his own admission "that the mothers and sons are there all the time" (Wiesenfarth 2009: 9). It is therefore surprising that within the literary criticism available, very little focuses on the singular importance of

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[3] Note the thematically related titles of Tóibín's published work: "New Ways of Killing Your Father" (1993), Mothers and Sons (2006), The Empty Family (2011), New Ways to Kill Your Mother (2012a), and The Testament of Mary (2012b).

parental relationships in Tóibín's work, or when it does, it projects their meaning into the socio-political realm of Irish historiography, nationalism, or gender roles.

In one of the more focused essays on the representation and function of mothers in Tóibín's fiction, Kathleen Costello-Sullivan examines the "continual dialogue with the figure of the lost mother" (109), and attempts to explain how this dialogue places within a larger pattern in Tóibín's fiction. Importantly, in *The Heather Blazing,* Costello-Sullivan does identify "Eamon's painful and repressed childhood" (Costello-Sullivan: 2009: 109), as well as the fact "that [the] mother is not consistently posited as a lack, but rather as a shadowy but concealed presence troubling the visible narrative of Eamon's life" (112). Ultimately however, Costello-Sullivan maintains that the function of the mother should be viewed primarily as a metaphor for the socio-historical exclusion of women in Ireland, and concludes by stating that:

> Tóibín specifically engages with the figure of the lost mother to challenge representations of Irish history that exclude Ireland's foremothers—the women from past and present generations who have contributed to the experiences and shaping of the nation. (122)

In a separate reading and interpretation of the representation of mothers in Tóibín's fiction, John McCourt emphasises the antagonistic aspects between the mother and son, and their individual need to "[maintain] an independent personal space in which to live and to develop" (McCourt 2008: 154). McCourt's further suggestion, that "[t]he son's achievement of personal affirmation seems always to come at the cost of sacrifice of the mother," particularly resonates with the argument of this essay, specifically in how it will be shown that the son's normative psychological maturation is contingent upon the necessary repudiation of the mother. Indeed, McCourt does explore the various dimensions of power and contestations of space between mother and son, and provides a convincing conclusion when stating that:

> The book's final lines underline the need to move beyond the mother figure and to overcome the huge maternal inheritance a son is born into—to render the mother part of the son's emotional past, to render her "no use" to him in the present. (165)

Yet, although McCourt alludes to the psychological dimension, it is again left at the margins of the argument, remaining unexamined or transposed by any meaningful application or theoretical framework.

Anne Fogarty's essay, "After Oedipus? Mothers and Sons in the Fiction of Colm Tóibín," is, as the title suggests, one of the few essays on Tóibín that does, at least in part, acknowledge psychoanalytic theory. Fogarty firstly identifies the primacy of "troubled interrelations between mothers and sons" in Tóibín's writing (Fogarty 2008: 167), then continues to investigate the "space of the maternal and the voided" (168), and the ways in which the "[u]nvoiced intimacy with the mother shades into a desolate insight into absence, loss and the unfathomable nature of individual existence" (170). Fogarty concludes her essay by analysing Tóibín's "articulated erotics of loss" (171), while ultimately rejecting the quintessential paradigm of Freudian theory by stating: "Tóibín's plots insistently expose the failing of the Oedipus complex even as they cleave to narratives of family life" (174). Fogarty's assertion that Tóibín's fiction needs to be interpreted beyond the limiting scope of the Oedipus complex, particularly resonates when juxtaposed with Tóibín's own reflection on the fiction in *Mothers and Sons*:

> There are times when you feel that Foucault, not Freud, is the presiding spirit [. . .]. The search for power and space is dramatised between the two and I wanted to 'de-Freudianise' the relationship between mothers and sons—the son is created by the mother but now he wants to wrestle power from her and she tries to keep it, and so on. (qtd in McDowell 2006)

Compounding Fogarty's critical assessment with Tóibín's own admission, it does become increasingly appropriate to eschew the Freudian theoretical framework of the Oedipus complex. However, this current essay argues that it is not Foucault but rather Freud who remains as "the presiding spirit" of *Mothers and Sons*, and specifically with the later elaboration of Freud's theory by Julia Kristeva. Although Tóibín may have consciously attempted to "de-Freudianise" the stories collected in *Mothers and Sons*, it will be argued that his fiction reveals that this is not so much *de-Freuding* as it is *de-Oedipusing*.

In its attempt to evade the overarching Freudian formulation of the Oedipus complex, Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons* inversely resonates with an equally sophisticated Freudian theoretical framework: mourning and melancholia. The processes of mourning are consistently present in

Mothers and Sons, albeit in varying degrees of intricacy and potency in each story. The sons then are represented not as secretly desiring their mother to the exclusion of the father, but rather in grief, they view their mother symbolically as an object of loss, which serves to impede and threaten the tenuous but imperative autonomy of their ego. *Mothers and Sons* frequently represents both the mother and son as existing in a relationship hinged upon repressed friction: friction that foremost may be understood as atavistic engagements with the psychoanalytic imaginary of the unconscious.

Freud's essay "On Mourning and Melancholia" begins with specifying that processes of mourning are induced by the "loss of a loved person," or "some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, [or] an ideal" (Freud 2001: 243). Furthermore, the psychological states of mourning and melancholia mirror one another in that they are signified by "profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling" (244). Most importantly however, relying heavily on earlier theoretical work on narcissism, Freud posits that in the process of mourning the ego has narcissistically identified with, and been capitulated by, the lost object.

In her own study on depression and melancholia in *Black Sun* (1989), Julia Kristeva simultaneously advances Freud's notions of mourning and melancholy while also reconceptualising certain key dynamics. For Kristeva, the ultimate lost object is the mother/breast that is first incepted during the pre-symbolic separation of the infant-child dyad. Aligned with Freud's theorisation of the narcissistic identification with the lost object, for Kristeva, "matricide [becomes] our vital necessity" (Kristeva 1989: 27), with the alternative being the "putting to death the self" (28). In addition to her articulation that the mourning of the pre-symbolic mother elides in all mourning, Kristeva also proposes that all mourning encompasses the mourning of the lost-self. Ineffable, this lost-self, according to Kristeva, is located in the semiotic realm, an unsymbolised "Thing" to be approached only through "melody, rhythm, [and] semantic polyvalency" (14). Tóibín's fiction particularly echoes this notion, specifically in how it frequently "[posits] parallel worlds that may or may not be of the same essence" (Hagan 2012: 33), by employing

sentences during key climactic moments that actively foster possibilities of semantic multifariousness.

Representations of Mourning the Mother

The opening story in *Mothers and Sons,* "The Use of Reason," revolves around an unnamed professional thief who recently stole various pieces of renowned artwork, including a treasured Rembrandt painting: *A Portrait of an Old Woman*. Throughout the story, the protagonist strives primarily to be rid of the paintings, while also manoeuvring between personal dilemmas relating to his alcoholic mother and previously murdered younger brother. The story begins, significantly, with the lone man surveying the "wide waste ground" of Dublin (Tóibín 2006: 3). Developing this imagistic scene through repetition of the word "empty"—a word repeated no less than nine occasions in the first paragraph—Tóibín hints toward the fulcrum of the collection as a whole. As Pico Iyer notes: "the word 'emptiness' tolls with mounting force as it recurs throughout the story [. . .] [until] we feel something like epiphany when it comes back with new resonance in the second half of the final piece" (Iyer 2006). The entire collection is markedly engulfed by tonalities of silence and emptiness, which arguably evoke emotive states of mourning and loss.

In "The Use of Reason," the rendered emptiness of the physical environment mirrors the psychological interiority of the protagonist. Throughout the story it becomes increasingly evident that the protagonist is on the verge of being drawn into a melancholic state, as revealed through his admissions of feeling "love for no one" (Tóibín 2006: 24), and that "he would be happy if everything were dark and empty [. . .] no sound at all and no one living to make any sound" (40). This repeated desire for erasure and the emptying of signs, the summoning of pre-symbolic existence, harkens Kristeva's notion of the semiotic and the pre-objectal "Thing," the part of the self that is simultaneously mourned in all mourning.

The catalyst of the protagonist's initial entry into mourning appears to be associated with his murdered younger brother, Billy, but is intrinsically tied to the presence of the mother. When his brother was alive "the only way he could see Billy was by seeing her" (40), and although the protagonist "supposed that he did not really feel much about

Billy anymore" (24), at the story's conclusion the opposite is revealed to be true. After learning that his mother had disparaged Billy during one of her regular bouts at a pub, he declares, in one of the more memorable pieces of dialogue in the story: "I will take action against you if I hear another word" (42). The imprecise meaning of the word "action" elicits a moment and need for interpretation. Clearly although the protagonist himself is unable to vocalise his own desire and intent, a typical problem vis-à-vis the unconscious and the nature of repression, it increasingly becomes evident that the "action" is in reference to some violent outcome, if not outright matricide, as supported by the protagonist's decisive fantasy of burning the paintings at the closing of the story:

> He would find a special place for them, the emptiest place [. . .]. He would stick to the barren emptiness which lay south of Dublin. He would bring fire-lighters, rather than petrol so that he could burn each one slowly, letting the canvases shrivel up in the flame, leaving Rembrandt's sour old woman until last until it was a heap of ash. It would make a vivid emptiness in the space where it had once hung. (44)

The Rembrandt painting, *A Portrait of an Old Woman*, therefore evolves as the chief symbol in the story and is employed on different metaphorical levels. The protagonist, admitting his inability to understand the worth of the painting, observes that the picture "was done in some dark colour," with the woman "[appearing] as though she needed some cheering up" (8). In the protagonist's unconscious, it is important to note the way in which "the stolen painting and his mother merge" (McCourt 2008: 154), and by extension reveals an attribute of his own inability to mourn. His need for erasure, and the burning of the maternal image from out of the symbolic order, equates with Anne-Marie Smith's observation that "in Kristeva's model of melancholia, 'energy is displaced from the social code' and meaning is shifted to 'the semiotic realm of sounds, colours, rhythms, tone and modulation'" (qtd in Blakeman 2006: 207). In addition, it evokes Kristeva's notion whereby matricide serves as "the first step on the way to becoming autonomous" (Kristeva 1989: 27), through the processes of normative mourning.

The mother thus represented, refuses to abide by the traditional framework set for the Irish mother, one which would have her provide unconditional love for her miscreant sons, as if nothing were more

excusable in an Ireland coming to terms with itself as a nation.[4] In parallel fashion, the protagonist elides the traditional representation of the Irish son; for although offering his mother ostensible immunity against her neighbours' rebukes, this overture is not only noncommittal, but also infused by a murderous desire to be completely rid of her, in a likewise manner as the painting itself.

When viewed as a part of an organic whole, "The Use of Reason" informs the stories that follow in both its representation of displacement and undertones of matricide. In the second story of the collection, "A Song," the protagonist Noel engages with a process that may convincingly be understood through its resemblance of mourning. Activated by an unexpected meeting with his mother at a bar, Noel appears to relive the abandonment that occurred years earlier, when she absconded with a lover to pursue a music career in England. Similarly to "The Use of Reason," the intricacies of the mother-son relationship are shifted into the realm of the semiotic, although this time through the rhythm and sound of the mother's song.

The song, a lament of unrequited love that evolves into "a song of treachery" (Tóibín 2006: 53), serves as an implicit testament of the mother's regret, while simultaneously repudiating Noel's successful mourning work as a child, and by extension, his integration with the "father, form, [and] schema" (Kristeva 1989: 32). This is strongly evinced through Noel's unexplained resolve to "go and see [his father] when he got back to Dublin" (Tóibín 2006: 50), a decision significantly made only after immediately becoming cognisant of the unexpected presence of his mother. Following thereafter, Noel becomes transfixed by his mother's song, with his sense of selfhood threatened by the sudden appearance of the mother, indicated in that "[Noel] found that he had come closer to her and stood alone between her group and the bar," and yet, "he had not intended to shift from where he stood" (53). This unconscious drawing back into the fold of the mother aligns with the way in which the lost object of mourning assimilates portions of the ego into itself, and necessitates the "killing off the trace of the other in the self as a means to reestablish psychic health" (Clewell 2004: 60).

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[4] Early twentieth century Irish literature is replete with mothers excusing the unethical and violent nature of the sons' actions, usually by privileging the sons' expedience for the Irish Free State.

In Tóibínesque fashion, the story ends rather anti-climatically with Noel hastily leaving the bar and "[waiting] in the darkness for the others to come" (Tóibín 2006: 55). Yet, it is precisely by escaping direct confrontation with his mother that Noel effectively defuses the possibility of regressing back into the remoteness of mourning her absence. This simultaneously reaffirms his identification with the phallic-symbolic "universe of signs and creation" (Kristeva 1989: 23), indicated by the foreshadowing of Noel and his friends departing the bar, only to resume their night by playing music away from the presence of the mother. Being comprised as it is of generally hinted at metaphysical realities, "A Song" features a brief window into the unconscious interplay involved in the need to forsake the mother, in order to maintain normative autonomy of the ego.

Most clairvoyant in its representation of the mourning son, the story "Three Friends" begins with the protagonist, Fergus, sitting alone at a funeral parlor attending his mother's corpse. The story proceeds with Fergus attending a beach rave, which culminates in two separate homosexual encounters with his friend Mick. On a psychoanalytic level the story resonates as it traces the unconscious framework of mourning. The story may clearly be read as consisting of three stages: the first, an introduction of the mourned object; the second, the need to successfully separate one's ego from the lost object; and the third, the redirection of libidinal energy from the lost object to a new object of desire.

As Fergus sits alone with his mother's corpse at the onset of the story, the scene promptly signals the metaphysical interaction and processes of mourning. Fergus first realises that his mother "was beyond knowing" (Tóibín 2006: 186), and as a result of this realisation that "he was going to cry" (186). Afterward, a mysterious unnamed figure enters the scene, and although engaging in small talk he ultimately remains aloof from Fergus. After dialoguing about the state of the family and past events pertaining to the funeral parlour, Fergus dwells again on the fact that "if someone were to whisper that this man had come to take away his mother's spirit, it would not have seemed strange" (188). Repeatedly, the stranger is likened to Death, an anthropomorphism of which Fergus may clearly be understood to be interacting with, and absorbed by, and something that "had left its mark" (189), alluding to Fergus's descent into mourning.

The second stage of mourning commences with Fergus returning to Dublin with a "gnawing guilt at [his mother's] death [. . .] as though he were implicated in its cause" (191), coupled with an instinctive desire to sleep. Fergus's inability to cope, his self-identification with the lost maternal object, and the consequential blunting of libido energy, promises to overwhelm him if he fails to progress in the following stages of mourning. This progression ultimately requires that all "memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object [be] brought up and hyper-cathected" (Freud 2001: 245), which in this story takes form in an invitation from Fergus's friend Mick to attend a beach rave. Although Fergus at first rejects the invitation, an implicit signalling of the narcissistic tendency in mourning to keep the lost object alive, at the peril of the ego, Fergus does eventually concede to attend the party.

In order to reach the secluded beach where the rave will occur, Fergus and his three friends must traverse unmaintained and rarely travelled roads. In a particularly acute analysis of "Three Friends," Robinson Murphy maintains that this journey symbolically serves to explicate Fergus's unconscious state, noting that:

> The friends' initial passage into the rave landscape demands a reading faithful to the book's stated focus [. . .]. The movement here is one of inverted birth, a return to the womb-like cave, the entrance to which requires ascent back into the mother. One notes the violent, unnatural trajectory; Mick, the driver, cannot navigate the lane without stopping and exiting the vehicle to track their progress. This is a seldom-trod route, but for Fergus a route that must be broached to pass again into the world of the living. (Murphy 2009: 488)

Murphy's interpretation is further reinforced by the party occurring in a "sheltered cove" (Tóibín 2006: 195), and the music's "almost imperceptible variants" (197), in addition to Fergus's sentiment of being in a "cocoon of energy" that "could enclose him and keep him safe" (198), all of which invoke the metaphorical aspects of the womb.

This subsequent stage of mourning precipitates in Fergus the need to reject the allure of further self-identification with the mother. However, as Freud notes, when the libido is withdrawn from a lost object it "arouses understandable opposition [. . .] people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning him" (Freud 2001: 244). In "Three Friends," these substitutes literally beckon Fergus in the form of his three friends waiting for him in the ocean, imploring him to come forward:

> This, he thought, as he wrapped his arms around his body to keep warm, and
> allowed his teeth to chatter, was going to be an ordeal, but he could not return to the
> strand and dress himself now; he would have to be brave and join the others, who
> showed no sign of coming back to dry land as they beckoned him not to be a baby.
> (Tóibín 2006: 200)

Again, in his essay, Murphy outlines a similar schism occurring in
"Three Friends," the divide between the engulfing mother and the
freedom made possible by joining his friends in the ocean. Yet, his essay
diverges from the psychoanalytic approach, by attributing this freedom to
the socio-political realm with "Fergus's reclamation of the non-
normative family" (Murphy 2009: 489). Murphy also associates the
ocean with a re-appropriation of the baptismal rites of the Catholic
Church, which he suggests Tóibín employs in order to reformulate
possibilities to "coexist in [a] space, rendered 'queer'" (489).

Although Murphy argues for a progressing acceptance of
homosexuality in a post-Catholic Ireland, primarily, by associating
baptismal rites with the emergence of a new normative domestic sphere,
a psychoanalytic approach would suggest that the Catholic rite of
baptism may in itself exist as a metaphorical appropriation of the
amniotic fluid of the womb, an invocation of the semiotic existence that
occurs before the pre-symbolic stage of individualisation. Like Murphy,
this current essay argues that Fergus's eventual decision to join his three
friends in the ocean is significant as it "signals an ascent to selfhood, a
departure from [his] 'baby' status" (Murphy 2009: 488). This
consequently also signals Fergus's emergence into the third stage of
mourning, the stage in which mourning effectively ends, as signalled by
Fergus's successful homosexual advancement with his friend Mick, and
its presumed consummation at the conclusion of the story.

Expounding on aspects that feature in the previously examined
stories, "A Long Winter" concludes *Mothers and Sons* by providing its
morbid closure for the collection as a whole. Set in a sparse,
mountainous region in northern Spain, the story is singularly removed
from Ireland, yet its common theme "throws a retrospective shadow over
the rest of the stories" (McCourt 2008: 163), and develops into the
apogee of the collection. "A Long Winter" presents at once a site of
"intersection between affectivity and the familial" (Fogarty 2008: 167),
resulting in a confluence of maternal loss, mourning, and an eventual
restoration of autonomy and reconfiguration into community.

The story revolves around a rural household composed of a father, mother, and two sons, the youngest of which is promptly dispatched for obligatory military duty. Miquel, the eldest son, remains on the farm working with his father, while his mother tends to the domestic duties. Again, silence and emptiness immediately become common fixtures in the story, depicted through the youngest son "leaving an empty bed behind" (Tóibín 2006: 229), and the "the heavy silence which had gathered," because of the family's isolation from the rest of the village due to "the row about the water" (238). Against this backdrop Miquel gradually becomes cognisant of a "great sporadic restlessness" aroused in his mother, one that evolves into her "inability to settle" (229). The framed setting is thus juxtaposed with the mother's refusal to be complacent within it, to abide by the isolating silence, and ultimately forced into becoming "like a strange, hungry animal" (230), a direct foreshadowing of the vultures engorging on the carcass of the dog at the story's end.

Only after Miquel witnesses his mother drinking at a bar, does he realise that the reason for her uncharacteristic behaviour is due to alcoholism. Showing subtle awareness by secretly acknowledging that she had "nothing except hostile neighbours and a long winter" (234), Miquel is ultimately represented by his inaction, especially after his father attempts to cure the mother by throwing away the newly bought wine. It is this moment that is the catalyst for the further alienation of the mother, spurring her decision to renounce her family and reject her position in the home and to embark on a perilous journey toward her brother's house in the nearby village.

The mother's hasty departure from the home dooms her for the rest of story to an ethereal frozen existence, a result of the blizzard that occurs promptly thereafter. Consequently, "A Long Winter" hinges on the loss and mourning of the maternal, with the plot essentially unravelled by—and upon—the dead and decomposing body of the mother. The death of the mother lends itself once again to an "absent space [. . .] in which crucial aspects of male identity are negotiated and reconceived" (Fogarty 2008: 170), while first allowing for the reconfiguration of the ego and desire. As well, and in a strikingly similar vein as found in "Three Friends," the mother's death creates the possibility of personal fulfillment, obliquely signalled first by the

blizzard itself, in its turning the dry barren winter from brown to its natural fecundity of white.

The rest of the story follows likewise, chronicling the now unhindered possibilities afforded to Miquel through his mother's death. The most noticeable potential is for an all-male presence allowed to replace the now voided maternal space. This is signalled in Miquel "[realising] that in all his life he had seldom seen other men in this kitchen [. . .] they were always somehow in the shadows" (Tóibín 2006: 257), which then is juxtaposed by the overcrowding of men in the kitchen afterward, and more specifically with the arrival of two police officers, the youngest of whom precipitates the first stirrings of Miquel's sexuality:

> He took in the young policeman's face in the shadowy light of the kitchen, the full redness of the lips, the square, hard stubbornness of his jaw and chin and then the softness of his eyes, the eyelashes like a girl's. The young policeman, in turn, watched only Miquel's eyes, his gaze cold, expressionless, as though he were sullenly blaming him for something. When Miquel looked down at the policeman's crotch, he too glanced down at himself and he briefly smiled, opening his lips, before resuming his former expression, but more intense now, almost feral, staking out an object within his grasp. (260)

The kitchen, previously existing as an exclusively maternal space, is gradually eroded by a definitive queer space, capable of engendering homoerotic desire. This process is ultimately consummated by the arrival of Manolo, the young man hired by the father to fulfill the mother's domestic duties.

Yet, it is precisely through the process of mourning that Miquel is enabled to channel his libidinal energy away from his dead mother, as hinted at in various places throughout the text. This may first be seen in Miquel's flashback of playing hide-and-seek with his mother during childhood, and its influence on his present psychological state:

> He did not know how it had started, but, with her in the room, he used to hide under the table, or under the bed, or behind a chair, and she then would pretend that she could not find him, and they would both let it continue until the moment before he became scared [. . .]. As Miquel moved around the house now, he was acutely alert to the shadowy places, becoming darker in the twilight, the places where you could hide and then appear, as though his mother might mysteriously arrive and position herself where she could not be instantly found. (261)

The mother, fastened in mourning, is represented here as existing in tenuous flux. Miquel's subconscious attempt to recover her from her deadening absence is under threat by his simultaneous unconscious desire to have her permanently displaced. This is observed again in one of the more significant scenes in the story, wherein Miquel needs to provide an article of his mother's clothing for the tracking dogs to scent:

> Below this was some of her underwear which he took and held, and then, checking that no one was behind him, he lifted to his nose. He buried his face in the intimate smell of her, which was clear despite the days that had passed since she had worn this underwear. It carried a sharp hint of her into this cold room and, for a moment, he imagined the dogs moving blindly through the landscape, living only with this smell, seeking its loving source under the snow or in the undergrowth. (265)

Miquel's attempt to recover his mother, to reconstitute her presence and be brought back into contact with the womb, is similar to that experienced by Fergus in "Three Friends." Equally similar is the prominence of water in both stories and how it gestures toward the restoration of autonomy and normative desire. Murphy argues that in "A Long Winter" the water symbolism chiefly materialises in how the "overtly sexualized figure enabled by bath night signals for Miquel an awakening of desire," which, "slowly usurps grief for his dead mother" (Murphy 2009: 493), a characteristic incepted by successful mourning.

Essentially, the dilemma that exists in Miquel's unconsciousness is defined by either holding onto the mother at the peril of drifting into melancholia, or of allowing Manolo to fill her absence with the result of unseating her permanently. This dilemma is patently indicated by Miquel's fantasy of becoming his mother's father: his imaginary meeting with his mother upon the road, and having her "run towards him waiting to be lifted, and he would kiss her and lift her up, the girl who had been lost" (Tóibín 2006: 305), and eventually returning her to her parents' house in the nearby village of Pallosa. Significantly, this formulated scene concludes with Miquel stumbling upon the all-important realisation that "Manolo [being] there too, wearing an apron, preparing a hot drink [. . .] did not belong to the scene" (306). Miquel acknowledges that his mother and Manolo cannot coexist in the same sphere; the mother must be repudiated in order for the latter to be established.

The precedent of matricide that precedes development and reintegration is induced twofold by the final scene, composed of the injured vulture:

> The vulture saw them, and all its sullen hatred for them, its savage gaze, its fierce panic, caught Miquel, as though it were directed at him and him only, as though his secret spirit had been waiting all of its life for such recognition. The dying bird was beyond human in its grief and its injury, screeching still in pain. Miquel did not know why he began to edge towards it, but he quickly found that Manolo was holding him from behind, preventing him moving further as his father lifted the gun again. (310)

This scene closes *Mothers and Sons,* and it is intricate both in its brutality of the primal nature of metaphysical existence, but also in its insistence of being vague of what exactly is being said. With specific reference to the passage above, Edward Hagan notes that "the careful reader must pause just to get the pronoun references right" (Hagan 2012: 31), not only creating a moment for an interpretively open landscape, but also a suggestiveness into the inner-workings of Miquel's unconscious. Applying accepted grammatical rules, the reader on second glance realises it is, indeed, the vulture that retains the role of the subject of the sentence. This gains significance when considering how "the image of the dying vulture and the carcass of an old dog merge with that of Miquel's mother" (McCourt 2008: 164), and moreover, how it invokes a metaphorical representation of Miquel's own ego, trammelled by the last duress of mourning.

It becomes increasingly significant then, that it is Manolo who prevents Miquel from venturing toward the vulture and carcass, and likewise, that Miquel "leaned backward towards Manolo, seeking the warmth of him" (Tóibín 2006: 310). This final scene invokes the way in which Miquel has proceeded through the stages of mourning. In channelling his libidinal energy away from the maternal object and into his new homosexual relationship with Manolo, Miquel arrives toward the end of mourning, resolutely putting an end to the maternal object's fatal seduction: "half torn asunder now, and no use to anyone" (310). Interpreted in this way, Tóibín's own reflection about the way that Miquel and his mother "are almost sexually locked into each other" (Wiesenfarth 2009: 9), helps reveal that the fulfillment and consummation of Miquel's homosexual desire depends upon the death and repudiation of the mother's presence.

Ultimately then the representation of the mother and her death in "A Long Winter," must be interpreted by its employment in the son's unconsciousness, with each informing the other in their distinct function. This does not exclude an interpretation wherein the mother's alcoholism, and her fleeing from the household, may be construed as an attempt to abscond her traditional role of mother—transfixed as she were in a life of silent and stagnating isolation. Rather, the implication is that this particular story privileges the representation of the son's mourning, at the sheer expense of the mother's emancipation. As will be seen, the last story to be examined sharply contrasts with the preceding stories, in providing an antithetical representation which nevertheless features both the mother and the unequivocal nature of the melancholic son.

Composed more like a sketched scenario than a conventionally plotted short story, "A Journey" is worth commenting on in its illustration of a more definitive melancholic state, an "impoverishment of [the] ego on a grand scale" (Freud 2001: 246), as well as its notably contrasting representation of the mother against the presiding inhibitions and silences of the melancholic son. The story consists of a mother returning home with her son David, after retrieving him from a mental health institution, where he was committed ostensibly on account of severe depression. According to the mother, David "[suffers] from silence" (Tóibín 2006: 174), and that it was "something David would not give up, a special dark gift he had been offered" (177). In each scene, the story exudes the melancholic state, beginning with the opening paragraph, composed of a flashback of David as a child displaying his morbid curiosity about death: "'Mammy, how do people die?'" (173). This scene synthesises into the chief imagery later in the story with David's determined, but silent, chain-smoking in the darkening back seat of the car.

Yet, for the mother, what waits at home is not reprieve but rather a compounding of the situation, existing in the form of an invalid husband and his waning interest in the world, as evinced by the fact that "even when she read the newspaper to him, Seamus did not seem interested" (176). David's psychological state is thus mirrored in the husband's physical paralysis, leaving the mother/wife in crisis, and culminating in her realisation that "she would have to muster every ounce of selfishness she had" (181). Composed as it is as vignette of grief, the story is unique in both its direct engagement with the mourning and melancholic son, as

well as its negotiation with—and reversal of—traditional Irish representations of the mother figure. Imperative in the mother's need for individualisation, as expressed in her concluding resistance against the entrapment and paralysis of both husband and son, Tóibín empowers the mother from the mourning or melancholic psyche, essentially disentangling her from her role as an object of loss: the primordial effigy that men unconsciously mourn for but never obtain. In terms of the father and son, the mother's resistance functions then as a "form of power which constrains them [. . .] and leaves her in control" (McCourt 2008: 162), thus ultimately inverting the traditional Irish domestic roles. Although many stories in *Mothers and Sons* do focus on mother protagonists that defy the patriarchal structures imposed upon them, "A Journey" is significant with both its treatment of the mourning son *and* the mother's escape from being solely represented as an unconscious attribute of his stunted psychological development.

Conclusion

In response to the repercussions of historically entrenched and inflexible notions concerning the Irish state, nation and family, Tóibín asserts that "ambiguity is what is needed in Ireland now [. . .] words ambiguous enough to make [the Irish] feel at home" (Tóibín 1993: 6). *Mothers and Sons* may be framed and viewed ultimately as a literary production that helps to expedite and facilitate that aim. *Mothers and Sons* negotiates with traditional representations of the Irish mother and son, but refuses to reduce the relationship to modern utopias of absolute emancipation. In contrast, Tóibín's fiction plants itself in the turbulent terrain of the unconscious, functioning primarily as elaborations of mourning, repression and desire: the primordial basis that constitutes the mother and son relationship.

   This paper has argued for a psychoanalytic interpretation of the representation of both mother and son, as they frequently are evinced in Tóibín's fiction. Subsuming Freud's own theories on loss, specifically in his understanding of the way in which the subject reveals a deep-seated hatred toward the lost object, Kristeva reconfigures the framework of mourning, and reemphasises that all loss punctuates the schism of the pre-Oedipal separation between child and mother: what is mourned is the lost object, as understood as existing as the archaic memory of the

separation from the pre-symbolic mother. Tóibín's fiction thus presents the son as existing in a state of mourning, with the filial relationship represented in unconscious metaphorical terms, and the death or absence of the mother required, prior to securing him into the symbolic order: the world of symbols, creation, and more often than not, sexuality. Melancholia, rather than existing at centre stage, remains in the margins of Tóibín's *Mothers and Sons*: a fatal attraction that the mourning son is encumbered with, by his desire to preserve his mother, but which he often eventually resists.

Mourning, when realised in the full extent of its possible permutations, is the leitmotif which informs the stories in *Mothers and Sons*. As such, it helps define one of the many modes and directions of Tóibín's fiction, by privileging the unsaid and unconscious undercurrents that force characters into climactic moments of subtle self-awareness. In varying degrees, the sons in *Mothers and Sons* must approach the work of mourning and successfully advance through stages of grief, in an attempt to prevent the fragmentation of their ego, and to reclaim a state of tenuous sovereignty over its vacillating autonomy. In proportion to the needs of the sons, the mothers often counteract to ensure their own survival from existing solely as a "death-bearing maternal image" (Kristeva 1989: 29), as particularly witnessed in "A Journey" and to a lesser degree, "A Long Winter." Tóibín's fiction thus engages with psychoanalytic processes of mourning, and exists as metaphorical illustrations of grief, whereby following the stages of mourning, *Mothers and Sons* steers a path for its protagonists that is paved toward possibilities of restoration and renewal.

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The Indeterminacy of Identity in Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark*

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Abstract
This article sets out to explore the implications of postcolonialism for Irish identity politics, through Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark*. Through the characters of this play, who struggle to define a coherent national identity for themselves in the industrial city of Coventry, Murphy depicts the reality of modern Ireland by locating the play in the pathology of the alienated individual who contradicts the hegemony of Catholic bourgeois nationalist Ireland. By contextualising the liminal aspects of *A Whistle in the Dark*, the primary aim of the article is to focus on these contradictions and the resulting indeterminate identity that lies at the borderlines of Irish culture. This analysis is informed by Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry in relation to the dynamics of colonialism. Through the sense of failure that permeates the play, and the desire to escape the confinements of constructed identity categories, which restrict and trap the characters within ascribed identities, *A Whistle in the Dark* explores the boundaries between essentialising narratives of Irish identity, and a non-dialectical space. The nature of identity is further complicated by Bhabha's hybrid voices and performances that allow for an indeterminate plurality of identities to exist in these liminal spaces where they are forced to make their own private myths fuse with the contemporary public identity they must inhabit.

Key words: indeterminacy, identity, postcolonialism, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, agency, mythology, performativity, interpellation

I

A Whistle in the Dark was published by Tom Murphy in 1961 in the immediate aftermath of T. K. Whitaker's 1958 Programme for Economic Expansion.[1] This programme was to explode questions of Irish identity, translating economic reform into cultural reform by presenting serious cultural and socioeconomic changes to a country, which, up to then, had experienced nationalism as the great binding force that united all discourses. Consequently, the nationalist ideology of a single unified society was exposed by the alienation felt by many in Irish society as it

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[1] T. K. Whitaker was Secretary to the Department of Finance and is credited with introducing a national recovery plan in the form of his Programme for Economic Expansion.

transformed from being a "beleaguered colony to a postcolonial nation state" (Paul Murphy 2001: 224). This transformation of nationalist ideology into something questionable called into being Ireland's fixity, unity, and homogeneity, replacing it with disruption, disunity and discontinuity.

The disruption and alienation caused by such socioeconomic changes is central to the work of Tom Murphy. Through the untamed Carney brothers of *A Whistle in the Dark*, who, having come from rural Mayo, struggle to define themselves in the industrial city of Coventry, Murphy focuses on the dignity of the human being, whose choices, identity and dignity have been taken away from them through their entrapment in impossible spaces (O'Toole 1994: 57). Through these characters, who have no power and no voice, Murphy's drama raises all sorts of uncomfortable questions to which there are few, if any, satisfactory answers. His theatre is one that consists of potent absences that frequently interrupt, demanding our attention in a portrayal of the bitter economic facts of poverty, emigration and political ideology, through the intimate actions and thoughts of his characters. Declan Kiberd describes Murphy as, "the most subtle chronicler of the embourgeoisification of rural Ireland" (Kiberd 1996: 612), who locates his drama in the "pathology of the alienated individual" (584). Murphy's work has been described by Colm Tóibín as "raw, visceral, and immediate," containing images of "pure violence and hatred, and people [who] really don't belong" (Tóibín 2012a: 5).

Murphy is not a political dramatist, yet he manages to paint a dialectic of Ireland's past and present by contradicting the hegemony of Catholic bourgeois nationalist history with the repressed discourses of subordination. He attempts to move Irish theatre beyond essentialist identity politics that define both nation and nationalism. He doe this by engaging with characters trapped in a space juxtaposed between the optimism of the 1960s, and the despair felt by many through the experience of limited opportunities. The timing of *A Whistle in the Dark*, the text central to this article, is thus important in that it is set in the aftermath of what Tóibín describes as "an era of pure hope, or pure illusion" (Tóibín 2012a: 37). Despite being written more than fifty years ago, *A Whistle in the Dark* has re-emerged onto Ireland's stage with a renewed dramatic force, in the aftermath of another time of pure hope and pure (dis)illusion—The Celtic Tiger. The questions raised by

Murphy in the historical moment of the 1960s are once again as relevant now as they were then.

Murphy's work marks a precedent in his attempt to negotiate the limits of a tradition in which his characters do not truly belong. Tóibín refers to Murphy's emigration plays as representative of the uncomfortable truth of dispossession, whereby a whole class of people were dispossessed as Ireland gained its freedom (Tóibín 1987: 29). Thus, the play can be said to represent a social critique of the Irish State. The characters of Murphy's drama embody the alienation felt by those trapped by the oppression of Ireland's economic, political, social and religious reality. Murphy mixes disillusion with shame and self-hatred, where the experience of real dispossession becomes a place of metaphysical loss, and where characters are acutely aware of their position in society.

The social critique that emerges in the play comes from the felt contradictions of the postcolonial state that defines Murphy's drama, and which is central to postcolonialism in Irish literature. His work raises the larger question of what studies of identity mean, in terms of postcolonial discourse. While postcolonialism is a theory grounded in the historicity and teleology of imperialism, colonialism and its aftermath, it has become productive to move beyond such narrow definitions of nationalism or authenticity to disciplines of transformation, otherness, ideology, gender, class and subaltern studies. These interpretations give rise to what may be described as borderland identity studies, where the subject is identified through new configuration of identities, rather than a single "postcolonial identity."[2] In light of these mutable discourses, the study of the formation of identity has therefore proven elusive. It is therefore reasonable to explore specifically what is understood by postcolonial identity politics, with particular reference to *A Whistle in the Dark,* and the sense of betrayal felt by its excluded characters who

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[2] For a further discussion on this see Lloyd's "Regarding Ireland in a Postcolonial Frame" which argues for an extensive exploration of the "notion of multiplicity" as opposed to homogenous postcolonial theories (Lloyd 2001: 14). Similarly, McClintock tries to move postcolonial theory from a simple binary which "marks history as a series of stages along an epochal road from 'the precolonial' to 'the colonial' to the 'postcolonial' bringing with it the implication that colonialism is now a matter of the past" (McClintock 1998: 1186).

represent contested categories in what is now an age of multiple belongings.

This dilemma of borderline existence and its resultant effect on identity formation is what Homi Bhabha refers to as the post-colonial "interstices" (Bhabha 1994: 11). These are the liminal spaces that exist in terms of the construction of identity through terms of negotiation, rather than a negation of oppositional and antagonistic elements (Bhabha 1994: 22). Bhabha argues that this liminal space emerges from the hybridity of postcolonial cultures, but he moves the argument beyond the simplistic notion of nationalist movements into one of cultural translation. Thus, the struggles of violence and language in *A Whistle in the Dark* can be considered not simply about nationalist struggle, but rather a struggle for identity. What emerges from *A Whistle in the Dark* in the archaeology of its purgatorial spaces, therefore, is the impossibility of determining identity. The primary aim of this study is to focus on those aspects of indeterminate identity that lie at the borderlines of Irish culture, as demonstrated in Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark,* and attempt to explore how these can be examined in light of a postcolonial politics of identity, as subordinated by the Irish State.

This study is underpinned by the theoretical framework provided by Homi K. Bhabha, particularly his concepts of hybridity and mimicry, in relation to the dynamics of colonialism. Bhabha attempts to direct the reader's attention away from antagonistic essentialist identities to what he terms the "borderlines of the nation-space," in an effort to acknowledge what happens in-between cultures (Bhabha 1994: 147). He explores this border or threshold through the liminal, emphasising that it is this "third-space" (Bhabha 1994: 218) which is central to the creation of new cultural meaning, situated as it is between essentialist forms or identities.

II

In *The Location of Culture,* Bhabha creates a series of concepts which include hybridity and mimicry. These serve to undermine simple polarities of identities of self and other, referring instead to the mixed nature or even "impurity," "foreignness," or "mixedness" of cultures in time (Bhabha 1994: 68). Recent colonial writing has sought, through

theorists like Bhabha, to move "post-Other,"[3] into what can be described as the "third-space," where stereotypes no longer represent fixed forms of representation based on binary nationalist discourse (Bhabha 1994: 75). Instead, Bhabha is interested in showing how subjective identities, as acts of translation, carry over from one place to another.

One of the crucial questions for Bhabha is the question of cultural difference, not in terms of essentialising or homogenising a culture or group simply because of shared traits, traditions or stereotyping. He is concerned instead with cultural difference as a place of hybridity, where constructed identity is "neither one thing nor the other" (Bhabha 1994: 25), and which alienates the forms of our recognition. Bhabha asserts that cultural groups, in terms of the politics of difference, are not centred on the margins, nor are they the "excluded term at the centre" (Bhabha 2000: 312). Rather, cultural location is always, in Bhabha's view, an articulation of various intersecting and often contesting positions that must be negotiated and translated in space and time (312). This interstitial location occupied by the diaspora, the colonised, the culturally dislocated, and the subjects that do not fit neatly into conventional homogenous national and racial typologies, is where conceptions of hybridity emerge.

What follows then, according to Bhabha, are the ambivalent effects of hybridity and mimicry in terms of the subject who is "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 1994: 25), so that an alteration of identity occurs. Bhabha has coined the term "hybridity" to characterise this ambivalent process within which hybridisation becomes that space, where one negotiates "the structure of iteration which informs the determination of identity," between agonistic elements (Bhabha 1994: 26). In this way, identity is translated through strategies of appropriation, revision and iteration, producing possibilities for those who are less advantaged and

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[3] For an interesting discussion on otherness, Drichel raises the question of how it is possible to conceptualise contemporary identity without resorting to the same old stereotypes that have become so ingrained in references to formerly othered peoples. She asserts that colonial otherness inevitably contains and disavows an alterity that cannot be articulated along the discursive principles of the dominant discourse. To bring about the deconstruction of this alterity, defined as it is through dominant discourses, Drichel suggests an engagement with the deconstruction of otherness in order to avoid falling into an essentialist trap (Drichel 2008: 590).

have traditionally had identity conscripted for them. Bhabha argues that cultural difference is a re-articulation of subjectivity that is transformed by the partial desire of hybridity into a "grotesque mimicry" (Bhabha 1994: 75). This does not "merely 'rupture' the discourse" (Bhabha 1994: 86), but ruptures forms of recognition. Consequently, hybridity and mimicry translate the whole notion of identity, alienating it from narcissistic identifications that are no longer dialectically articulated through an "arrested, fixated form of essence" (Bhabha 1994: 75). For Bhabha, nations and cultures are "narrative constructions that arise from the hybrid interaction of contending national and cultural constituencies" (Bhabha 1994: 2), where identity is negotiated.

Through the dual concepts of hybridity and mimicry, Bhabha tries to move his theory beyond the understanding and use of the stereotype, and the notion of fixity, in terms of representation (Bhabha 1994: 75). For *otherness* not to be reduced to a stereotype, based on essentialist ideas, another form of representation needs to be assumed. Drichel describes this as a "partial assumption of a stereotype" (Drichel 2008: 588), where the other can *be* and *not be* the stereotype. This "menace of mimicry" (Heininge 2009: 34-35) of the coloniser and colonised, mutually performing an inaccurate version of themselves to the other, lies in its misrepresentation, which is then taken for truth. Because of its enunciation, repetition and misinterpretation, this partial representation allows for a re-articulation of the whole notion of identity, and thereby alienates it from its essence through a splitting of the subject. Bhabha thus introduces the existence of the "third space" (Bhabha 1994: 49), where hybrid identity is enunciated and signified, and where this misrepresented mimetic stereotype can be recognised. The third space allows for a negotiation of difference between "polarizations without acceding to their foundational claims," and which therefore "both challenges the boundaries of discourse and subtly changes its terms" (Bhabha 1994: 119). Consequently, this "interstitial perspective" (Bhabha 1994: 3) takes the place of what Bhabha calls, "the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation" (Bhabha 1994: 148). This disrupts the "signification of the people as homogenous" (Bhabha 1994: 148), and thereby escapes any self-referential echo allowing for a postcolonial analysis that is not weighed down by essentialist narratives.

Extending his argument, Bhabha holds that hybridity is not experienced solely as a physical removal from place, but also as a

temporal space that allows for otherness to be examined in light of a temporality that disrupts the terms of stereotypical cultural oppositions. By looking at identity in terms of temporality, it introduces a liminality that is encapsulated in a succession of historical moments: between the shadows of a self-generated past, which is not entirely absent, and a tentative present, which is not as yet properly defined, but which displaces the historical present. Hybridity thus enables the potential to question identity in terms of a contemporary culture that is situated in the past certainties of a nationalist pedagogy. Individual identity is thus bestowed by tradition as a partial form of identification, but rearticulated through contemporary temporality, which is subjectively inscribed. Bhabha argues that this "agonistic state of hybridity," of being in the middle of difference, takes us beyond the multicultural politics of mutual recognition (Bhabha 1997: 438). In some respects, this agonistic state exists because the once-colonised subject simultaneously occupies a past space in which there is a time-lag where postcolonial belatedness disturbs signified, subjective identity, and articulates the heterogeneity of the nation (Bhabha 1994: 148). What the hybrid space does, therefore, is gives rise to a central "introjective movement of anxious identification" (Bhabha 1997: 442), where culture and identity are thus a result of the events of history, in all their indeterminacy.

III

A Whistle in the Dark has been understood by many as an engagement with Ireland's colonial past, through its representation of the experience of emigration to England, the former colonial power, which displays the stage Irish figure in a heightened form of brutality and drunkenness (Heininge 2009: 2). Contrary to this, however, O'Toole claims that *A Whistle in the Dark* represents more than just an emigrant drama in its portrayal of complex identity politics. O'Toole describes Irish emigration as a "demographic, economic and statistical fact," but also as "a way of seeing, and of being in, the world" (O'Toole 2012: 30). He further argues that a culture shaped by centuries of mass emigration and colonialism is one in which realism is impossible, and where narratives are mythologised (O'Toole 2012:30). This (im)possibility of realism is also identified by Richard Kearney, who suggests that mythologising master narratives can lead to both perversions and utopias, such that they can

both incarcerate and emancipate the way subjective identity is formed (Kearney 1984: 23). This raises the question of whether it is possible to represent a single, fixed reality of postcolonial Irish identity on the stage. O'Toole suggests that this is not possible, that in fact, reality is constructed in such a way that identity becomes a struggle that is both unfixed and uncertain, because of its shifting borderline existence, which is set against constructed or essentialist identities (O'Toole 2012: 30).

A Whistle in the Dark revolves around a social critique of these myths and narratives that shows the growing antipathy felt by the Carneys, left behind by the postcolonial "New Ireland," instigated by Whitaker's reforms (Arrowsmith 2004: 318). In this early play, Murphy compares the calcification of Irish identity as set against the hollowness of independent Ireland, where the old certainties of class, race and nation become contested categories, in what has become an age of multiple belongings. He shows the intense frustration of the Carneys, as they burn with the memories of past humiliations. Through these humiliations the Carneys recognise that the language and identity of heroic Ireland is not theirs. This alienation, which they were taught at school through the "certainties of a national pedagogy" (Bhabha 1994: 142), from which they were singled out for "special" treatment (Murphy 2001: 46), is made apparent, and serves to show the hybridity of their identity.

Through this hybridity, they not only sit on the border of Irish/English culture, but are also juxtaposed across class divisions and the rural idealism of nationalist Ireland, which contradicts the Carneys's urban actuality. Bhabha makes the case that emigrants do not always realise "how fully the shadow of the nation falls on the condition of exile (Bhabha 1994: 141). Murphy explores the psychological effects of moving from one culture to another, which can change everything and nothing at the same time, such that the "shadow of the nation" (Bhabha 1994:141) remains as a psychological unease. The Carney brothers are still identified as the same "iron [men]" (Murphy 2001: 165) they were back in Mayo, only now with a wider and more diverse range of antagonists to fixate upon (Harte 2012: 15). Even Michael, the protagonist who tries to assimilate and conform to versions of middle-class, interpreted as Englishness by his family, is haunted by the fact that his desired identity makes him no less a "paddy" in English eyes, or a "tinker" in Irish eyes (Harte 2012: 15). Despite his perceived "successes," Michael is still the victim of his hyper-masculine clan that

breeds in him a self-loathing, compounded by the shame and rage he feels from his impotent desire to be other than who he is. There is a sense of being trapped in a purgatorial world, amongst the complexities that emerge from the entanglement of discourses that the postcolonial nation represents.

By writing in the aftermath of Whitaker's economic reforms, Murphy questions de Valera's nostalgic, essentialist vision of Ireland, through the representation of the harsh realities of the Mayo "peasant class," forced to emigrate to industrial Coventry in a migrant act of survival. The play exposes de Valera's essentialist agrarian idyllic vision of Ireland, by demythologising his representation of the West of Ireland as "the last vestige of an essential Gaelic culture" (Murphy 2010: 219), through the sardonic discourse and general brutality of the Carneys. Through these economic migrants, questions of identity, othering, and agency emerge in the disconnect that occurs between a particular kind of postcolonial Ireland, in relation to the particularity of post-imperial England (Arrowsmith 2004: 317).

The Carneys have ended up in Coventry because the economy of Mayo in the late 1950s is shown to have offered little. Michael left Ireland ten years prior to the 1961 setting of the play, and his brothers have recently followed suit. His flight from his past reflects the bid by post-Whitaker Ireland to move towards capitalist modernity: a modernity that is seen to be anathema to the violence and tribalism, symbolised by Dada Carney and his sons. Instead of the traditional sentimentality of the agrarian peasant, the mark of success towards social advancement and upward mobility is signified by the acquisition of a professional position, such as the characters of Anthony Heneghan the architect, or John Quinlan, the doctor (Murphy 2001: 28). Michael Carney wants Des, his youngest brother, to be "something, respectable" (Murphy 2001: 18). He wants to own his own home and be part of a "civilised" family. The political utopianism of de Valera's Ireland, reflected in the play, is shown in stark contrast with the failure of the economic utopianism of de Valera's nationalist protectionism (Arrowsmith 2004: 317).

This utopia is demythologised by Murphy, who subjects Irish sentimentalism to a particularly strong critique, where the myth of the rural idyll has become, as Kearney argues, a perversion that has resulted in a downright oppression (Kearney 1984: 23). Mush declares "the economy [is] destroyed since the demand for St. Patrick's day badges

fell" (Murphy 2001: 28). His vision of the Irish economy represents everything that is opposite to the values of the 1960s: "opportunism, meritocracy and cosmopolitanism" (O'Toole 1994: 62). Des suggests contemporary Ireland offers little hope for the future and contrasts Ireland's postcolonial poverty, where he manages to get "a lousy few quid" (Murphy 2001: 29), with the many opportunities he anticipates in England, where there are no "slave-drivers," or where "you don't have to lick no one's shoes" (Murphy 2001: 30). Through an insurgent act of cultural translation, Harry inverts the traditional, pastoral image of Ireland, subverting essentialist notions of identity. In doing so, he disturbs the dictates of nationalist nostalgia through his use of the ass-shoe as a knuckle duster, which he sardonically describes as a "souvenir from Ireland" (Murphy 2001: 19). The conformity and constraint which such Gaelic notions of identity represent are translated through the rejection of these icons of nostalgic nationalism. This happens to the extent that they become a space of transmutation, where partial stereotypes are performed as (mis)represented stage Irish figures, through their brutality, violence and scornful speech patterns.

A Whistle in the Dark is therefore not only an exploration of the complex psychological effects of emigration, but also of the poverty of the mind that has been instilled in Irish society, because of a reductive nationalism which shows how little has changed with the Carneys move to Coventry. The Carney brothers, with the exception of Michael, are the same "iron men" in Coventry who now fixate upon an alternative range of antagonists: "Blacks," "Muslims" and "bloody Englishmen" (Murphy 2001: 11-12), all of whom come together to form an ever growing derelict population of exclusion and indeterminacy. Harry shrewdly sees that social and racial hierarchies are shifting in post imperial Britain, as a result of immigration from England's former colonies, and acknowledges that "if they weren't here, like, our Irish blue blood would turn a shade darker, wouldn't it?" (Murphy 2001: 11). He recognises their precarious position, and is aware of the shame of being Irish in England. However, he also defensively asserts his Irishness through violence, and in order to perform and protect the value of their identity and self-image the Carneys have to fight the Mulryans, another Irish clan, in order to shield themselves from their true powerlessness. This fight is not merely a result of antagonism, but also a response to their marginal status in England. The new wave of immigration to England from her former

colonies, which includes the Carneys, lacks a sense of community, and therefore any sense of communal identity, existing as they do in ghettoised forms of isolation. Through these new subaltern groups, instead of community, there exists rivalry as they battle to secure their identity.

Michael, especially, merely wants to live a comfortable life, and is content with the basic improvements that come his way. For the other Carneys, particularly Dada, the existence of a stratum of people beneath them provides them with an agency of empowerment that allows them to feel a progression that was denied to them in Mayo. Dada dismisses the dubious roots of this assertion of agency. He thinks only of "respectability when we've showed them," and dreams of a shop with "Michael G. Carney & Sons," over the door (Murphy 2001: 39). They *have* to recognise him through these "triumphant" failures. Dada's desire to build up an identity, in whatever form, can be examined in relation to Bhabha's concern regarding the reconstruction of postcolonial identity. Thus, through hybrid acts of translation poised between the competing claims of seemingly homogenous wholes, it is difficult to determine one's identity.

Typically, one of the ways in which the postcolonial nation forms identity is through the invention of an enemy. Umberto Eco suggests that "having an enemy is important not only to define identity but also to provide an obstacle against which to measure [one's] system of values [. . .] to demonstrate worth" (Eco 2012: 2). Thus, when there is no enemy, an enemy has to be invented, or one risks losing one's identity. In *A Whistle in the Dark*, Michael represents the internal enemy, the person who offers the remaining Carney tribe a sense of cohesion, and therefore a stable sense of identity through their distance from him. In an Irish postcolonial world the English are no longer the ostensible enemy; they are now just "the bloody Englishmen, the lousy Englishmen" (Murphy 2001: 103). Where the English-man or the protestant was the traditional enemy in Ireland, the enemy is now translated along other racial and religious lines, for instance, the "niggers," the "blacks," the "muslims" (Murphy 2001: 100). The enemy also exists within their own ethnicity, in the form of the "Mulryans" (Murphy 2001: 109). However, the enemy is very often not those who pose a direct threat. Rather than representing a real threat, highlighting the ways in which these enemies are different, the difference itself becomes a symbol of what is threatening in its

ambivalence. Such an analysis is arguably used to highlight the construction of colonial subjects as *a priori* historical objects, and therefore historical enemies or "others."

However, as contact between people becomes more complex through immigration and globalisation, a new form of "enemy" arises. This is the person who remains outside, exhibiting his otherness, but also the person within, who is a stranger, who behaves differently, like Michael, or who speaks the language badly, as Harry does. This complexity is exacerbated by the diasporic nature of identity in *A Whistle in the Dark* through the setting of the play in Coventry, an industrial migrant city in England. Coventry represents a hybrid space indicative of those wandering migrants who "will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse" (Bhabha 2000 315). These migrants represent "the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation" (Bhabha 2000 315) bringing into question the continuity of community and tradition as reified by nationalist narratives.

Murphy's characters, inarticulate in themselves and at odds with reified narratives, do however manage to articulate the "'death-in-life' of the idea of the 'imagined community' of the nation" (Bhabha 2000 315). *A Whistle in the Dark* is not simply a portrayal of the stereotype of the Irish immigrant in England. Through the vagaries of Hiberno-Irish speech patterns, Murphy displays an unflattering, disturbing image of Ireland that goes beyond the "narcissistic myths" (Bhabha 1994: 40) of Irish cultural supremacy. Through the festering aggression and subdued ferocity, Murphy shows the Carneys's endeavours to emerge from the colonialist shadow, where they turn from subjugated to subjugators, through a form of mimicry, in an attempt to compensate for their own inferiority complexes. The violence in the play exposes weaknesses in national cohesion, by asserting difference and opposition to the ruling norms. Murphy moves beyond a mere refutation of the colonial shadow to show how the past has so damaged his characters to the extent that their perversities can be explained in terms of psychological deficiencies and social injustice (Griffin 1983: 17). Instead of the "resplendent national life" (Bhabha 2000: 315), in circulation through the pedagogical narratives of the time, Murphy's characters can be seen to represent a disjunctive discourse that attempts to redefine cultural identities. Through the grotesque nature of the Carneys, the past reveals itself in a transmuted form of identity in the present, revealing a space where

Catholic bourgeois nationalism is contradicted by the repressed discourses of contemporary economic hierarchies. This tells a history of poverty and its psychological consequences of a psychological forgetting of the truth about migration and dispossession, through assertions of positive nationalist "reality."

The setting of Coventry also raises questions of the relationship between the *Other*, the Irish and what defines Irish identity, complicated by the diaspora. Heininge asks the question of "how otherness can be determined when Irishness evidently can't be?" (Heininge 2009: 4). In addressing Michael as a "British Paddy" (Murphy 2001: 15), Harry considers whether those who no longer live in the country are still Irish. Does emigration necessarily mean a forfeiture of national identity for those who want to "fit into a place" (Murphy 2001: 15). Michael is chasing a mythical utopia in Coventry, deferring the day when he must confront his essential homelessness and the indeterminacy of his identity. Paradoxically, moving to Coventry has allowed him to move beyond an Irish society deeply divided by class, to one where all Irish people are seen as the same: "paddies" (Murphy 2001: 15). His Irishness, however, becomes a badge of shame, such that he suffers from disillusionment and rage that no amount of introspection can salve. His search for a "way of being" yields only "puppetry, mimicry and rhetoric" (Harte 2012: 15). Michael's anguished admission: "I want to get out of this kind of life [. . .]. I don't want to be what I am (Murphy 2001: 63) accentuates his desire to fit in, even though he reluctantly recognises that he has more in common with his feral brothers: "We're all Paddies and the British boys know it" (Murphy 2001: 15). Michael's anguish is indicative of the disillusionment with the fading dream of progress and economic success which fuelled Ireland's transformation from "beleaguered colony to postcolonial nation state" (Murphy 2010: 224). For Michael, there is no utopia in Coventry. The economic hierarchies of colonial oppression are as present in postcolonial Britain with its shift to global capitalism. Whether it is in England or Ireland, the psychological violence imposed by the demands of capitalism are reflected in the physical violence that punctuates the play.

This violence in the play represents a savage metaphor of the breakdown of subjective identity, from the deeply intimate to the broadly social, in a way that allows for an understanding of the complexities of determining postcolonial identity through acts of translation. Savagery

replaces discourse, and can be seen as a revealing subtext that highlights the unspoken interaction between characters, and which represents a signal point of identification. Through their performativity, the characters resist discursive conceptualization, and thereby maintain a silence within the interstices of argument (Lutterbie 1998: 468). In this way, "silence" is used to address the question of the subject, and allows for a representation of self through absolute absence. *A Whistle in the Dark* represents this absence in the failure of the State towards the Carneys, in the shadow of economic and social change. They have been alienated from an unyielding and uncompromising Irish society which incarcerates them within a "mythic utopia" (Kearney 1984: 23). Consequently, the translation of identity falls under a fatal strain. The tensions produced cohere in the tortured figure of Michael Carney, and result in a night of violence that both problematises and reasserts solidarities around agency and identity (Merriman 1999: 312).

The violence depicted in the play emerges from a partial representation centred around a perverted version of the traditional faction fight, once a common feature of fair days and markets in rural Ireland (O'Dwyer 1987: 35). For Dada, success in the fight against the Mulryans will restore respect to the Carneys, in their failed attempt at gaining economic status and move them beyond the appellation they been repeatedly given: "Tinkers! Carneys! Tinkers! Tinkers!" (Murphy 2001: 77). This will atone for the various humiliations Dada has had to suffer in life. He is humiliated by being offered a caretaker's job by those he saw as equals "at the club" (Murphy 2001: 28). He has had to leave his job in the *Garda Síochána* and is now supported by his wife who is "on her knees scrubbing [. . .] floors" (Murphy 2001: 92). In contrast, Pookey Flanagan, the road-sweeper, has educated his own family from the "dirt of the roads" (Murphy 2001: 44), with the result that "one of his sons became an engineer, and there was a girl that became a nun, and another of them was at the university" (Murphy 2001: 44). For the Carneys, their economic failure has resulted in emigration and dubious "enterprises" (Murphy 2001: 38) that involve prostitution, bribes, petty theft, drinking and fighting. The small council house which Dada and his five sons inhabit also contains their violence and frustration. Even Michael, who tries to save his youngest brother from a life of stereotypical *Othering* and abjection, succumbs to violence, when in the end he strikes Des after much provocation by Dada. This results in a

decisive alteration of identity that disrupts the forms of recognition existing within the Carneys, up to this point.

IV

A Whistle in the Dark explores forms of recognition. It therefore brings into question the binary that marks the moment where collective identity defined by an essentialist narrative, once untranslatable and unrepresentable, is disrupted and now presented in hybrid form. Narratives that were previously silenced or inarticulate are, in Murphy's play, articulated in a performative moment that attempts to translate identity through a moment marked by excessive hybridity. Bhabha claims that hybridisation is a "discursive, enunciatory, cultural, subjective process" (Olson and Worsham 1998: 391), having to do with struggle around authority and its revision. This is reflected in Murphy, who in his own analysis of his characters, claims he portrays "inarticulate people" who "don't belong" (Tóibín 2012b: 6). These are the "ferocious, angry" (Tóibín 2012b: 5) subjects of *A Whistle in the Dark,* who endure the bitterness, stagnation and futility of struggle. As Griffin states: "the Carneys fight the world and each other with a ferocity born of inner emptiness, frustration, and bitterness" (Griffin 1983: 17). The real task for the Carneys, thus, is to figure out how they, as subjects, are constituted in and by mutable discourses, constructed as they are from "the well-worn pedagogies and pedigrees of national unity" (Bhabha 1994: 167). Michael lacks the capacity to define himself, and is therefore defined by others. Dada and his brothers know he is incapable of withstanding the pressures they exert upon him, evident in Dada's declaration that "You can talk a bit, but you can't act. Actions speak louder than words. The man of words fails the man of action" (Murphy 2001: 34). For Dada, words reveal nothing; the disclosure of identity can only come from the deed itself.

However, as Hannah Arendt suggests, disclosure through deed alone cannot form "the unique and distinct identity of the agent" (Arendt 1998: 180), and she argues that action without a specific identity attached to it becomes meaningless. Thus, in what should be an enunciative space, is in fact the attempted emergence of the self in a performative space, where disclosure is through deed, and where the self does not control its performativity (Bhabha 2000: 98). This reflects Bhabha's ambivalent

movement between the discourses of pedagogy and the performative (Bhabha 1994: 149). Bhabha raises the question of where to *find* agency: through moments of recitation and discourse or through performative actions? The Carneys in a sense "perform" identity, and create the self in this borderline community of migrants. By failing to enunciate their identity discursively, they therefore have to resort to violence in their attempt at forming an identity.

Judith Butler, however, argues for agency through language, by invoking Althusser's understanding of interpellation. She argues that one is not simply fixed by a name, rather a name, even one that is demeaning, gives the possibility for a particular social existence. Consequently, this produces an identity that can give rise to an unexpected and enabling response, by inaugurating agency in the subject (Butler 1997: 2). This allows the subject to use language to counter the offensive name, and thereby allows the subaltern voice the opportunity to resist and interrupt it. Michael Carney is tainted by the appellation of cowardice by his family, and is determined to resist the labels that others put on him, whether it is "tinker," "paddy," "jewman" or "jibber." It is only when Michael neglects to "be" himself, fights his youngest brother and kills him that he finds the agency to remove this taint and define his identity as ascribed by his family. Ironically, it is at this point where he is physically strongest that his self-identity wavers. Through the denial of his self-professed identity that marks him as "civil," and through an act of abhorrent violence, he ultimately fails to determine the civilised identity he aspires to construct.

Developing this point further, the characters in *A Whistle in the Dark* find themselves set-apart, perceived through the eyes of others, and interpellated as "pig," "tinker," and "paddy." Harry is ambivalent towards his culture but, at the same time, proceeds to consolidate the fixity of the stereotypical Irish man through his violent, drunken, tribal ways, and thereby inaugurate his own agency. These appellations, which have to some degree created meaning and "fixed" their identities through their performative negations, however allow for an enabling response, giving the Carneys's agency of a sort. Therefore, identity, "Tinker" (Murphy 2001: 77), or "Paddy" (Murphy 2001: 15) creates a supplementary space for the creation of the Carneys as "iron-men" (Murphy 2001: 165). In acting, even if through "mute violence" (Arendt 1998: 179), the Carneys enable the revelation of personal identity. This

moves them from their fixed place of otherness into one of subjectivity and agency that puts others in their places (Drichel 2008: 598). Dada's desire to "show them" is an attempt to valorise what was once demeaned, in order to create meaning, and with it the agency to define identity. However, by filling the supplementary space which this name has created, their identities are in fact indeterminate, as they fill the space of *Otherness*. In doing so, they forego any essential ontological identity that they might claim through their misrepresentations of identity (Drichel 2008: 598). Through the "colonial gaze," the Carneys are at once outside and inside their performed identity. This represents their hybridity and the indeterminacy of their identity, by introducing a split in Irish identity, at the point where they try to articulate it.

By appealing to the nation's authoritative narrative, Murphy draws attention to the historical presence of Irish identity. There are frequent generalisations made against the "bloody Englishmen" (Murphy 2001: 12) through Mush's ballads, which have historically been used as a traditional narrative form to illustrate Irish colonial history. There are many references to Irish stereotypical cultural artefacts, such as "a bonham [pig, which was kept] to run around the kitchen" (Murphy 2001: 8), and the growing of shamrocks. In addition, Murphy refers to religious and superstitious beliefs in the form of fairies and leprechauns, the power of those "Holy Marys pulling strings" (Murphy 2001: 15), and the "pioneer pin" (Murphy 2001: 12). The hybridity of identity through traditional artefacts and narratives is exposed and disrupted in their present reality in Coventry, when Harry plays on "authentic" Irish imagery through his "Souvenir from Ireland" (Murphy 2001: 19), illustrating how contemporary narratives have changed. Harry surreptitiously interrupts fixity from his interstitial location, which simultaneously obscures his powerlessness and articulates his presence. This is achieved through the subjective qualities *acted out* by Harry as agent. Despite the inability of the Carneys to articulate their identity discursively, they have nevertheless become "big names" (Murphy 2001: 37*).* They have constructed themselves through "spectacular resistance" (Bhabha 1994: 121) to the pedagogical nation's narrative authority, which signifies people "as an *a priori* historical presence" (Bhaba 2000: 297).

Instead of an "enunciatory present marked in the repetition [. . .] of the national sign" (Bhabha 2000: 299), the Carneys construct their

identity through the performance of identity. In their attempts at "trying to be fly" (Murphy 2001: 38) through violence, pimping and extortion, they are the "big names," the iron men who have "showed them" (Murphy 2001: 39) what performed agency can do. The subject is thus interpellated in action: there is no subjective identity before or after, but only when the subject becomes an agent through public disclosure (Kapoor 2003: 572). Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of "authority," representing the impossibility of a determined identity and interrupts the collusive sense of symmetry. The Carneys retain their presence as "iron-men," Irish-men, and have become "big-names." But they are no longer representative of an essence, and are now instead a partial presence transformed into a liminal signifying space that represents the "tense locations of cultural difference" (Bhabha 1994: 148), which leads to an anxiety within the characters.

The anxiety that follows, particularly evident in Michael and Dada, reveals the vacillating process of translation that lies at the border posts, which Bhabha suggests "designate the double territory where the resolute intention to join a movement turns into the deep, moving current of psychic displacement" (Bhabha 1997: 446). Michael's identity is split ambivalently between various aspects of his life, where his past encroaches on his present: the washed-up past; the life waiting to happen; that part that needs to find its voice to create meaning, and define his identity. As Betty remarks, Michael's anxiety is reflected in Dada, when he vacillates between wanting to be "out of it all" (Murphy 2001: 67), and his subsequent declaration that actually he is "proud" (Murphy 2001: 67). Their identities do not, as suggested by Bhabha's theory of hybridity, live either in the middle ground of difference or by the "straight arrow of emancipation" (Bhabha 1997: 447). In this sense, as Fuss argues, identification is only possible when it is placed in Bhabha's ambivalent third space (Fuss 1995: 49). However, there is also the risk of multiple identities which compete with each other. An identity that once appeared fixed is now quickly dislodged, making Michael indeterminate to himself. In the breakdown of the familiar binary boundary between those "lousy Englishmen" (Murphy 2001: 13) and the "Paddies" (Murphy 2001: 15) other borderline identities are established. Thus the present opens up to reveal "a rigid class system and the hypocrisy of churchmen and politicians" (Tóibín 2012a: 6) that went further to define identity than any nationalist narrative.

The anxiety that Michael and Dada experience is turned into a rage within Harry, who sees the illusions of a conscripted Irish identity collapse and fall away. Where Mush refers to the "lousy Englishmen," Harry reiterates the sentiment, but acknowledges the many "lousy Irishmen" (Murphy 2001: 13) too. Harry rejects the notion of a collective sentimentalist Irish identity, when he says these "lousy Irishmen" (Murphy 2001: 13) are not all the same, and differentiates between the "fly shams" (Murphy 2001: 13), and "the holy ones" (Murphy 2001: 14), all of whom he is alienated from. Harry moves beyond simplistic binaries of Irish and English. In the articulation between these two cultures, both can be substantially transformed, depending on what feature they decide to negotiate and articulate between themselves. If it is social stratification or class, which the play indicates, then the coming together of nationality will not be defined by the previously assigned significations of Irish or English. These will be reconstituted in, and negotiated through, a third space which, in a way, disrupts any sense of the two cultures doing any kind of double dealing with each other in their translations. Class will now be viewed through a certain kind of postcolonial migration and resettlement, through traditional Irish narratives of Irishness, but also through the ideas that the migrant community and its location in Coventry brings with it (Olson and Wolsham 1998: 380). Identity is moved beyond its former rigidity to one that resonates with an inevitable indeterminacy with the translation from one place to another.

The final scene in the play is indicative of the indeterminacy portrayed throughout. The drama ends, not with the determination of identity, but, following Michael's regression to violence and the killing of Des, with the evacuation of Dada's enunciative power. Thus "the curtain falls slowly through the speech" (Murphy 2001: 96), and with it falls Dada's final attempt at forging an identity. In his pitiable repetitions, there is in fact an utter failure in terms of forming identity. Murphy presents a vision of Dada isolated in a corner of the stage repeating, what are to him, his final attempts of meaningful resonance in his life. Unable to determine his identity, either through his own efforts, or through his son's, the true pathos of his situation reaches its climatic expression, where, having just destroyed his family's sense of identity through his provocation of Michael and Des, he presents an unsettling and pronounced sense of loss and indeterminacy in his final utterances "[. . .] Did my best [. . .] I tried [. . .]." These last words are determined in

their utterance, but their final disproof has just been witnessed in the actions and inarticulations of the characters on stage.

V

The characters in *A Whistle in the Dark* have been shown to specifically represent figures of the dispossessed Irish, both in terms of material dispossession and their moral bankruptcy, which rebukes essentialist caricatures of the West of Ireland peasant idyll, over-determined in Irishry. Instead, through the gross caricature of the Carneys, there is a malevolence in *A Whistle in the Dark* that leads to a cathartic relief where certain forms of feral Irish identity have been left behind. However, this play directly implicates the Irish State in its particular stance toward the poor, the past, and Irishness, in all of its indeterminacy, and raises concerns central to the politics of identity. *A Whistle in the Dark* is not merely about highlighting dispossession, but also the repression felt by those who have been dispossessed, distorting their identity through the construction of an over-determined mode of representation. This emphasises the dualistic nature of the Carneys's existence as both the absence of identity, but which yet contains a presence which is definitely there.

Through the sense of failure that permeates the play*,* and the desire to escape the confinements of constructed identity categories, which restrict and trap the characters within ascribed identities, *A Whistle in the Dark* explores the boundaries between an essentialising narrative of Irish identity, and a non-dialectical space. This is a space where identity is constructed and performed against seeming fixities, grounded in teleological narratives of postcolonialism. Instead of identity being forged through a grand narrative that unites the past and present, there is a disunity of time and space in which the Carneys move. The characters in *A Whistle in the Dark* are all devoid of purpose and alienated from themselves. There is no determination that connects them. Murphy questions the origins of indeterminate identities as it relates to the extent by which we can trust the nation with the formation of our identities through pedagogical narratives. Murphy pays close attention to Bhabha's interstitial spaces, which are beset by irreconcilables. These are further complicated by the hybrid voices and performances that have been typically silenced, allowing for an indeterminate plurality of identities to

exist. In this liminal landscape a space is created for exhibition, and a conscription that allows for organic change in part, but also for translation and negotiation from one culture to another. This contemplation of liminality, of non-dialectical spaces of hybridity, allows the characters to occupy spaces, where they are forced to make their own private myths fuse with the contemporary public identity they must inhabit. In Michael's own words: "a lot of it is up to a man himself to fit into a place. Otherwise he might as well stay at home" (Murphy 2001: 15).

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"You look behind you as you could not then": Embodied Cognition and Linguistic Confusion in Beckett's "Heard in the Dark I"

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Abstract
Samuel Beckett's short story "Heard in the Dark I" points to the significance of the body for the process of reshaping experience and seeing the world afresh. Moreover, the situation that unfolds in the narrative constitutes a breaking with the habitual flow of things and introduces a path to something beyond linguistic meaning. Through the medium of text, the reader will encounter the movements described as if they were performed. That is to say, reading the meticulous descriptions of physical movements in the text forces the reader to engage with, and imaginatively perform, the very motions described. In so doing, Beckett prompts his reader to break with the habitual appropriation of language as a means to try to make "sense" of the text, turning our attention instead towards the body. By heightening the reader's attention to the body, Beckett manages to return us to the particularity of presentation, and in this sense his texts are wake-up calls to perception.

Key words: Beckett, phenomenology, body, movements, meaning, experience, memory, imagination, habit

> Halfway across the pasture of your beeline to the gap. The unerring feet fast. You look behind you as you could not then and see their trail. A great swerve. Withershins. Almost as if all at once the heart too heavy. In the end too heavy. (Beckett 1990: 15–16)

> It is quite true what philosophy says; that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle: that it must be lived forwards. Which principle, the more one thinks it through, ends exactly with the thought that temporal life can never properly be understood precisely because I can at no instant find complete rest in which to adopt a position: backwards. (Kierkegaard 1996: 161)

I

Published posthumously in 1990, Samuel Beckett's "Heard in the Dark I"[1] belongs to a sequence of writings recalling childhood memories, often revolving around the physical experience of the situations remembered. The story depicts a character stopping midway on his walk through a snowy field, to look back at the trail of footprints he has made in the snow: "A great swerve. Withershins. Almost as if all at once the heart too heavy" (Beckett 1999a: 16). In the narrative "now," the experience is described by the focalising consciousness of a second-person narrator, who, on his back, in a dark room, is giving detailed reports of the event remembered, the setting out from the porch, "having pulled the door gently to behind you" (10), the feet disappearing "and the skirts of your greatcoat come to rest on the surface of the snow" (11). The walking, according to the narrator, is "so familiar to [the] feet that if necessary they could keep at it and sightless with error on arrival of not more than a few feet north or south" (12). The habitual walks in the field are also characterised by a sense of blindness, for the character walks "if not with closed eyes though this as often as not at least with them fixed on the ground before [his] feet" (12). However, on this "last time," the character is unable to continue his walk as the "foot falls unbidden in midstep or next for lift cleaves to the ground bringing the body to a stand" (14–15).

The meticulous descriptions of experience are at the centre of the story. By contrast, the vague allusions to the narrator's life or social situation—for instance, loneliness as indicated by a "father's shade" that is no longer there—seem unable to explicate the significance of these descriptions of movement. Instead, it is the act of imagining the walking, stopping sand finally looking back on the "great swerve" that presents a shape on the ground leads the narrator to formulate an understanding of that shape as expressive of the particularity of these movements— "almost as if all at once the heart too heavy. In the end too heavy" (16). The moment of stopping is highlighted as the moment when the impulse to move leaves the body. Depicted as a memory in the character/narrator's life, the short story constitutes a projection of a moment of stasis or loss (death?), even if the full thrust of this event has been delayed until the "now" that appears in the text, and even if the

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[1] All references in this article to "Heard in the Dark I" are from *As the Story Was Told* (Beckett 1999a: 10–16).

insights that the moment brings seemingly emerges out of the text, as we read it.

The character's movements gradually appear as drawings on a canvas, illustrating points and lines that project through the expanse of white snow, finally presenting a shape, along with the invitation to read this shape as expressive of the character's state of mind. The trail "now," appears as an image of despair with the feet projecting a straight line that suddenly falls off its curve. However, this trail was not visible to the character "then," but appears only in the process of going back in memory to re-experience the moment. In addition, the second person narrative prompts the reader to share in the experience of remembering this event, for example, through evoking a sense of the body's weight as the narrator describes "[y]ou," leaning against the door with bowed head before setting out, feet disappearing in the snow and "the skirt of the greatcoat come to rest on the snow" (10). The image of setting out in the snowy field therefore invites the reader to perceive the trail of feet as a path to sensing the experience of walking, stopping and coming to a standstill: heavy-hearted and lost for words, as the convoluted report of visual and kinetic impressions that accompany the image draw the reader into the narrative, through implicating her in this process of remembering. That is to say, reading the descriptions entails going through the motions and perceiving the meticulously described movements as meaningful: they lead us back to what is, perhaps, an authentic moment of resistance in the character's life.

In Samuel Beckett's *oeuvre,* the body—its gestures and movements, as well as the situations and predicaments that determine and/or limit it—is frequently foregrounded to present a stark contrast to language, revealing a fundamental incommensurability between his characters' physical situation, and their linguistic comprehension of that situation. More often than not, the confusion that so many of Beckett's characters experience, grows precisely out of the body's resistance to comply with seemingly intelligible and rational goals, such as walking, sitting, cycling, writing or speaking. In such instances, the body emerges as obstructive, intrusive or recalcitrant to the perceiving consciousness, whether character, narrator or reader. By analogy, "Heard in the Dark I," presents a situation where the body unexpectedly and for no apparent reason refuses to perform its habitual task: suddenly the "the foot falls

unbidden midstep [. . .] bringing the body to a stand" (14): "The unerring feet fast," unable to move on (15).

The situation constitutes a breaking with the habitual flow of things and introduces a path to something beyond linguistic meaning. The body participates in undermining language in Beckett's work, and is consistently made to break with its habitual mode of appearing. Normally, the body, as the means by which human beings access the world, recedes from perception in perception. We do not see the eye seeing, or hear the ear hearing, but eyes and ears withdraw in the act of seeing and hearing to allow that which is seen or heard to appear (Leder 1990: 11). Yet, in Beckett's work, the body is foregrounded to the point where it seems to eclipse the content of the perceiving act. This can be seen also in "Heard in the Dark I," where "you" do not see the trail of feet in the snow or hear the sound of your own footsteps, because "Unhearing and unseeing you go your way. The same way. Day after day" (Beckett 1999a: 13). Nor can "you" talk to yourself into continuing walking, for as "the foot falls unbidden in midstep or next for lift cleaves to the ground bringing the body to a stand," "you" remain a figure of "speechless misgiving [. . .] a speechlessness whereof the gist, Can they go on? Or better, Shall they go on?" (Beckett 1999a: 15).

The body in "Heard in the Dark I" seemingly stands in the way of the character's efforts to control it. But what is at stake in this situation? Is the "gist" of the argument here about "self-control" or agency? Is it "your" duty to move on, or to stop? The two contradictory impulses—wanting to stop but having to move on, and wanting to continue but being unable to do so—frequently emerge in Beckett's work as an essential image of the human condition. Man's inabilities, the propensity for failure, and the misappropriation of effort and aspiration appear in this way as moments of crisis, whereby the body momentarily emerges from the shadows of consciousness where it usually dwells. Moreover, by superimposing the experiences of reader, narrator and character, the confused, lonely figure in the field emerges as a plethora of identities, some "real" some "ideal." Thus, in "Heard in the Dark I," as well as in most of Beckett's creative work, body and mind appear as equal and opposite forces; physical "reality" (here walking and stopping) clashes with linguistic "ideality" (thinking about walking and stopping and constructing it as meaningful in some way), in such a way as to highlight the character's inability to control the situation (life), or make sense of

the experience. Clearly, constructing the walking as a ritual that has to be upheld, although it seemingly has long since lost its significance, points to the deadening effect of habit. But the failure to uphold the ritual ("your" body coming to a standstill), also suggests that "you" are not in control, neither of body nor of mind. In short, life is a "mess," and, as Beckett once famously quipped in an interview with Tom Driver (1961): "[t]o find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now" (qtd in Graver and Federman 1979: 219).

II

"The way being always the same" (Beckett 1999a: 13)

The history of philosophy is rife with debates on the nature of reality, centring on the opposition between the "real" and the "ideal." Already in the early part of 500BC, the Greek Philosopher Parmenides wrote *On Nature*, a challenging poem that has been considered one of the first attempts to "refract the internal opposition between matter and ideas into an internal contradiction within the human mind" (Hawkes 2003: 20). The poem presents two distinct "ways of inquiry" into the nature of reality, as perceived by man, namely: "the way of opinion," which pertains to the world of sense experience ("matter"), and "the way of truth," which relates to the faculty of reason ("ideas") (Hawkes 2003: 21). Sense experience, according to Parmenides, is illusory and inevitably leads to confusion, whereas the rational logical processes of thought have the capacity to convey "what is" or "true reality."[2]

Over time, many artists have also grappled with questions about the nature of reality and perception. For example, Keats's concept of "negative capability" could be seen to problematise precisely such categories as indicated above, in its insistence that man should strive to remain "in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats 1899: 277). Moreover, the concern of both impressionism and cubism with perception problematises the

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[2] Parmenides also gave ethical precedence to the faculty of reason, and since Parmenides, the distinction between "truth" or "falsehood" can be seen to derive precisely from this identification of sense experience with "unreliability," and reasoning with "incontestability" (Hawkes 2003: 20-27). According to David Hawkes, ideology, defined as "false consciousness" derives from this distinction between matter and mind conceptualised as the "real" and the "ideal."

relationship between reality and truth, as does Schoenberg's justification of atonality ("emancipation of dissonance") (Tenney 1988: 2), and Kandinsky's discovery of abstract art (Henry 2009: 16). It would appear that these artists seek to explore the dichotomy of matter and mind, in order to be able to present the relations and structures that made up the artwork more "truthfully." But they also seem to recognise the challenge inherent to understanding the constructed nature of "truth" and "meaning," without necessarily denying, either their own particular "truth" or "meaning," its explanatory power.[3]

Beckett's preoccupation with the body and with perception also testifies to his concern with the philosophical and aesthetic issues addressed, for example, by Kandinsky and Schoenberg. His interest in the Presocratics's effort to try to understand the nature of reality should perhaps be read in the light of such concerns, although John Fletcher claims that "there is nothing to suggest that [Beckett's] interest [in the Presocratics] has ever gone beyond the anecdotal and superficial" (Fletcher 1965: 43). Yet, as Matthew Feldman convincingly argues, Beckett's interest in the Presocratic philosophers goes far beyond the merely anecdotal, as proposed, for example, by John Fletcher. Instead, as Feldman points out: "Beckett [is] asking the same questions of art that the Presocratics were asking of the world" (Feldman 2006: 7).[4]

Already in his 1934 review "Recent Irish Poetry," Beckett begins to identify the "problem of presentation and representation" as a "rupture

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[3] As more contemporary studies in to the nature of embodied cognition have revealed, physical movement is the foundation of intellectual meaning—we are immersed in movement from the moment of conception till the moment we stop breathing. Human meaning making depends on a visceral or intuitive connection with the world (Johnson 2007: 9). It is through the lived experience of a three-dimensional self-moving body that abstract notions of space and time etc. develop—"meaning traffics in patterns, images, qualities, feelings and [only] eventually [in] concepts and propositions" (Johnson 2007: 9). Because of the way in which concepts are founded in the there-dimensional living body, reading movements therefore evoke a kinesthetic response in the reader without us necessarily having to be aware of it because experience and knowledge are not two separate realms of "thinking" but are in fact linked in a complex continuum: moving, thus, is a way of knowing.
[4] Both Beckett's biographer James Knowlson, and Matthew Feldman have documented Samuel Beckett's interest in the Presocratic philosophers (Uhlmann 2011: 78).

between subject and object" (Beckett 2001: 70).[5] This manifest concern continues to underpin Beckett's preoccupation with the nature of consciousness, often explored in his work through a focus on the dichotomies body/mind, experience/knowledge and subject/object. However, rather than constructing sense-experience as merely illusory, and the rational logical processes of the mind as the route to "truth," Beckett sets out to illustrate the profound confusion inherent to human experience more generally.

The foregrounding of physical experience in Beckett's work could therefore be seen as part of his strategy to undermine language and prepare the ground for a different kind of perception. It is in this sense that we can understand Beckett to be asking, as Feldman suggests, "the same questions of art as the Presocratics were asking about the world" (Feldman 2006: 7).[6] The meticulous descriptions of the body and its gestures are a means to undermine linguistic meaning and gear the reader's attention towards other qualities in the work. In so doing, Beckett not only gives "shape to the confusion" of his characters (Beckett 1999b: *xi*), but he also prompts his readers to break with the habitual appropriation of language as a means to try to make "sense" of his work. By turning the reader's attention towards the body instead, Beckett invites the reader to suspend linguistic judgment, in favour of a more dynamic and embodied involvement with the text.

III

"For you there is no other any more" (Beckett 1999a: 13)

The significance of the body in Beckett's work has not gone unnoticed. However, the extent to which Beckett's *oeuvre* invests "value in

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[5] In 1934, under the pseudonym Andrew Belis, Beckett wrote an article entitled "Recent Irish Poetry," published in *Disjecta,* 1983.

[6] Exploring the connection between memory and habit was also an important part of Beckett's effort to "disrepute language." In a widely quoted letter to his German friend Axel Kaun, Beckett makes what is often taken as a programmatic declaration, suggesting an artistic method yet to be explored: "As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute. To bore one hole in it after another in it, until what lurks behind it—be it something or nothing—begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today" (Beckett 2001: 172).

embodied experience" has remained relatively unaddressed (Maude 2009: 2). While the first wave of Beckett criticism features scholars who discuss the body, mostly in terms of its representing a contrast to the mind, thereby reflecting Beckett's interest in Cartesian dualism, subsequent scholarship has sought to broaden the philosophical discussion in his work, by addressing the body in a variety of ways, for example, by looking at its participation in the production of social, cultural and philosophical meanings. Post-structural readings of the body in Beckett's work have also approached the body's significance for the production of subjectivity and identity, through a self-reflective use of language, as well as discussed the body's relationship to language itself. Yet, in nearly all these highly relevant approaches to the body in Beckett's *oeuvre*, emphasis has nevertheless remained, as Ulrika Maude points out, on discourse rather than "the body itself" (Maude 2009: 3). Clearly, Beckett scholarship has not sufficiently recognised the extent to which his focus on the body is a consistent phenomenological concern with consciousness, the ways in which the body is part of thinking, nor the extent to which Beckett problematises habitual appropriations of embodied experience and meaning.

Beckett's awareness of the problem of presentation and representation made him receptive to some of the central tenets of phenomenology that involve "consciousness, sensory perception and embodied experience," all of which receive ample attention in his work, as well as in his own critical writings, where the structure of consciousness is frequently addressed (Maude and Feldman 2009: 1). Beckett's descriptions of experience are phenomenological, because of the way in which they problematise the meaning of conventional actions (like walking,) by foregrounding the characters' individual experiences of these actions (walking does not take "you" anywhere,) as a way to displace cultural and/or social expectations (walking should take you somewhere). Moreover, Beckett's consistent focus on immobility and stasis reveals a paradox entailed in habitual "readings" of mobility as positive, since, more often than not, the characters' most important insights seem to emerge precisely out of the stasis and immobility they experience. Through destabilising the relation between subject and object—in "Heard in the Dark I" presented as a moment of crisis by means of which a character unable to move begins to perceive the world differently—and through placing strong emphasis on physical

movements, Beckett is able to produce a situation of linguistic ambiguity. Thus, not only the connection between experience and knowledge is problematised, but also the relationship between language and meaning.

IV

"Unhearing and unseeing you go your way. Day after day. The same way." (Beckett 1999a: 13)

The somatic shape presented in "Heard in the Dark I" seems to lose its sense of orientation through habitually performing the same routine everyday: "Unhearing and unseeing you go your way. Day after day. The same way. As if there were no other anymore. For you there is no other any more" (Beckett 1999a: 13). Although walking is a movement that we frequently associate with direction, transportation and action, the character in "Heard in the Dark" seems completely distanced from any such project. Recalling Nietzsche's statement that "all truly great thoughts are conceived by walking," it is perhaps surprising that no great thoughts appear to evolve out of the walking in this context. Instead, walking here is an activity that is completely devoid of thinking, and in this sense, inauthentic. The man does not seem to have a goal but "plods" on "from nought to anew" (14). Without attention or focus, he merely follows the beeline he usually takes, as if it was someone else's path; thereby revealing the danger involved in habitually pursuing the same routine every day. By analogy, as Dante realised in the dark forest, being on the path of someone else's way is to have lost one's life (Keleman 1999: 39). In this sense, following the path of someone else is inauthentic—even if that someone else is "you." The moment the man stops could therefore be seen to constitute an instance of authenticity, which, if only momentary, is still significantly more meaningful than the mindlessness entailed in going through life without paying attention to it in its particular inflections, variations and nuances.

Moreover, the snowy field in spring "strewn with red placentae," presents an anti-pastoral setting for the walk, and the contrast between the "expanse of light" of the "snowlit scene," and the narrator, who is now "lying in the dark with closed eyes" (11), serves to enhance visual imagery in a way that is reminiscent of Milton's "darkness visible." In the dark room, behind closed eyelids, the moment remembered

seemingly promises no hope, but only "[r]egions of sorrow, doleful shades," of a life spent in "utter darkness" (Milton 2003: 1, 64-73).Yet, these contrasts between darkness and light also reveal the ambiguity of the situation, as well as the confusion that this ambiguity gives rise to. As Beckett explained in an interview with Tom Driver in 1961: "If there were only darkness, all would be clear. It is because there is not only darkness but also light that our situation becomes inexplicable" (quoted in Graver 1979: 219). The organisation of elements in the story that allude to light and darkness, blindness and the deadening effect of habit, therefore, metaphorically convey the illusory nature of sensory experience. The ambiguities evoked by the tension between light and darkness in the text also parallel the tension between the authentic and the inauthentic in the character's actions.

However, as Beckett was well aware, there is no position, whether in time or space, from which we may objectively perceive or understand anything in the world. There is no "perception which is not full of memories," but the residue of former impressions still inform our perspective to the point where we see only what we expect to see, hear only what we expect hear and finally, understand only what we already know (Bergson 1988: 24).[7] The significance of memory to occlude "pure" perception, a frequent theme in Beckett's works and one that he addressed already in his essay on *Proust*, here resurfaces to demonstrate how preconceived ideas about meaning or significance linger on. These continue to inform our understanding of the world, to the point where: "Unhearing and unseeing [we] go your way. Day after day. The same way" (Beckett 1999a: 13). For Beckett, Proust's characters are victims of, or subject to, the laws of memory and habit, and ultimately suffer from these conditions: "There is no great difference, says Proust, between the memory of a dream and the memory of reality" (qtd in Beckett 2001: 33). On the strength of these insights, "the performance of memory in Beckett's work (whatever the genre) [. . .] refuses the past as either spatially or temporally static: as either museum or linear narrative: the past is rather produced in the present" (McMullan 2002: 6).

The notion that fixed meanings dull the senses is for Beckett intrinsically linked to the question of habit, since it is precisely our

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[7] In *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image,* Anthony Uhlmann suggests that Beckett was well aware of Bergson's theories of perception.

customary beliefs and traditions that keep us from fully grasping the world afresh. In *Proust* he writes. "Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to its vomit. Breathing is habit. Life is habit" (Beckett 2001: 19). Still, the spell of habit can be broken by sudden rupture, which "opens a window on the real" (Beckett 2001: 28). The rupture can come in the shape of an "involuntary memory," as in Proust's famous Madeleine cake episode, or it can come in the shape of a moment of crisis. Thus, the spell of habit that guides perception momentarily is broken to reveal the world as a "non-logical statement of phenomena, before they have been distorted into intelligibility in order to be forced into the chain of cause and effect" (Beckett 2001: 86). In "Heard in the Dark I," the moment of crisis occurs with the "unerring feet fast," creating an unprecedented rupture in the habitual routine of walking.

V

"You look behind you as you could not then" (Beckett 1999a: 15)
The stopping and looking back is the single event focalised in the story, "Heard in the Dark I," and the meaning of this moment seems to hinge on the way in which the shape in the snow takes on symbolic meaning. Up until the moment he stops, the character has been oblivious to the world around him. However, in the temporal "now" of the story, the narrator imagines the character stopping to look back on the trail that materialises before his mind's eye, a "great swerve," whose contour is drawn by the feet in the white snow (Beckett 1999a: 16). In the dark room, with eyes closed, the moment remembered promises no hope to a life now spent in "utter darkness." The image of the character standing in the middle of the field can therefore be seen as an image of despair.

While the moment of crisis entailed in the memory is abysmal, indeed it is described as an instance of "speechless misgiving" (15), it is also an image of poetic force, through which the past suddenly becomes visible. In the dark "with closed eyes," the narrator revisits a specific moment but perceives it, as it were, differently: "The dark cope of sky. The dazzling land. You at a standstill in the midst [. . .]. You look behind you as you could not then and see their trail. A great swerve" (15). The poignant climax in the story "now" appears as a shape on the ground, and the moment of perceiving this shape as meaningful constitutes a moment of insight for the character, illustrating the dialectical nature of having an

experience, and the act of thinking about that experience. Although it could also be argued that this moment, while epiphanic in nature, only leads to silence—just as for Beckett writing itself "leads to silence" (Beckett qtd in Juliet 2009: 16).

The situation that unfolds in the story epitomises Søren Kierkegaard's observation that life must be understood backwards (Kierkegaard 1996: 161). However, it also illustrates Kierkegaard's own refutation of this premise, namely that adopting a position from which life can be "properly understood" backwards is, in effect, impossible. In remembering, the narrator actually changes the moment, or rather invents something entirely different. The shape in the snow, which previously was not visible to the character—because of the way in which his movements and posture restricted the view of the world to the "momentary ground beneath the feet" (Beckett 1999a: 12)—is actually not remembered at all, but imaginatively recreated.

The process of reshaping experience, through the creative act of imagination, therefore also reveals the way in which experience fails to provide a foundation for knowledge. Only with hindsight does the character understand the significance of the moment of stopping. Only in the "tranquil recollection" of this moment of crisis does it begin to make any kind of sense to the character/narrator, or perhaps, reader. In the temporal past of the story, the limitations imposed on the character by the body seemingly occlude the possibility to see the "real" shape produced by the trail of feet in the snow: "For you advance if not with closed eyes [. . .] at least with them fixed on the momentary ground before your feet. That is all of nature you have seen. Since you finally bowed your head" (12–13). Only in remembering the walk does the narrator actually arrive to "see" the trail in the snow. Temporalities therefore overlap in the narrator's reminiscence of the past: the act of remembering, like the narrative itself, projects forward in time. Yet the moment remembered does not completely abandon its temporal status of past. Although the act of remembering projects forwards, the situation remembered is understood "backwards." The act of remembering, therefore, like the act of reading, is presented as an "ideal" position in which the temporal dimensions of life can coincide. In this way, the proliferation of narrative perspectives in the story illustrates the similarities between reconstructing a memory and telling a story.

While the narrator and the character's visual perspectives seemingly coalesce, the second person narrative also presents a proliferation of "consciousnesses" in the story. Indeed, as the proliferation of voices reveals, the person telling the story may not be identical with the person listening, and the second person narrative also triggers the narrator's memory to overlap with the reader's creative act of imagining the situation that unfolds.[8] On the one hand, there is the narrator, remembering himself in the field. But there is also "you," the reader, or possibly another consciousness, or even the narrator speaking to someone else, although it could also suggests that the narrator and the character are in fact the same. The narrator and "you," the reader, nevertheless seem to occupy similar, or near identical, focalising perspectives, and, as a result, "you" too end up envisioning the event to the point where fiction and reality, as well as past, present and future, seem to blend.

VI
"Almost as if all at once the heart too heavy" (Beckett 1999a: 16)
How then should we understand the image of a character walking through a field and stopping mid-ways, unable to continue, while at the same time a narrative voice continues to relate the story of this situation, seemingly unable to stop talking? How should we understand the relentless voice that cannot be silenced, but keeps on telling its story in the "[s]ame flat tone at all times. For its affirmations. For its negations. For its interrogations. For its imperations. Same flat tone" (Beckett 1980: 20). The story, as it originally appears in *Company,* is part of a longer narrative, which seemingly rejects a chronological ordering, and, as such, should perhaps be seen to present an image that needs to be read in conjunction with other images of childhood that appear in the context of this longer narrative. John Pilling, in his review of the book*,* suggests

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[8] Beckett's "life lifelong interest in sound and hearing" is implicit in his second-person narratives, of which "Heard in the Dark I" is but one example (Maude 2009: 183). Other examples include: "Heard in the Dark II"; *Embers* (1957); *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958); *Eh Joe* (1966); *Footfalls* (1975) and *Ghost Trio* (1975), all of which highlight the significance of sound through abstract and detached voices relating the characters stories.

that the "scenes from the past,"[9] which make up *Company,* present a web of implicit correlations that are operating in the text: "The upturned face of the little boy, directed first at the distant sky and then at the unloving face of his mother prefigures the upturned face of his father at the Forty-Foot Hole, the 'loved trusted face' that the boy is looking down to for succour" (Pilling 2014: 1).

Given that the story is a textual representation of childhood memories, perhaps the character in the story cannot be fully understood without the other stories that contribute to the larger canvas. But then again, does it really matter who the character or narrator is? The story that unfolds in the narrative of the character walking across the field suggests an image of both general and particular purport: he is "you," "you" are him, "I" am "you," "you" are "me." The final moment arrived at, when the character stops to see the great swerve his feet have made in the snow: "Withershins. Almost as if all at once the heart too heavy. In the end too heavy," is an image that we all may recognize, as human beings. We may all have experienced such particular moments of "immobility" in our lives, and these instances, as we read, may be brought to bear on the story, as our memories inflect towards the narrator's memory and momentarily coalesce. Reading the story therefore entails a decentring of our individuality as the second person narrative forces us to participate in the experience that unfolds. Importantly, through a narrative that invites the reader to share in the experience of another, Beckett's story possibly holds the promise of empathy.

However, by heightening the reader's attention to the body, Beckett also returns us to the particularity of presentation. In this sense, Beckett's texts, whether his prose or dramas, are wake-up calls to perception, because they enable us to see the world afresh. In the case of "Heard in the Dark I," not only is reading the movements described (walking, stopping, looking back,) kinaesthetically meaningful, but the description also brings about a phenomenological shift of attitude, as the second person narrative triggers the fictive character's memory to overlap with the reader's creative act of imagining the event of stopping in the field. Importantly, the shift of attitude that the story prompts is revelatory of how: (A) seeing does not happen with the eyes. (The narrator lies in the

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[9] "As Beckett calls them in his manuscript notebook" (Pilling 2014: 1).

dark with closed eyes and now sees the scene, as he could not then); (B) Walking does not necessarily take you anywhere: "Unhearing and unseeing you go your way. Day after day. The same way." (Indeed, Beckett's characters famously never get anywhere, but repeat the same habitual actions over and over again.); and finally (C), perception does not necessarily entail understanding.

The story therefore points to the significance of the body for the process of reshaping experience and seeing the world differently. The shape in the snow, rather than illustrating the character's life, constitutes a pertinent image of the mobilisation of memory, but it also shows how perception can change to allow for "new" insights, despite the deadening effect of habit. Albeit, the moment we realise that something has changed is of course not the moment change took place—it is only the moment when we become *aware* of change. In fact, change has already happened, and the moment, as such, is already gone, as Kierkegaard's reflection on temporal life illustrates. Still, the story offers its readers an opportunity to engage in the creative act of imagining self-movement, and in so doing, it testifies to the body's capacity to transform us.

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Hunger: Passion of the Militant

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Abstract

This is a study of the 2008 film *Hunger* made by the British director Steve McQueen, a film that dramatises events in the Maze Prison in the period leading up to the 1981 Irish Republican hunger strike and death of Bobby Sands. It considers the filmic and artistic practice of McQueen in conjunction with certain concepts from the work of Deleuze and Guattari to develop a productive thinking about how the film addresses this traumatic event. *Hunger* employs a series of aesthetic techniques that push at the limits of the viewer's senses and suggest new ways of thinking about the subject. McQueen's concern to go beyond the clichés of the media coverage of the Irish conflict provides a unique insight into the production of a militant subjectivity generated by the opposition to the prison regime of the Maze in Belfast. Ultimately, however, it is argued that McQueen collapses into a form of religious iconicity that reinforces the Irish Republican mythology of suffering and redemption. *Hunger,* as a work of cinematic creation, offers a powerful sense of how resistance can be made manifest on screen yet, simultaneously, can become captured by the transcendental unity of identity thinking operating through the image of the romanticised face.

Key words: *Hunger*, Steve McQueen, Bobby Sands, hunger strikes, Deleuze & Guattari, militant becoming, Kafka

> Martyrs do not underrate the body, they allow it to be elevated on the cross. In this they are at one with their antagonists. (Franz Kafka, "The Third Notebook")

Description of a Struggle

Reference to Kafka opens this discussion of Steve McQueen's film *Hunger* (McQueen 2008) and runs throughout. Bobby Sands, the nominal prisoner at the heart of this film, knew that his self-sacrifice/sacrifice-of-self would become an indispensable sign of the struggle for the Irish Republican cause and located his action as one taken to inspire a new generation of activists. Yet, out of the intimidation, beatings, and brutality of the Special Category Status prisoner campaign emerged recognition by State and guerrilla army that neither could be defeated through force, even as the threshold of sacrifice was, indeed, elevated on the cross. To describe this moment is, as in its original Latin root, to write it down. But McQueen is averse to writing

text and explication in such a process, rather, he pushes the description from words to speech, impressions, pictures, even pushing the definition as far as the tracing of a form or outline, as with a circle produced by a compass. He clearly defines the centre of his circle in this event within the film and with it a very visible boundary of the body, the unstable limit of his description.

Hunger mobilises these different symbolic systems to different degrees and one of the film's strengths is that it never adopts any singular way of representing the experience of the no-wash protest and the hunger strike of Sands. What McQueen presents on screen are bodies immersed in a struggle for endurance against domination, as each is systematically drawn into the world of the other in a decelerating cycle of action and reaction. Each opposing position can be seen to invade the space of the other: guards/prisoners; insurgents/state; the militant/church. In its own way, the film articulates quite effectively the oscillation between escape and capture that defines the Irish Republican struggle itself. The resistance of the prisoners is driven by a nomadic desire to escape the limits of the State and its segregative social structuration, yet, because they are defined by Republican politics they become invested once more in a transcendental unity that leads back into molar identity.

McQueen has repeatedly argued that the film does not deal with a political subject in any ordinary sense: "People say, 'Oh, it's a political film,' but for me, it's essentially about what we will inflict and what we can endure" (O'Hagan 2008). He offers that one might draw wider lessons on treatment of prisoners of contemporary conflicts, but not really on the specifics of Northern Ireland, for as Maria Fusco sharply writes: "there is one thing missing: politics with a capital 'P'" (Fusco 2008: 37). His motivation, it seems, is singularly a creative one: an aesthetic fascination with exploring the pressures on those corporeal bodies that have chosen to engage in this war for control, as seen through his humanising lens. This leads to limitations on the subject (the broader terrain of the political/military conflict) yet does, it is argued, simultaneously lead to useful insights into another kind of subject (a type of militant subjectivity). If there is a politics here it is less in any explication or context and more in a way described by William Connolly as a "neuro-politics," where the focus is on those potential circuits that exist between perceptual experience, habits of thinking, ethical disposition and filmic technique, that spur "new thoughts into being"

(Connolly 2000: xiii). *Hunger*, I would argue, creates a kind of cinematic body that allows us to critically reflect on the terms of the emergence of a militant becoming, the awkward reality of its emergence, and yet, finally, capture by its own historical temporalities, even if it hints at connecting with a wider militant collective.

"Words are shit"

In an interview from 2002, McQueen states that: "Words are shit, because they put you somewhere else. I'm trying to catch the things that are in-between" (Brooks 2002). As a filmmaker who derives from a fine art background rather than one shaped by the commercial imperatives of film school, McQueen brings an approach to the subject of the hunger strikes that is more formally experimental. Approached by Channel 4 to direct a film, he is one of a number of contemporary artists who have crossed over into the mainstream film circuit in recent years. In the year after the release of *Hunger* he represented Britain at the 2009 Venice Biennale, where he projected across two screens a 40-minute film titled *Giardini* (Demos 2009). Certainly, he is driven by the creative imperative of "show, don't tell" and there is no doubt that as a film experience in sound and vision *Hunger* profoundly impresses the senses. Other critics have taken issue with the problem of what is left out in this narrative of resistance and oppression as well as what is included (Helliwell 2009, Mac Giolla Léith 2008, McKenzie 2008, McNamee, 2009).

For British filmmakers there is always a question of where to start and finish narratives concerned with any of the painful episodes of the conflict in Northern Ireland (Herron and Lynch 2007: 65-78). It is a pertinent question to ask whether *Hunger* inevitably endorses the format of the media reporting of the conflict over many years with its abstractions and barren repetition of empty moralities. Such was the charge levelled at Alan Clarke's *Elephant*, a film with which *Hunger* shares certain formal affinities, and indeed both directors are reported to have described the intentions in making their films as creating a "diagram of killing" (Kelly 1998: 199). However, McQueen brings an aesthetic of art installation and gallery projection to the subject that is initiated by the question of how to reduce elements of signification in the work so that what is left resonates or vibrates with an affective quality.

Previous films on the blanket protest and hunger strikes, such as *Some Mother's Son* and *H3* have adopted a more conventional form that is, arguably, more easily accommodated within existing narratives on the conflict. A key problem, here, is always of how to speak about colonial experience when the very terms themselves are already embedded in a structure of meaning established by the dominant regime. McQueen employs more challenging strategies of creative filmmaking that seek to evade this problem that is not one of simply presenting a different narrative which leaves the terms of the language itself intact. This strategy relates well to an observation from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on the struggle for a challenging artistic and philosophic practice: "We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 108). McQueen certainly tends towards creation rather than communication more convincingly than many other filmmakers. In this way he produces what T. J. Demos refers to as: "[. . .] an experience of perceptual creativity that denies the certainty of identity and the clarity of signs on which hegemonic order rests" (Demos 2009). By avoiding many of the televisual clichés of films on the Irish conflict he is able to shift the perception away from the "presentifying function" of television and towards a film that has the potential to generate new emotions that move beyond the prefabricated emotive models of the dominant media (Deleuze 2006: 291). In this formulation it is not a matter of merely telling a different story but of generating a new syntax to "[. . .] carve out a kind of foreign language within language [. . .]" (Deleuze 1997: 72). This is not to overstate the extent to which McQueen produces something radically different, which I think he does in many ways, but, rather, evidence of a genuine will to innovate on this subject within the cinematic form.

In these terms, it can be said that McQueen operates on the ground between what we can define as meaning and sense, where meaning is what is shared in a communication, but sense has to do with the grounds of intelligibility as such. What can be seen is a struggle, one articulated by Heidegger who called this relation a "self-revealing self-concealment," where it simultaneously becomes possible to speak and impossible to say it all (Bartky 1969). As McQueen himself states:

> In art, you are trying to create form. In cinema, form already exists. It's a variation on the form and what you are trying to do is subvert the form. In art, you're trying to make the form and make sense. (McQueen 2008)

In *Hunger*, then, there is a restaging that is resistant to certain conventions, working at times towards their limits but, ultimately, collapsing back into others. What we see is a struggle over the desire to escape cliché, yet the inability, ultimately, of McQueen to sustain this, for as Deleuze says in relation to any artistic practice: "There are psychic clichés, just as there are physical clichés)—ready-made perceptions, memories, phantasms" (Deleuze 2007: 61).

McQueen's effort to shift to a different yet familiar cinematic language can be seen in an early section of the film, as we follow the character Davey Gillen as he enters the prison and is obliged to strip because of his refusal to wear a prison uniform. Standing naked in front of the guards his dissent is logged into the prison ledger in a shot that is reminiscent of one from Dreyer's The Passion of Joan of Arc from 1928 (Dreyer 1928). Gillen's reduction to this bare state is matched by McQueen's film technique that is driven by a strategy of reducing the action, dialogue, and mise-en-scene close to the minimum needed to sustain a narrative. The first nine minutes show glimpses of bloodied hands, prison-guard banter, and auditory inserts of radio broadcasts that provide something of a context. We enter the prison in this way through a climate, both physical and emotional. McQueen describes the initiation of the film project as deriving from a single recollection-image from childhood, of the repetition each night on the evening news of a picture of Sands's face and the number of days on hunger strike below it. Fragments of information are suggestive of childhood memory recall working through the consciousness of an adult. The lack of any substantial historical explication is instead magnified by the duration of many of the camera shots as he sustains long takes from a single viewpoint to maintain a concentration on detail that increases in significance as the seconds pass by, something central to his artistic practice (Demos 2005: 71). This is no mean feat and, as Deleuze argues in relation to the painter Francis Bacon, it is a mistake to think that an artist starts with just a white surface and then reproduces an external object on it. As he says:

> The painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio. Now everything he has in his head or around him is already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins his work. They are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface, but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it. (Deleuze 2007: 61)

McQueen seeks to resist language in a way that echoes the refusal of the prisoners themselves, as they demand to be categorised as political actors rather than criminals. This manifests itself in the smearing of excrement on the walls of cells as a form of writing or inscription, something McQueen aestheticises by creating an image of a spiral in one widely reproduced scene.

This echoes an artwork by a previous British artist, Richard Hamilton, from 1983, *The Citizen*, based on footage of the men "on the blanket" snatched from a brief moment of TV coverage. For Hamilton, it was suggestive of the figurative/abstraction mode of artistic expression in the actual image of the men in their cells. Writing of the impressions that inspired him to produce the work, he states he saw it as a form of calligraphy, where this substance is made to: "resonate with echoes of the megalithic spirals of New Grange or the Gaelic convolutions in the book of Kells" (Hamilton 1983: 8). In the film the emphasis moves away from the legibility of the script towards a more expressive mode beyond, as McQueen, once again, voices his frustration with words: "I often think that in movies people talk a lot of shit. They fill the space with words [. . .]. It is all about process and all about 'doing' rather than speaking [. . .]" (Caddell 2009). This attitude is made manifest by the on-screen character of Sands who commits to a course of action that seeks to transcend the limitations of words/shit within the prison struggle.

In the film the narrative is driven by the lead up to the escalation in strategy from that of disruption to one of assassination and suicide. In a previous work, in the film *Caribs' Leap*, McQueen had already addressed the theme of suicide in a colonial situation. Here, McQueen interweaves scenes of everyday, primarily beaches from the island of Grenada, with scenes of figures falling through the sky in an allusion to the suicide of seventeenth-century Caribs fighting a losing battle against French colonial forces. As T.J. Demos writes, this story: "provides yet another allegory of the resistance to capture, of the sacrifice of the body in the escape from the forces of colonization" (Demos 2005: 81).

The Hunger Artist

> Apart from the changing groups of spectators there were also constant observers chosen by the public—strangely enough they were usually butchers—who, always three at a time, were given the task of observing the hunger artist day and night, so that he didn't get something to eat in some secret manner. It was, however, merely a formality, introduced to reassure the masses, for those who understood knew well enough that during the period of fasting the hunger artist would never, under any circumstances, have eaten the slightest thing, not even if compelled by force. The honour of his art forbade it. (Franz Kafka, "A Hunger Artist")

Kafka, in his story of the hunger artist, draws attention to the fact that a fundamental aspect of the hunger strike is aesthetic and a primary motivation. McQueen indicates that early on in pre-production he had considered making the film without any dialogue at all and that his ideal choice for screenwriter would have been Samuel Beckett. Clearly, by the time he has got to the shoot this has been left behind, but there is something to the idea of McQueen working through the creative image of such an artist. In their book on Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari write of the style of Beckett as operating, like him, with a "willed poverty" that pushes deterritorialisation "to such an extreme that nothing remains but intensities" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 19). Further on, they speak of the disjunction in Kafka between eating and speaking, and indeed, eating and writing with the potential of the latter to compete with food. This power of transformation is what seems to underpin the appeal for the artist of the hunger striker: as they say "To speak, and above all to write, is to fast" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 20).

Again, what is useful from this is how this emphasises the struggle between that which has been deterritorialised against the drive for meaning and the relative fixing through a reterritorilisation of this language, in an extensive or representative function. In *Hunger*, there is a line of flight represented here, but one that leads to the sadness of suicide as trapped in the spectacle of starving flesh. As Kafka's story describes, self-starvation is a performance and as such an audience is essential, necessary, and at the same time the essence of what is at work. For Maud Ellman, the hunger strike is actually comparable to an act of terrorism because the force of both relies upon words as much as the display of violence itself. To stop it being an act without sense the hunger striker must "append a text of words to the mystery of their disintegrating flesh"

(Ellman 1993: 19). Similarly, the journalist David Beresford in his account of the prison campaign writes:

> Hunger-striking, when taken to the death, has a sublime quality about it; in conjunction with terrorism it offers a consummation of murder and self-sacrifice which in a sense can legitimize the violence which precedes and follows it. (Beresford 1987: 38-39)

Both sides of the prison conflict are very aware of the nature of this struggle—this is not a disagreement over empty words or the particulars of styles of clothing but a struggle for power to *define* the framework in which power itself is to be exercised. Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* that all prison revolt is at the level of the body (Foucault 1977). Resistance, in this context, is a contest over the power to determine symbolisation, evident in the ritual of prisoner arrival and the imposition of a prison number. McQueen effectively focuses on the Goffmanesque struggle for this power (Goffman 1961: 18-30). An increasing level of violence and brutality on the screen sees the structure of domination attempt to impress its force upon soft-flesh which, of course, works to harden minds.

The Maze we see on screen is not visualised as a particularly panoptic space, more of a dungeon-like series of spaces-within-spaces. Indeed, Allen Feldman argues that the refusal to wear the prison uniform was itself a refusal to enter into what Foucault calls the "compulsory visibility" of the penal regime and an interruption to the "optical circuit of domination" (Feldman 1991: 156). Although, as we see in the film, the rectal mirror examination is a violent extension of the powers of observation, a "colon-ization" according to Feldman (Feldman 1991: 174). In terms of the production process, McQueen is adamant that the architecture and light source for the cell act to determine, to a large extent, the nature of the film image itself.

Hunger is effective in its power to extend the on-screen image to affect the body of the audience member. The phrase most used in relation to the film is visceral, that is, a feeling in the body rather than conscious reasoning. Disgust, revulsion, wincing, these are all bodily reactions more than cerebral processes. Of course, this is not a uniform process, one columnist in the *Guardian* responded that he would have liked to have seen the Republican prisoners actually tortured more on-screen. What McQueen does so effectively is to set up an affective encounter:

this is not a relationship of identification or even pity. Instead, McQueen talks of filming snowflakes landing on an outstretched hand as an entry point for the audience. Violence is the force that drives this film as it did in the H-Blocks themselves. Hands serve to function metonymically as the instrument of violence in this scenario, whether the tattooed fingers of the loyalist nurse, or the bloodied and split knuckles of the guard.

There is something of Robert Bresson's world of circulating objects in an optical space, but not the wallets of *Pickpocket,* rather, the surreptitious pencil from *A Man Escaped,* as we see tightly written "comms" passed back and forth from prisoners to visitors, and even a radio hidden within the cavities of the body.

The Face of the Militant
Within *Hunger*, cinematic signification shifts from the calligraphic of the opening section, to the iconographic of the final third. Here, the face is tied to a struggle over the codifying function of language and the regime of signification. If, to quote Deleuze and Guattari from "Year Zero: Faciality" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "significance is never without its white wall upon which to inscribe its signs" what happens when that wall is covered in your own shit? What happens when the "black hole of subjectification" leads to suicide through self-starvation? (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 167). Madness is a definite danger here (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 188).

Here, the face, which had been disrupted by the chaos of the no-wash protest leading to a loss of singularity, is brutally shorn of this line of escape away from the penal coding of the prison regime. An echo of an attempt to dismantle the face and stir strange becomings can be detected (this a Bunker-face) even if the effort to elude the organisation of the face is finally abandoned (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 171). Overwhelming and cacophonous violence is used by the repressive regime to try and subdue this disruptive manoeuvre, and out of which emerges a face that will mobilise an absolute semiotic of the body: the face of Christ. There is indeed a Holy Shroud here, As Deleuze and Guattrai say:

> The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of it; it constitutes the wall of the signifier, the frame or screen. The face digs the hole that subjectification needs in order to break through; it constitutes the black hole of

> subjectivity as consciousness or passion, the camera, the third eye. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 168)

The black and the light are already there and we can ask whether this scene is not one of pitiless darkness: "A horror story, the face is a horror story" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 168). McQueen wants to not explain, but he is relentlessly pulled towards a romanticised landscape. The white walls of the cells are smeared brown, the light is yellow, like piss, and the piss is dark and malevolent. This is a violent interruption to the circulation of meaning within this institution, one of the most important nodal points in the repressive state apparatus of the Northern Irish statelet. By the end of the film, the black hole has become the white hole, but it is still a system orientated towards the degree zero of faciality.

Now, it seems, the mythological is to determine the path of signification. The slowness of this imprisonment will be intensified on the body. It is as if the mouth is sewn shut, the opening closed, the chrysalis nourishing on the internal juices of the body until it runs dry. The correlate landscape is an enclosed one from which it is only possible to escape in recollection, and a repeating of its foundational Republican narrative: sacrifice, martyrdom, redemption.

The face is a landscape now, a sacred land. Deleuze and Guattari write:

> The close-up in film treats the face primarily as a landscape: that is the definition of film, black hole and white wall, screen and camera. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 172)

The maternal face is in this landscape. The recollections are landscapes populated by a dreamed-of face, a child's face. A white wall pushes the subject towards abstraction but is always returned by the ever-present machine that finds a corner from which to extend. The rat is always at the edge of the frame. It travels along the line between the outside and the inside. The maggot, on the other hand, travels between the inside and the outside. Larval blindness versus muroidean gnawing: "Selves are larval subjects" (Deleuze 1994: 100). McQueen begins with yellow and brown form, not as outlines, but as the matrix for the colours yet-to-come (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 173).

The architecture of the prison functions, here, as a face. The corridor is the primary locus of conflict where the impasse is contested and

resisted. It spills out of the cells and invades the space transforming it from sanitised passageway to malevolent a-subjective flow. In a remarkable scene, McQueen shows the prisoners moulding channels and barriers to direct in a coordinated way the buckets of bodily waste that wash underneath the doors, pouring out into the corridor. There is a defiling intensity to this action that sees the urine flow together into pools that sit under the fluorescent strip lighting. The response from the guards to this invasion of the corridor space is vicious and brutal violence that escalates to their invasion into the cavities and anal passages of the prisoners. Later, McQueen maintains a shot of almost unbearable duration as the figure of a rubber-booted guard pushes the liquid down and out of the corridor, only pausing to sweep it under the door of an arbitrary cell.

The individual prison cells are an extension of this process. If tools can become weapons, shackles become winches, pulling the warders into the realm of the prisoners' eco-system and regime of cathected bodies. The cell is only to be entered in prophylactic suits, like the rubber gloved hands that force their way into anuses and then mouths as violent incursion. The prisoners' refusal is a refusal to fold the body to an alien interiority of disciplinary representation. This produces the exteriorisation that is an inversion of the violence of the guards into a counter-defilement, operating on and through the body.

Sands's face is now en-ciphered as part of a regime organising as "political power operating through the face of the leader" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 175). The face of the militant is here presented as akin to the face of the saviour:

> Jesus Christ superstar: he invented the facialization of the entire body and spread it everywhere (the Passion of Joan of Arc, in close-up). (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 176)

The (Anti)Christ-face of the militant is produced in opposition, not just to the guard, but also to the priest. Soon, however, both these oppositions collapse into the Christ-face. McQueen, of course, is not a militant, and cannot keep them apart. Like opposite poles of a magnet they pull with increasing force until they collapse into each other. Speech becomes impossible but the face "is a veritable megaphone" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 179).

The disciplinary regime seeks to crush any other semiotic and there is outright war on the right to determine the signifier of the almighty. This politics demands a face. The close-up, then, is anticipation, foreshadowing death. This face is not dismantled, the temptation proves too strong and he is caught, pulled back into the face instead of escaping along the "asignifying, asubjective, and faceless" broken line of a love connecting with the other instead of conquering them (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 187).

The Militant and the Priest

> I am standing on the threshold of another trembling world.
> Bobby Sands (Beresford 1987: 84)

This last section considers the issue of belief—belief in the film (belief *in* film). Halfway through *Hunger,* McQueen changes the dramatic tone seen in the shocking execution of the guard and thus clearing the screen for Sands. This strategy of constantly de-centreing the narrative subject is adopted from the beginning of the film. We shift from the gloom of the blanket protest and the relentless violence meted out on the prisoners into, firstly, an intermediate, stabilised realm of the priest versus the militant, secondly, into the light of the passion. Reflecting once more McQueen's background in gallery installations, the demarcation of this tri-partite structure challenges conventional narrative by opening up this space of inter-mediate dialogue.

In a seventeen-minute fixed-camera shot there is little movement on screen between the two characters. But I think this is less in the direction of a "rediscovery of the fixed shot" (Deleuze 1989: 128), and more towards what Bresson would call "theatricality" (Bresson 1986: 15). What we see in this staged argument is a confrontation between a Republican militant, who has made the choice to commit to death, and a priest in the tradition of a certain kind of liberation theology, who challenges the morality of this act of suicide. McQueen is adamant that he organises the shot like this to make clear that this is not a conversation that we as an audience are positioned as included in; on the contrary—we are made to feel excluded, or at least distanced from it.

This scene is preceded by the execution of the guard in front of his lost-to-dementia mother. Death, therefore, brackets this section and

symbolically clears the screen for the elevation of the Sands character. If Sands ordered the execution then this is part of a very specific line of action: no more "negotiation" but to act. This is to be contrary to negotiation, which itself is a form of recognition, even a legitimacy, certainly an economy of rights (Cheng 2004: 118). This, however, is not simply a demand for recognition but simultaneously a dis-recognition, a refusal of the symbolic order of British rule. This is a move towards the abyssal Real, only to be recaptured by the Republican Imaginary. The scene resonates with a Kierkegaardian sense of character: the Knight of Faith, who does not hesitate, versus the Knight of infinite resignation, whose walk, he says, "Is light and bold." Kierkegaard concludes *Fear and Trembling* with: "Faith is a marvel, and yet no human being is excluded from it; for that which unites all human life is passion, and faith is a passion" (Hong 2000: 101). However, as Deleuze and Guattari state, the passional regime is a line of flight of potentially dangerous value, where subjectivity is deterritorialised and intensified (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 129).

Bobby Sands's quote from his secret diary, kept for the first seventeen days of the hunger strike, indicates that any politics suggested by such thought will be defined by the tradition of the Christian martyr, as indeed the quote from Kafka at the very beginning alludes to. But the other side of this passion is the inherent violence it contains, for as Levinas argues:

> Kierkegaardian violence begins when existence is forced to abandon the ethical stage in order to embark on the religious stage, the domain of belief. But belief no longer sought external justification. Even internally, it combined communication and isolation, and hence violence and passion. (Levinas 1998: 31)

McQueen's organisation of the film works as a process giving form to a kind of deterritiorialisation of the prisoners as they enter the prison system and embark upon the defiance of the blanket protest, and then the reterritorialisation of the prisoners around the figure of Bobby Sands as a militant, but singularised, subject. The question here is whether the shift to the figure of Sands articulates a switch from what might be defined as the combat strategy of the dirty protest and on to a war footing of the hunger strikes. There is something here of the hunger striker as one who pulls the myriad lines of resistance, defiance, and defilement into the realm of the body of the subject, which now becomes the scene of

conflict. Like Dreyer's *Passion*, the judges seek to contain the terms of the dissent to orientate the logic to that of the regime. But, there is a resistance here, even if one prone to capture and codification, and the question remains as to whether it tips over into deification. Deleuze draws a distinction between combat and war that is pertinent, he writes:

> Combat is not war. War is only combat-against, a will to destruction, a judgement of God that turns destruction into something "just." The judgement of God is on the side of war, and not combat. (Deleuze 1997: 133)

In one image from the film, redolent for some of a Francis Bacon painting, the bloodied and beaten figure of Sands has an expression of ecstatic bliss. However, this moment signals a shift in the aesthetic of McQueen away from the disintegration of the body and its indiscernibility, to use a term Deleuze applies to Bacon's paintings and his "Anglo-Irish pity" (Deleuze 2003:17). This sense of identification by the artist for the suffering of the body is one of pity for the "meat," the common zone between man and beast. As he states:

> This is not an arrangement of man and beast, nor a resemblance; it is a deep identity, a zone of indiscernibility more profound than any sentimental identification: the man who suffers is a beast, the beast that suffers is a man. This is the reality of becoming. What revolutionary person—in art, politics, religion, or elsewhere—has not felt that extreme moment when he or she was nothing but a beast, and became responsible not for the calves that died, but *before* the calves that died? (Deleuze 2003:18)

The presentation of the contrived conversation between the militant and priest can be read as kind of self-argument, less "echolalia" and more like an internal party debate. For one type of militant subjectivity, informed specifically by Maoism, there is an essential need for a "criticism/self-criticism" mode of interrogation, for the breaking and remaking of the self as a militant subject (Thoburn 2008: 103). On screen, Sands is given the opportunity to challenge the charge of narcissism to his action, where violence can always be found as necessary to the destruction of the Other.

The transformation of the hunger striker is the purification of the subject through the movement to an absolute limit. The body of the militant is the medium of the struggle and the film duly focuses on the skeletal frame and suppurating sores, tenderly dressed by the hands of

the gentle nurse. The endurance of the actor in this period of self-enforced starvation is a spectacularised moment for audience consumption, but also arguably shifts the audience investment towards him and away from the historical figure, for as Zach Horton emphasises: "*The figure in the centre of the frame is now Michael Fassbender, the actor*" (Horton 2012: 127).

By the end, the face of Fassbender/Sands on screen has a religious quality suggestive, to a certain extent, of Dreyer's Joan, a face that out-spiritualizes the Church. But martyrdom will always hold in place a politics defined by the religious transcendental: the militant is too religious and the religious too militant. There is not the joy of being communist here (Hardt and Negri 2000: 411-13). For some, suicide can be an affirmative act, a refusal to accept an impoverished level of intensity, the intolerable (Braidotti 2005: 149). However, the question is: does this operate here? If this were its limit then, as one commentator suggests, it shifts from a biopolitics to its opposite—a thanatopolitics (Gooch 2011: 9). But there is the glimpse of something collective beyond this embodied aesthetic, as the promise made by Sands in the film to radicalise "a new generation" is made manifest as we read in the closing frames that he was elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, thus extending to something of the vast crowd of a 100,000 crowd that lined his funeral route. As the skeletal body of Fassbender-Sands is removed from the celluloid space, it connects to a movement outside, a shift from the singular to the promise of a collective.

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"Pushing Yourself into Existence": Language, Trauma, Framing in Pat Collins's *Silence* (2012)

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Abstract

The article considers Pat Collins's feature length debut *Silence* (2012) as a film concerned with responses to trauma. Opening with a definition of epistemology and film-imaging as framing, the article then focuses these concerns around language or language-use. A parallel is then drawn between the thematising of "silence" around the journey of the protagonist (Eoghan) in *Silence* and "silence" as thematised in the final proposition of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1922). This parallel is used to explore an obligation, perceived as coming to prominence in the course of Eoghan's journey, to resist the desire to frame the experience of trauma; resistance defined by an ethics of "silence." The article's middle section develops this discussion of ethics to explore the "window" as a visual motif in *Silence* (considered pertinent to reading the ethical), arguing that this motif gives the perceived obligation to remain silent (in the case of Eoghan's journey home in the film), to resist framing, a crucially aesthetic context. The final section addresses these issues in the wider sense of the film as an allegory on Ireland; concerned with accepting the limitations of language regarding the traumatic or the experience of trauma.

Key words: framing, Ireland, language, trauma, knowledge

> The small meadow shimmered in the starlight, and her promises grew more extravagant as she drifted into the lucid thin air of waking dreaming, her flirting more obvious–then she'd awake, alert to some step in the woods, some brief bloom of light in the sky, back and forth for a while between Brock fantasies and the silent darkened silver images all around her, before settling down for a sleep [. . .]. Prairie awoke to a warm and persistent tongue all over her face. It was Desmond, none other, the spirit and image of his grandmother Chloe, roughened by the miles, face full of blue-jay feathers, smiling out of his eyes, wagging his tail, thinking he must be home. (Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*)

> Don't you hear the horrible screaming all around us, the screaming that men usually call silence? (Hören Sie nicht das entsetliche Schreien ringsum, das man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt?'). (Georg Büchner, *Lenz*)

Two Irish feature films released in 2012 can be considered responses to the trauma of the Irish economic collapse, albeit addressing trauma in an indirect capacity. Lenny Abrahamson's *What Richard Did* (2012), an

urban drama, is inspired by the social realism of Belgian filmmakers, the Dardenne Brothers, and based loosely on the Anabel nightclub crime, which took place in Dublin in 2000. The crime in question concerned the accidental murder of a Dublin schoolboy by his peers following a nightclub brawl. Pat Collins's *Silence*, on the other hand, set largely among the wild expanses of the Irish West Coast, concerns an exiled worker—in the vein of diasporic texts such as Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming* (1985)—returning home; a return complicated by a lack of information as to why he originally fled.[1] An estranged emigrant, Eoghan, living in Berlin, is tasked with returning home for temporary work. His return, however, takes a different route to earlier exile narratives, in that, in the process of returning he is reacquainted with a country he appears to have, initially, lost interest in. The reason for Eoghan's exile in Berlin is never revealed as such.

While both films are concerned with trauma, or dealing with it, lack of any clear indication as to who is responsible, is presented—in both films—through a young male's difficulty in speaking about the crisis he bears witness to. In both films, one based in an urban setting, another in a rural, the crisis experienced by the lead protagonist lends itself to being read as an allegory on the Irish experience, most specifically the traumatic impact of the recession. In the case of *What Richard Did*, a well-adjusted popular teenager, Richard, is faced with an insurmountable trauma, the response to which becomes the mainstay of the film. The smooth functioning of bourgeois society is interrupted, a shockwave emanating from a criminal act of traumatic proportions. In the case of *Silence*, an exile travels back to Ireland, while remaining wearily quiet about why he left. An abiding sense of loss permeates the discussions when travelling. In what follows, I read Eoghan's journey, like Richard's, ethically *and* allegorically. Taking allegory to mean a kind of parable or fable, *Silence* can be contextualised around the recent recession in Ireland, assessed around the ramifications of the economic collapse. That Eoghan returns, in the course of his journey, to a place associated with trauma and remains silent about this has ethical as well

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[1] Orla Yadin's and Sylvie Bringas's eleven-minute animated documentary *Silence* (1998) shares not only a title but the thematic concerns of Collins's feature-length film. Yadin's and Bringas's film deals with the self-imposed silence of a Holocaust survivor; the film is an exploration of the child's response to trauma

as allegorical merit. There is, I argue, an obligation, a demand for Eoghan, to resist framing trauma (in language) which, perceived allegorically, can be considered an ethical and cathartic way of confronting the Irish "trauma" of recent years.[2]

Over the course of a journey to significant sites, landmarks and long shots of the landscape, the composition of which evoke the landscapes of Casper David Friederich and Irish painter Paul Henry, position Eoghan in a diminished yet—at the same time—overwrought state. The sheer immensity of the land is an intimation of the (immense) trauma associated with it. Wide-angle shots of landmarks contrast interiors of cars and houses, distinguished by an imposing window frame. A signature shot of Eoghan moving across the landscape in his car is of a figure "immoblised" (I return to this later) against the backdrop of a window in close-up, the framed interior emphasised by the lines bordering the window. Windows (cast as the frame within the frame) are prominent "frames," giving a visual form to the narrative concern with picturing, and certain validity to the contention that framing—framing the past as knowledge—is a central prerogative of Eoghan's. The narrative, in one sense at least, concerns Eoghan seeking a picture, from which his past can be framed as a coherent narrative. Each encounter along his work route seems to impel him towards a past trauma.

This article approaches *Silence* through a register of framing considered double. Framing, in the first instance, is considered a method for harnessing the past in discourse. Epistemically, the past is filtered as an object of knowledge, the framed object a reductio of past experience. To frame is to harness knowledge from cognitive recall. "Enframing," as outlined by Martin Heidegger in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954), helps conceptualise the reductive power of framing. As Heidegger states, "nature reports itself in some way or other that is identifiable through calculation and that it remains orderable as a system of information" (Heidegger 1993: 328). For Heidegger, the very idea of

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[2] David McWilliams has consistently addressed the trauma of recession Ireland. Ireland is said to have experienced an "anxiety recession" based on the shock of deep economic turmoil. "In an anxiety recession," McWilliams notes, "people want to pay down their debts because they have been traumatised by too much debt" (McWilliams 2012). Trauma has a material trace in ghost housing estates dominant on the Irish landscape, crucially underling the distinction between "house," a symbol of trauma, and "home," a symbol of belonging.

ordering "nature" (considered as experience) is just one method, one particular way of procuring—as a port of call—knowledge. To enframe is to build systems of knowledge using such methods. While, for Heidegger, enframing is scientific, it operates as a blockage to "original revealing and hence to experiencing the call of a more primal truth" (Heidegger 1993: 329). For Heidegger, the enframing impulse has the unsavoury effect of smothering, or concealing, truth in this primordial form.

With the primordial the considered concern, there is an argument to be made, a central aim of this article, that (en)framing, as expressed in the form and content of *Silence*, works against an obligation–expressed through the journey undertaken by protagonist Eoghan–or at least, one alluded to, to resist doing just that (framing as language).[3] In other words, the enframing impulse confronts an opposing one, revealed as a primordial feature of Eoghan's journey. To (en)frame is one way of thinking through framing, perhaps scientifically, another way of which can found in the discourse of film theory. For Sergei Eisenstein, to frame involves "cutting out a piece of reality by means of the lens" (Eisenstein 1929: 148). In the piecing together of shots, film "frames" an exterior real. Multiple shots frame the real, fuelling the perception that film is more advanced in accessing reality than earlier art forms. Although this is not a contended point in what follows, it is suggested that framing— framing in language or framing (reality) as image—when both involve knowledge claims, is problematised around trauma and its representation in *Silence*. This problematisation concerns an act of knowledge formation called "framing." A claim like "the problem is home" is an example. Or indeed, "the film is about Ireland." These are not necessarily false claims. However, the act of framing is purported by them. To frame can be perceived as an epistemological (which includes visual) act.

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[3] Heidegger develops the discussion of enframing around the issue of what he calls destining. "When destining reigns in the mode of enframing," he notes, "it is the supreme danger. The danger attests itself to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of standing-reserve, then he comes to the brink of a precipitous fall" (Heidegger 1993: 332). One could read the journey of *Silence* as a journey, not destined but reactive, working against the large masses of standing-reserve (houses) that have come to define Celtic Tiger Ireland.

From a film theoretical perspective, a distinction can be made between framing, considered as a process of knowledge formation and showing. To show, simply to show, involves no subsidiary knowledge claim. However, in so far as it concerns "reality," certain strands of "reality" which are not necessarily framed as knowledge, can, nonetheless, be shown in film: to frame a considered method for expunging knowledge relating to what is shown (generally relating to the film in its narrative form). Taking the distinction between framing and showing as intact (or for the purpose of argument at least), a further line of investigation in the following article will be concerned with the window as motif (the frame). The window, as "shown" in the final sequence, has a reflexive use, in that it problematises the epistemology of framing.

The epistemology of framing concerns ordering and systemising in language. To frame is to know something definitive about an object. But to know is a conduit of language. The limits of the world are, for certain philosophers of language, the limits of language. Yet, that experience can resist "expression" in language gives credence to the possibility, certainly within a phenomenological context, that not all experience can be "known." Traumatic experience is often spoken of in this way. "Trauma," Cathy Caruth notes, "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that it's very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth 1996: 4). In their seminal essay "Introjection–Incorporation: Mourning or Melancholia," the pathological retort to fantasy, considered as a defense mechanism against trauma, is explored by Abraham and Torok. Trauma, they argue, is of "such nature to prohibit communication" (Abraham and Torok 1980: 7). The event is resistant to expression; its shock value escapes diction.

Taking the relationship between language, the frame and trauma as a point of departure, the ethical *response* to trauma as suggested by *Silence* can be considered, rather ironically, as silence. Silence, which Eoghan is trying to record in the film, is a silence instrumentalised as (en)framing. This is then opposed to a primordial silence considered epistemologically as a way of responding to trauma that is ethical. The pertinent emphasis given by Ludwig Wittgenstein to "silence" in the *Tractatus* (1922) finds certain resonance here. Wittgenstein ends his text with the proposition,

"whereof which we cannot speak, therefore we must remain silent" (Wittgenstein 2002). While certainly a teasing way to end a major philosophical work, a body of criticism has taken the proposition to be a tautology, a nonsensical end to an at times nonsensical text. Others, alternatively, have noted a dismissal of philosophy's capacity to solve anything of note. Yet, while some are skeptical of the true worth of Wittgenstein's claims in ethical terms, there are those who find in the proposition something of a definitively ethical nature. Staying silent on what must not be spoken of, is, for these critics, a distinctly ethical stance.

The obligation to remain silent is assumed—by these scholars—to mean something cannot be said; and this must be accepted as such. The *Tractatus*, on this reading, takes the form of a ladder, thrown away when the limitations of language are accepted. The ladder is a metaphor for language; throwing it away is a metaphor for an awakening to the limitations of language. For Lynette Reid, who has written extensively on Wittgenstein's conclusive endnote, the upshot of the ladder theory lies in the assertion to "stop engaging in this activity of arguing" (Reid 1998: 106). This demand to stop arguing, for Reid, involves a subsidiary demand to accept insufficiencies of language. There is a lack in language in relation to certain experiential forms, a lack which must be accepted.

Returning to *Silence*, cast as a film which concerns language, or at least the relationship between silence, language and trauma, the concerted efforts made by Eoghan to record the "silence" of Ireland's landmarks, which makes up a considerable portion of the narrative action, can be thought to shield, that is, mask, the purpose of the silence maintained around the (perceived) trauma in returning home. Eoghan's efforts at recording silence—the journey of the film a long deliberation on silence—can be found to veil the significance of his speaking in his native tongue when he returns to Tory Island (an Irish-speaking island off Donegal, part of the Donegal Gaeltacht). By travelling to where his native language is spoken—in the film's conclusion—and facing the trauma of having left, considerable weight is given to the relationship between silence, language and trauma. Indeed, the journey culminates on Tory, at a moment when the relationship between language and silence, discussed at various anchor points along the way, reaches critical mass. Crucially, Eoghan, as a native speaker, returns to where his native tongue is spoken. Yet his journey home, which requires speaking his native

language at intermittent intervals, can also be found to involve an acceptance of language *per se* in its limitations (as silence). This is analogous to Wittgenstein's text, when this acceptance is considered as an ethical variant.

The film opens with a sequence of images, abstract in that they have no context within the film prior to this, of a house situated in the Irish landscape. Collins then cuts to Eoghan discussing his return to Ireland (for work) with his partner on the streets of Berlin. The discussion, drowned out by city-noise, shifts to an apartment in evening time. No back-story is given concerning the problems of home. There is an implicit tension generated around the abstractions of a house and a broken window shown in close-up prior to these scenes. These abstractions emerge again at the film's end, now revealed as images of the place Eoghan finally returns to, having been spliced into the action at random moments throughout. A close-up of a framed picture swaying on a wall follows that of a curtain blowing through a broken windowpane. Lacking context in the main body of film, these are "disjunctive temporalities," as Adam Lowenstein puts it, which "exceed 'pastness' and infect the present" (Lowenstein 2012: 143). Like trauma, they "cut into" the present, only to reveal their content as Eoghan's family "home" at the end (a point when form and content align).

It is never clear whether these images are markers of what haunts Eoghan because of an associated trauma, or the expression of a trauma interrupting the film's syntax. In the former sense, as mental images, they recall the repetitious-mental images experienced by victims of trauma, images which, lacking cognitive status, jarr with language. Simply put, their content resists framing. "The event," James Dawes notes, "overwhelms the act of experiencing [. . .] because the event thereby permanently escapes understanding." He adds, "if trauma is in this sense not simply cognition resistant but noncognitive, then there are serious costs to putting trauma into words" (Dawes 2013: 29-30). "Trauma," Grant H. Kester claims, "is defined [. . .] by the continual reenactment, repetition, or reiteration of the traumatic event in the consciousness of the subject" (Kester 2011: 183). Images return *ad nauseum* due to a subject's difficulty processing image content in language. These trauma images also interrupt the filmic syntax. It is only when their indexical content materialises and is shown as the home associated with trauma that the film ends. Moreover, the final shot,

Eoghan moving from the window to the centre of the room having returned "home," is undertaken in silence the constitutive basis of which is an (perceived) ethic *not* to frame (to frame to find a definitive meaning for experience in language).

The journey, before reaching this endpoint, unfolds with an almost gravitational pull to where Eoghan's native language is spoken on his return to Ireland. This pull is marked by incidents which draw him, almost as if by some unconscious force, towards home. One of the most significant of these incidents takes place on the West Coast. The incident in question begins with an undisclosed "other," with the novelist Michael Harding playing himself, although he is never referred to as Harding, walking towards the camera in long shot; while Eoghan sets up his recording equipment. The stranger inquires what Eoghan is doing, only to be told "recording areas that are away from manmade sound." "Sure *you're* here," the stranger replies. Without dwelling on the ironic comedy of this reply, the next scene takes place in a car, making it clear that Eoghan has been invited home. The conversation hinges on the possibility of experiencing pure silence. The shot of a skyline is then followed by a cut to a dining room of an old house; where the discussion continues over dinner. Eoghan is asked if he has sisters and brothers. He is visibly uncomfortable when stating he is an only child, inferring posssible reasons for his exile. Recognising this, his host changes the subject.

The host (as "other") deliberates on a "silence" which cannot be understood as lack, as the tension around the discussion of Eoghan and his family and the trauma it invariably evokes now subsides. Eoghan then agrees to sing, after which he talks about the value of song to rooting people in place. This moment underlines—to the extent that it is almost an epiphany—the importance of "home." "When you push yourself into existence, it's like the first note of a song. It comes out of silence. And your last breath will be followed by silence," the host notes, adding the words, "but in that time you can only be where you're rooted, where you belong. And to where you go home." From this point the significance of "place" in the sense of belonging is greater; as the "being"—associated with the lure of "home"—harmonises with "becoming." The scene anchoring the film is momentous; the change from resisting the lure of home to accepting it now takes on a revelatory tone.

Eoghan's failure to reveal something about the return to Ireland is nonetheless poignant. An existential quality is given to belonging, in that "you can only be where you belong," yet it is never made clear whether Eoghan at this point shares this view. He has "been" to different locations on a map, an exercise in solitude. The encounter with *this* other, who forms a bond with Eoghan, seems in one sense revelatory, in part due to the sudden "constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together a particular locus" (Massey 1994: 154). It involves the "particular locus" of home. In another sense, it seems to remind Eoghan of the trauma he is destined to confront. The discussion concludes with the camera turning to the homely kitchen space. A kettle boils; morning arrives. Eoghan's silence on the ruminations concerning home are now more telling, more affective than a robust response, with the kitchen and boiling tea signifiers of a "home" he maintains an uncomfortable relation with. A shot of a window (and I will return to the significance of recurring window images) ends the sequence, framing a garden with a child's swing made from an old tyre. Here are traces of family life but information about Eoghan's past remains steeped in silence.

Matthew Ostrow finds in the concluding proposition of the *Tractactus* emphasis on doing a statement he regards as fundamentally ethical. For Ostrow, "Wittgenstein's statement finds its real fulfillment not in what we say but in what we do" (Ostrow 2002: 14). In the sequence following the encounter with the undesignated host, Eoghan is alone in the landscape, with the emphasis now shifting from the subtlety of his conversation to the base physicality of what he is doing. Because the reasons for visiting the places he visits are lacking, the journey to these places takes on a spiritual as much as physical demeanour (a *must* not to be spoken of). This physical "doing" accords with a silence of Wittgensteinian proportions. Eoghan hypothetically assumes the "my" in Ostrow's analysis:

> The activity of philosophizing (serves) as an indication that my will is at odds with reality, that I am failing to accept fully the course of my experience. It will be taken as a sign that something has gone awry in my way of living. And that is to say that to "go on" with the task of the *Tractatus* is ultimately just to acknowledge the "must" in the text's final remark—"whereof one cannot speak, thereof one *must* remain silent" (*TPL* 71)—as the mark not of logical necessity, but of ethical obligation. (Ostrow 2002: 133)

In deciding to visit the county where his native tongue is spoken, a sense of ethical obligation is brought to bear on Eoghan's subsequent decision to return to the derelict house perceivably his home, bearing witness to the source of trauma, or at least the home associated with it. He arrives in the Gaeltacht (where his house is), and in the sequences which herald his decision to return to Tory, speaks fluently in Irish. These are sequences crucial to the film's narrative trajectory in the sense that the journey back consists of generating an awareness of silence as a means of accepting language *in* its limitations (a silence in language). Eoghan must rediscover the language that links him with "home" while at the same time accepting that this language is limited in accounting for the impact of trauma. His encounters on the way are significant in serving as premonitions of this. In the final sequence, Eoghan travels from Inishbofin—an island like Tory–to Donegal, as the camera settles on a young man conversing with Eoghan in Irish. That the dialogue concerns the burden of leaving home, adds significance to what materialises after. The boy could just as easily be a younger version of Eoghan, planning his future, speaking of a need to escape the "home" Eoghan is about to rediscover. The fact that Eoghan converses in Irish is also significant. He has entered Tory, the Gaeltacht island he has not visited in fifteen years:

A shot of Eoghan boarding the Tory island ferry is followed by a set of stunning superimpositions: an image, archival in origin, of a fisherman winding in a net, superimposed on a monumental wave crashing upon the shore. A voice-over recalls the songs sung by fishermen from one boat to the next, as they travel across the waves. The second is an image of a lighthouse superimposed on a map, used to signify the protagonist's impending arrival on Tory. These images hint at Eoghan's decision to travel to the island, before a cut to him conversing with an older islander (having walked inland from the pier) indicates his arrival. In the sequence which follows, Eoghan sets out to rediscover the island's beauty. The camera then cuts to him walking along a cliff-edge, the corncrake's call the only discernible sound, drowning out the man-made noise in the surrounding vicinity. A medium shot, concealing the danger of Eoghan's position, cuts to long: He is now a dot on the landscape, making the scale of rock on which he stands immense in comparison. The roar of the sea is heard as he begins his retreat. A medium shot of Eoghan returning to the village, signifying the end of an excursion, follows a diminished profile—his silhouette—standing on a sea stack.

In these sequences the idea of "silence," conceptualised by Eoghan earlier in the film as sound free of man-made intrusion, materialises as a kind of obtuse supplement to language. This is silence as sound, devoid of cultural significance, but also silence indicative of what Eoghan *must* not speak about ethically. That is, when to speak is to frame, to reduce the experiences associated with the past to an object of knowledge. Silence resonates in the first sense in shots of the landscape. These are complemented, in the second sense, by a cut from Eoghan walking towards the village at half-light, to a reverse shot of a derelict "house," situated in a sparsely populated rural area in full light. Blurred "frames"—windows, doorways—come into focus as the nooks and crannies of the house are perused on entering. Eoghan then opens a cupboard, inspects peeling paint, before gazing out through the broken glass of the sitting room window. He then recalls muttering voices. This "collective" mutter, resistant to the framing of language, does not make "sense." As if in lieu of this, Eoghan moves upstairs, where a broken window and picture frame externalise the broken mutter of the voices.

Eoghan then appears at a window (which we will discuss later), surrounded by a gradually darkening room. A ruin, advanced in its decay, is set in the field over which the window looks. Sandy Denny's "It'll Take a Long Time" plays as the screen begins to blacken, as a non-diegetic accompaniment to the final scene. The significance of Denny's epic should not be lost. For the line about fishermen "who will never know, if there's a reason, each of them must go, to join the cruel flow" finds an echo in the cruel flow Eoghan confronts at "home." Perhaps the lyrics express the ethical recognition for Eoghan that certain memories remain excluded from discourse, and the need to accept this. To speak about a trauma is to look for sense, to give a reason. The cruel flow is the fifteen years of absence, voices that will not relent; and the journey a bearing witness to the material—and not so material—traces of this absence.

Michael Kremer's critique of the *Tractatus* can help shed light on the specifically ethical concerns around this ending to the film:

> My interpretation of the ethical point of the *Tractatus* turns on the "irresolute" character of the ineffability reading. The central idea of the ineffability reading, that there are truths which are "shown" but cannot be said, involves an unstable combination of two notions: the notion of a truth, something with the structure of a proposition, and the notion of an insight which is beyond expressing in propositions.

> Ineffability readers sometimes recognize the incoherence of this idea, but nonetheless do not hesitate to saddle the *Tractatus* with it—after all, they say, the book was later recognized by Wittgenstein as defective. Resolute readers, on the other hand, see this idea as a temptation which the *Tractatus* presents to its readers, only to show them in the end its incoherence. Resolute readers, therefore, must look elsewhere for the difficulties that Wittgenstein eventually came to see in his early work. (Kremer 2007: 146)

Kremer's interpretative stance, as resolute, is not the main concern here, nor is the viability of his reading. However, his assertion that the shown does not "assume the structure of a proposition," when the proposition is considered to frame "reality" (addressed by Kremer in its "incoherence"), is helpful when considering the meaning of this end. The film ends with the once trauma image being revealed as an image of the home Eoghan has now returned to, while Eoghan is shown approaching the window, first seen in this trauma image. He gazes out from the window before he moves away, and the window moves off screen. The window can be seen as "a fragment from a constantly flowing and evolving reality" (Elsasesser and Hagener 2010: 16). Thus, retreating from the window—the same window of which is a central motif in the (trauma) image—imbibes, symbolically, Eoghan's need not to, or that he must not, frame the "reality" to which he now bears witness (the shown). What he experiences as "real" need not "assume the structure of a proposition," hence, he remains silent. The window frame moves out of the cinematic frame, as the ethical and allegorical reach a meaningful epiphany.

The Realist Fallacy

> That place called home is never an unmediated experience. (Doreen Massey)

André Bazin's writings, most specifically the essays "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," and "The Myth of Total Cinema," both written during the early years of Italian neo-realism, have been instrumental in shaping the relationship between cinema and the realist movement after the War. Bazin identifies a defining teleology, from the first excursions in perspective, to the advent of French painterly realism (on to cinema). In his essay, he underlines the fact that the early inventors of cinema "saw the cinema as a total and complete representation of reality [. . .] *an*

integral realism, a recreation of the world in its own image" (Bazin 2005: 20-21). For Bazin, photography is an "impassive" recorder of reality. Just as Stanley Cavell claims, "when a photograph is cropped, the rest of the world is cut *out*" (Cavell 1979: 24), Bazin finds an unparalleled access to reality in the photographic medium.

Bazin finds realism—the teleological origin of which he identifies— in painterly perspective. For Stephen Heath, following Bazin, the "fixed centrality" of the film spectator, derives its positional fixity from the spectator of two-dimensional (pictorial) space. In "Narrative Space," Heath maintains "fundamental (to the film experience) is the idea of a spectator at a window, an *aperta finestra* that gives a view on the world—framed, centred, harmonious (the *istoria*)" (Heath 1976: 78). "For Heath," Friedberg puts it, "the frame of the camera reproduces the frame of Alberti's metaphoric window, offering a view that is framed and centered" (Freidberg 2006: 78). Friedberg notes:

> The cinematic moving image is produced by a series of "frames" travelling at a precise speed through an aperture of projected light. The film frame reminds us of Alberti's axioms for perspectival representation. But while photographic perspective conforms to the conventions of depth of field and framing, and hence Bazin's teleological viewpoint, "the cinematic movement of objects within the frame to its edges, and off-frame, suggests its radical contradiction." (Freidberg 2006: 83)

The cinematic/photographic frame may have its origins in the Albertian window. Yet the positing of such origins is belied, at least in Friedberg's view, by contradiction. Not only is equating the window with the materiality of the screen a problematic venture, so too is the conviction, when assumed, that photography is a less "mediated" form than others. In other words, it is not a given that the framing of reality which supposedly originates in perspectival painting reaches a nadir of perfection in the photographic image. It might be more appropriate to say that the photographic image has an ability to show without necessarily framing reality, the distinction being fundamentally epistemological.

Debates in realist discourse tend to hinge on considerations of photography as an end-point of the realist project. These debates also rest on the fact that reality—of which we speak—can be rendered without the same recourse to mediation, film as a fulfillment of the Albertian "window on the world" coda. Taking the cinema screen to equate with the window, as assumed within realist circles, the windows used in

Silence can appear as problematic reflexive motifs, dramatising the window view as a metaphor for peering into the real. That *Silence* has been received as a documentary would seem to support the film's "window on the world" coda;[4] and indeed its realism. In this sense, the film frames reality. Yet, considering the film as neither conventional documentary nor full fiction, the aesthetic use of the window assumes greater levels of import. It is interesting to note that Eoghan is played by a non-professional actor (and co-author of the screenplay for the film), Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, who has lived in exile from Donegal. Eoghan, in an uncanny contradiction, plays Eoghan. The emphasis on the window, nonetheless, serves to reflexively dramatise the film's implicit claim to be a window on the world, with the world being Ireland, while generating further concerns around the issue of Eoghan framing this world.

By turning away from the window "frame" in this final sequence the reflexive concerns with the visuality of framing are all the more apparent: what are "we" looking at? What can be "seen"? What can be known? Eoghan peers outwards through the window, a mark of his impulse to frame, before moving away, suggesting, or at least implying, his decision not to frame, or that he must resist beholding, like the film itself, a frame for trauma (a microcosm of Ireland's trauma). For Eoghan travels back to Ireland, whether, consciously or not, in the hope that an understanding of how the country has impacted on him can be framed. However, the move away from the window now implies he has come to terms with the limitations of framing as language, when to frame is a repository for language. The window is used to reflect on framing, ending the film by suggesting the "reality" Eoghan peers at through this window—as if the picture he has of the past is no longer something to be beheld—and the desire to structure his reality as a proposition, has given way to an acceptance of language and its limitations. The end, associating the window frame with framing, aligns Eoghan's view with

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[4] It is not surprising that quite a large proportion of critics received the film as a documentary, the implicit aim of which was to interrogate the realism of the documentary form. Mac Giolla Bhríde is a co-writer, making the film partially autobiographical. When the distinction between non-professional actors and documentary subjects is rendered mute, the film acquires a certain realism, while equally problematising the realist form.

the spectator's;[5] a gaze no longer directed at the window. The window, as a symbol of "reality," and the framing of language, now moves off screen, forming a symbolic correlation with the Albertian metaphoric window:

> Alberti's metaphoric "window" was a framing device for the geometrics of his perspective formula. While it implied a fixed position for the viewer of single point perspective, it did not assume or imply that the "subject to be painted" should be the exact view of what one would see out an architectural window onto the natural world, as in a "window on the world." As a representational system, linear perspective was a technique for reproducing what was seen on the virtual plane of representation. But if the logic of perspective produced a representation of pictorial space with the effect of window-gazing, it also placed new restrictions on a viewer who was, as one writer will describe, "immobilized by the logic of the system." (Friedberg 2006: 35)

The capacity for the window, *qua* Friedberg, to immobilise the viewer, makes it a suitably fertile metaphor for the ending of *Silence*. For, rather than assume an experience of immobility, the effect of window-gazing— a practice in which Eoghan partakes in this scene, and at key moments in his journey—allows the experience of arriving home to take the form of acceptance at this moment. Eoghan is attuned, perhaps impelling the viewer to become similarly attuned (to Ireland and its problems), to accept that something about "reality" does not lend itself to being framed. Something about what Eoghan gazes at through the window escapes the aperture of the frame. It is no surprise that the images, defined as trauma images, find a context at this juncture, neutralising their earlier impact as "trauma." It is as if, with Eoghan *and* the film

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[5] It is interesting to note the metaphoric use of the ruin in Iranian cinema, particularly as Collins has an expressed interest in the Iranian New Wave, and in particular the films of Abbas Kiarostami. He made a commissioned documentary *Abbas Kiarostami: The Art of Living* (Collins 2004). Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa makes the point "a perfect example of metaphor of Kiarostami's cinema, also common in Persian poetry and the work of other Iranian filmmakers, is the use of ruins as an image of depression, an image that can be historical as well as personal—that evokes a collective memoir of destruction imperialistically and internally as well as a sense of despair and loss" (Saeed-Vafa 2003: 59). That Eoghan turns away from the window, through which he peered upon the ruin, supports the argument that the collective memory which materialises as a ruin cannot be framed, and he *must* stay silent.

making, the same point—the trauma depicted through these images, of Eoghan's home—can be accepted, without at the same time assuming the "structure of a proposition," framed. The home aligned with trauma, does not lend itself to framing.

That trauma must not be spoken of, rationalised (as expressed in Wittgenstein's final proposition), is felt in the phasing of the window off screen as Eoghan sits in silence. The visual emphasis given to the window, as frame, is reduced. The subtle use of sound, however, as an accompaniment, has a nonetheless crucial role in this sequence. Eoghan enters the home, with memory externalised as sound; a mutter of voices gradually replaced by song. Although he does not speak or talk about what he feels, the audience is privy to the sonic memories that pervade his consciousness. The Real, as coined by Jacques Lacan to account for the use of language in the aftermath of trauma, offers an interesting means for assessing how visual form echoes the concerns mediated in sound. Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek explores the concept, as follows:

> Here the distinction between reality and the Real can be brought into use: reality, as we have just seen, serves as the external boundary which enables us to totalize language, to make out of it a closed and coherent system, whereas the Real is its inherent limit, the unfathomable fold which prevents it from achieving identity with itself. Therein consists the fundamental paradox of the relation between the Symbolic and the Real: the bar which separates them is strictly *internal to the Symbolic*, since it prevents the Symbolic from becoming itself. (Zizek 2002: 112)

The "closed" and the "coherent" equate, metaphorically, with the enclosing Zizek associates with the frame. It is noteworthy the film ends with Eoghan moving through the space of the "home," as a hum of mutter is recalled. It is a "strange" mutter in that it does not cohere as speech. It is also strange in that Eoghan recalls it before recalling the tradition of sean nós. Mutter subsides in a tradition of song Ó'Cannain says is a "complex way of singing in Gaelic, confined mainly to some areas in the West and South of the country [. . .] one finds a very florid line in Connacht, contrasted with a less decorous one in the South, and by comparison, a stark simplicity in the Northern songs" (Ó'Cannain 1978: 49). He notes "no aspect of Irish music can be understood without a deep appreciation of sean nós singing. It is the key which opens every lock" (Ó'Cannain 1978: 71). It is significant that this tradition is recalled

as Eoghan moves around the derelict "home." The mutter of the strange "unfathomable fold" is replaced by an unaccompanied solo voice.

The lyrics of the song go some way to framing the reality of an island, in this case Tory. This is in contrast to a mutter, conceptualised as the Real, resistant to the symbolic as discourse. Just as his project in returning to Ireland involves recording silence—conceptualised by Eoghan as framing the natural world—there is something "beyond" the frame, emphasised by this muttering, which bears on the experience. In this way, *Silence* is about navigating an island, where the frame, considered as the historical real, exists in a curious nexus with the trauma of the Real. Trauma, returned to by way of an unconscious pull, reveals itself in the muttering of the Real, recalled by Eoghan as he enters the home. As Zizek puts it "history itself is nothing but a succession of failed attempts to grasp, conceive, specify this strange kernel (the Real)" (Zizek 2002: 101).

A silhouette is all that is visible as the film ends, the spectator tasked with imagining Eoghan's emotional reaction. Eoghan may well be overwrought. But that he maintains silence against the partially viewed window is important. For he *must* retreat from framing and stay silent, just like the spectator who finds resonance in his position on screen.

Quiet Radicalism/A House is Not a Home

> It is language that tells us about the essence of a thing, as long as we respect language's own essence. Martin Heidegger

Images of a house haunt the film until this scene, when, crucial to the allegorising process, they reveal themselves as images of home. The pacifying alignment of trauma with home evokes a similarly pacifying alignment in Eoghan and, crucially, a potentially similar one in the spectator. Because Eoghan's journey mirrors the journey undertaken by these images in finding a context, house becomes home, in a kind of cathartic riposte to the Irish obsession with housing in recent years.

Catharsis is achieved ending the film this way. Anxiety displayed in the form, or more specifically in the interruptive "trauma" images, is eased when Eoghan is shown dwelling in the home that these images represent. The silence maintained by Eoghan, the fact that he does not talk about going home, and resists speaking about it in a capacity which

would seek to frame it, synchronises with the move away from the frame of the window. The gaze, an attempt to impose order, is rejected: the ruin is no longer in need of a frame. The trauma of the Irish landscape, symbolised by the ruin, resists being bound by the framing of language.

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Listen—Christy Moore's Old and New, *Glocal* Ireland

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Abstract
This article examines the role of popular music in the construction of communal belonging and cultural memory in contemporary Ireland, focusing on a single case, namely that of the former lead singer of Planxty, Christy Moore—ever a politically active songwriter and performer, who was named as "Ireland's greatest living musician" in RTÉ's People of the Year Awards in 2007.[1] Moore's solo album, *Listen* (2009), by its very title invites his audience to listen to a summation of his influences, his past and his diagnosis of the present. The album refers to history—personal, communal and national—in three different areas: Musical history (that of Ireland at large—"Rory's Gone"), as well as Christy Moore's personal role in it ("Barrowland"); Irish immigration and diaspora history ("Duffy's Cut"); and world political history at large ("The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos"), and yet it also emphasises the present cultural state and critiques it. The article examines this album as a glocal Irish artefact and cultural text.

Key words: music, song lyrics, cultural memory, globalisation, glocal, cultural texts

Christy Moore's penultimate solo album, *Listen* (2009) is *glocal*—global as well as local—in its scope. The songs are collected from a number of different songwriters and describe events around the world, in places as diverse as Arctic Sweden, Great Britain, the USA and El Salvador—with notable local Irish interludes, such as "The Ballad of Ruby Walsh," which takes us to the Galway races, and in the process sends up the Irish upper classes. The album also includes "Gortatagort," which continues the tradition of limning the Irish countryside with very specific use of place names to create a nostalgic geography and historiography. Even songs that are not specific in their references to Irishness, however, take on Irish resonances from the very framing they are exposed to, through the song selection, as well as the performance aspects of the recording, including the choice of Irish instruments (including bodhran) and, not least, Moore's Irish accent. I propose that this hybridity of new and old,

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[1] Awarded for "decades of exceptional contribution to Irish music," http://www.rehab.ie/press/article.aspx?id=304.

foreign and national, might just be the most appropriate strategy for an updating of Irish identity through song.

Cultural geographers and theorists of postmodernism and globalisation have suggested that the last decades of the twentieth century were characterised by the twin phenomena of cultural acceleration and time-space compression. David Harvey proposes in his book, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, that "the general effect is for capitalist modernisation to be very much about speed-up and acceleration in the pace of economic processes and, hence, social life" (Harvey 1991: 230). Thus, he suggests that "innovations dedicated to the removal of spatial barriers [. . .] have been of immense significance in the history of capitalism, turning that history into a very geographical affair—the railroad and the telegraph, the automobile, radio and telephone, the jet aircraft and television, and the recent telecommunications revolution are cases in point" (Harvey 1991: 232).

This acceleration and compression, which—when felt in our social relations—may be perceived as a general speeding-up of all interactions, greatly helped by information technology and sharing, has also been theorised by Paul Virilio in his work on the emerging field he calls dromology, or the philosophy of speed. He states: "The reduction of distances has become a strategic reality bearing incalculable economic and political consequences, since it corresponds to the negation of space" (Virilio 1986: 133). An immediate effect of the acceleration and higher speed and ease of exchange is a perceived lessening of the distance between sites of production and sites of consumption when we think in terms of goods, and of a similar compression of space when it comes to our consumption of cultural products, such as music, originating from places far removed from our own listening position. This is an effect shadowed by the similar compression happening in the production of music across large distances between musicians and writers/composers—physical distance being made irrelevant by the ease of file sharing via the Internet, or simply the global access to Internet radio and music libraries. This means that a global listening position is indeed possible, but as listening always takes place in one's immediate and therefore local site, listening as well as production can be conceptualised as a glocal process. Therefore, my purchasing of Moore's album in CD form in Dublin is less important than the fact that its consisting of portable digital files has allowed me to listen to it and write about it in locales as relatively

diverse and far-flung as Falun, Turku, Roskilde and Skagen—all non-Irish, of course.

Globalisation has a number of repercussions for our identity formation, even leading theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman to suggest that we no longer create firm identity structures or holisms, but rather that we instead resort to scattered, local identification points. He writes: "Perhaps instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalising world to speak of *identification*, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged" (Bauman 2001: 129). The advantage of such a view is, among other things, that identity is regarded as a process rather than as an end product. This opens up for a dynamic analysis of identity work where the individual as well as the social framework can be seen as possessing agency in identity, or identification formation. Furthermore, it emphasises the connection between existing in what Bauman elsewhere has dubbed "liquid modernity," and having liquid identification structures that can constantly be revised to fit with the subject position most relevant for the individual, whether as cultural producer or consumer—another distinction that is under erasure in the digital age of self-production and publication.

In addition to acceleration and time-space compression, the phenomenon most often proposed, as a necessary precondition for globalisation, is deterritorialisation. A leading scholar of globalisation and cultural identity is John Tomlinson, who in his article "Globalization and Cultural Identity" remarks: "The very dynamic which established national identity as the most powerful cultural-political binding force of modernity may now be unravelling some of the skeins that tie us in securely to our national "home." The kernel of truth in the claim that national identity is threatened by globalisation lies in the fact that the proliferation of identity positions may be producing challenges to the dominance of national identity" (Tomlinson 2003: 274). For Tomlinson, deterritorialisation is first felt on the national level, as our identity construction no longer relies on belonging to a national entity, but rather to alternative spatialities, whether regional or strictly local. It is exactly this insistence on locality that can be regarded as a positive side-effect of globalisation with regards to identity formation. One can indeed propose with Tomlinson that there is no deterritorialition without subsequent

reterritorialisation within what he calls "projects of cultural 'reterritorialization'—the claiming and reclaiming of localities—which don't inevitably involve claims to state power" (275). While Tomlinson in this connection discusses movements looking to reclaim a traditional "homeland" (usually ethnically as well as territorially defined), his argument is also valid for the glocal identity formulations of Irishness, as for instance seen in the case of Christy Moore. In Tomlison's words: "What is interesting about such projects is that, again, they exemplify a particularly modern cultural sensibility: the very notion of a juridical contestation of rights linked to identity seems understandable only within the sort of global-modern institutional form of identity which we have identified" (275). While Tomlinson eschews the use of the term glocal for these "global-modern institutional form[s] of identity," it seems apt to apply it to processes of identity work, for instance those involved in music production, even in territories not directly embroiled in "hot" contestations of rights (especially as in Ireland the "cooling" of such issues never seems permanent anyway).

Irish music has been a major export commodity since the late 1960s and the emergence of global names such as Van Morrison (1970s onward) and U2 (1980s onward) has sped the process along. In the last two decades the process of globalisation has fed back into Irish music itself and enriched its flavours with elements of other national music traditions or of world music, as the recordings of Sinead O'Connor and other neo-traditionalists testify. In other articles, I have examined aspects of the global status which the music of Morrison and O'Connor has achieved, focusing on how the Irishness of their music has been mediated, for instance by its use in films and music videos. Likewise, I have described the relationship between the maintenance of tradition and innovation of this Irishness as a global/glocal interchange. Christy Moore's album *Listen* is a further example of this development, and gives me a welcome opportunity to revisit these issues through the lens of globalisation.

Moore, by his own statement, listened to nothing but traditional Irish folk in the early part of his career as a singer and performer (or as he puts it, more memorably in an interview with Niall Stokes, 2011: "I was a pure finger-in-the-ear-head-up-me-arse folky until 1972"). The seventies and eighties, however, saw him begin to take an interest in contemporary songwriters from a wider, international folk scene, and eventually the

rock music-related field. By the 2000s Moore had reached a state in his four decade long career where he could record pretty much anything he saw fit. He earned this right by constantly innovating his musical and lyrical expression, moving in his first two decades of recording, both solo and with Planxty, from traditional ballads from the long Irish musical history, via contemporary songs by travellers such as John "Jacko" Reilly, to political songs taking a stand in favour of the IRA, especially Bobby Sands and the H Block prisoners. In the 1980s, with his new band "Moving Hearts," Moore began experimenting with an instrumentation drawing more heavily on rock traditions, following which he again went solo and started accumulating a varied new repertoire of his own songs, as well as songs by other Irish and British songwriters.

The 2009 album *Listen* came after a fairly long studio recording hiatus for Moore, four years after his previous effort. The album is credited to "Christy Moore with Declan Sinnott" in the accompanying booklet, but on the cover it is simply listed as a Christy Moore album. Sinnott is however an essential part of the album, performing most of the distinctive guitar and mandola work on the recording, and singing lead vocals on one song, "I Will," and harmony on most of the others. The inside sleeve photograph by John Coffey, appropriately shows Moore and Sinnott performing as a duo act in 2008 in Dublin. Moore's career had been scaled back since the 1990s on doctor's orders, after years of drinking and hard touring had taken a severe toll on his health. It is entirely possible that the new album was intended as taking a moment to sum up a career, and to reminisce on the state of a world Moore might be about to leave. One song, "China Waltz," which is specifically about old age and dying: "The hard release / That steals the peaceful dream / Might take this breath away." This is referred to by Moore as a song he was not ready for, until this album was recorded although he had "tried to record it" in the 1980s. As he puts it: "It has never left me and came back loud and clear last year" (Moore 2009). And certainly songs about road casualties, such as the Pink Floyd modern classic "Shine On You Crazy Diamond," written in 1975 about Syd Barrett (died 2006), and Moore's own "Rory's Gone," obviously dedicated to the legacy of Irish blues legend Rory Gallagher (died 1995), would seem to indicate as much.

An "English" song, such as "Shine On You Crazy Diamond," is made locally "Irish" and personal, through a circumscription performed

by the liner, or sleve notes on the album. Moore labels this number "an old Séan-Nos song" (Moore 2009), and explicitly compares it to songs such as "The Yellow Bittern," putting it into the tradition of old Irish balladry. One sees the obvious thematical similarities between the two ballads in striking lines from "The Yellow Bittern," such as these: "His bones are thrown on a naked stone / Where he lived alone like a hermit monk,"[2] which could easily be read as descriptive of the reclusive life Syd Barrett was reduced to, as LSD use brought out his dormant psychoses, and left him unable to perform or even communicate coherently with others. Barrett's condition is cast in words in "Shine On," in lines such as these: "There's a look in your eye / Like black holes in the sky"—and: "Nobody knows where you are / How near or how far" (Waters and Gilmour 1975). It is obvious that Moore identifies with a fallen fellow-traveller such as Barrett, and he continues his note: "It evokes memories of old friends past whose stars burned brightly, whose flames were quenched too soon"—words that also echo this line from "The Yellow Bittern": "I was sober a while, but I'll drink and be wise,"[3] signifying how many of the "old friends past" knowingly chose the road of excess as a shortcut to wisdom, and consequently settled for a short earthly life in exchange.

The Waters/Gilmore song is, however, not the only one to reference England's geography and culture. Liverpudlian songwriter Ian Prowse's "Does This Train Stop on Merseyside" would seem the most obvious example of this, judging by its title alone, but in fact this track turns out to be the most global of all on the album. The lyrics effortlessly bridge British colonial history and its darkest, bloodiest aspects, such as the slave trade and transported Irish labour ("the blood of Africa on every wharf"; "the Famine boats are anchored in the bay"), to contemporary ills emanating from the old British enemy: Yorkshire policemen stand by impassively as Liverpool football fans are crushed in the Hillsborough stadium disaster in 1989, and above everything Easy Jet hovers aimlessly, "flying everybody everywhere." This song is not only an instance of time-space compression, it is, in fact, *about* the very phenomenon of time-space compression and globalisation as postmodern

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[2] http://www.celticlyricscorner.net/ryan/yellow.htm.
[3] http://www.celticlyricscorner.net/ryan/yellow.htm.

colonisation. The pun of the name of Merseyside rings throughout the refrain—when will there ever be mercy found on Merseyside?

Other aspects of the lyrics introduce the listener to British eccentrics of the past, such as William McKenzie, whose soul, we are informed, "lies above the ground / in that pyramid near Maryland"—lines which both refer to McKenzie's bizarre final resting place in the graveyard of St. Andrew's Church, off Maryland Street in Liverpool. This is a bona-fide 15-foot pyramid in which McKenzie was interred, sitting upright holding a winning poker hand, in case the Devil should come by looking for a game, and to the fact that McKenzie's soul reportedly never found rest in the grave but walks down Maryland Street, seeking redemption for the many other souls who perished working in McKenzie's railroad and canal construction sites and steelworks. In contrast, Alan Williams, the first manager of The Beatles, is mentioned as a still living source of tall tales of Liverpool's glorious past, and the home of the Merseybeat. Another example on the album paying tribute to this style and era is found in the song "I Will," which was a hit for Merseybeat act Billy Fury in 1964. The Fab Four are further limned as having tapped into a "lay-line [that] runs down Mathew Street," the site of The Cavern Club where The Beatles first honed their performance skills (Prowse 2010).

Prowse's lyrics thus mirror Moore's split feelings concerning Britain and its colonial and cultural history. The music and storytelling that came out of Liverpool is subtly weighed against, and counterbalanced by, the city's role in the violent history of capitalist exploitation, and state sanctioned violence against the working class and common folk of many races and nationalities. It is worth noting that in a remarkable exchange of respect after Moore's exposure of this song to a large audience, Prowse decided to write his 2010 Master's thesis in Irish Studies on the topic of "Locating the role of Christy Moore in Irish folk and traditional music."[4]

Most of the songs on the album are, however, written by Irish songwriters Moore has known for decades, and in many cases he refers in his liner notes to having wanted to record their work for years. It is thus clear that Moore is working on updating and modernising the tradition and canon of Irish song via his selection of songs and

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[4] http://www.pledgemusic.com/blog/851-ian-prowse-on-fatherhood-irish-folk-and-being-an-other.

songwriters included on *Listen*. An artist such as Dublin-born songwriter Wally Page has no less than three cuts on the record, one written in collaboration with Moore, and these two artists in fact have a long history of collaborating on material for Moore's records.[5] "Duffy's Cut" is a prime example of a number that looks both to the old and to the new Irish reality, being a story song of suffering and injustice of the Irish diaspora, which has a timeless quality in its treatment of a dark episode in the history of pressed emigration and labour, not least because the story of the dead at Duffy's Cut is as yet an unsolved mystery. The lyrics capture the hope and aspirations of Irish labourers who seek their fortune crossing the Atlantic to work on the Philadelphia and Columbia (later Pennsylvania) Railroad in 1832, only to graphically describe the illness and death of "57 Irish Navvies," who first "suffered like the weeping Christ," only to end up in an unmarked grave, obviously meant to cover up the real circumstances of their demise. This violence is depicted in the text as an Irish on Irish crime, as Duffy, the contractor luring the workers to America, is quoted speaking Gaelic: "Dia is Muire Dhuit agus Failte romhat / Duffy is my name, I cut through stone / work for me. I'm one of your own." This adds sting to the betrayal of the workers in the name of protection of the railroad's profits, and Moore's note to the song in the lyrics booklet plays up the as yet unclarified aspects of the events: "Was it cholera or was it murder?" he asks, referring to findings in recent years indicating that some of the workers may have been murdered to prevent the spread of the cholera epidemic to other communities in the Malvern Valley.[6]

"Duffy's Cut" is therefore a parallel to the one of the other Wally Page selections, "The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos," which extends the space described in the songs to another part of the world. This time, it is not as an Irish diasporic space, but as part of an international solidarity sphere, highlighting as it does the disappeared individuals in El Salvador during the civil war (1979-1992), and the dictatorship in that country. Reading "Duffy's Cut" and "The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos" together, as the album itself urges us to do, as they follow each other in the running order of the disc, thus shows a connection across time and

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[5]   http://www.peermusic.com/peermusic/index.cfm/artist-writer/artist-details/?artist_id=353.

[6] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/6958216.stm.

space. This connection is formed by exploitation in the name of capitalism, murder and subsequent cover-up at all costs, on the part of the authorities that stand to lose, if the truth be told in these matters. The songs are of course also a pair in that they serve as part of art's function as a potential whistle-blower against such conspiracies of silence, and ultimately as raiser of the listeners' consciousness of such injustices. "The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos" sketches out a potential utopian paradise in El Salvador: "This could be Paradise free of the spell / of the Yankee dollar bills from Hell." In his note to the song, Moore explicitly calls for remembrance of those who "*were* 'disappeared,'" rather than those who merely *have* disappeared (Moore 2009; my emphases).

The third Wally Page contribution (which actually is a Page/Moore collaboration) is a more personal and musical memoir, waxing nostalgic about the Glasgow club Barrowland the song is named after, which must have functioned as a home away from home during Moore's touring and drinking days. Barrowland, the club, is described as an ideal space for Moore and his peers to master and to use as a "church," in which to spread the gospel of their songs and stories. The song "Barrowland" ("A ballroom of remembrance") constructs a clear feeling of a shared Celtic space reaching across from Ireland to Scotland and—in the two songs on the album referencing Merseyside—down into Northern England. The lyrics are more than a little nostalgic, as the "I" persona remembers nights of performing in the club ending with a trip to "dreamland," in which he was uncertain (or too drunk to care) whether going to bed would be tantamount to him going "to Hell or to heaven." The song, however, also describes the history of Glasgow and some of its rarely sung heroes and heroines, notably "Mags McIvor" (Margaret McIver), who was the founding mother of the street market ("The Barras"), formerly located where Barrowland now stands.[7] Likewise, legendary performers such as Billy McGregor and the Gaybirds, who were the house band at Barrowland throughout the 1930s and 1940s, are remembered for their showmanship as much as their choice in musical styles, although jitterbug (one of their specialties) is specifically mentioned as one of the music forms played under the whirling disco lights, referred to in the lyrics as "the carrousel of healing." Ladies of the night appear: "the lassies of The Broomielaw / on their Cuban heels,"

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[7] http://www.glasgow-barrowland.com/market/history.htm.

along with footballers such as Jimmy "Jinky" Johnstone, the Celtic winger of 1960s fame,[8] and their heroics add to the power of "remembrance" housed within the club's four walls.

The Page selections thus neatly create three concentric circles of interest for Moore (by proxy through his friend's song-writing)—first of a personal Celtic space (with a dominant nostalgic tone), then a diasporic Irish space (the tone is political, historical), and finally a global space of solidarity between oppressed, underprivileged peoples. Obviously again, the tone is political and militant, sharpened by the events being more contemporary. Time-space compression renders the three songs not just parallel, but a seamless sequence of nostalgia, sentiment and anger.

Yet the album is in equal measure new in its musical and lyrical direction. Moore's own solo song-writing contributions are both humorous and contemporary personal anecdotes. Of "Riding the High Stool" he says in the record notes: "I knew a fellow like this once" (Moore 2009), and we immediately understand he is talking about his own good self throughout the lyrics of this song of overweening drunken pride and its inevitable fall. The "I" of the lyrics is, to put it mildly, not a very sympathetic person who maintains a public "Mr. Know-it-all" persona, always "expanding and expounding" on issues he really knows very little about—whereas in the deep dark night of the soul, he is sentimental, torn by self-doubt, but too proud to ask for help. Through what amounts to a miracle, he is picked up by a "lightship," minutes before "I went under for the very last time." The nature of the lightship is never specified in the lyrics, but we note the religious overtones of his "being caught in its beam" and being led to safety. The song actually exists in two different versions, and one which has somewhat more elaborate lyrics is found on Moore's own website.[9] In this expanded version, the message of salvation is the same, but the topics which the "I" persona was expounding upon are spelled out more fully. Jack "The Gorgeous Gael" Doyle, a famous Irish-born boxer and actor, is referenced as a real historical persona, as by now has become an established practice in the songs on the album. Here, he is part of the unlikely range of topics Moore's alter ego was an "expert" on, which also includes Aga Khan's wives, and "the price of rice in Sierra Leone."

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[8] http://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/mar/14/guardianobituaries.football.

[9] http://www.christymoore.com/lyrics/riding-the-high-stool/.

Fellow drunkards are also mentioned by (nick)name in this set of lyrics, and certainly not spared the rod of ridicule, although the "I" still reserves his most scathing critique for himself.

By contrast, "The Ballad of Ruby Walsh" is an exuberant observation of the mores of the *nouveau riche* of Tiger Economy Ireland: "You can see the Liposuction, the Botox and the Augmentation, Brazilian haircuts and Colonic irrigation," at whom Moore thumbs his nose, as the narrating persona, against the odds and with the help of jockey Ruby Walsh, cleans up at the Galway races. The controlling metaphor of the song is an extended comparison between pilgrimages to known holy places and places of miraculous healing (Bethlehem, Lourdes and Croagh Patrick, to cite but a few) on one side, and the *faux* "pilgrimage" involving genuine "agony and ecstasy" to the Galway races on the other. Both types of pilgrimages are for the despicable rich and unscrupulous, such as those "Soldiers of destiny / in a feedin' frenzy / Them boys would eat the Lamb of God / and come back for the gravy"—but also for the ones who "have seen better days / lookin' to take our chances"—yet another *memento mori* being issued to himself. Thus, the races have the potential to become a site of greater equality than the "Smurfits and O'Reillys" would really care for, and the Galway races become a glocal event of significance to both high and low.

Counterbalancing the portraits of modern Ireland are two songs that reference the ballad past, and in one case a mythical figure. The Irish heartland is praised in a sincere hymn to the green jewel of Gortatagort, "where the Angels bleed over Bantry Bay," and "I sing the House my Mother was born." This song carves out an extremely local patch of Irish ground, using hyperspecific references with remarkable capitalisation of local sites, such as "The South Rey Grass and the North Rey Grass." But as all geographically specific Irish songs, the private Ireland of the individual songwriter stands as a metonymic representation of the whole of the island, which again is a metonym for home, origin, birthplace and birthright. The song underscores this Irishness by alternating English and Gaelic place names: "Through The Longmeadow The Cnocan Rua / The Fortfield The Pairc na Claise." Moore annotates this John Spillane song: "John wrote this song about his mother's home place. When I sing it, it transports me back to Barronstown, between the Hill of Allen and The Yellow Bog" (Moore 2009). There is, in other words, a Gortatagort for and inside every Irish person. The song explicitly performs a specific

type of time-space compression by stating in its lyrics that the singer sees Gortatagort simultaneously "in this time now and in another," making manifest its nostalgic gaze back to childhood days and conflating the two times as one, both being equally real to his mind, in cultural memory. This is as local as Moore's selection gets, yet the lyrics are so universal in their longing for a Mother's house that one can share in their emotional contents, no matter from where on the globe one originates.

In "John O' Dreams," this Irish version of the Sandman is described as the great equaliser, as "Both man and master in the night are one / all things are equal when the day is done / the prince and the ploughman, the slave and the freeman / all find their comfort in John O' Dreams." Once more a dream of an Edenic state of equality recurs in Moore's song selection, but this paradise cannot be attained in the waking world, in life, as the sleep John O'Dreams creates is a metaphor for death. The song's heavy nostalgia for rest, and ultimately death, is underlined by Moore's laconic note that he first heard Bill Caddick perform this song in 1969, 40 years earlier. Though the note here does not spell it out as it did in the case of "China Waltz," we are left in no doubt that it is not until now that Moore was ready to record it. The melody, carried by a solo cello in the arrangement on this record, is strongly reminiscent of one found in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, known as the *Pathetique*, which enhances the association with death, as this symphony was the last work the composer finished, conducting it a week before his death (the second performance of it was given a memorial for the composer three weeks later). The lyrics about the impending night ("home comes the rover, his journey's over") take on a clear personal significance for Moore here, at career and possibly life's eventide ("sleep is a river, flow on forever, and for your boatman choose old John O'Dreams"). This is by far the most moving song on the album, and again this effect is achieved by the song's universal appeal to rest and peace in death. We are at once at the heart of the Irish qualities of the album and at the heart of Moore's personal hopes and fears.

"John O'Dreams" is the penultimate selection on the recording, and obviously sets up the refrain of the album closer: "Rory's gone to Heaven to play the blues." One already senses Moore's readiness to follow suit in "John O'Dreams," but it is not until "Rory Is Gone" that we begin to glimpse what sort of hereafter Moore might envision will open for him as well, after he is "gone." Paradoxically, this cut is the

only live concert selection on the album, thereby offering a tongue-in-cheek meta-pun on the song's list of bluesmen who have "died too young and much too premature" (a pleonasm if ever there was one). The Moorean vision of heaven turns out to be a variation on the "Great Choir in the Sky," and it is not far-fetched at all to say that Christy Moore easily can picture himself joining this heavenly jam band, as Gallagher did in 1995. This, the final image of Utopia offered on the album, is not surprisingly also somewhat political in nature, as it offers, "all the colours mixed together," in a manner not often found in earthly life. Rory's contribution may well have been the Irish Green in this cocktail: "Blacks Whites Blues and Greens and Reds"—and Moore's contribution to come when he joins Rory and the other bluesmen in Heaven may well be the Red, considering his socialist political viewpoints.

It is useful in conclusion to contemplate the full arc the album *Listen* inscribes, from the opening invocation in the Hank Wedell song "Listen," which celebrates the community one can be part of both as performer of and listener to music: "listen to the heartbeat of harmony in unison." This is a feeling echoed in the Glasgow club Barrowland, described as "the church of ceili," to the final description in the album's only live track (aptly enough recorded in the very same "church of ceili," Barrowland) of the great rainbow-coloured blues band in Heaven, counting everyone from "Mississippi Fred and Muddy Waters" to the local boy, the singer himself.

The album thus has a wistful optimism built into it, suggesting, in effect, that despite the fact that individuals pass on, the tradition remains. The stories still go on being told. New generations will come to worship at the "church of ceili," and take the strange communion of "Fidel Castros," a "mighty cocktail" invented by another fallen hero, Hamish Imlach—dead since 1996—consisting of Bacardi Rum, Russian Vodka and American Coke (Moore 2009).

The album is unambiguously glocal in its ability to absorb musical influences from South America, the USA, Scandinavia and Great Britain, and turn the often undesired, marginal inhabitants of those places into honorary Irish Séan-Nos—on the strength of their stories, both guardians of the tradition and engines of innovation at the same time.

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In Search of the People: The Formation of Legitimacy and Identity in the Debate on Internment in Northern Ireland

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Abstract
The identification of and with "the people" has important effects in political discourse. It works to legitimise political goals; it constructs inclusion and identity, and it produces exclusion of those who do not fit the characteristics attached to "the people." The current article examines how different concepts of 'the people' were constructed by various political groups in Northern Ireland in the debate on internment in the early 1970s. Internment was introduced in August 1971 in order to curb the escalating conflict, but came to increase rather than reduce the level of conflict. The article discusses how exclusionary concepts of "the people" worked to widen the gulf between the groups, and identifies four main sets of "peoples" constructed in the debate: "the loyal people," "the responsible people," "the moral people" and "the risen people."

Key words: Northern Ireland, internment, legitimacy, identity, "the people," political discourse, exclusion, inclusion, conflict

Introduction

> "The people" is one of the trickiest and most dangerous of all political phrases. It is also indispensable. That being so, no occurrence of it ought ever to be taken for granted or allowed to pass without examination. (Sparkes 2003: 148)

The empirical focal point of this analysis is the debate on internment in Northern Ireland from its introduction in August 1971 until it was ended in December 1975. It is striking how frequently the concept of "the people" appeared in the debate. But who were "the people"?[1] To be able to trace the different meanings attributed to this designation, it is

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[1] This question is inspired by the title of Peter Shirlow and Mark McGovern's collection on unionism, Protestantism and loyalism in Northern Ireland. They also relate "the people" to the establishment of legitimacy stating that "[. . .] 'the people' possess a series of concepts which constitute a discourse of political legitimacy" (Shirlow and McGovern 1997: 5).

necessary to evaluate not only the label "the people" as such, but its application in the context of the various statements in the debate.

The construction of "the people" will in the following be studied as discursive practises that constitute the objects of which they speak (Foucault 1989: 49). I will pay attention to how the concept functions in the formation of identity and political legitimacy, and how "the people" are produced through processes of "othering" (Spivak 1985). It is, important to stress that these processes are complex and ambiguous. The post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha, points out that the concept of "the people" has two simultaneous functions: one, as historical "object" of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; and the other, as "subject" of a process of signification that demonstrate the principle of "the people" as the continual process by which the national life is signified as a repeating and reproductive process (Bhabha 2010: 297). He argues that the tension between the pedagogical and the performative aspect turns the reference to the people into a problem of knowledge that haunts the symbolic formation of social authority (Bhabha 2010: 297).

The political theorist Sofia Näsström has stressed the importance of critically exploring how "the people" are constructed in order to understand the process of legitimacy formation: "To speak 'in the name of the people' is to speak the language of power. It can be used for a variety of purposes" (Näsström 2007: 624). Given this background Näsström is critical of many political theoreticians who have assumed a "Maginot line" between the legitimacy of the people and democracy, thus dismissing disagreements on the constitution of the people as external to democracy (Näsström 2007: 656). Näsström claims that this renders the question of "who legitimately make up the people" into something unquestionable within political theory, just "a fact of history." Against this, she argues that it is important to regard the constitution of the people, not as a finalised historical event, but an "ongoing claim that we make" (Näsström 2007: 645).

Political Context
The political landscape before and during the debate on internment in Northern Ireland was rapidly changing in the early part of the 1970s. On the unionist side, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) experienced a growing

internal division as well as increasing opposition from other unionist parties, in particular by Rev. Ian Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), founded in September 1971. DUP soon became an important force in Northern Irish politics and a persistent threat to the traditional dominance of the UUP. The UUP was also challenged by a new right-wing pressure group, Ulster Vanguard, and several loyalist paramilitary groups, such as Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and Ulster Defence Association (UDA). On the other side of the political spectrum, the UUP also lost supporters to a new moderate and liberal party founded in April 1970. This party, called the Alliance Party, gained support from a section of liberal Unionists who had left the UUP and from some former members of the Labour party. The party hoped to draw support from both Protestants and Catholics.

On the nationalist side, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), founded in August 1970, rapidly became the most important political force rapidly surpassing the old Nationalist party. It presented itself as a radical, left-of-centre party and was backed by former supporters of the Nationalist party, as well as the civil rights movement. The other strand within nationalist politics, the republican movement, was in 1970 split on the issue of recognition of the Belfast and Dublin Parliaments. The party Sinn Fein then became two parties: Official Sinn Fein (for recognition), and Provisional Sinn Fein (against recognition).[2] The Official party had a pronounced Marxist approach, whereas the Provisional party, linked to the Provisional IRA, predominately focused on the demand for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

An increasing militarisation and polarisation ran parallel to ever more focus on security measures, and the Unionist government decided to introduce internment in Northern Ireland on 9 August 1971. The decision to use internment was defended as a necessary step in the fight against the increasing IRA violence, but internment came under immediate attack. Nationalist and republican groups, as well as the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), protested, and an anti-internment campaign was launched. People were urged not to pay rent and rates, and nationalist representatives withdrew from local

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[2] The political activities of the Official Sinn Fein were in the first half of the 1970s conducted under the label Republican Clubs.

councils. At the same time, the number of riots and the level of violence rose to new dimensions.[3]

Following the suspension of the Northern Ireland government in February 1972, internment was continued by the British government, which operated internment (or detention as it was re-named) until 5 December 1975. Between August 1971 and December 1975, 1,981 people were interned: 107 loyalists, and 1,874 republicans. The number of internees reached its peak in late March 1972, when 924 people were held (*Irish Times* 6 December 1975).

In the following, I have chosen to group my findings into four sets of "legitimising collectives": "A loyal people," "a responsible people," "a moral people" and "a risen people." However, this general pattern was muddled by complexities which will be discussed during the analysis. I will stress that these groups are my constructions, established on the basis of overall patterns and tendencies.

A Loyal People

The term "loyal people" appears in the statements of several groups, the Democratic Unionist Party, Vanguard, and the loyalist paramilitaries in particular. These groups disagreed on the issue of internment with the DUP being against it from the start, whereas Vanguard mainly supported it, at least in the first phase. The loyalist paramilitaries became particularly involved in the debate on internment after the internment of the first loyalists in February 1973. This led to immediate riots and loyalists called a one-day general strike with the backing of the Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW), the UDA and several other loyalist paramilitary groups. What DUP, Vanguard and the loyalist groups had in common is that they identified a collective characterised by "loyalty" as a key virtue—a collective which these groups communicated with and from which they built authority as representatives of "the people."

The virtue of "loyalty" was highlighted by the frequent use of the term "loyalist" and "loyal." Vanguard contended that it was speaking for "the vast section of loyalist opinion," when it argued against the release

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[3] The trend was to continue: In the two years prior to internment, 66 people were killed; in the first 17 months of internment, the number had risen almost tenfold to 610 (Dixon 2001: 118).

of nationalist internees (*News Letter* 10 August 1972). And when declaring a hunger strike against the internment of some of its members, the UDA explained that it hoped the hunger strikers' brave undertaking would "open the eyes of the loyalists" (*Irish News* 14 August 1973). DUP representatives also regularly appealed to "loyalists" and "loyal Protestants" to act in certain matters. For instance, "loyalists" were called to oppose internment *(Irish News* 21 February 1973),[4] and "loyal Protestants" were requested to reject violence (*Protestant Telegraph* 17 February 1973).

The meaning ascribed to the terms "loyalist" and "loyal" can also be traced through negative descriptions of "the other," those being disloyal. It was, for example, claimed by Vanguard that the Northern Ireland secretary, William Whitelaw, had gone out of his way to satisfy the minority, which had not the welfare of Ulster at heart "as they have gone on record as saying that their aim is the unification of Ireland" (*News Letter* 10 August 1972). Loyalism was the negation of working towards a unification of Ireland; true loyalism was about defending Ulster against such attacks.

"The loyal people" were often portrayed as a persecuted people. Disloyal republican paramilitaries were assisted, while those loyally abiding the law were humiliated, the Londonderry Branch of Ulster Vanguard claimed (*News Letter* 18 July 1972). The persecution of "the loyal people" was not only carried out by the nationalists, but also by the Northern Ireland secretary and representatives of the Unionist establishment. The persecution from the representatives of the state was regarded as particularly unreasonable, because the loyalists' only "crime" was "the protection of Ulster." This representation of persecution fostered an image of the "loyal people," fighting a heroic battle against all odds. Ian Paisley vigorously proclaimed that he was absolutely confident that "no matter how the enemies of Ulster rally and conspire and no matter how many false friends we have who praise us today and betray us tomorrow; the loyalist people of Ulster are going to win this battle" (*News Letter* 19 February 1972).

Such declarations show that one of the main characteristics of "the loyal people" was its bond to Ulster. The term "Ulster" was regularly

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[4] Ken Gibson, chairman of the Ormeau Democratic Unionist Party Association. Gibson was at the time of the appeal detained in the Maze Prison.

employed in DUP statements, and it was to the "Ulster people" that Ian Paisley first and foremost felt responsibility. He argued that the Ulster people were being made second-class citizens and that DUP's duty would be to see that the Ulster people had the chance to become full citizens (*News Letter* 27 March 1972). Moreover, Paisley spoke of "Ulster's agony" (*News Letter* 10 August 1972), and alleged that the Unionist Party had failed in its duty to the people of Ulster (*Irish News* 27 November 1971).

The bond to Ulster was also underscored by both Vanguard and the UDA. When arguing against the release of republican internees, Vanguard claimed that it would not stand by and allow the final betrayal to take place, but was prepared to "lead the Ulster people to fight against such a conspiracy" (*News Letter* 10 August 1972). In another example, the UDA made use of the same term when objecting to internment being used against loyalists. It was claimed that the government used internment "not only to destroy the structure of the IRA but also to silence those who would speak and act in the defence of Ulster" (*Irish News* 14 August 1973).

The frequent use of the notion of "Ulster" situated "the people" in a particular geographical territory as well as in a historical and cultural setting. The application of the name "Ulster" was of course no coincidence; it had a particular resonance that, for instance, the term "Northern Ireland" had not. Ulster was the historical name of the northernmost province of Ireland and emphasised tradition and continuity in contrast to the modern invention of "Northern Ireland." The concept of Ulster thus denoted a unique identity and history, as different from the rest of the island.[5] Hence, as well as pointing to a geographical and historical location, the use of the term "Ulster" also authorised a specific reading of the history of partition and the process of establishing Northern Ireland—a reading that identified partition and the founding of Northern Ireland as the inevitable product of a unique "Ulsterness." In other words, the use of the term "Ulster" limited the legitimising

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[5] In particular the Ulster identity has been characterised by the strong perception of being under siege from a hostile minority inside the state and from what was seen as an aggressive neighbour in the south. The unionist identity has therefore been linked principally to the narrative of territoriality and the image of the garrison. See: Arthur 2001: 64; Deane 2003: 21; Anderson and Goodman 1998: 11.

collective—"the people"—to those sharing an allegation to the Northern Irish state and its history. Thus, on the one hand, the term "Ulster" activated mechanisms of exclusion to bar nationalists from "the people," and consequently from having a legitimising potential. On the other hand, it also activated objects of identification, thus linking together those included as worthy members of the "loyal people." Even though the Ulster Unionist Party was frequently criticised by DUP, Vanguard and UDA, the Ulster Unionists and their supporters were still regarded as persons to appeal to and to communicate with. They were considered to be a part of "the loyal people," and hence, in spite of the criticism directed at them, embodied legitimising potential.

In addition to the term "Ulster," there were other mechanisms working in the same manner. One of these was the repeated emphasising of "Protestantism" as a hallmark of "the loyal people." To those suggesting talks with the IRA, the Reverend William McCrea of the DUP declared: "Any man who calls himself a Protestant, and would attempt to sit at a table with the IRA murderers, is no Loyalist or true to the Protestant cause. We must be strong" (*Sunday News* 11 June 1972). True Protestantism was the same as loyalism, and speaking to the IRA was a negation of both. As shown in the quotation, "Protestants" corresponds to "we," and such use of plain words like "we," "us" and "our" intensified the image of "the loyal people" as a united group. This line of reasoning can also be illustrated by a quotation from James Rodgers, a member of the Vanguard executive, who when the first loyalists were interned in February 1973, observed that: "This will be looked on as a watershed. It shows that the law is being turned against us. More and more Protestants are going to be picked up, and in the face of this threat new moves for unity will almost certainly come" (*The Times* 6 February 1973).

Rodgers spoke of the laws being turned against "us" and then in the following sentence identified "Protestants" as the next to be picked up by the security forces. In doing so he identified "us" as "Protestants." This type of discourse not only created an image of a united Protestant people, but pointed to the existence of "they"—"the other"—which in a Northern Ireland context would read as "Catholics."

What about those who were not "one of us": who were they? In general, "Catholics" and "nationalists" were rarely referred to in the statements of DUP, Vanguard or UDA. Neither the Catholic people nor

the nationalist parties were regarded as people it was necessary to appeal to. The image of "the other" was thus first and foremost an image of disloyalty: Catholics/nationalists were the enemies of Ulster because they conspired to create a united Ireland. They were the complete negation of "the loyal people." In the words of James McClelland of the DUP:

> The Protestant people of Northern Ireland have persistently demonstrated their loyalty to the British throne. They have helped and encouraged and supported Her Majesty's forces in the execution of their duties in the province. [. . .]. The Roman Catholics have consistently done the opposite. They have secretly and openly encouraged and fomented rebellion against our sovereign, and even in the last few days a large group of their clerics have launched a diatribe of abuse at the troops. (*Irish Times* 22 November 1972)

The enemy was in some cases named more specifically, as when Ian Paisley hit out against the civil rights movement: "It will be a day when the boom of the Civil Rights movement will be smashed forever" (*News Letter* 19 February 1972). Yet, in most cases the enemy was labelled in more general terms, such as Paisley's description of nationalists as the Irish prime minister's "cohorts in Ulster" (*News Letter* 10 August 1971). The Republic of Ireland was described by DUP representatives as "a neighbouring hostile republic" (*Belfast Telegraph* 17 December 1971), and "a hostile country, sheltering murderers" (*Belfast Telegraph* 26 February 1973). A Co. Down branch of the DUP went so far as suggesting that since the IRA and its sympathisers were destroying Ulster, the government should "deport all Irish foreigners, both in Britain and in Ulster, who were not British citizens or loyal to the British Crown" (*News Letter* 29 August 1972).

The accounts of the DUP leaders contain few signs of any nuances and gradations in the image of Catholics/nationalists.[6] Both the SDLP and republican groups were portrayed as part and parcel of the one enemy. The SDLP leaders were, for instance, branded the spokespeople of the IRA *(News Letter* 26 November 1973). It did not matter that the SDLP condemned the actions of the IRA, McCrea argued, because

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[6] I have found some exceptions. For example, one where Paisley stresses that also Catholics live in fear of the IRA (*Irish Times* 24 February 1972), and another where William Craig underlines that also many Catholics were against the IRA (*The Times* 12 February 1973).

"although they strenuously deny any connection with the IRA, their goal and negotiating terms are the same" (*Irish Times* 22 June 1972).

As shown above, there was an inclination to present Catholics/nationalists as one monolithic group. This group had no legitimising potential; it was not appealed to, and no attempt was made to represent it.[7] The largest unionist party, the UUP, however, did not fully partake in the legitimising collective of the "loyal people." Instead its statements appealed to the "responsible people" for legitimacy.

The "Responsible People"
On introducing internment, Prime Minister Brian Faulkner assured his listeners that:

> This is not action taken against any responsible and law-abiding section of the community [. . .]. Its benefits should be felt not least in those areas where violent men have exercised a certain sway by threat and intimidation over decent and responsible men and women. (*Belfast Telegraph* 9 August 1971)

Here Faulkner divided the population of Northern Ireland into a responsible majority and a violent minority. The decision to introduce internment was necessary for the protection of "decent people" (*Daily Mail* 16 September 1971). Faulkner wished to safeguard a collective whose defining qualities were "responsibility," "decency" and "innocence." These features sum up the collective that most Ulster Unionist representatives appealed to, and drew authority from. But what did it mean to be "responsible"?

"The responsible people" were presented as a "non-violent" people—not in the sense that they were pacifists, but in the sense that they rejected non-state violence. It was regularly pointed out by the UUP that most of the people of Northern Ireland were opposed to violence. James Molyneaux asserted that "The vast majority of Ulster citizens want to live at peace" (Letter in *The Times* 16 August 1971), and Brian Faulkner agreed: "[. . .] the people causing violence, and I would say that they are but a tiny fraction of the population—are not in the least

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[7] Alan Finlayson has carried out a somewhat analogous analysis of loyalist discourse on "the people" after 1994, and his findings to a certain degree indicate continuity in the loyalist construction of "the people" (Finlayson 1997).

interested in reform" (*Irish Times* 27 November 1971). When Faulkner explained the reasons for introducing internment, he emphasised that the measure had not been directed against Roman Catholics as a religious group, but against the organisations that sponsored and practiced violence *(Guardian* 16 September 1971): "We are quite simply at war with the terrorists [. . .]. We are now acting to remove the shadow of fear which hangs over too many of you" (*Belfast Telegraph* 9 August 1971). The first sentence separated the population of Northern Ireland into good ("we"—the majority) and evil (the terrorist minority). The identification of an extensive collective of "ordinary people," who were not terrorists, served to provide weight and democratic authority to the decision of introducing internment. The "decent" majority was highly praised when Faulkner in 1973 summed up the previous troubled year:

> The one bright aspect of the Ulster scene since 1972 was to be found in the indomitable strength of human character displayed in the steadiness of the ordinary people of the Province, who carried on their lives and work in the face of every danger and discouragement. (*News Letter* 23 February 1972)

But who were *not* being included in the "vast majority"? First of all, they were obviously the IRA. One might also add members of the People's Democracy and the civil rights association, since several of them were interned—and correctly so, according to the UUP. Whereas Faulkner and many representatives condemned loyalist violence, other party representatives also argued that the loyalist groups were merely defending their country (see for example, Austin Ardill, UUP, *Irish Times* 25 July 1974). Consequently, some UUP statements included loyalist paramilitaries in "the responsible people," whereas others assigned them to "the violent minority."

The UUP often tried to go beyond the Catholic-Protestant dualism. On the whole, Unionist representatives, and Faulkner in particular, emphasised the importance of "non-sectarianism" as a feature of responsibility. "Non-sectarianism" was closely linked to issues such as neutrality and religious bias. In a debate with SDLP leader, Gerry Fitt, Faulkner declared that there was no justification for any kind of sectarianism in the courts, and he asserted that there never had been a single Act passed that went against people on the grounds of religion (*Irish Times* 15 April 1972). Faulkner strongly denied claims that the internment of Catholics only showed religious bias on behalf of the

Northern Ireland government. On the contrary, it was those who argued against internment who were guilty of such bias:

> Nor has internment any religious basis or bias. Those who proclaim that it has should reflect that it is surely sectarian to say "I am against Mr. X being interned because he is my co-religionist." Which is more important—Mr. X's church affiliations, if he has any, or his involvement in arson, murder and destruction? (*News Letter* 13 September 1971)

Faulkner insisted that sectarian separation of people as Catholic and Protestant was inadmissible because the conflict in Northern Ireland was not about religion: The essential conflict was between democracy on the one hand, and the terrorism on the other (*Irish Times* 27 November 1971; see also *Irish Times*, 13 September 1971). Faulkner pointed out that the whole Ulster community—Catholic and Protestant—was suffering from "the campaign of violence" (*Irish Times* 13 September 1971). Moreover, most Catholics were not against the state, he argued. There was, Faulkner claimed "a desire among the vast majority of the Catholic population to play their part not only in eradicating the cancer of terrorism from the community, but in co-operating with the work of achieving economic and social progress" (*Irish News* 11 September 1971). Faulkner reminded the reader that for 50 years the Catholic population had remained in Northern Ireland and multiplied, and that their MPs had played a part in Parliament (*Irish Times* 15 April 1972). Thus, when the Catholic population did not speak out against the IRA, this was only a result of fear and intimidation, Faulkner argued (see for example *Belfast Telegraph* 9 August 1971, and *Irish Times* 27 November 1971; see also *Irish Times* 15 April 1972).

The "responsible people" of the UUP thus differed from the "loyal people" of Vanguard, DUP and the loyalist paramilitaries. Whereas these groups stressed the significance of religious affiliation, Faulkner and the UUP toned down the religious difference and the traditional Catholic/nationalist-Protestant/unionist dualism. This had two significant effects connected to the question of legitimacy. Firstly, the statements produced an image of the majority of Catholics as "decent people," as persons worth representing and appealing to. Secondly, the Northern Ireland government was portrayed as an inclusive, non-sectarian and representative government, keen to listen to—and to represent—the wishes of the vast majority of the country's people. Hence, in this way

"the responsible people" appeared as a quite inclusive legitimising collective, excluding only a tiny violent minority.

Some UUP statements, however, told a different story. These statements primarily concerned general condemnations of both nationalist political organisations, and Catholics in general, for not co-operating with the institutions of the state. Other criteria for the inclusion in the "responsible people" were thereby introduced, producing a somewhat more exclusive legitimising collective. For example, Faulkner hit out at the nationalist boycott of the Stormont Parliament, and the rent and rates strike introduced after internment ("Statement of the Government of Northern Ireland" 21 September 1971). The Catholic community, or at least a large part of it, was branded as a sectarian community discharging its obligations (*News Letter* 13 September 1971).

It is significant that while the term "Catholics" was employed frequently, the term "Protestant" rarely figured in the UUP statements. When it did appear, it was predominantly in relation to the violence of the IRA, under which "the whole Ulster community—Catholic and Protestant—was suffering" (*Irish Times* 13 September 1971. See also *Belfast Telegraph* 9 August 1971; and James Molyneaux, *The Times* 16 August 1971).

The "absence" of the term "Protestant" has two, partly contradictory, implications. On the one hand, it could imply a rejection of "Protestantism," as a suitable symbol of "the responsible people." This of course fits into the image of "a responsible people" transcending religious divisions. Yet, if this was the case, one might ask why the term "Catholics" appeared so regularly? By employing this term, the religious division was inevitably evoked, even though the other half of the traditional dualism was not mentioned. A further possible implication was that Protestantism invoked a universalistic image, whereas the image of Catholicism was "particular" or "restricted." Gender studies regularly point out how women have been viewed as a particularised "second" sex, while men have been granted the position of representing universal qualities connected to being human (see for instance de Beauvoir 1994). It is possible to trace a similar line of reasoning in the UUP statements presented above. It was unnecessary to declare the existence of "Protestantism" because it was taken for granted; it was the norm to which everything else was compared, evaluated and determined.

These implications are reinforced by the regular use of the term "Ulster" to epitomise Northern Ireland in UUP statements, as we saw earlier in the statements of the DUP and Vanguard. James Molyneaux wrote in a letter to *The Times* of "terrorism in Ulster," "the vast majority of Ulster" and "Ulster citizens" (*The Times* 16 August 1971). In a similar manner, Faulkner spoke of "the problems of Ulster" and "the Ulster community" (*Irish Times* 13 September 1972).

Like the UUP, the Alliance Party also combined a quite inclusive and pluralist ethos, with a dual image of Catholics as simultaneously responsible and irresponsible. Oliver Napier for instance warned that "there is one issue, and only one issue, upon which virtually every Catholic without exception, moderate and extremist, anti-partition and pro-partition, is united, and that is an almost psychopathic revulsion and fear of internment" (*Belfast Telegraph* 12 August 1971). He continued, attempting to explain to Protestants the behaviour of the Catholic community:

> Many decent Protestants may find Catholic reaction to internment childish and irrational. Maybe it is. It is the result of history and environment [. . .]. Remember that [. . .] internment has never been used against Protestants and therefore they can consider it without emotion. (*Belfast Telegraph* 12 August 1971)

It is obvious that the Alliance spokesman tried here to put the behaviour of the Catholic community in perspective and to rationalise an apparently "irrational" conduct. His attempt at explanation might thus be viewed as a sign of inclusion. However, the statement also produced exclusion, when referring to the Catholic community such as "almost psychopathic," "childish" and "irrational." Catholics were thus being identified as "not rational Protestants." This "deficit" was "excused" by historical developments, but this did not change the fact that Catholics were evaluated and defined by their deficiency.

In short, both the UUP and the Alliance party presented an ambiguous legitimising collective: on some occasions Catholics were included in "the responsible people," on other occasions they were excluded. It is neither possible nor desirable to determine which of the two images of "the responsible people" constitutes the "essence" of the legitimising collective in the UUP statements. The two images existed side by side in the debate. A similar ambiguity was displayed in the

statements of moderate nationalism in the SDLP, to which we shall now turn.

A Moral People

Shortly after the introduction of internment, John Hume of the SDLP stressed that throwing stones or petrol bombs, or using guns in a confrontation with the British Army was pointless. In his speeches, Hume consistently imagined a people characterised by fighting spirit, moral courage, suffering and non-violence (see for example *Sunday Press* 22 August 1971; and *Irish Times* 27 September 1971). Through the identification of and association with "a moral people," Hume's messages of non-violence and responsible resistance gained significance, confidence and authority.

The notion of "moral" serves as an overall indicator of several virtues characterising the "legitimising people," as portrayed in the statements of the SDLP. These statements appealed to, and obtained authority from a collective characterised by three basic features: non-violent protest, pluralism and suffering. The statements defined two different sets of in-groups and out-groups, whose composition depended on the issues being raised: The statements concerning non-violence and pluralism mostly created a dualism between "the vast majority" of people who condemned violence, and a tiny minority who employed violence. The statements concerning suffering and oppression, however, put forth other criteria of inclusion and exclusion.

The SDLP identified a people fighting against injustice, a people whose minds were firmly set on creating a new society. Paddy O'Hanlon warned the Unionist government that "[. . .] our hearts are hardened, and we will bring this corrupt system to an end in the near future" (*Irish Times* 24 August 1971). Such statements supported an image of a people who were confident, politically aware and ready for action. The people had to act responsibly and constructively, Eddie McGrady argued: "We must hold ourselves ready to act with responsibility and courage in the debate on the political future of this province, being at all times prepared to act for the good of the whole community" (*Irish News* 1 December 1973). Hence, the SDLP statements presented a legitimising collective of supposed high morality and a constructive political outlook. But who were "the moral people"? Let us take a closer look at the collectives

emerging in the statements of non-violence and see whether these were judged to be allies or enemies.

It followed from the message of anti-violence that the perpetrators of violence were fiercely condemned, and this covered both paramilitaries and the security forces. This implied that in some cases the distinction was drawn between those who supported the security forces versus those who did not, whereas on other occasions the main line of division went between those who supported the paramilitaries versus the non-violent majority. In the first case, most unionists were excluded, in the second case, the supporters of paramilitary violence were excluded.

It is significant that "the extremists" most frequently condemned by the SDLP were the IRA. The persistent and strong verbal attacks on the IRA strengthened the impression of a fight between a non-violent majority and a violent minority, in other words a fight that transcended the traditional dualism of Protestant/unionist and Catholic/nationalist. The situation in Northern Ireland was defined as a common struggle of the majority of innocent people, Protestant and Catholic, against violent extremists. Thus Gerard Fitt claimed: "We are just as horrified as the Protestant majority by the murderous attacks in which innocent civilians from both religions have been injured and killed" (*The Times* 30 September 1971).[8]

The transcending of the traditional Protestant/Catholic dualism was confirmed by the SDLP's focus on pluralism. The party's primary goal was the creation of a truly pluralist society, north and south (*Irish News* 1 December 1973). It sought to develop a society in Northern Ireland with "a genuine sharing of responsibility" (*The Times* 30 September 1971). Fitt underlined that they did not "seek to humiliate, coerce or discriminate against the Protestant majority because we have had quite enough of that ourselves" (*The Times* 30 September 1971). The importance of a cross-community approach was emphasised by Eddie McGrady in an appeal for an IRA ceasefire:

> In this area there are no victors. Only a broken people will remain, embittered, dour and hate-filled [. . .]. A love of one's country is a terrible thing—a terrible thing for

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[8] See also Paddy Devlin, quoted in *Belfast Telegraph* 24 November 1973; Eddie McGrady quoted in *Irish News* 1 December 1973; John Hume quoted in *Irish News* 1 December 1973, and Paddy Duffy quoted in *Irish Independent* 2 April 1974.

good and for evil. At this time a love of one's country demands peace not war. I ask, not for me, not for the SDLP, or Unionist, not for any factions, but for this nation once proud, once honoured. (*Irish News* 1 December 1973)

The SDLP devoted many of its statements to allaying the fears of "the Protestant community." This was regarded as a necessity if peace were to be achieved in Northern Ireland. Hume argued that the history of Anglo-Irish relations showed that the problem could only be solved when the fears of the Protestant community were overcome. He asked Catholics to recognise that they were asking a lot of "the Protestant people of the North," and requested them to applaud "the generosity of those who agreed to a consensus" (*Irish Times* 3 December 1973). To calm Protestant fears, it was necessary to change the "moral codes" in the Republic of Ireland. The SDLP deplored what they regarded as an enshrinement of exclusively Catholic moral codes in the laws of the Irish Republic, and underscored the need to build a "new Ireland" (*Irish News* 1 December 1973).

Although these references to Protestant fears indicate that the SDLP's notion of "the legitimising people" included unionists, other statements point in a different direction. I refer here to the party's remarks on the verbal attacks on the unionist movement in the internment debate. Statements concerning the "unionist regime" dealt primarily with oppression and suffering of Catholics, and generated a different legitimising collective from that presented above. They involved other criteria for the inclusion as "one of us" that served to generate a predominantly non-unionist, Catholic legitimising collective.

Statements issued during the rent and rates strike illustrate this point. The strike was enthusiastically supported by the SDLP, and in a joint statement with the Nationalist Party, the Republican Labour Party and NICRA, they called on the general public to participate in the protest by immediately withholding all rents and rates: "We expect this from all opponents of internment and all opponents of the Unionist regime" (*News Letter* 10 August 1971. See also *Irish News* 10 August 1971). To be part of the in-group—"one of us"—one had to be willing to take part in an unlawful protest, as well as being opposed to internment and the Unionist regime. This obviously created a far more exclusive in-group than that of the "vast majority of non-violent people" presented earlier. By stressing the support of the rents and rates strike, as a crucial sign of true allegiance, a clear message was sent out: To reject the strike, was

not only to reject the campaign against internment, but also to reject "membership" in the collective as such.[9]

The image of the Catholic community as a suffering people oppressed by "the Unionist regime" was a recurrent and very striking symbol in the statements of moderate nationalism. Intertwined with the ideal of non-violence, "suffering" was portrayed as one of the main sources of morality (see for example John Hume: *Irish Times* 27 September 1971). John Hume and the SDLP pointed to the moral force of suffering, thus establishing a legitimising collective that included primarily Catholics and excluded Protestants. Since the suffering was viewed as orchestrated by "the unionist regime," the traditional dualism of nationalists and unionists was thus redefined as sufferers and oppressors.[10]

The two different kinds of legitimising collectives presented in the statements of the SDLP existed side by side during the debate on internment. But the collective of suffering tended to appear more frequently in the debate's early phases, while the collective of non-violence gained force with passing time. This trend paralleled changes in the role of the SDLP in Northern Irish politics. In the early phase of internment the party boycotted the elected institutions and declined to co-operate with the Unionist government, but from late 1972 and onwards, SDLP's involvement in the power-sharing Executive seems to have paved the way for a more inclusive approach.

A Risen People

> For further changes there must surely be, if we are to have a society where the ordinary man's lot in life is to be improved. Flags and slogans are no cure for an empty stomach, and the ordinary man, having borne the brunt of the suffering over the past few years against the might of the British Army, must assert his will on the wily politicians who, even now, are snarling at each other in their attempt to claim political capital from a false victory. [. . .]. People have not forgotten how their

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[9] A similar effect was produced by the employment of the term "Irish" in some of the SDLP statements. Gerard Fitt, for instance, claimed in a TV debate with Brian Faulkner: "The people of NI were Irish and in the final analysis the only integration which would bring an end to the troubles would be integration with the rest of the island" (Fitt quoted in *Irish Times* 15 April 1972).

[10] For more on the construction of victimhood, see Rosland 2009.

> peaceful legitimate demands were met with the full range of State-controlled violence from the batons of an ill-disciplined, sectarian and special police force. (Statement of the Long Kesh Camp Council. *Irish News* 25 April 1972)

This was how the internees in the internment camp Long Kesh portrayed the prospects of "the ordinary man" in Northern Ireland. The ordinary people—who had "borne the brunt of suffering"—were encouraged to rise against the establishment to improve their lives. An initial success was expected: "A united campaign of the risen people against repression and sectarianism will defeat Britain's plans for this country and destroy totally the basis of Unionism" (Joint statement by internees in Crumlin Prison *Irish News* 23 August 1971. See also statement from internees in Long Kesh, *Irish News* 5 January 1972).

Here, we see a fourth legitimising collective, "the risen people," which dominated in the statements of the internees and several republican and civil rights groups.[11] These groups constructed a rebellious collective of "ordinary," or "working class," people. Most statements represented the campaign against internment as a fight between the people on one side, and the political and economical establishment on the other. Nevertheless, the statements also precipitated other sets of in-groups and out-groups, their structure depending on the issues being raised.

Many statements of the internees and the republican groups were linked to a broader narrative of class conflict. Hence, "the risen people" were first and foremost a working-class people. The internees condemned the terror, imprisonments and destruction of working-class homes (Statement from internees in Long Kesh, *Irish News* 29 January 1972), and considered internment "an attack by the governing party on a section of the working class of the same community, on the Falls, Ballymurphy, Ardoyne, Duncairn and increasingly, on the Shankill Road" (*Belfast Telegraph* 27 January 1972). The Republican Clubs alleged that the Special Powers were used by the British government to "put down any and all sections of the working-class whatever their reasons for opposition" (*Irish News* 31 January 1974). It was insisted that only through "unity of the working class and united action against repression will the people achieve justice" (*Irish News* 31 January 1974).

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[11] NICRA, People's Democracy, Republican Clubs (Official Republicans) and Provisional Sinn Fein.

But although a socialist republic was the eventual goal, the Republican Clubs were also eager to rally behind short-term goals:

> The present demands of the people are—and have been since the Civil Rights Association first attacked the Stormont totalitarian system—for peace, justice and democracy for all. While we are convinced that these aims are only truly obtainable when a socialist republic is established, we as a movement of the people support whatever short-term gains the people may obtain, congratulating them on their solidarity, dedication and refusal to be intimidated by the repressive Stormont regime supported by the British Government. (Statement from Long Kesh coordinating committee of Republican Clubs, *Irish News* 4 April 1972. See also *Irish Times* 28 July 1972)

Although this quotation presents an overall message of inclusion, "the people" were related to several specific defining characteristics: the support of the civil rights movement, socialism and opposition to the Stormont regime and the British government.

Nevertheless, the statements emanating from the anti-internment coalition generally defended inclusion and non-sectarianism. The Republican Clubs strongly emphasised that they fought for policies that would benefit the working class, no matter what their creed (*Irish News* 11 September 1971). The Provisional IRA argued that the voice of the working class, demonstrated through loyalist groups and the republican movement, had to be heard and listened to (*Irish News* 2 July 1974). NICRA and the People's Democracy underlined the importance of campaigning for the release of *all* internees: "We will not support sectarian demands for the release of Protestant or Catholic internees alone" (*Irish News* 7 July 1973).

Through emphasising universalism and stressing the class character of the internment issue, many statements of the anti-internment coalition challenged the traditional unionist/Protestant-nationalist/Catholic dualism. The enemy of the "ordinary man" was presented as the reactionary forces of unionism (*Irish News* 29 January 1972), the sectarian state (see *Irish News* 12 January 1972; 4 April 1972; 2 January 1973), the British Army (see *Irish News* 11 September 1971; 28 March 1972; 2 July 1974, and *Irish Times* 28 July 1972), and the economic elite (*Sunday Press* 5 September 1971). The enemy was perceived as the Unionist political and elite, not Protestants as such. Some statements also pointed to the leaders of the SDLP as part of this elite, a criticism that was triggered by the SDLP taking seats in the power-sharing Executive

after the Sunningdale Agreement, signed in December 1973. When the SDLP reversed its earlier policy and recommended an end to the rent and rates strike, the party was accused of collusion with the Unionist elite: "Now that they are in the new Assembly they are in power. They are now the jailers. They are now interning the people. The people must realise this and act by maintaining the rent and rates strike" (*Irish News* 4 January 1974).[12] From this moment on the SDLP was clearly not regarded as a part of the "risen people": the people were urged to ignore SDLP talk of moderation and instead rise against the establishment.

How, then, were "the risen people" to engage in rebellion? Descriptions of the revolt of "the risen people" were partly formed as appeals to "the people" to engage in protests ("we ask the people"); partly as an appreciation of the work "the people" had already done ("we thank the people," and partly as an assertion of "facts" about the attitudes of the people ("the demands of the people are"). As to what constituted the proper means of revolt, the groups offered somewhat different perspectives. Whereas the civil rights movement and the Republican Clubs both preferred political action, the Provisional republicans considered violence a necessary and legitimate device. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, the statements concur on the idealised way of rebellion against internment: Participation in street protests and the rent and rates strike. In the words of the chairman of the Maidstone branch of NICRA: "We believe the greatest weapons of the people in the campaign are the civil resistance and disobedience" (*Irish News* 15 September 1971).[13]

The fight against internment was viewed as a common struggle involving political groups, the internees and the people. When some internees were released early in 1972, Bernadette Devlin invoked this combination of strength, by paying tribute to the courage and determination of "the men behind the wire, people who stood solid with them and the resistance campaign" (*News Letter* 8 April 1972). It seemed to be the function of the various organisations to help the people to organise their struggle (*Sunday Press* 5 September, 1971). But, it was made clear that it was "the people" who were the key to success: the

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[12] The internees had also earlier alleged that the SDLP attitude to internment had softened. See statement of Long Kesh internees, *Irish News* 9 May 1973.

[13] See also Provisional Sinn Fein statement: "Civil disobedience must be renewed [. . .]" (Quoted in *Irish News* 8 November 1972).

people's support was regarded as generous and invaluable (*Irish News* 9 November 1972) and it was only action by the people which could win justice (*Irish Times* 28 July 1972). It was underlined that the fight was the people's own fight, not somebody else's: "You owe it to yourselves and your children," the internees claimed, at the same time affirming their own commitment to the cause and thus setting the standard of dedication: "We are prepared to do our time" (Statement of internees in Long Kesh *Irish News,* 9 May 1973).

Hence, "the risen people" ought to work with the internees and the political organisations supporting the internees. In this coalition, the people, the internees and the organisations had different functions: The role of the internees was one of setting standards of commitment, the role of the people was to rebel, and the role of the political organisations was to help the people organising their campaign.

Since the campaign was presented as a joint struggle where everyone had a significant role, it also produced an identity for those supporting the campaign. Both those inside the internment camps and those outside belonged to the same people. For example, the internees called on: "[. . .] our people, badly pressed though they be, to stand up against this new despicable form of tyranny and corrupt government" (*Irish News* 8 November 1972). The use of the pronoun "our" is significant. The term "our people" points to an already existing bond between the internees and "the people," a bond that would be confirmed and renewed by supporting the campaign against internment.

But how did this emphasis on "the risen people" as a rebellious people activate mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion? To be included in "the risen people," one had to be against the state, as well as the unionist (and to a certain degree the nationalist) establishment. In addition, one had to be ready to participate in illegal actions and support the activities of the civil rights movement or similar organisations. Hence the "requirements" clearly worked to exclude unionists, for the quintessence of unionism was the support of the state. A similar tendency to exclude unionists was evident in the statements on suffering. The issue of victimhood predominantly constructed the collectivity of "the risen people" more along the lines of the traditional dualism.

Several statements of the republican groups additionally made use of the term "Irish" to characterise "the risen people." In a New Year's message the internees in Long Kesh stated: "We know that we are

echoing the most fervent wish of all the Irish people when we hope that this year will bring peace to our community and to our country" (*Irish News* 5 January 1972). The Provisional IRA claimed in a similar statement: "The demand from all sides was for an end to internment. If this was what the Irish people wanted then this is what they are entitled to" (*Irish News* 2 July 1974). The Republican Clubs also employed the term "Irish" in their statements, arguing that: "the Irish people must control their own lives politically, economically and culturally," in a society "whose laws will not permit discrimination on the basis of religion, in which Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter will rejoice equally in the common name of Irishman" (*Irish Times* 10 December 1971).

The discourse of the anti-internment coalition thus reveals a significant ambiguity in the coalition's approach to inclusiveness. On the one hand, the statements idealised non-sectarianism and universalism, portraying a legitimising collective that could include Protestants. Yet, on the other hand, the statements applied the term "Irish," apparently ignoring the fact that there hardly were any Protestants in the public debate that explicitly identified themselves as "Irish." And when commenting upon the unionist rejection of an Irish identity, some republican statements almost insisted on Protestants being Irish. Thomas MacGiolla of the Republican Clubs said he utterly rejected the notion that the Protestants of Northern Ireland were not part of the Irish nation (*Sunday Press* 5 September 1971), and Maire Drumm, vice-president of Provisional Sinn Fein, confirmed the ethnic bond: "We have always said we would talk to our Loyalist brethren. They are Irish as we are" (*Irish News* 5 April 1974).

The republican position thus resembles that of the Unionist government, whose "responsible people" claimed to have the support of most Catholics, even though little support really came forward. Statements like these displayed an apparent inclusiveness, but were built on an ignorance of difference: an ignorance that made the preferred identity—"Irish" or "Ulster"—look more inclusive.

Legitimacy, Identity and Conceptual Gerrymandering

> A society needs a system of legitimation and, in seeking for it, always looks to a point of origin from which it can derive itself and its practices [. . .]. But the search for origin, like that for identity is self-contradictory. Once the origin is understood to

> be an invention, it can never again be thought of as something "natural." A culture brings itself into being by an act of cultural invention that itself depends on an anterior legitimating nature. (Seamus Deane 1990: 17)

The current article has aimed at exploring how the system of democratic legitimation and its relation to identity rests on the tension between the identification of a "natural" origin, on the one hand, and on the continuous acts of invention, on the other. The study has examined how the concept of "the people" was used by various political groups in the debate on internment in Northern Ireland. I found that the loyalist statements most frequently appealed to and idealised "a loyal people," a people characterised by being Protestant, faithful to the state and loyal to Ulster. The Unionist party was more ambiguous: Whereas the party appealed to and claimed to represent the vast majority of people, "the responsible people" were regularly restricted to those supporting the existing state of Northern Ireland. Moderate nationalism demonstrated a similar ambiguity: SDLPs "moral people," proposed to include "the vast majority of non-violent people," but the people idealised in the statements were frequently limited to Catholics victimised by the Unionist regime. The republican groups also presented "the risen people," through a dual and ambiguous set of characteristics, appealing both to the working class "no matter what creed," and to a common Irish identity.

The historical identities being emphasised in the debate on internment were mainly an Ulster identity and an Irish identity. Neither the Irish nor the Ulster identity was perceived as constructed by those who declared their commitment to them; the identities were simply seen as reflecting existing realities. In this sense these identities are predicated on "forgetting" the history of how they are made (Bhabha 1990: 311).[14]

The notion of "the people" thus has a key role to play in political discourse because it transforms political proposals into "collective requests" and in theory constitutes the concluding and unifying judge: the ultimate authority to which all proposals must concede. Judging from the extensive use of the concept, "the people" was indeed recognised as the fundamental source of legitimacy by the participants in the debate on internment. But through continual acts of "conceptual gerrymandering" the various political parties employed different and often exclusionary

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[14] See also Renan 1990: 11, and Calhoun 1995: 233-35.

concepts of "the people," thus producing a fragmented popular mandate and fundamentally widening the gulf between the groups.

The decision to introduce internment was meant to curb the escalating conflict in Northern Ireland, but, as shown above, the result was the exact opposite. When internment ended in late 1975, cease-fires had come and gone. Peace proposals had emerged and failed severely and more than 1,300 people had died.

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