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Arianna Antonielli, Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Samuele Grassi

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Arianna Antonielli, Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Samuele Grassi

Daredevils of History?
Resilience in
Armenia and Ireland

edited by
Suzan Meryem Rosita,
Dieter Reinisch

Thinking about Resilience Introduction

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The politics of mourning, victimhood and martyrdom are central to the self-images of Armenia and Ireland, and yet in the context of this special issue resilience emerges as a powerful metaphor that was previously absent from contemporary narratives of Armenian and Irish nationhood. The readings on resilience offered in this volume differ greatly in methodological focus and theoretical context, but all offer a critical view on how resilience is performed and imagined in Armenia and Ireland around the hundred-year mark. They show that resilience, much like vulnerability, is indeed “part of resistance” (Butler 2016, 26). This dual vision can replace our previous conclusions about resilience with a more nuanced understanding of what it means *to resist* in our world – in the past, present and future.

The ten essays, responses and artistic interventions in this issue show that the notion of resilience can provide us with a unique way to explore and read Armenian and Irish history, alongside and in connection with each other. In the centennial landscape we survey, resilience comes in many forms and occurs in a variety of situations and historical moments: in the conjuncture of combined and uneven development on the one hand, and dreams of independence on the other (Carlo Maria Pellizzi and Aldo Ferrari); in the margins as well as at centre stage in Great War national politics (Marc Levene); in surviving archival documents chronicling the birth of modern human rights law and activism (Patrick Walsh); in diplomatic reports from Armenia by Irish emissaries commenting on Armenia’s trajectory as a peripheral republic of the Soviet Union (Maurice J. Casey); in the form of counter-memories of the “generations after” who struggle to find their voices and identities in a post-colonial global context and post-traumatic nation-building discourse around the hundred year mark (Sevan Beukian and Rebecca Graff-McRae); in literary works (drama and novels) and films that make us painfully aware of the limits of our own language and imagination (Claudia Parra and Donatella Abbate Badin); and in contemporary artistic interventions and per-

formances (Mkrtich Tonoyan and Phelim McConigly) that add yet another imaginative layer to the silence that is necessarily always part of conversations about war and violence.

Despite the promising, and often original, uses of resilience in the contributions to our issue, the notion has a troublesome and complicated history (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 2012). Resilience is widely used in the language of neoliberalism, national security and defence, and it has served as a form of rhetorical shock absorber when “climate change, the War on Terror, and economic crises affect livelihoods around the world, and disproportionately those of the poorest” (Bracke 2016, 58-59). Talk of resilience in order to survive, bounce back and recover quickly from adverse circumstances and situational exigencies contributes to an understanding that to be resilient is to merely survive. Such discourses of survival and self-mastery are culturally and politically charged, as a public poster from the Louisiana Justice Institute seen on a mural in Belfast shows:

Stop calling me
Resilient.
Because every time you say
'Oh, they're resilient'
that means you can
do something else to me.
I am not resilient.¹

We challenge these common conceptions of resilience and argue that an alternative perception of this concept is crucial to understanding how the people of Armenia and Ireland mobilize (and in the past have mobilized) resilience for the purposes of asserting their existence, claiming the rights to memory and equality, and resisting police violence, security and military actions. The concept of resilience, we find, illuminates our present moment and resonates with the recent political and social debates surrounding fundamental questions about political representation and personal freedom spurred by the 2018 Armenian velvet revolution and Ireland's historic referendum ending the country's ban on abortion.

¹ The appearance of the term “resilient” on a mural in a Loyalist-dominated area of West-Belfast in place of a former paramilitary UDA mural reflects the manifold uses of “resilience” in Ireland by actors from all corner of the political spectrum, victims and perpetrators alike. While the essays in this issue focus on the resilience of the weak, the use of the same term in the context of the right-wing, white supremacist UDA reflects also its manipulative power; <<https://extramuralactivity.com/2015/10/12/i-am-not-resilient/>> (last accessed on 05/2018).

Resilience also turned out to be an appropriate theme for the process of editing this collected volume. The process was far from easy and we thank Fiorenzo Fantaccini for encouraging us to pursue the project and for providing hands-on support and invaluable advice. We also thank the dedicated staff at *Studi irlandesi*, and especially Arianna Antonielli, for doing such a great job editing and producing this issue, and all anonymous referees. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Hrachya Vardanian, whose artistic work has inspired us to think about Armenia and Ireland as having convergent yet connected histories.

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A Nation Once Again? Continuità e discontinuità nel nazionalismo irlandese

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Abstract:

This essay is a brief overview of the different forms of Irish nationalism (or of nationalism in Ireland), from the Anglo-Norman invasion to the 20th century; from Gaelic proto-nationalism as a reaction to the first Angevin conquest, to the gradual affirmation of a powerful religious element during the Tudor re-conquest and the fast reformulation of identities in the conflicts of the 17th century; from the ironic Protestant colonists' "Ascendancy nationalism" in the 18th century, to the birth of the first form of post-French Revolution, post-Enlightenment modern democratic Republicanism at the end of that century; from the subsequent rise of a new but old constitutional brand to the different epiphanies of those two strands in the following decades, with Unionism as a third possible form. The continuity and discontinuity of the two main "currents" are considered, showing that there was always a continuum between the two.

Keywords: Forms of Irish Nationalism, Irish Unionism, O'Connell movement, Tudor Conquest, United Irishmen

Secondo la definizione data dall'opera più ambiziosa e riuscita sulla storia del nazionalismo irlandese, il nazionalismo è "the assertion by members of a group of autonomy and self-government for the group (often, but not invariably, in a sovereign state), of its solidarity and fraternity in the homeland, and of its distinctive history and culture" (Boyce 1995 [1982], 19). Nel caso dell'Irlanda tale rivendicazione, pur precoce rispetto all'Europa continentale, anche per la lunga durata ha assunto nei secoli diverse forme e diverse sostanze, così che si potrebbero anche ravvisare, a seconda delle epoche, "nazionalismi irlandesi" diversi¹.

¹ Boyce (1995 [1982]) affronta la questione del nazionalismo irlandese nei suoi diversi filoni e *avatar* sulla lunghissima durata, dall'invasione anglonormanna ai nostri giorni. Il

Anche se i decostruzionismi alla moda, spesso nel nostro caso declinati come rivalutazione della storia sociale e culturale, hanno nel passato trentennio offuscato questa realtà, asse portante della storia dell'Irlanda negli ultimi otto secoli e mezzo rimane indubbiamente e comunque il rapporto, per la maggior parte del tempo conflittuale, con il potente vicino, prima anglo-normanno, poi inglese: non solo in termini di "evenemenzialità" politica e di istituzioni, ma di costruzione e di rivendicazione di una identità nazionale. L'individuazione di una identità irlandese distinta è avvenuta – come spesso accade nella storia dei popoli – per contrasto.

L'evento iniziale di questo turbolento rapporto fu l'invasione anglo-normanna dell'isola, intrapresa da nobili del regno d'Inghilterra e dai loro séguiti nel maggio del 1169 e coronata dall'arrivo del sovrano inglese nell'ottobre 1171; invasione che per il suo particolare carattere (su cui torneremo), poco consueto in quell'epoca, pose le basi del plurisecolare conflitto futuro².

1. Una conquista incompleta: la lunga gestazione di una identità nazionale

Per ripetere fatti probabilmente già noti alla maggioranza dei lettori, a quel tempo l'isola d'Irlanda era assolutamente unita dal punto di vista della cultura e della struttura sociale: una unità culturale che comprendeva, al di fuori delle sponde dell'isola, anche l'isola di Man e la maggior parte della odierna Scozia. Una sola lingua, il celtico gaelico, lingua scritta e standardizzata con cura da secoli a opera di addetti specializzati (i monaci cristiani e la "casta" dei successori dei druidi pagani): sola eccezione in Irlanda, la popolazione di lingua scandinava delle cinque città fondate dai Vichinghi. Una identica società, non statale, ma familiare e tribale, gerarchicamente fondata, oltre che sul potere, sul prestigio: la famiglia estesa (intesa come tutti i discendenti da un capostipite fino alla quarta generazione), il clan (che poteva fare risalire l'appartenenza dei propri membri a generazioni ancora precedenti, comprendendo affini e alleati), la tribù o popolo (*túath*: almeno ottocento in Irlanda al tempo dell'invasione anglo-normanna, su una popolazione di

volume di Robert Kee (1976 [1972]), pur presentandosi come una "storia del nazionalismo irlandese", tratta quasi esclusivamente uno solo dei suoi filoni generali, quello dell'indipendentismo repubblicano dalla fine del XVIII secolo agli anni Venti del XX.

² Non è il caso in questa sede di cercare di fare una bibliografia di storie dell'Irlanda. Rimando ai nove volumi (più quelli delle appendici) dell'opera collettiva *A New History of Ireland* (1970-2005), iniziata nel 1970 e completata dall'ultimo volume (in realtà il primo secondo il piano dell'opera: *Prehistoric and Early Ireland*) solo nel 2005. E rimando all'altra opera collettiva fresca di stampa, Bartlett 2018, che studia la storia d'Irlanda dal 600 d.C. a oggi. Inoltre si tengano presenti gli undici volumetti, ciascuno di un diverso autore, storiograficamente importanti a dispetto della scarsa mole, de *The Gill History of Ireland*, pubblicati negli anni Settanta del XX secolo (1972-81), e i sei più imponenti volumi, anch'essi ciascuno di autore diverso, della *New Gill History of Ireland* (1990-2005).

forse poco più di mezzo milione di abitanti), che poteva però essere vassalla e tributaria di una tribù più potente, che gestiva il potere politico (tradotto in latino, la *ciuitas*, o entità politica autonoma, come descritta secoli prima da Giulio Cesare riguardo ai Celti: nel 1169 ne esistevano nell'isola circa 150). Società in cui erano comunque spiacevolmente presenti, a dispetto dei celtomani degli ultimi due secoli, la schiavitù e il servaggio della gleba. Un solo, complesso, sistema giuridico, quello delle leggi del *Brehon* (dall'Antico irlandese *Breitheambh*, "giudice, arbitro"), della cui comune e quotidiana applicazione in quella società oggi comunque si discute. Una sola religione, cristiana in comunione con Roma, però non basata su una struttura diocesana, ma su una struttura monastica.

Una completa unità culturale e sociale dell'Irlanda nel 1169 che non corrispondeva però ad alcuna unità politica: una società tribale, divisa in decine di comunità politiche autonome il più delle volte in conflitto tra loro (con l'aggiunta in molti casi della obbligata guerra giovanile primaverile, rito di passaggio celtico degli adolescenti all'età adulta), paese in cui l'idea di Stato, pur giunta, non aveva avuto alcuna applicazione significativa o efficace, al di fuori di un solo, isolato e poi vanificato tentativo di instaurare una statualità feudale, come vedremo oltre.

Un'isola o una etnia, quella dei Gaeli o Scoti, che aveva avuto comunque – dopo una ovvia continuità di rapporti con la celticità europea e britannica – un intenso e verificato contatto col continente europeo conquistato dai Romani, almeno dal primo secolo dopo Cristo. Contrariamente alla leggenda di una Irlanda mai toccata dagli eserciti imperiali, risulta che dal governatorato sulle *Britanniae* di Giulio Agricola, conclusosi nell'84 o 85 d.C., e fino all'inizio del III secolo d.C., la presenza militare romana nella costa orientale dell'isola sia stata costante (con tanto di classici forti romani, come quello di Drumanagh, e di sepolture permanenti, come nell'isola di Lambay). Rapporto poi continuato, a parti inverse, nei successivi due secoli, dopo l'attenuazione dell'aggressività imperiale col regno di Caracalla, con le scorrerie e gli insediamenti degli Scoti o Gaeli sulle coste occidentali della Britannia romana. Un rapporto duraturo, con intensi scambi commerciali e con l'affluire costante di mercenari irlandesi negli eserciti imperiali, come poi comprovato, in forma istituzionalizzata, dalla *Notitia Dignitatum* dell'inizio del quinto secolo dopo Cristo. Questo stesso intenso rapporto produsse tra il III secolo d.C. e la prima metà del VI secolo la completa cristianizzazione dell'Irlanda (e aveva anche dato origine all'alfabeto ogamico, basato su quello latino). A un'iniziale adesione al modello diocesano latino, proposta dall'evangelizzatore e normatore arcivescovo Patrizio (ca. 355-431 d.C.), proveniente dalla parte romanizzata della Britannia, subentrò presto una esplosione monastica incredibilmente radicale, che sulla falsariga delle ben più antiche associazioni celtiche di giovani guerrieri votati alla morte (in Irlanda i *Fianna*) produsse una evangelizzazione *usque ad martyrium* diretta

a ogni terra pagana o paganizzata (= l'Europa barbarica) conosciuta, e vide l'opera dei famosi santi irlandesi, capostipiti di fondazioni monastiche che in pochi decenni sovvertirono completamente la struttura ecclesiastica dell'isola. Come ricaduta per quanto riguarda la cultura europea, allora messa in radicale crisi dalle avvenute invasioni barbariche, il titolo di un noto libro di un giornalista (*Come gli irlandesi salvarono la civiltà*) è nell'insieme attagliato ai fatti: un esempio per tutti, san Colombano (543-615 d.C.) (vedi Cahill 1995). I monaci gaelici, oltre a salvare e a copiare i manoscritti della cultura classica greca e latina, cominciarono a trascrivere nella propria lingua le saghe e leggende locali, e poi gli annali e le leggi, fino ad allora affidati alla trasmissione orale dei bardi druidici, così che il *corpus* dell'Antico Gaelico è uno dei "volgari" (cioè lingue parlate diverse dal Greco e dal Latino) attestati più antichi d'Europa. Per quanto riguarda l'Irlanda e le terre collegate (Scozia e isola di Man) l'effetto fu diverso: le case monastiche fondate da monaci all'inizio asceticissimi presero il potere sulla Chiesa gaelica, relegando i vescovi a meri funzionari incaricati di ordinare i sacerdoti (e ve ne fu da allora uno per ogni tribù politicamente indipendente), mentre gli abati delle grandi abbazie, spesso originariamente appartenenti alle famiglie estese che avevano il potere nelle più importanti tribù, gestivano la Chiesa. Forse anche come reazione alle durissime regole monastiche imposte dai fondatori, non appena passato l'entusiasmo, la maggior parte degli abati e monaci irlandesi, dall'inizio del settimo secolo, cominciarono a smettere di seguire il loro voto di castità e ritornarono gradualmente ai costumi laicali irlandesi, inclusa la poligamia (anche se una minoranza di monaci, noti come *Céili-Dé* – "compagni di Dio" – e tollerati dagli altri, rimasero però fedeli ai voti monastici originari nei successivi secoli). Questo sviluppo portò da un lato alla creazione di "tribù monastiche" che potevano entrare in guerra – in senso militare - con altre tribù, sia monastiche sia civili: da un altro lato, favorì la prima aggregazione di centri proto-urbani o "città monastiche", come ad esempio Armagh, Clonmacnoise, Glendalough e Kildare. Dal 795 d.C. le scorrerie, e poi gli insediamenti dei Vichinghi (o Scandinavi), prima pagani, poi anch'essi cristianizzati, non mutarono il quadro della situazione nel senso di un deteriorarsi dei costumi religiosi (già ben diversi, da almeno un secolo e mezzo, dalla norma continentale), a dispetto dei saccheggi iniziali – spesso compiuti ai danni dei monasteri – e a dispetto della ben posteriore vulgata catto-nazionalista (e catto-vittoriana) irlandese: e i loro insediamenti diedero vita ad altre città costiere (Dublino, Wexford, Waterford, Cork e Limerick). Incidentalmente, la "diversità" della Chiesa gaelica rispetto alle Chiese del continente si manifestò anche nella lunga controversia riguardo al calcolo della datazione annua della Pasqua; papa Gregorio I (590-604) e i suoi successori intendevano imporre a tutta la Chiesa il nuovo computo usato nel Mediterraneo, ma si trovarono di fronte alla dura opposizione della Chiesa gaelica, fedele al computo precedente. Solo gradualmente, fondazio-

ne monastica dopo fondazione monastica, cominciando con quella di Iona (fondata da san Columba, 521-597) in Scozia nella seconda metà dell'ottavo secolo e finendo con quelle del Munster nella prima metà dell'undecimo secolo, la Chiesa gaelica accettò di uniformarsi all'uso romano.

Probabilmente come reazione al consolidamento e alla nuova aggressività del regno anglosassone d'Inghilterra sotto Alfredo il Grande (871-899) e sull'esempio di quanto fatto da Kenneth MacAlpin in Scozia nell'843, oltre che come reazione alle scorrerie vichinghe, nella seconda metà del nono secolo la famiglia estesa che guidava la tribù dei Dál gCáis di Thomond (odierna contea di Clare), gli *Ua Briain*, tentò per la prima volta di creare uno Stato in Irlanda. Beninteso, uno stato di impronta feudale, dotato quindi per la prima volta di funzionari, con l'ambizione di fare del proprio capo (i capotribù erano spesso chiamati "re" in Irlanda) il "Re Supremo" (*ArdRí*) dell'isola, sull'esempio scozzese. Oggi la storiografia irlandese discute se questo concetto del "Re Supremo", su cui al tempo insisteva la propaganda scritta dei sostenitori del progetto, che cercava di attribuire ad esso grandissima antichità, fosse preesistente al progetto stesso (come creduto dagli storici nazionalisti catto-vittoriani, *in primis* EoinMacNeill), o non, invece, una nuova creazione basata sull'esempio di Kenneth MacAlpin. Si noti, però, che per la prima volta questa propaganda, invocando la necessità e la legittimità di un Re Supremo, identificava di fatto l'isola d'Irlanda come "nazione". Quasi centocinquanta anni di tentativi da parte degli UaBriain sembrarono avere successo all'inizio dell'undicesimo secolo: il loro più grande capo, Brian Boru (Brian Bóruma, 976-1014), era riuscito a farsi riconoscere come Re Supremo (in Latino, *Imperator Scotorum*) dalla maggior parte delle tribù irlandesi. Peccato che nel 1014 nella battaglia di Clontarf (sulla costa, pochi chilometri a nord del centro di Dublino) Brian Boru venisse sconfitto e ucciso, insieme ai suoi discendenti diretti, dalla minoranza di tribù irlandesi che ancora rifiutavano di riconoscere la sua supremazia. Il progetto dei Dál gCáis venne in sostanza fermato: anche altre confederazioni tribali, come quelle degli O'Neill e degli O'Connor, cominciarono a pretendere il titolo di Re Supremo, scontrandosi tra di loro fino alla invasione anglonormanna. Lo "Stato primitivo" degli O'Brien di Thomond restò comunque in esistenza fino ad allora, continuando a cercare di sostituire un diritto di tipo feudale al consueto diritto tribale. Vi è da chiedersi, in una visione socio-antropologica, riguardo a questa eccezione irlandese (e alle poche altre riguardanti le altre società celtiche nel millennio e mezzo precedente), se si sia trattato di uno "Stato primario" (cioè di uno Stato formatosi come necessario risultato di dinamiche socio-politiche ed economiche interne) o di uno "Stato secondario" (uno Stato sorto principalmente grazie ad influssi provenienti dall'esterno, o come reazione alle minacce provenienti dall'esterno). Da questo punto di vista il regno di Thomond era molto probabilmente uno "Stato secondario" (vedi Arnold, Gibson 1995).

Dal punto di vista della propaganda riguardante questo progetto il tentativo di Thomond è però importante. Non solo perché con l'idea di un Re Supremo dell'Irlanda poneva le fondamenta di una idea di nazione irlandese, ma perché anche nella propaganda successiva alla sconfitta di Clontarf sosteneva l'identità di una "proto-nazione" gaelica in lotta contro degli "stranieri". Infatti il famoso *CogadGáedel re Gallaib* (La guerra dei Gaeli contro gli stranieri), testo propagandistico a favore degli O'Brien di Thomond scritto quasi cento anni dopo la battaglia di Clontarf (secondo i filologi odierni, tra il 1103 e il 1111), asseriva l'esistenza di una lotta plurisecolare tra gli Irlandesi (o Gaeli) e gli invasori vichinghi, paragonando Brian Boru a Cesare Augusto e ad Alessandro Magno. Non sorprende che il testo medioevale sia stato entusiasticamente adottato dai nazionalisti irlandesi del XIX e XX secolo, senza curarsi della realtà storica: la città-stato vichinga di Dublino, nemica delle aspirazioni di Brian Boru e alleata alle tribù irlandesi che gli si opponevano, aveva sì convocato per la battaglia orde di Vichinghi provenienti da tutto il mondo scandinavo, ma lo stesso Brian Boru aveva fatto la medesima cosa, tramite i suoi propri alleati vichinghi. Non si era quindi trattato di uno scontro tra Gaeli e Scandinavi. Nonostante ciò, è evidente che da sessanta o settanta anni dopo la sua redazione (nel dodicesimo secolo) questo testo abbia contribuito a dar forza alla resistenza contro i nuovi "stranieri", gli Anglonormanni, non i Vichinghi³.

Nel frattempo altre cose avvenivano a livello internazionale. Nell'Europa occidentale del nuovo millennio si manifestavano con forza una espansione demografica e una conseguente rifioritura economica, anche dovute a motivi climatici. La Chiesa di Roma dalla metà dell'undicesimo secolo si scontrava con i poteri laici nella lotta per le investiture, il che comportava decisive riforme interne; tra queste, l'idea che i sacerdoti non dovessero avere consorti e figli, e che meno ancora potessero averli i monaci. Ovviamente insieme alla propria ridefinizione la Chiesa diffondeva valori e modelli sociopolitici che erano inevitabilmente feudali, seppur di un feudalesimo nobilitato e purificato. Anche come valvola di sfogo a questa crescita della società europea e per ridurre la conflittualità tra aristocratici interna ai paesi feudali, la Chiesa promosse la prima e la seconda crociata, che non coinvolsero l'Irlanda. In Irlanda i *CéiliDé* e i loro sostenitori intuirono la possibilità di riformare la Chiesa nazionale, e presero a quel fine contatti con i riformatori della Chiesa europea. Il più rilevante riformatore irlandese – riuscì a porre le basi per il ritorno dell'isola alla struttura diocesana, e a radicare da vari monasteri gli abati laici e i loro seguaci - fu Máel Máedóc Ua Morgair (1094-1148), a noi più noto come san Malachia di Armagh, l'amico di san Bernardo di Clairvaux che ne scrisse la biografia (*Vita Malachiae*) nel 1149. Come tutte le opere di Bernardo l'opera ebbe immediata

³ L'edizione critica del testo ancora in uso è quella curata da Todd (1867), vol. 48 della "Rolls Series".

diffusione nell'intera cristianità europea. Descrivendo lo sforzo di Malachia di riportare la Chiesa irlandese alla originaria purezza di costumi e di farla aderire alle regole che il movimento riformatore voleva imporre, Bernardo veicolò espressioni forti (più bestie che uomini, selvaggi senza legge: [Malachia] “non aveva mai visto uomini in un simile abisso di barbarie, uomini così svergognati riguardo alla morale, così indifferenti riguardo ai riti, così testardi nel rifiutare ogni disciplina, così sozzi nelle loro vite. Essi erano cristiani solo di nome, ma di fatto pagani” (*Nusquam adhuc tales expertus fuerat in quantacunque barbarie: nusquam repererat sic protervo sad mores, sic ferales ad ritus, sic ad fidem impios, ad leges barbaros, cervicosos ad disciplinam, spurcos ad vitam. Christiani nomine, re pagani*) che, astratte dal loro contesto (si riferivano agli oppositori ecclesiastici di Malachia), vennero intese nel resto dell'ecumene cristiano come applicabili *tout court* a tutti gli irlandesi⁴. Il testo dell'abate cistercense ebbe una ricaduta immediata sul piano della grande politica ecclesiastica e laica e sulla povera Irlanda. Nel dicembre 1154 saliva infatti al soglio pontificio Adriano IV (1154-1159, al secolo Nicholas Breakspear), unico papa inglese della storia, che probabilmente un anno dopo, nel 1155, concedeva con la bolla *Laudabiliter* al nuovo re inglese Enrico II (1154-1189) il titolo di *Dominus Hiberniae* (“Signore dell'Irlanda”), benedicendo il suo “pio e lodevole” (*pium et laudabile*) proposito di invadere l'isola e di sottometterne la popolazione onde renderla “obbediente alle leggi” (*ad subdendum illum populum legibus*) e sradicarvi “le radici del peccato” (*et vitiorum plantaria inde exstirpanda*). Il pontefice ostensibilmente invocava un aiuto militare straniero per fare trionfare la riforma della Chiesa irlandese che Malachia aveva sostenuto, ma dando per scontato che la popolazione dell'isola fosse di fatto pagana, nei termini desunti dalla *Vita* dello stesso riformatore scritta da Bernardo. Scopo della missione del futuro Signore dell'Irlanda sarebbe stato infatti “allargare le frontiere della Chiesa, dichiarare a quelle genti selvagge e ignoranti la verità della fede cristiana, ed estirpare dal campo del Signore le radici del peccato” (*ad dilatandos ecclesiae terminos, ad declarandam in doctis et rudibus populis Christianae fidei veritatem, et vitiorum plantaria de agro Dominico exstirpanda*), “migliorando le abitudini di quel popolo” (*gentem illam bonis moribus informare*), “impiantandovi e aumentando la fede cristiana” (*plantetur et erescat fidei Christianae religio*), “per porre limiti al progredire del male, per correggere i malvagi costumi e diffondere la virtù, per fare crescere la religione cristiana” (*pro vitiorum restringendo decursu, pro corrigendis moribus et virtutibus inserendis, pro Christianae religionis augmento*)⁵. L'a-

⁴ Il testo della *Vita Malachiae* è pubblicato in *Sancti Bernardi Opera* (1957-1977). Riprodotto online in diversi siti, la citazione da cap. VIII, 16.

⁵ Il testo della *Laudabiliter* venne per la prima volta riprodotto nella *Expugnatio Hibernica* di Geraldo del Galles (1867, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, vol. V, 317-318, dalle quali sono tratte tutte le citazioni).

more per il suo popolo che aveva spinto Malachia nella sua opera di riforma ecclesiastica ebbe quindi l'effetto esattamente opposto, poiché servì a motivare ideologicamente la sottomissione e la devastazione dell'isola.

Meno di dieci anni dopo iniziarono le invasioni del sud-est dell'isola da parte di spedizioni organizzate di baroni del regno d'Inghilterra, di alta nobiltà sassone, normanna e gallese, all'inizio col pretesto di sostenere un capotribù del Leinster che era stato spodestato, ben presto impadronendosi apertamente delle terre e cercando di sottometterne gli abitanti a un servaggio feudale. Enrico II dovette affrettarsi a recarsi col suo proprio esercito nell'isola, due anni e mezzo dall'inizio dell'invasione, per fare riconoscere dai baroni conquistatori la propria signoria su di loro, onde evitare che tramite le loro conquiste potessero rendersi indipendenti, come era avvenuto nel Levante. Anche la maggior parte del clero e della nobiltà gaelica del centro e del sud dell'isola (nonché le città vichinghe) all'inizio si sottomisero formalmente al nuovo "Signore dell'Irlanda", in ciò certo influenzati dall'appoggio papale per la conquista. Il nord e parte dell'ovest dell'isola vennero toccati da nuove spedizioni feudali anglonormanne nei decenni successivi: poi il movimento di conquista nella seconda metà del XIII secolo perse il suo slancio.

Il carattere della conquista anglonormanna di buona parte dell'Irlanda fu però grandemente diverso dalla progressiva espansione dei tardi regni anglosassoni nelle terre celtiche della Gran Bretagna (Galles, Cornovaglia e Cumbria), e poi degli stessi anglonormanni nel Galles. In quei casi all'aspetto militare si associava la cooptazione graduale delle aristocrazie locali al modo di vivere inglese, con sostituzione anch'essa graduale di un diritto e una struttura sociali feudali a quelli preesistenti; alla forza militare si affiancavano, spesso in modo preponderante, la persuasione e l'allettamento, che intendevano mostrare agli indigeni (e *in primis* alle loro aristocrazie tribali) i vantaggi del nuovo sistema. L'imitazione, non si sa quanto consapevole, di quanto avevano fatto i Romani coi popoli conquistati e conquistandi. Tutto il contrario nel caso della conquista anglonormanna della maggior parte dell'Irlanda: a dispetto dei desiderata papali espressi nella bolla *Laudabiliter*, e apparentemente confermati da Enrico II nelle sue due visite irlandesi, le milizie anglonormanne e i nobili che le guidavano si diedero da subito al completo saccheggio, trattando da nemici tutti gli indigeni e in particolare i loro aristocratici (che erano in possesso delle terre di cui i conquistatori intendevano impadronirsi). Allo stesso modo si regolarono nei confronti della Chiesa: lungi dal riformarla, sostituivano i prelati gaelici con i propri prelati in tutte le zone che riuscivano a conquistare. Le terre sotto il controllo degli invasori vedevano il numeroso afflusso di coloni dall'Inghilterra, dal Galles e dagli altri paesi controllati dalla corona, che non solo nei centri urbani, ma anche nelle campagne si sostituivano agli abitanti originari. Una conquista coloniale pura e semplice, basata sulla forza bruta, che anticipava di secoli il comportamento degli Europei nel Nuovo Mondo, e in particolare i modi delle conquiste coloniali dell'impero inglese di Elisabetta I e degli Stuart.

Correttamente dagli anni Ottanta del secolo scorso gli scritti dello storico inglese John Gillingham hanno individuato nella conquista anglonormanna dell'Irlanda nel XII e XIII secolo non solo le origini della visione di sé e dell'Altro da parte inglese, ma della stessa espansione coloniale e imperialistica inglese e britannica a partire dagli anni Sessanta del XVI secolo. L'"Impero Angloino" del XII secolo come vera fondazione dell'Impero britannico di molto successivo, ma senza soluzione di continuità tra i due. Per citare un articolo di sintesi con cui Gillingham dava notizia a un più vasto pubblico di questa nuova interpretazione, corroborata in due ponderosi volumi,

Looking at the English in Ireland does indeed make a lot of sense. It was an experience which helped to shape and harden attitudes. But those who point to the sixteenth century as the starting point of it all are just a little bit wide of the mark - roughly 400 years wide of the mark. The formative experience was not the forward policy adopted by the Elizabethans in the late 1560s, but the forward policy adopted by Henry II in the early 1170s. This is crucially important because it means that these imperialist attitudes are much more deeply ingrained than people realise. It was not just in the modern era that Englishmen decided that the Irish were savages and should be either Anglicised or exterminated: they had thought so for centuries. That this has hitherto been insufficiently realised is very largely the fault of medievalists themselves and their misleading and inaccurate habit of referring to the attack on twelfth century Ireland as "the Norman invasion" when it should, undoubtedly, be called "the English invasion". The writer who did more than any other single individual to establish the standard English view of Ireland was Gerald of Wales. (Gillingham 1987, 17-18)

il propagandista principe della conquista di Enrico II. Dopo avere analizzato in dettaglio le immagini medioevali inglesi degli irlandesi, mostrando con abbondanza di esempi che esse non differivano in nulla dalle posteriori immagini tudoriane, Gillingham notava che "What we have here, in the twelfth century just as in the sixteenth, is an ideology of conquest. Given that the Irish were barbarians it followed that they could legitimately be dispossessed" (Gillingham 1987, 19). Un'altra osservazione di Gillingham, importante per la contestualizzazione del primissimo espansionismo inglese nel suo tempo, è che "In essence then the history of the English in Ireland begins with a period of imperialist expansion in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This strongly suggests that what was happening in Britain was part of a wider, European movement: to the East the German *Drangnach Osten* fuelled by a German view of the Slavs as barbarians: in the Mediterranean region the crusades against the infidel" (*ibidem*, 22). Infatti sulle modalità della invasione dell'Irlanda da parte di Enrico II con ogni probabilità ebbe una rilevanza decisiva il concetto di *Outremer*, scaturito dall'esperienza delle crociate e dei regni dei conquistatori "franchi" nel Levante: l'Irlanda, a differenza di Galles, Cumbria e Cornovaglia, era di sicuro "al di là dal mare" rispetto a Lon-

dra. Rilevanza decisiva ebbe anche la situazione socio-politica dell'Inghilterra, che fino all'accesso al trono di Enrico II era stata dilaniata da quasi vent'anni di devastante guerra civile (poi chiamata "l'Anarchia") tra i seguaci di sua madre, la regina Matilda, e quelli del di lei cugino Stefano, pretendente al trono. Di baroni, cioè grandi nobili, quali quelli che avevano diretto le due fazioni nel conflitto, nel regno ce n'erano troppi, e troppo potenti. Dal punto di vista di Enrico II che cosa vi era di meglio che far loro ponti d'oro verso l'Irlanda (o verso la Terra Santa) così che con la brama di nuovi possedimenti oltremare essi, coi loro séguiti di nobili di minor grado e di armigeri, si allontanassero definitivamente? E lo stesso valeva per il popolo comune, che aveva, moltiplicato dall'esplosione demografica, comunque nutrito la forza della guerra civile: che tra di essi i più avventurosi e intraprendenti si trasferissero in Irlanda come coloni era cosa più che desiderabile⁶.

A conquista avviata la giustificazione ideologica del diritto della corona inglese al dominio dell'Irlanda venne propagandata nell'Europa cristiana da Gerald del Galles (o Gerard de Barri o Giraldus Cambrensis, 1146-1223), prelado aristocratico di ascendenza anglonormanna e gallese, nelle due opere in latino *Topographia Hibernica* (pubblicata nella prima redazione mediante lettura pubblica nel 1188) ed *Expugnatio Hibernica*, di pochi anni successiva: due opere che ebbero al tempo, e continuarono a esercitare anche nei secoli successivi, una enorme influenza in tutta Europa, non solo in Inghilterra, sulla immagine dell'Irlanda e degli Irlandesi, venendo considerate quali fonti attendibili su di essi. Uomo purtroppo di vaste letture, Gerald attribuiva ai Gaeli suoi contemporanei tutti i peggiori stereotipi che la letteratura classica greca e latina aveva applicato ai Celti e agli stessi remoti Irlandesi (selvaggi e barbari, bestiali, incivili, inclini a folle violenza, privi di ogni legge, infidi, cannibali), rincarando (e aggiornando) la dose nel dipingerli come falsi cristiani e veri ed empì pagani. Aggiungeva alla caratterizzazione generale particolari piccanti: ad esempio, a causa dei loro costumi sessuali sfrenati e perversi, in Irlanda esistevano ibridi di uomini e animali. Secondo Gerald, si trattava di "Un popolo adultero, incestuoso, illegittimamente nato e che illegittimamente si accoppia, un popolo fuori da ogni legge, che profana sconciamente la natura stessa con pratiche maligne e detestabili" (*gente adultera, gente incesta, gente illegitime nata et copulata, gente exlege, arte invida et invisa ipsam turpiter adulterante naturam, tales interdum contra naturae legem natura producat*) (Giraldi Cambrensis 1867, 181). Essendo così barbari, andavano civilizzati. Era lecito quindi – anche se ciò non veniva esplicitato – alle forze della corona inglese espropriarli, sottometterli o ridurli in schiavitù, e anche ucciderli, trattandosi di esseri di totale alterità⁷.

⁶ I due volumi cui si fa riferimento sono Gillingham 1984 e Gillingham 2000.

⁷ L'edizione critica ancora in uso dei due testi di Gerald di Galles sull'Irlanda costituisce il vol. 21-V della "Rolls Series": si veda Giraldi Cambrensis 1867.

Certo il confronto degli anglonormanni con l'Altro in atto in Irlanda, giustificato implicitamente nelle sue forme più brutali da Gerald, contribuì a formare già in quest'epoca l'identità inglese, o un proto-nazionalismo inglese. Ma analogamente, nella sua brutalità, fece nascere e condensare un proto-nazionalismo gaelico irlandese pre-moderno, di cui il più rappresentativo documento – in quanto diffuso oltre le sponde dell'isola – sarà in latino la *Rimostroanza dei capi irlandesi a papa Giovanni XXII*, del 1317. L'affermazione dell'antichità e delle glorie dei Gaeli, che attingeva al ricco patrimonio di miti, di leggende epiche, di genealogie, trasmesso fin dai secoli più oscuri, già presente prima dell'invasione di Enrico II (come ci si aspetterebbe in una società tribale ossessionata dal prestigio e dal lignaggio), tese da quel momento a una precoce (e obbligata) rivendicazione della propria identità nazionale. I bardi gaelici delle corti tribali irlandesi opposero al nuovo nemico i loro poemi, registrati spesso da monaci che li trascrivevano, con una ovvia rivendicazione di una differente identità etnica rispetto ai conquistatori; ma proprio a causa della frammentazione tribale essi non si curarono di tradurli in latino e di diffonderli per l'Europa in un concertato sforzo propagandistico, come invece accadde per secoli agli scritti di Gerard de Barri. Li ha ripresi pochi decenni fa lo studioso olandese Joep Leerssen, riconsiderandolo scontro culturale tra Inghilterra e Irlanda nella prospettiva della storia delle immagini e dimostrando che proprio la poesia gaelica del Medioevo fu la prima espressione, e il fattore formativo, dell'idea stessa di una nazionalità irlandese, ben prima non solo del nazionalismo moderno di impronta rivoluzionaria nato alla fine del XVIII secolo, ma anche del proto-nazionalismo su base religiosa esposto e proposto dagli esuli cattolici irlandesi dopo la riforma anglicana⁸.

La conquista anglonormanna proseguì offensivamente per un centinaio d'anni, portando al suo apice al controllo almeno nominale della corona inglese su circa due terzi dell'isola. Poi, in coincidenza col regno di Edoardo I d'Inghilterra (1272-1307), la sua forza espansiva cessò, e anzi iniziò il ripiegamento. Oltre a una probabile stabilizzazione sociale interna all'Inghilterra (sempre meno non solo nobili, ma plebei erano disposti all'avventura oltremare) e al fatto che Edoardo I, impegnato a completare la conquista del Galles e a intraprendere quella della Scozia, non aveva le risorse per occuparsi dell'Irlanda, il ripiegamento fu causato da fenomeni interni all'Irlanda stessa. In primo luogo la resistenza indigena divenne sempre più tenace e organizzata, nonostante la disparità dei mezzi; in secondo luogo si verificò uno strano fenomeno di assimilazione progressiva dei coloni inglesi, soprattutto nelle zone rurali, alla cultura dei nemici irlandesi, adottando non solo la loro lingua gaelica ma i loro costumi familiari e sociali fino al vestiario e ai giochi, così che, a detta dei sostenitori della corona, essi erano diventati "più Ir-

⁸ Si veda Leerssen (1996 [1986]).

landesi degli Irlandesi stessi”. Assimilazione ai conquistati che non risparmiò una parte delle grandi famiglie di feudatari anglonormanni, soprattutto nelle zone più lontane dall’Inghilterra: vari grandi magnati, ormai imparentati con famiglie dell’aristocrazia gaelica, si trovavano in bilico tra due mondi non solo sul piano politico, ma sociale; vassalli importanti e formalmente fedeli del re inglese e dei suoi inviati, ma allo stesso tempo capotribù gaelici nel loro territorio, legati a tutt’altre norme e colleganze. La reazione dei colonizzatori non assimilati fu univoca: sempre più numerosi statuti locali prescrivevano la totale separazione tra gli Inglesi e i “meri Irlandesi”, anche all’interno delle strutture ecclesiastiche e degli ordini religiosi, con misure persecutorie verso i secondi, la proibizione dei matrimoni misti, dell’uso dell’irlandese, del vestiario e foggia irlandesi, e di ogni altro costume gaelico.

La crisi divenne manifesta sotto il regno di Edoardo II (1307-1327), quando durante la vittoriosa rivolta scozzese guidata da re Robert Bruce suo fratello Edward sbarcò in Irlanda e venne proclamato re dell’isola dai nobili gaelici ribelli. Anche se dopo tre anni Edward Bruce venne sconfitto e ucciso dall’esercito della corona, il ripiegamento inglese nell’isola era ormai manifesto. Proprio nel contesto della spedizione di Edward Bruce (1315-1318) venne compilata la *Rimostranza al papa* del 1317. Stilata da Domhnall Ó Néill della antica famiglia degli O’Neill dell’Ulster a nome dei capotribù irlandesi ribelli, essa intendeva spingere papa Giovanni XXII (1316-1334) a revocare la bolla del 1155 che attribuiva la signoria sull’isola ai re inglesi, e a fargli riconoscere invece Edward Bruce come re d’Irlanda. Il testo ascriveva la *Laudabiliter* alle propensioni nazionali di Adriano IV, “Inglese non tanto per nascita quanto per sentimenti e carattere”: come conseguenza di quella ingiusta bolla papale “da quando gli Inglesi sono entrati entro i confini del nostro regno, iniquamente ma con qualche mostra di religione, essi hanno cercato con tutta la loro forza e con ogni sleale artificio a loro disposizione di spazzare via interamente la nostra nazione e di estirparla completamente”. La petizione intendeva smascherare le menzogne della propaganda inglese da Gerald di Galles in poi, descrivendo le dure condizioni di assoluta sottomissione cui gli indigeni si erano trovati sottoposti ad opera dei conquistatori, di cui venivano descritte le atrocità – anche quelle commesse contro la Chiesa dell’isola; e notava con esempi come la pratica di considerare gli irlandesi animali che si potevano impunemente espropriare e uccidere era anche teorizzata dal clero anglonormanno usurpatore: “Giacché non solo i loro laici e il loro clero secolare, ma anche alcuni del loro clero regolare asseriscono in forma di dogma l’eresia che uccidere un irlandese non è maggior peccato che uccidere un cane o qualunque altro animale”⁹. Cosa per noi anche più inte-

⁹ La *Remonstratio* è riportata in traduzione inglese in Curtis, McDowell 1943, 38-43, da cui sono tratte le due citazioni.

ressante, la *Rimostranza* descriveva l'Irlanda come nazione e popolo basati sulla continuità degli antenati, sulla lingua e sul costume, nazione gaelica non sorprendentemente collegata all'altra nazione gaelica, la Scozia, dotata di un diritto ad autodeterminarsi, e costretta dagli eventi successivi alla invasione di Enrico II a una inimicizia perpetua verso i colonizzatori inglesi. Le condizioni dell'Irlanda sotto la colonizzazione inglese erano peraltro note alla Santa Sede. La *Rimostranza* comunque non ebbe risposta da parte del pontefice, così come non la ebbe di lì a poco la *Dichiarazione di Arbroath* del 1320, in cui re Robert Bruce e i suoi nobili gli chiedevano che riconoscesse l'indipendenza della Scozia¹⁰.

Rivendicazioni di nazionalità precoci che sembrano davvero convincenti, se non si tengono presenti la natura e le componenti delle società non-statali gaeliche, nel cui caso si comprende come in esse la coscienza primaria della propria identità (e l'agire politico che ne discendeva) sia sempre stata familiare e tribale. Nel caso britannico delle popolazioni celtiche medioevali e moderne, abbiamo altri indizi, oltre a quanto si desume dalla poesia in lingua e da questo genere di dichiarazioni ufficiali, che alla coscienza familiare e tribale tradizionale si sia sovrapposta, o meglio affiancata, ben presto quella etnica o "proto-nazionale", nella lunghissima durata del confronto-scontro con gli stranieri inglesi, i "Sassoni" (come vengono chiamati in tutte le lingue celtiche moderne); fenomeno che si è verificato anche in altri luoghi di lunghissimo scontro, e confronto, di popoli non tanto di lingua diversa, quanto di diversa cultura e sistema sociale (come, in Europa orientale, il caso del rapporto tra Tedeschi e Slavi). Questa percezione della differente appartenenza etnica e culturale, più accentuata che in altre zone d'Europa negli stessi secoli che precedono la Rivoluzione francese, si configura sì come "proto-nazionalismo", ma tranne che in alcune occasioni (come quelle che hanno portato alla stesura di queste mozioni pubbliche collettive) non produce comportamenti collettivi "nazionali" tra i Gaeli di Scozia e d'Irlanda; l'orizzonte di appartenenza degli individui e dell'aristocrazia gaelica rimane di fatto circoscritto alla propria famiglia estesa e alla propria tribù, uniche entità sociali e politiche verso cui si senta di dover essere leali.

Questo tendenziale ripiegamento forzato della colonizzazione, il sempre più numeroso assimilarsi di coloni inglesi alla società e alla cultura gaelica, e la maggiore forza dei ribelli indigeni caratterizzarono i due successivi secoli, fino agli anni Trenta del XVI secolo, quando il dominio della corona si trovò ristretto alla sola zona del cosiddetto *Pale*, una striscia di terra sulla costa orientale con al centro Dublino. La reazione della corona e dei suoi

¹⁰ Il testo latino della *Remonstratio* ci è stato tramandato nello *Scotichronicon*, una storia della Scozia iniziata dal sacerdote scozzese John di Fordun (ca. 1350-1384) e aggiornata e continuata dall'abate Walter Bower (1385 circa 1449), completata nel 1447. Per una traduzione inglese della *Rimostranza* si veda Curtis, McDowell 1943, 38-43.

sostenitori locali, oltre a vedere occasionali azioni militari difensive di contenimento, continuò a insistere nella direzione della separazione radicale tra le due etnie. Gli Statuti di Kilkenny del 1366, un insieme di 35 leggi volte a impedire e a punire ogni commistione dei coloni con gli Irlandesi, che univano in un solo decreto statuti e leggi occasionali precedenti, vennero stilati principalmente dal viceré inglese Lionel duca di Clarence e votati da un parlamento da lui convocato all'uopo. Essi avevano lo scopo di ribadire in forma finale la distinzione giuridica non colmabile tra gli Inglesi, che potevano quali sudditi della corona godere della legge inglese, e i "Meri Irlandesi", che ne erano esclusi, con dure sanzioni previste contro chi dei primi adottasse lingua e costumi irlandesi. Indubbiamente a un lettore italiano simile insistenza legislativa non può non richiamare alla mente le grida manzoniane... E a ragione, dal momento che l'espansione della lingua gaelica proseguì per altri tre secoli fino a toccare le plebi delle città di lingua inglese, e dal momento che certo sarebbe stato assai imprudente cercare di applicare tali statuti, e le previste sanzioni, ai magnati del regno, cioè alle grandi famiglie di origine insieme anglonormanna e gaelica che non solo erano presenti nel locale parlamento feudale (di una quarantina di membri), ma che svolgevano un fondamentale ruolo di camera di compensazione e mediazione tra le tribù gaeliche indipendenti e i coloni inglesi, garantendo così la sopravvivenza della colonia. Una di queste famiglie, quella dei FitzGerald, conti di Kildare per il sovrano d'Inghilterra, invece *overlord* tribali per varie tribù di Gaeli, a dispetto degli Statuti di Kilkenny controllò per un sessantennio, tra gli anni Settanta del XV secolo e la riforma anglicana, il potere politico a Dublino (il capo operava in qualità di delegato del re d'Inghilterra).

La riforma anglicana avviata nel 1533-34 da re Enrico VIII (1509-1547) coincise in Irlanda col tentativo della corona di conquistare militarmente l'intera isola, non limitandosi a riprendere il controllo dei territori invasi nel corso della invasione anglonormanna e poi persi per la risorgenza gaelica: tentativo che fu coronato da completo successo solo settant'anni dopo, alla fine del regno della figlia Elisabetta I (1558-1603). Naturalmente il primo passo fu un tentativo di centralizzazione, rimuovendo il potere dei FitzGerald e sostituendolo con quello di un viceré mandato dall'Inghilterra. La conseguente rivolta di quelli nel 1534, che coincideva con l'inizio della riforma anglicana, assunse tinte propagandistiche religiose, presentando i FitzGerald come sostenitori e garanti dell'antica fede contro l'innovazione protestantica. Come notava il Boyce, è però assai dubbio che in questa prima fase dello scontro, fino almeno al termine del regno di Elisabetta I, la religione avesse in realtà una rilevanza primaria: a differenza che in Inghilterra non vennero subito fatti tentativi di imporre a tutti i costi la riforma nelle zone sotto il controllo della corona. Dopo la sconfitta dei conti di Kildare il parlamento irlandese (composto, come si è detto, di coloni inglesi e di magnati angloirlandesi) accettò senza particolare opposizione la riforma ecclesiastica, e la dis-

soluzione degli ordini religiosi avvantaggiò i mercanti del *Pale*; e nel 1560 lo stesso parlamento accettò senza fiatare l'ulteriore riforma di Elisabetta. Ma proprio dalle zone popolate dagli antichi coloni inglesi prese avvio il movimento di aspiranti al sacerdozio cattolico, i *Recusants*, verso i nuovi seminari tridentini del continente. La rivolta dei FitzGerald fu l'apertura di una serie di guerre, culminate e concluse dalla Guerra dei nove anni del 1595-1603. Gli Irlandesi ribelli (comprendendo per la prima volta in questo termine sia gli Anglo-Irlandesi come i FitzGerald sia i Gaeli, a esclusione dei soli antichi coloni inglesi delle città) reagivano all'iniziativa régia per mantenere le cose come erano state fino a quel momento, non per avanzare cambiamenti sociali o politici (vedi Boyce 1995 [1982], cap. 2).

Enrico VIII e i suoi immediati successori poterono dedicare le risorse necessarie alla repressione delle rivolte e alla conquista dell'isola (compresa la presenza costante per la prima volta di un esercito régio) grazie ai mutamenti rivoluzionari prodotti in Inghilterra dalla riforma anglicana. La redistribuzione delle terre ecclesiastiche e l'abolizione delle terre di uso comune (che oggi possiamo ritenere l'accumulazione capitalistica originaria che creò le condizioni per la prima rivoluzione industriale, decollata proprio in Inghilterra meno di due secoli dopo) produsse e mise in moto torme di mendicanti e vagabondi affamati, contro la cui stessa esistenza i governi di Enrico ed Elisabetta emanarono leggi draconiane: ma a questi espulsi da un'economia non più comunitaria e feudale poteva essere sospesa la pena (in genere di morte) se acconsentivano a farsi trasportare in Irlanda come coloni (liberi o servi) o come soldati (e dall'ultima parte del regno di Elisabetta anche nei Caraibi e in America del Nord).

Trovandosi a dover trattare direttamente con i clan gaelici, senza più l'intermediazione dei magnati angloirlandesi, la corona escogitò la strategia del "surrender and re-grant": ai capotribù gaelici che si sottomettessero al re sarebbe stata concessa la proprietà delle terre come signori feudali, con diritto di successione ai primogeniti, e ai più potenti anche titoli inglesi prestigiosi. Dal momento che tale feudalizzazione dell'Irlanda gaelica distruggeva dalle fondamenta l'ordine sociale tribale, comprese le regole di successione, l'effetto immediato fu che clan e famiglie estese non coinvolte o negativamente coinvolte da questa sottomissione di un capo entrarono in rivolta contro di esso, e quindi con la corona, in una condizione di guerriglia costante (ma senza che la ribellione si trasformasse mai in un movimento nazionale unito). Venne quindi riproposta la colonizzazione inglese delle terre strappate ai ribelli (tornata possibile per quanto detto sopra: e coloni e soldati vennero definiti i "Nuovi Inglese"); dalla metà del secolo vi furono "plantations" organizzate, dapprima nelle Midlands, poi nel Munster. Dopo la scomunica papale di Elisabetta (1570) il tema religioso cominciò a prendere più forza nella propaganda ribelle: nella rivolta del Munster diretta dai FitzMaurice, angloirlandesi conti di Desmond (1579-83), intervenne addirittura una piccola spedizione papale, poi annientata dagli Inglese, guidata da un gesuita *recusant*. Due ve-

scovi cattolici vennero giustiziati per pretesi rapporti con i ribelli. Ma, come notava il Boyce, “It was the impact of English colonization rather than the impact of the reformation that was a decisive event” nel caratterizzare il rapporto di estremo conflitto tra Inghilterra e Irlanda nel XVI e XVII secolo. I coloni e i soldati inglesi, i “Nuovi Inglesi”, in contatto ormai diretto con i Gaeli irlandesi (il filtro dei magnati angloirlandesi e degli “Old English” era venuto a mancare) li considerarono selvaggi irragionevoli, di estrema barbarie, con cui non vi era la possibilità di compromessi (Boyce 1995 [1982], 54).

Si tenga presente che negli stessi decenni anche gli Inglesi cominciarono ad affacciarsi al Nuovo Mondo, e che il sempre più conscio nazionalismo inglese dell'epoca Tudor, e soprattutto del regno di Elisabetta, portò all'identificazione degli “Irlandesi selvaggi” (ovvero i Gaeli indipendenti, sia d'Irlanda che degli altopiani scozzesi) con gli “Indiani selvaggi” delle Americhe. Questo esplicito parallelismo fu un *topos* ricorrente nella letteratura dell'Inghilterra elisabettiana, e presente nella pubblicistica britannica da allora in poi¹¹; parallelismo esteso spesso anche agli altri Celti delle Isole britanniche: “We have Indians at home: Indians in Cornwall, Indians in Wales, Indians in Ireland...” (da un opuscolo londinese del 1652, citato in Williamson 1996, 56). Continuazione delle immagini dell'Impero angioino per quanto riguarda gli Irlandesi, esso impresse fin dall'inizio il suo carattere alla espansione oltremare dell'Impero britannico elisabettiano e degli Stuart: gli sforzi degli Inglesi elisabettiani di comprendere l'Irlanda che stavano conquistando fece sì che essi “almost simultaneously applied these categories to the Indians in North America, whose settlement comprised a closely allied and frequently intertwined project”; e “English expansion legitimated itself through the denigration of the local population, and in so doing formed patterns which were subsequently exported across the ocean” (*ibidem*, 54). Una sintesi delle considerazioni dei “Nuovi Inglesi” sui tre tipi di abitanti dell'Irlanda che avevano trovato nell'isola è il pamphlet in forma di dialogo del 1596 del poeta, soldato e colono Edmund Spenser (1552-99), *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, in cui individuava nella lingua e nei costumi gaelici (compreso il sistema legale della *Brehon Law*) e nella religione cattolica i tre elementi da sradicare fino in fondo per potere conquistare permanentemente l'Irlanda alla corona e alla civiltà. La sua detestazione era riservata, più ancora che ai Gaeli, agli Angloirlandesi o “nazione di mezzo”, che agli inglesi intendevano presentarsi come Inglesi, ma che in realtà erano come i primi, per lingua, per costumi (condividendo l'uso del *fosterage*¹² con essi, e sposandosi con loro)

¹¹ Vedi a questo proposito i testi coevi raccolti in Myers 1983.

¹² *Fosterage* (che nell'inglese odierno significa “affidamento”) nel contesto irlandese è il costume gaelico per cui si davano da crescere propri figli a un'altra famiglia estesa, cosa che ovviamente cementava legami di alleanza tra le due famiglie.

e per religione. Mentre non aveva da obiettare in termini di civiltà (cioè di lingua e costumi) ai “Vecchi Inglesi” del Pale, notava che essi condividevano la religione papista con gli altri abitanti, e nella stessa forma a suo dire ignorante e bestiale. Come rimedio consigliava la completa protestantizzazione di questi ultimi (volenti o nolenti), e assai semplicemente il totale sterminio degli appartenenti alle altre due categorie che non si fossero immediatamente arresi senza condizioni, che aveva funzionato a meraviglia nella repressione della rivolta del Munster, cui aveva partecipato¹³.

La religione cattolica nella sua forma isolana (forma peraltro poco gradita anche agli inviati tridentini) divenne per i “Nuovi Inglesi”, nell’ultima fase della conquista elisabettiana, sintomo e simbolo della inferiorità e della inciviltà congenite degli Irlandesi, per cui gradualmente, dal momento che tutti gli abitanti erano cattolici, cominciarono a considerare tutti i cattolici dell’isola quali Irlandesi, cancellando la tardo-medioevale tripartizione tra indigeni gaelici, angloirlandesi e “Vecchi Inglesi”. Ma anche se la “difesa della Fede cattolica” contro gli “Inglesi invasori” affiorò come proclama nella maggior parte delle ribellioni, e vi fu in molti casi un’alleanza tra Angloirlandesi e Gaeli, le plurime divisioni interne della società irlandese (non solo quella tra le tre auto-individuate comunità, ma quelle tribali e familiari, e quelle sociali tra aristocratici e il popolo minuto) impedirono che si trasformasse nella chiave di una rivolta nazionale. Nelle rivolte, e in particolare nell’ultima (o Guerra dei nove anni), guidata da Hugh O’Neill (AodhMór Ó Néill, 1550 circa-1616) capo (o “re”) della confederazione tribale degli O’Neill dell’Ulster, ma allo stesso tempo Conte di Tyrone per la corona inglese, e da Hugh Roe O’Donnell (AodhRuadh Ó Domhnaill, 1572-1602), capo (o “re”) degli O’Donnell di Tyrconnell, si manifestò comunque una nuova e più delineata forma di proto-nazionalismo etnico, che individuava nell’isola d’Irlanda una nazione che era essenzialmente cattolica e gaelica, che doveva difendere la vera religione e i propri antichissimi costumi, e che aveva il diritto e la missione di liberarsi dagli spietati invasori inglesi (e protestanti), recuperando le terre espropriate dai nuovi colonizzatori. I bardi indigeni si diedero a un’intensa produzione di poemi in questo senso, confermati dai proclami in latino dei capi ribelli indirizzati all’Europa cattolica e al papa, in cui si affermava di nuovo, dopo secoli, contro la regina inglese eretica, il diritto dell’isola cattolica ad avere un proprio re. Gli stessi temi cominciarono a venire propagandati sul continente dagli esuli *recusant*, in maggioranza membri del clero. “Indeed the whole notion of a national rebellion against English rule, inconceivable before the Tudor age, had become an almost normal aspect of Irish politics” (Boyce 1995, 64). La rivolta degli O’Neill e degli O’Donnell si estese anche ad altre parti dell’Irlanda, come il Munster, e vide anche lo

¹³ Una buona traduzione italiana del testo, curata e introdotta da Vittorio Gabrieli, è Spenser 1995.

sbarco di un esercito spagnolo a sostegno dei ribelli a Kinsale, ma nel marzo 1603, mentre Elisabetta I era moribonda, O'Neill dovette capitolare al viceré inglese Mountjoy. Per la prima volta l'intera isola era sotto il completo controllo militare inglese, e la conquista iniziata dagli anglonormanni si era geograficamente conclusa.

Il nuovo re, lo scozzese Giacomo I Stuart (1603-25), che unì nella sua persona i regni di Scozia e di Inghilterra, perdonò i capi dei ribelli e li riconfermò nei loro possedimenti quali vassalli della corona: ma l'intenzione era comunque di anglicizzare anche quella parte d'Irlanda gradualmente, facendo scomparire la società tribale gaelica, e pochi anni dopo, nel 1607, Hugh O'Neill e la maggioranza dei capi gaelici dell'Ulster decisero di fuggire sul continente. Era aperta la strada alla colonizzazione dell'Ulster, a questo punto non graduale, che vide lo stanziamento massiccio e organizzato di coloni sulle terre espropriate ai capi fuggiti: coloni Inglesi anglicani, e un più grande numero di Scozzesi delle Lowlands, per la maggior parte di lingua gaelica, ma di una tendenza protestante ancora più estrema, il calvinismo presbiteriano. I Gaeli irlandesi in questo caso rimasero nella parte colonizzata, ma come braccianti o affittuari dei nuovi proprietari.

Contrariamente alle speranze cattoliche il re Stuart impose in modo più stringente la riforma anglicana in Irlanda, togliendo su base confessionale ogni potere e ogni incarico statale ai cattolici e trasferendoli a "Nuovi Inglesi" protestanti, e decretando l'espulsione dall'isola dei sacerdoti cattolici e la partecipazione obbligatoria dei laici ai servizi religiosi protestanti (misura che di fatto si poté applicare solo in alcune città, proprio quelle popolate dagli *Old English*); inoltre vennero inflitte con più determinazione le multe ai possidenti che non aderissero alla religione riformata. "Vecchi Inglesi" e angloirlandesi, presso cui la riforma tridentina faceva progressi, mentre non aveva ancora inciso sulla parte gaelica della Chiesa cattolica, si illudevano che nel loro caso si potesse scindere la loro fedeltà in materia religiosa al papa da quella civile al sovrano, anche se ciò era in pieno contrasto col principio prevalente in tutta Europa: *Cuius regio, eius religio*. Il nuovo parlamento del re a Dublino comprendeva per la prima volta Gaeli irlandesi (quelli i cui antenati avevano accettato la politica del "surrender and regrant", e che erano poi rimasti fedeli alla corona), ma i deputati dei *New English* e i prelati della Chiesa riformata ne costituivano comunque la solida maggioranza. Una politica di uniformità religiosa non estrema, che lasciava comunque sperare agli *Old English* possibili miglioramenti, e che venne continuata dal successore di re Giacomo, Carlo I (1625-1649).

L'inizio della cosiddetta Guerra dei tre regni (1638-1660), che vide al suo interno la Rivoluzione inglese, rimise la situazione in moto: e il prevalere in Inghilterra dell'opposizione parlamentare nel 1641 mise in rotta di collisione i *New English* e gli *Old English*; i primi alleati alla fazione parlamentare inglese, gli altri propensi a sostenere il re, a condizione che questi proclamasse ufficialmente la tolleranza per la religione cattolica. Nell'ottobre dello stesso

anno gran parte della popolazione gaelica dell'isola si ribellò, e l'epicentro della rivolta fu l'Ulster, di recente colonizzazione: in quella regione i ribelli uccisero o scacciarono i coloni inglesi, cosa che impressionò il partito parlamentare inglese, rafforzandolo contro il re (ma i ribelli all'inizio non attaccarono i coloni scozzesi per la lingua in comune, nonostante questi non fossero cattolici). La rivolta era stata organizzata da proprietari terrieri gaelici e cattolici (il 60% delle terre dell'isola era ancora posseduta da cattolici), ma inseriti nell'aristocrazia del regno. I ribelli non riuscirono a impadronirsi di Dublino, ma comunque di due terzi dell'isola. Due sinodi dei vescovi cattolici nella primavera del 1642 definirono la rivolta "guerra giusta e santa", proclamando nello stesso tempo la fedeltà a re Carlo e ai suoi successori e al libero esercizio della fede e religione cattolica romana in tutta l'isola, mentre l'esercito dello stesso re combatteva la rivolta. La maggior parte degli *Old English* a questo punto passarono dalla parte dei rivoltosi o confederati, e il papa mandò l'arcivescovo di Fermo Giovanni Battista Rinuccini come suo rappresentante presso i ribelli¹⁴. Anche dopo l'inizio dello scontro militare in Inghilterra tra i realisti e il partito parlamentare (ottobre 1642) i confederati non riuscirono a venire a patti con il re, poiché chiedevano un editto di tolleranza del cattolicesimo che questi era molto riluttante a concedere. Le dichiarazioni dei confederati insistevano sul fatto che i cattolici irlandesi corrispondevano con la nazione irlandese, proclamando che non vi erano più differenze tra gli "antichi o meri Irlandesi" e i "nuovi Irlandesi" discendenti di Inglese di altre epoche, purché tutti sostenessero la Chiesa cattolica; e assunsero il motto *Pro Deo, pro Rege, pro Patria*. Le dichiarazioni non sanarono comunque la divisione tra Gaeli e *Old English*, per cui la confederazione fu sempre tormentata da scontri e conflitti interni (anche militari) che le impedirono di liberare tutta l'isola dalle truppe inglesi, sia realiste, sia parlamentari. Dopo la sconfitta di Carlo Stuart e la sua esecuzione, nell'agosto 1649 Oliver Cromwell sbarcò in Irlanda e procedette alla riconquista inglese dell'isola, che venne completata nel 1653. La guerra di religione era giunta in Irlanda, creando nuove identità, che sarebbero rimaste in futuro; e da allora, anche grazie agli scritti degli esuli cattolici nel continente, sembrò avere convalida l'idea dell'Irlanda come nazione cattolica, anzi, nazione in quanto cattolica. Fu infatti proprio l'alquanto spietata e sanguinosa riconquista cromwelliana che diede realtà alla "nazione cattolica" proclamata dai confederati, dal momento che le sue teste rotonde non fecero alcuna differenza tra Gaeli e *Old English*: tutti i cattolici dell'isola dovevano essere passati a fil di spada,

¹⁴ L'arcivescovo, tornato in Italia nel 1649, scrisse una lunga relazione in latino, in cui attribuiva la sconfitta cattolica alle divisioni tribali e etniche irlandesi. In particolare accusava di tradimento i "Vecchi Inglese" (molti di loro avevano continuato a sostenere il partito del re contro i ribelli confederati), lodando invece i Gaeli, che erano sì meno civili dei primi, ma cattolici molto più sinceri. Se ne veda la traduzione italiana: Aiazzi 1844.

o comunque spossessati. Il piano era di confinarli tutti nel Connacht (al di fuori di quella regione nessuna proprietà terriera doveva rimanere a cattolici): non si realizzò solo perché i *New English* e i nuovissimi coloni, gli stessi soldati di Cromwell, avevano bisogno di servi e di braccianti. Nel 1660, anno della restaurazione di Carlo II Stuart (1660-85), meno del 10% dell'isola era posseduto da cattolici. Nell'atto del 1652 del parlamento inglese che dava sanzione ai nuovi espropri era data la nuova definizione delle nazionalità presenti in Irlanda: semplicemente gli "Inglese protestanti" e gli "Irlandesi papisti". Quando Giacomo II Stuart (1685-89) venne spodestato dalla *Glorious Revolution* di Guglielmo d'Orange la "nazione cattolica" irlandese in effetti lo sostenne, per essere sconfitta con lui alla battaglia del fiume Boyne, e poi all'assedio di Limerick.

Contro alle condizioni della resa irlandese (che prevedeva verso i cattolici la stessa tolleranza di cui avevano goduto durante il regno di Carlo II) il nuovo parlamento dell'isola, interamente "nuovo inglese" e protestante, cominciò a votare una serie di Leggi Penali diretta contro i "papisti", che vennero approvate – seppur con riluttanza - dai governi dei nuovi sovrani: essi non potevano possedere armi, né andare a studiare all'estero, né possedere cavalli di pregio; vescovi e ordini religiosi cattolici erano proibiti nell'isola, pena la morte; in caso di matrimonio con un cattolico il coniuge protestante avrebbe perso i suoi diritti di successione; i cattolici non potevano acquistare proprietà terriere; qualunque erede si convertisse al protestantesimo aveva diritto all'intera eredità, a scapito degli eredi rimasti cattolici; i cattolici non potevano possedere edifici di culto, anche se un numero fisso di sacerdoti cattolici registrati presso le autorità sarebbe potuto rimanere nell'isola; nessun cattolico poteva avere un impiego pubblico, o servire nell'esercito, o votare per il parlamento. Alcuni dei provvedimenti, quelli riguardanti la necessaria adesione alla Chiesa anglicana per gli impieghi pubblici o l'acquisto di proprietà terriere, discriminavano anche i *Dissenters*, cioè i presbiteriani e gli aderenti di altre sette della riforma, particolarmente numerosi nell'Ulster (così che molti di loro furono nel corso del XVIII secolo i primi immigrati irlandesi in America del Nord). Le Leggi Penali erano chiaramente motivate da scopi proprietari e sociali, confermando il potere e la superiorità della *Ascendancy* protestante nell'isola, più che dalla speranza che i "papisti" si convertissero all'anglicanesimo. Anzi, visto che essi erano la "nazione" sconfitta, era bene cementare la supremazia della "nazione" inglese e protestante vincitrice. Esse vennero applicate in tutta la loro durezza fino agli anni Cinquanta del XVIII secolo, quando venne meno il rischio di una restaurazione Stuart e quando cominciarono a percolare anche in Irlanda le nuove idee illuministe.

Ma la nuova autorità del parlamento protestante di Dublino diede vita nel corso dei decenni a un nuovo, paradossale genere di nazionalismo: quello non più Inglese protestante, ma Irlandese protestante. L'autorità esecutiva era nelle mani di un viceré mandato da Londra, e secondo gli statuti di Poyning del

1494 il parlamento irlandese non aveva un potere legislativo autonomo. Ciò ovviamente metteva il regno d'Irlanda in una posizione decisamente subordinata rispetto a quello d'Inghilterra. Mano a mano che il terrore dei "papisti" recedeva e che la *Ascendancy* protestante si sentiva più sicura, le prerogative del parlamento divennero oggetto di scontro tra essa e il governo di Londra, insieme alle collegate questioni della libertà di commercio e di esportazione, delle tasse, del conio di moneta: si rivendicavano le leggi e libertà che sarebbero state garantite al regno d'Irlanda centinaia di anni prima, e che lo avrebbero reso uguale a quello d'Inghilterra. Alcuni polemisti, tra cui il prelado anglicano Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), cominciarono ad applicare il termine "popolo d'Irlanda" alla cromwelliana nazione degli "Inglese protestanti", rivendicando la propria "irlandesità": una identità basata sul luogo, e non sulle origini, che comunque implicitamente presupponeva l'essere anglicani. A questo nuovo tipo di nazionalismo diede forza dal 1775 la ribellione dei coloni inglesi dell'America del Nord, e la loro guerra d'indipendenza: per difendere l'isola da una possibile invasione dei Francesi, alleati degli insorti americani, dal 1778 cominciarono a formarsi milizie volontarie, che presto si politicizzarono, sostenendo il partito parlamentare dei "patrioti" guidato da Henry Grattan (1746-1820). Nel frattempo il governo di Londra aveva cominciato a revocare le Leggi Penali, e il partito "patriottico" irlandese permise che la revoca passasse nel parlamento di Dublino. Il processo di revoca delle *Penal Laws* si concluse solo nel 1793: unica limitazione rimasta contro i cattolici in quanto tali, il non potere essere eletti in parlamento (i cattolici con un reddito di almeno 40 scellini avrebbero potuto votare). Anche i vescovi e gli ordini religiosi poterono tornare legalmente nell'isola, e la Chiesa cattolica poté erigere chiese e nuove cattedrali (quelle originarie scampate all'iconoclastia dei cromwelliani erano state fatte proprie dalla Chiesa di stato anglicana). Nel 1782 il congresso dei Volontari a Dunganon passò risoluzioni a favore dell'indipendenza legislativa del parlamento irlandese, e il governo di Londra accettò di restaurarla. Non cambiava molto, dal momento che il potere esecutivo rimaneva appannaggio di Londra, e che il parlamento era esclusivamente composto di aristocratici protestanti, ma dal punto di vista simbolico fu una grande vittoria per i "patrioti protestanti". La loro retorica, col richiamo costante all'uguaglianza dell'Irlanda all'Inghilterra in quanto nazione, la rivendicazione dell'antichità della nazione irlandese (molti patrioti protestanti studiarono gli scritti, la musica e la lingua gaelici) venne ripresa e incorporata da successivi e ben diversi nazionalisti irlandesi. Ma certamente la traiettoria politica del nazionalismo "irlandese protestante" si concludeva con quella vittoria simbolica: non vi potevano essere sviluppi ulteriori, che avrebbero costretto questa "nazione irlandese protestante" (e aristocratica) a confrontarsi con la presenza di un'altra nazione irlandese quattro volte più numerosa, quasi assente nella percezione di tali "patrioti". L'unica espressione politica di quest'altra nazione irlandese, la *Catholic Association* fondata nel 1759,

all'inizio guidata da mercanti e dai pochi possidenti cattolici scampati alle confische precedenti, operava in stretta consultazione col proprio clero, e professava la più estrema fedeltà al sovrano d'Inghilterra, seguendo in contatto col governo di Londra il processo di smantellamento delle Leggi Penali. Le posizioni ormai lealiste della gerarchia cattolica irlandese mostrarono al governo inglese che essa poteva essere un alleato prezioso per controllare la società dell'isola, specie in un'epoca rivoluzionaria, per cui Londra permise e finanziò nel 1795 la costruzione del seminario nazionale per il clero cattolico a Maynooth. Altra espressione di questa nazione sommersa, di ben altro segno, però fino a quel momento sociale più che politica, erano le associazioni segrete rurali, duramente represses con le impiccagioni, che fino ad allora intervenivano all'interno di una "economia morale" in cui i contadini che di tali società segrete facevano parte non mettevano in discussione il sistema, o l'esistenza del grande proprietario terriero, ma le eventuali deviazioni da ciò che si riteneva giusto.

2. I venti della Rivoluzione: nazionalismo independentista e nazionalismo riformista

Occorse una nuova rivoluzione, quella francese, per fare scaturire un nuovo tipo di nazionalismo. I presbiteriani, particolarmente numerosi nel nord, avevano condiviso alcune delle limitazioni imposte ai cattolici (così come le altre denominazioni non anglicane). Come risultato avevano dovuto investire, invece che nella proprietà terriera, nell'industria (proprio alla fine del Settecento la rivoluzione industriale si sviluppava nel nord-est dell'isola, intorno a Belfast, con l'industria tessile) e nelle professioni. La loro fede riformata, senza strutture centralizzate e con ruoli elettivi, poteva essere retroterra per ogni genere di radicalismo, tanto autoritario quanto democratico. Esclusi per legge da incarichi politici, molti di essi lessero con partecipazione le opere del radicale democratico Tom Paine (1737-1809), americano adottivo¹⁵. E quando nel 1789 la rivoluzione esplose in Francia, una più forte brezza cominciò a soffiare tra loro: la rivoluzione venne applaudita. Brezza che cominciò a soffiare anche a Dublino, tra giovani delle classi agiate (e anche delle classi industrie) di ogni confessione. L'associazionismo politico era divenuto di moda col movimento dei Volontari del 1778-84: ed era entrata in circolazione l'idea di una riforma del parlamento irlandese, aristocratico, che abolisse le barriere censitarie per l'elezione. La questione era però a chi si

¹⁵ Le due opere politiche principali di Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), scritto poco dopo l'inizio della guerra d'indipendenza delle colonie inglesi del Nord America, e *The Rights of Man* (1791-92), scritto durante la Rivoluzione francese, propagarono nel mondo di lingua inglese più di quelle di qualsiasi altro scrittore le idee del filone democratico radicale dell'Illuminismo.

potesse estendere il suffragio: il “popolo d’Irlanda” era solo quello protestante (cui al massimo, come grande concessione, si sarebbero potuti aggiungere i *Dissenters*), come sostenuto dai parlamentari “patrioti” irlandesi, o comprendeva anche la maggioranza, cattolica, della popolazione? Un giovane avvocato protestante, Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798), nel settembre 1791 pubblicò l’opuscolo *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*, in cui sosteneva la causa dell’emancipazione cattolica (cioè dell’ammissione dei cattolici ai pieni diritti politici), perché le ragioni dell’Irlanda rispetto all’Inghilterra si sarebbero potute affermare solo tramite la cooperazione degli Irlandesi di tutte le religioni. Nell’ottobre 1791, a Belfast, Tone partecipò alla fondazione della Società degli Irlandesi Uniti, che di lì a poco ebbe un proprio organo di stampa, *The Northern Star*. All’inizio la maggioranza dei membri erano presbiteriani dell’Ulster, mentre i membri del resto dell’isola erano in prevalenza anglicani: buona parte degli uni e degli altri avevano partecipato al movimento dei Volontari. Nel frattempo a Dublino anche i cattolici del “terzo stato” (i termini provenienti dalla Francia venivano incorporati dai democratici dell’epoca) cominciarono a radicalizzarsi, e vari di loro aderirono agli *United Irishmen*, che organizzarono nel 1792 un “congresso cattolico” per appoggiare l’allargamento del suffragio. La società fece ciò che poteva, in termini di agitazione, per opporsi all’entrata in guerra dell’Inghilterra contro la Francia rivoluzionaria nel 1792. A quel punto il processo di radicalizzazione degli Irlandesi Uniti si accelerò: l’obiettivo diventava non solo ottenere in Irlanda una democrazia radicale in forma di repubblica, che con accento giacobino si sarebbe dovuta basare sui “men of no property”, unendo l’intero popolo irlandese e sostituendo il nome comune di Irlandesi a quello di Protestanti, Cattolici e *Dissenters*, ma di spezzare il legame con l’Inghilterra, “the never-ending source of all our political evils” (citato in Elliot 2012 [1989], 300)¹⁶. Una nazione concepita sull’esempio illuministico francese, che incorporava sia gli aspetti costituzionalistici delle discussioni parlamentari del XVIII secolo e delle teorie politiche radicali, sia il passato irlandese, visto come un costante conflitto con l’Inghilterra (anche se a resistere, a rivoltarsi e a scontrarsi con gli eserciti della corona non erano stati certamente gli antenati della maggior parte degli Irlandesi Uniti). Annettendosi il passato irlandese, quello della maggioranza cattolica della popolazione (presso la quale i “men of no property” abbondavano), e volendo unire a sé l’intero popolo d’Irlanda, essi cominciarono anche a tradurre i pamphlet e i volantini in gaelico (a quel tempo, anche se da circa centotrent’anni la lingua indigena aveva ricominciato a ritirarsi a favore dell’inglese, al di fuori delle città essa era la lingua assolutamente predominante tra i cattolici, e non solo tra di loro), e organizzarono un festival nazionale di musica, poesia e canto tradizionali gaelici a

¹⁶ La frase citata, divenuta ormai proverbiale, è di Theobald Wolfe Tone stesso. Sulla ideologia degli *United Irishmen* si veda Ceretta 1999, Milano.

Belfast. Sviluppo più importante al fine di fare la rivoluzione (dato che fino ad allora tra i cattolici essi potevano contare solo su qualche bottegaio, artigiano o operaio di Dublino, cioè una parte minima della popolazione cattolica), gli Irlandesi Uniti, che dal 1794 cominciarono a essere sottoposti a repressione da parte del governo e si erano dati una struttura clandestina, si allearono con la società segreta rurale dei *Defenders*, scambiandosi con essi i giuramenti. Nel 1793 il governo inglese in Irlanda aveva introdotto una forma di coscrizione obbligatoria dei contadini (ormai i cattolici potevano portare armi) in una “Milizia” che avrebbe dovuto contrastare eventuali sbarchi francesi in Irlanda. Le forme di tale coscrizione scatenarono moti rurali, repressi nel sangue dall’esercito regio, che nel clima dell’epoca portarono molti contadini cattolici a sbarazzarsi dell’idea di una “economia morale” del sistema. Anche tra analfabeti che non parlavano l’inglese (e men che meno il francese), quindi, il vento della rivoluzione e delle sue idee aveva cominciato a soffiare¹⁷. Originariamente i *Defenders* erano soltanto una delle manifestazioni del fenomeno quasi secolare delle società segrete di contadini cattolici, che scontrandosi nell’Ulster col suo omologo anglicano protestante (i “Ragazzi del far del giorno”) aveva preso il nome di “Difensori”. Dopo i disordini suscitati dall’istituzione della Milizia la società segreta, politicizzatasi e radicalizzatasi in senso rivoluzionario e repubblicano, aveva inglobato altre società segrete rurali cattoliche delle altre parti dell’isola, divenendo nazionale. Anche se al di fuori dell’Ulster è probabile che la maggior parte dei contadini che parteciparono alla rivolta del 1798 fossero membri dei *Defenders*, di loro non si sa quasi nulla, dal momento che le autorità trionfanti riuscirono sì a smantellare quasi completamente gli organi direttivi degli *United Irishmen*, ma non il direttorio dei *Defenders*. Costretti dalla repressione a darsi un’organizzazione clandestina gli Irlandesi Uniti avevano infatti preso come modello di struttura gerarchica e di compartimentazione la massoneria (di cui molti di essi erano membri, e di cui erano membri anche molti dei loro avversari), da cui i giuramenti: ma delle società segrete dei contadini cattolici irlandesi, tanto di quelle del XVIII secolo quanto di quelle del XIX secolo, a tutt’oggi si sa molto poco.

Una sintesi dell’ideologia di questi primi repubblicani irlandesi è contenuta in uno dei loro più diffusi “catechismi rivoluzionari”, adottati secondo l’uso francese: “D: Che cosa hai in mano? / R: Un ramo verde. / D: Dove è cresciuto la prima volta? / R: In America. / D: Dove ha germogliato? / R: In Francia. / D: Dove lo pianterai? / R: Nella corona di Gran Bretagna”¹⁸.

¹⁷ Vedi Bartlett 1983, che riguardo ai *Militia Riots* che produssero la radicalizzazione dei *Defenders* li vede come l’evento che fece scomparire tra i contadini l’idea che il sistema comunque si reggesse su una “moral economy”.

¹⁸ Brillante sintesi citata spesso nelle opere sugli *United Irishmen*, qui da Newman 1991, 135.

Attaccato dalla repressione governativa il movimento degli Irlandesi Uniti cercò l'aiuto della Francia rivoluzionaria; ma nel 1796 un esercito guidato dal maresciallo Hoche non riuscì a sbarcare a Bantry Bay per i venti contrari, e l'anno dopo, con mossa preventiva da parte delle autorità, la Milizia e la *Yeomanry* (milizia volontaria di soli anglicani, creata dal viceré nel 1796 perché non si sapeva se la Milizia, composta prevalentemente di cattolici, sarebbe stata affidabile per compiti di repressione), colpirono l'Ulster, zona in cui i rivoluzionari erano particolarmente forti, con un durissimo rastrellamento preventivo (*the Dragooning of Ulster*). L'insurrezione armata nazionale del maggio 1798 partì in condizioni di debolezza dei ribelli: il governo aveva già arrestato buona parte dei dirigenti degli Irlandesi Uniti, e questo costrinse gli altri a scatenare la rivolta prematuramente, senza potersi coordinare con la Francia; inoltre l'arma principale dei rivoluzionari, in mancanza di armi da fuoco, era la picca. Anche se sulla costa occidentale ci fu uno sbarco di soldati francesi (non di un esercito come quello che Hoche doveva guidare), essi e i ribelli vennero facilmente sconfitti. I combattimenti più duri, con battaglie campali, avvennero nell'Ulster e nel sud-est dell'isola: oltre ai caduti nei combattimenti e nelle immediate rappresaglie governative crebbe abbondante il frutto dell'albero della forza: si sostiene che l'insurrezione e la sua repressione abbiano causato più di trentamila morti, compresa la maggior parte della dirigenza degli Irlandesi Uniti. Nelle montagne della contea di Wicklow, vicino a Dublino, una banda di *United Irishmen* condusse una guerra di guerriglia fino al 1803, anno che con il tentativo di insurrezione a Dublino guidato da Robert Emmet (1778-1803) segnò la fine di quella stagione rivoluzionaria¹⁹.

Primo e immediato effetto del fallimento del "Novantotto" (nome sintetico dato da allora in poi in Irlanda a quel periodo rivoluzionario) fu la promulgazione dell'*Act of Union* del 1800, che univa organicamente l'Irlanda al regno di Gran Bretagna dando vita al Regno Unito di Gran Bretagna e Irlanda (cosa che gli aristocratici del parlamento di Dublino approvarono a maggioranza, una volta rese sicure le loro prebende); nonostante il viceré Cornwallis volesse accompagnare la misura con la *Catholic Emancipation* (l'elettorato passivo per i cattolici) la resistenza dei parlamentari di Dublino, e anche del sovrano e di parte del suo governo, fu insormontabile.

E dopo il 1803 il movimento rivoluzionario, repubblicano e indipendentista, non lasciò all'apparenza eredi nella società irlandese: paradossalmente nell'Ulster presbiteriano entro pochi decenni i discendenti degli insorti divennero la punta di lancia dell'odio confessionale più estremo verso i loro concittadini cattolici, e i più sfigatati sostenitori dell'unione alla Gran Bretagna; e anche nel resto dell'isola per più di quarant'anni non si vide alcuna

¹⁹ Sulla insurrezione e la guerriglia del Wicklow e sull'insurrezione di Emmet vedi i volumi di O'Donnell 1998; 1999, 2003a, 2003b.

traccia di repubblicanesimo indipendentista, almeno in superficie. Col senno di poi, si manifestava per la prima volta la natura di fenomeno carsico di questa forma di nazionalismo irlandese: è probabile che le società segrete rurali che continuarono per un secolo a compiere azioni violente (e a venire represses con la forca e la galera) fossero più repubblicane di quanto appaia, anche se non si chiamavano più *Defenders*; ed è probabile che nelle *Trade Unions*, cioè le corporazioni di mestiere, le associazioni di categoria e i sindacati di lavoratori (a quel tempo il termine copriva tutte e tre quelle realtà), pullulanti in quei decenni a Dublino, Belfast e Cork, la (allora giovane) tradizione repubblicana proseguisse tenacemente, seppure sotto traccia. Certo non risulta alcuna sopravvivenza repubblicana nei primi anni di rapporti della polizia (*Irish Constabulary*, creata in Irlanda nel 1836), anche perché la sua attenzione era diretta a un altro filone di nazionalismo, allora politicamente più rilevante, e ai crimini agrari. Forse solo una ricerca minuziosa sulle minute delle *Trade Unions* del periodo 1800-1860 circa che siano sopravvissute potrebbe dare maggiori indizi²⁰.

Che l'Irlanda, ormai parificata alla Scozia nella struttura costituzionale britannica, non fosse come la Scozia, avendo in permanenza un viceré e un segretario capo inviati dalla corona a Dublino, che avevano il controllo dell'intero potere esecutivo e giudiziario e delle forze armate inglesi presenti nell'isola, e nessuna responsabilità se non verso il governo in carica, e che da allora in poi fossero in vigore leggi speciali per l'ordine pubblico costantemente rinnovate, è alquanto evidente: e nel dibattito storiografico sulla domanda se l'Irlanda tra il 1800 e il 1921 fosse una colonia o invece una parte integrante del Regno Unito fa pendere la bilancia della risposta a favore della prima possibilità.

Nei decenni successivi alla stagione rivoluzionaria degli Irlandesi Uniti, in particolare dalla fine delle guerre napoleoniche, la scena fu dominata da un nuovo filone di nazionalismo irlandese, il movimento riformista per l'emancipazione cattolica, e poi per l'abrogazione (*Repeal*) dell'*Act of Union*, guidato dall'avvocato Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), discendente di famiglia aristocratica gaelica. Filone che era in realtà la ripresa o nuova versione, aggiornata, non violenta e liberale, ora più cattolica che gaelica, del nazionalismo catto-gaelico del XVII secolo, che faceva coincidere la nazione irlandese con la sua popolazione cattolica. Gli anni dell'agire politico di O'Connell vedevano un riaccendersi delle tensioni interconfessionali – o *sectarianism* – tra protestanti e cattolici, fallito del tutto il tentativo dei rivoluzionari degli anni Novanta del Settecento di creare una nuova identità nazionale all'insegna del laicismo illuministico. Già nel 1795 nell'Ulster era stato fondato l'Ordine d'Orange, organizzazione interclassista a struttura paramassonica

²⁰ Suggerimento dello storico irlandese Owen McGee.

che voleva riunire tutti gli anglicani nella difesa della supremazia protestante contro i cattolici in quanto tali (l'Ordine scaturì dal locale costante conflitto tra i *Defenders* cattolici e i "Ragazzi del far del giorno" anglicani) e contro i rivoluzionari repubblicani (che nell'Ulster erano in prevalenza presbiteriani e altri *Dissenters*). Sostenuto a dispetto delle origini teppistiche e plebee dagli aristocratici anglicani e dall'amministrazione inglese l'Ordine si estese subito a tutta l'Irlanda: gli Orangisti costituirono le compagnie di *Yeomanry* che ebbero un ruolo essenziale nella repressione degli Irlandesi Uniti (per inciso, tale ruolo ebbe anche la Milizia composta da cattolici; la gerarchia della Chiesa, seguita dalla maggioranza delle migliaia di membri del clero, si era schierata decisamente contro i rivoluzionari e a favore della monarchia, seppur protestante; solo una cinquantina di membri del basso clero presero parte all'insurrezione, pagandone il prezzo). Un movimento di *revival* o risveglio religioso tra gli anglicani del nord (gli anglicani irlandesi sono sempre stati *latitudinarian* in materia religiosa, non *High Church*) e l'ascesa del movimento di O'Connell spinsero nel 1835 l'Ordine d'Orange ad ammettere nelle proprie file anche i presbiteriani e gli altri *Dissenters*, che ne erano stati esclusi fino ad allora. Avveniva la riproposizione implicita, nei fatti, dell'idea sei e settecentesca delle due nazioni, quella "Inglese protestante" (ora per effetto dell'esperienza dei cosiddetti "patrioti" parlamentari del tardo Settecento invece "Irlandese protestante", con anche, dopo l'*Act of Union*, l'opzione di divenire "Britannica protestante"), rappresentata dagli Orangisti e da chi si opponeva all'emancipazione cattolica e poi all'abrogazione dell'Unione con la Gran Bretagna, e quella "Irlandese cattolica" incarnata politicamente dal movimento di O'Connell. E come già la "nazione irlandese protestante" dei "patrioti" aveva cercato nel tardo Settecento la benevolenza dei cattolici, ma con palese paternalismo, ora fu il turno della "nazione irlandese cattolica" di trattare con paternalismo i protestanti.

Devoto cattolico ma politicamente liberale, O'Connell intendeva in primo luogo risollevare quella che sentiva come sua nazione (l'Irlanda cattolica) liberandola dai lacci sociali e legali che la opprimevano, e sgretolare la supremazia protestante. La sua campagna per il *Repeal* era basata sull'idea che l'autogoverno dell'isola che ne sarebbe conseguito avrebbe permesso a un parlamento irlandese (composto ovviamente da deputati in maggioranza nazionalisti e cattolici) di meglio rimediare ai mali sociali ed economici che affliggevano il paese. Ed entrambe le sue campagne principali erano concepite in modo tale da far credere ai suoi seguaci che la questione fosse di orgoglio nazionale, di una liberazione con tratti di millenarismo laico (dopo il 1829 veniva infatti chiamato *The Liberator*), di rovesciamento completo dei torti storici subiti dal paese, di ritorno al controllo della propria isola da parte della Nazione cattolica irlandese perseguitata e oppressa per secoli: ma in realtà era assolutamente contrario a qualsiasi idea di indipendenza dell'Irlanda. Fermissimo oppositore di ogni violenza (fu sua la frase "La libertà dell'Irlanda

non vale lo spargimento di una sola goccia di sangue”, “Irish freedom is not worth a drop of human blood”, citato in McCaffrey 1966, 76), e delle azioni delle società segrete rurali, la sua retorica era però violenta e colma di immagini guerresche, intendendo dare ai suoi seguaci una valvola di sfogo verbale che li distogliesse dalla tentazione dell’impiego della *physical force* che era stata dei repubblicani. A questo fine, mentre con il suo movimento esaltava gli eroi e martiri gaelici che avevano combattuto anglonormanni e inglesi, e quelli di parte cattolica delle guerre di religione del XVII secolo, si guardava bene anche solo dal menzionare i caduti repubblicani del troppo recente periodo rivoluzionario. Di lingua gaelica egli stesso, la usava per rivolgersi alle folle delle campagne che non parlavano l’inglese (esso divenne lingua della maggioranza degli abitanti solo come risultato della Grande Carestia del 1845-52), ma senza alcun interesse verso di essa: e riteneva che l’Inglese fosse un veicolo più adatto per la modernizzazione e lo sviluppo del paese. Attivo già da giovane nel comitato cattolico di Dublino, aveva compreso che per creare un movimento di agitazione di massa di cattolici irlandesi che però agisse nell’ambito della legalità, “agitazione costituzionale” come la definiva, occorreva che il clero fosse in esso coinvolto, e a livello organizzativo. Riuscì a coinvolgere e convincere la sospettosa gerarchia ecclesiastica, e dagli anni Venti la struttura organizzata della sua campagna fu composta in larga misura da sacerdoti irlandesi. Una struttura così capillare e bene concepita che più tardi veniva invidiata anche dal nostro Mazzini.

Nel 1829, al culmine della campagna per l’emancipazione cattolica, si candidò ad una elezione suppletiva, venendo eletto anche perché l’avversario era stato convinto a ritirarsi. In quanto cattolico la sua elezione era completamente illegale: e il governo di Londra, a differenza di ventinove anni prima, accettò di promulgare (contro l’opposizione impotente dei *Tories* irlandesi al parlamento di Westminster) l’*Act of Catholic Emancipation*, che permise ai cattolici non solo d’Irlanda, ma di tutto il Regno Unito, di essere eletti e di avere qualsiasi incarico governativo (tranne quelli di reggente, di viceré e di lord cancelliere - la carica più alta del sistema giudiziario). Ottenuta questa vittoria, O’Connell si propose il nuovo obiettivo dell’abrogazione dell’Unione, che però prese davvero l’abbrivio solo nel 1841: quando i suoi alleati *Whigs* (o liberali) erano al governo, sostenuti dalla sua pattuglia parlamentare, egli infatti sospendeva l’agitazione per non creare loro problemi. Altre cause comunque tennero impegnato il suo movimento, come quella dell’istruzione: nel 1831 venne varato il sistema nazionale d’istruzione irlandese, che permise alla Chiesa cattolica di creare proprie scuole riconosciute dallo stato in tutta l’Irlanda. Quando la campagna per il *Repeal* si scatenò in seguito all’andata al governo dei *Tories* di Robert Peel, l’arma scelta da O’Connell, favorito da una voce stentorea, fu quella dei *Monster Meetings*, cioè comizi non autorizzati tenuti in luoghi storicamente significativi delle campagne con la partecipazione di decine di migliaia, e poi addirittura di centinaia di migliaia di

persone fatte venire da tutto il paese: comizi in cui oltre a usare la solita retorica guerresca invitava il governo di Peel a fare di lui un martire. Una tattica di sfida rischiosa: quando infatti nel 1844 il governo Peel dichiarò che avrebbe sciolto con la forza il suo *monster meeting* che si sarebbe dovuto svolgere a Clontarf a nord di Dublino O'Connell dovette alla fine cedere, e con minore martirio si fece anche tre mesi di galera.

Ma una disgrazia epocale stava per abbattersi sull'Irlanda, e distrusse anche il movimento o'connellita. La crescita della popolazione irlandese nella prima parte del XIX era stata altissima (probabilmente 8.700.000 abitanti vivevano nell'isola nel 1847, rispetto a meno di tre milioni cinquant'anni prima), ed aveva portato a un sempre maggiore spezzettamento dell'uso delle proprietà agricole da parte degli affittuari che, impoveriti, confidavano nella patata come cibo quotidiano. Un fungo della patata cominciò a colpire l'Irlanda nel 1845, facendo perire la maggior parte dei raccolti, e colpì anche l'anno dopo. Nel 1847 la carestia si tramutò in catastrofe, e occorsero altri cinque anni perché si ritornasse alla normalità. La Grande Carestia, come venne chiamata, con la morte per fame e per le malattie infettive ad essa associate causò tra i 900.000 e 1.200.000 morti, e costrinse più di due milioni a emigrare in Gran Bretagna, nelle colonie britanniche e negli Stati Uniti d'America (dando avvio a un fenomeno di migrazione permanente dall'isola che si arrestò solo alla fine degli anni Ottanta del secolo successivo, il XX), colpendo ovunque, ma spopolando soprattutto le zone più povere. Una delle conseguenze fu la sconfitta del Gaelico, che smise di essere la lingua della maggioranza degli Irlandesi, e la distruzione di ciò che restava di vari altri aspetti della cultura gaelica. La Grande Carestia venne considerata dal nazionalismo irlandese, dai settori riformisti a quelli radicali, e vissuta nella memoria storica popolare come un genocidio deliberato da parte del governo inglese. La fede liberista professata dal governo Russell certo favorì la folle ortodossia del non-intervento statale che aggravò di molto la portata della catastrofe; e certo non contribuì a dissipare i sospetti irlandesi il fatto che i giornali inglesi, seguaci di una tradizione che partiva da Gerald di Galles, mentre essa avveniva continuarono a descrivere e a raffigurare (come nel caso del *Punch*, il giornale satirico illustrato) gli Irlandesi quali scimmie antropomorfe.

Già prima della Carestia era apparsa una nuova forma di nazionalismo irlandese, un nazionalismo romantico più radicale di quello di O'Connell, che conteneva in sé i germi di un rinascita del repubblicanesimo indipendentista della "forza fisica". Un gruppo di giovani intellettuali, in prevalenza di religione protestante, si affiancò infatti, a partire dal 1840, all'agitazione di O'Connell per il *Repeal*. Il principale tra loro era il poeta e avvocato Thomas Davis (1814-1845), che intendeva creare una identità nazionale irlandese profonda, secondo gli ideali romantici, tale da sostenere un movimento di tutti gli Irlandesi per la liberazione nazionale. Concorde con Tone sulla necessità di unire

in un solo corpo politico cattolici e protestanti, a tale fine, a differenza dei suoi ispiratori romantici del continente, sosteneva che non erano gli antenati a dare una identità nazionale, ma il volere fare parte di quella nazione, unendosi intimamente a essa nella cultura, nella lingua e nelle aspirazioni, come poteva fare qualsiasi protestante discendente dei *New English*. All'algida natura contrattualistica della nazione illuminista degli *United Irishmen* Davis sostituì un romantico corpo caldo, fondato sul sentimento e sull'emozione, in cui il patriottismo aveva valore congenitamente santificante. Davis imparò il Gaelico e con i suoi seguaci lo usò in poesia e in prosa, considerandolo (a differenza di quanto faceva O'Connell) tratto essenziale della nazione profonda. Davis e il suo gruppo nell'ottobre 1842 fondarono il giornale *The Nation*, che subito ottenne una circolazione ragguardevolissima per l'epoca e il luogo (si stimavano più di 250.000 lettori), al fine di raggiungere l'animo del paese e la mente del popolo, e di collegarsi ai giovani intelletti patriottici, facendoli esprimere. Il veicolo principe per la diffusione di una sola cultura irlandese era la letteratura patriottica, anche per contrastare i programmi scolastici che de-nazionalizzavano le giovani generazioni: ma sarebbe bastato raggiungerle, dal momento che l'animo del popolo era innatamente patriottico, e si sarebbero poste le basi di una Irlanda libera e prospera. A tale fine, oltre ad utilizzare il loro giornale e la loro pubblicistica (Davis stesso era un prolificissimo scrittore di ballate), istituirono una rete di biblioteche popolari e una collana di libri di storia e letteratura dell'isola da essi stessi scritti. Nella produzione storica e letteraria del gruppo (che presto venne chiamato dagli altri *Young Ireland*) oltre ai temi comuni ai discorsi di O'Connell e al resto del movimento per il *Repeal*, come le antichissime glorie dei Gaeli e gli eroi resistenti di un lontano passato, comparivano sconvenientemente i ben più recenti eroi e martiri degli *United Irishmen*. Fu a Carestia ormai inoltrata che avvennero lo scontro colla maggioranza o'connellita del movimento per il *Repeal*, e la scissione dei radicali della Giovane Irlanda: tra altre cose, la pubblicazione in *The Nation* di articoli di carattere militare insurrezionale didattico alla fine del 1845 (che si può comprendere, vista l'immane tragedia che cominciava ad abbattersi sul paese) spinse O'Connell a imporre all'associazione per il *Repeal* una dichiarazione incondizionata secondo cui nessun obbiettivo politico irlandese avrebbe mai giustificato il ricorso alla violenza. A quel punto la Giovane Irlanda si scisse dall'associazione di O'Connell, organizzandosi autonomamente. Sull'onda della nuova rivoluzione francese nel 1848 suoi membri intrapresero un tentativo d'insurrezione, ma con effetti letteralmente ridicoli; mentre l'anno successivo un attacco a caserme inglesi ebbe più successo, e i responsabili sfuggirono alla cattura. Essi, e gran parte dei membri più radicali della Giovane Irlanda, pochi anni dopo fondarono la *Irish Republican Brotherhood*, organizzazione segreta indipendentista e repubblicana destinata a una lunga vita (1858-1924). Si tenga presente che i dirigenti della Giovane Irlanda erano tutti, cattolici o protestanti che fossero, di buona famiglia, e nella loro visione romantica l'oppressione dei grandi proprietari

terrieri sui contadini (i primi continuarono a pretendere gli affitti dai secondi, anche al culmine della Carestia), i “men of no property” di Tone e i rapporti di produzione nell’agricoltura irlandese non figuravano come importanti: il che spiega perché non furono in grado di intervenire efficacemente durante la Carestia. Uno solo di loro, James Fintan Lalor (1807-49), figlio di un deputato di O’Connell, affrontò la questione sociale dei contadini, scrivendo che di fronte alla questione agraria il *Repeal* era del tutto irrilevante, individuando nei circa ottomila *landlords* dell’isola la vera base del dominio inglese, e proponendo il non-pagamento degli affitti e la lotta dei contadini per la ripartizione delle proprietà terriere come centro della lotta di liberazione nazionale; e fu tra gli organizzatori dell’attacco alle caserme del 1849. Il lascito più duraturo di Davis e della Giovane Irlanda fu però proprio la letteratura romantico-nazionalista (e in essa le ballate), che a dispetto del suo spesso scarso valore letterario continuò a essere popolarissima tra Irlandesi di tutte le classi sociali, e presso ogni forma di nazionalismo dell’isola, da allora a oggi.

A proposito della *Young Ireland* e della sua collaborazione col movimento riformista di O’Connell occorre qui notare che da allora le due diverse forme di nazionalismo irlandese che dal XIX secolo si sono perpetuate fino quasi a oggi, quella riformista e costituzionale che rifuggiva dall’uso della violenza e quella repubblicana indipendentista che impiegava la *physical force*, non sono state del tutto e con chiarezza separate tra loro, come immagina anche per comodità espositiva la vulgata storiografica, ma hanno in realtà, tranne che forse in fasi di conflitto particolare tra loro, rappresentato un continuum nella società irlandese.

La Carestia, sconvolgendo dalle fondamenta la società agricola irlandese, e la morte in quello stesso tragico 1847, mentre andava in pellegrinaggio a Roma, di O’Connell, che non si era preparato successori, avevano disgregato il movimento per il *Repeal*.

Avvennero anche mutamenti importanti nella Chiesa cattolica nazionale: il nuovo arcivescovo di Dublino, l’ultramontano Paul Cullen (1803-1878: nella capitale irlandese dal 1852), che era stato rettore del Collegio irlandese di Roma durante i moti rivoluzionari del 1848 e la Repubblica romana, considerava uno dei compiti principali della sua missione prevenire la rivoluzione atea, ed era pertanto alquanto allergico a ogni forma di nazionalismo irlandese, avendo visti gli sviluppi del nazionalismo in Italia. Egli si impegnò a distruggere il tentativo di formare di nuovo un partito parlamentare irlandese autonomo, prendendo a pretesto la presenza tra loro del più moderato dei leader della Giovane Irlanda, ora convertito al riformismo, che Cullen additava all’esecrazione dei fedeli come “un Mazzini irlandese”. Per una ventina d’anni, fino al nuovo partito di Butt e Parnell, non vi fu più un gruppo parlamentare irlandese autonomo nel parlamento di Londra. Forte del sostegno di papa Pio IX (che nel 1866 lo nominò cardinale, primo Irlandese nella storia) Cullen, pur se con qualche opposizione da parte di altri prelati,

riuscì in sostanza a prendere il controllo della Chiesa dell'isola, avviandovi quella che è stata chiamata "rivoluzione devozionale"²¹. Si trattava di uniformare finalmente il culto cattolico alle norme continentali, spazzando via con l'accusa di superstizione e paganesimo le forme, le usanze e i riti tradizionali della devozione popolare irlandese, reindirizzandoli in senso tridentino; e di centralizzare e disciplinare la struttura ecclesiastica, in modo che potesse controllare le menti e i corpi di tutti i fedeli (con tanto di manuali per insegnare ai sacerdoti come venire a sapere tutto dei propri parrocchiani, con metodi di *intelligence*). Mentre per l'opposizione dell'arcivescovo di Tuam e di alcuni altri vescovi dell'isola le 27 diocesi irlandesi rimasero sovrane, e l'avversione di Cullen a ogni forma di nazionalismo e a ogni coinvolgimento del clero in movimenti nazionalistici non riuscì a prevalere e venne ovunque respinta dopo la sua morte, la "tridentinizzazione" del culto e dei costumi cattolici permase. Si tenga presente che buona parte dei seminari continentali in cui dal XVI al XVIII secolo si erano formati i sacerdoti irlandesi era dominata da giansenisti e gallicani, per cui la Chiesa irlandese assunse, una volta libera di organizzarsi, tratti "elezionistici", rigoristi e puritani, che la rendevano da un certo punto di vista molto simile nei valori ai calvinisti protestanti dell'isola che la avversavano e che essa avversava. La Chiesa isolana con Cullen, e dopo di lui, rafforzò il suo temporalismo di rivincita, mirando a un controllo sociale totale sui suoi fedeli. Controllo che fallì solo nel confronto politico occasionale col nazionalismo, specie indipendentista, mentre prevalse a tutti gli altri livelli, coronandosi dopo il 1921 e fino agli anni Sessanta del XX secolo nel totale predominio entro il nuovo stato irlandese; la Chiesa dell'isola aveva reso gli Irlandesi "più vittoriani dei vittoriani stessi", specie in termini di repressione sessuale e di pruderie bacchettona. Nei decenni in cui la Chiesa continentale si impegnava nel sociale, nella azione cattolica, nel movimento cooperativo e nei movimenti sindacali operai e contadini, quella dell'isola si dedicava invece a combattere il proselitismo (il più delle volte immaginario) dei "pagani ed eretici" protestanti e l'intera pernicioso letteratura e pubblicistica "straniera" contemporanea, e a discettare sulle sottigliezze del diritto canonico e sulle minute norme per applicare lo *shabbath* (cioè la santificazione della domenica mediante astensione da ogni lavoro e azione modellata sul sabato degli ebrei ortodossi, seguita dai calvinisti più radicali nelle isole britanniche e fatta propria sorprendentemente dal cattolicesimo irlandese). Per dare una misura del controllo sociale raggiunto, ad esempio riguardo alla pratica religiosa, negli anni Sessanta del XX secolo più del 98% dei battezzati irlandesi era presente a tutte le messe di precetto: non è una percentuale che si spieghi con la sola devozione degli Irlandesi, per quanto intensa fosse.

²¹ Il termine di "rivoluzione devozionale" è dovuto a un davvero *seminal article* di Emmet Larkin, grande storico americano della Chiesa irlandese dell'Ottocento: Larkin 1972.

Altro sviluppo che si accelerò dopo la Carestia fu quello industriale del nord-est dell'isola, unica zona in cui la rivoluzione industriale si fosse già pienamente manifestata: alle tradizionali industrie tessili si aggiunsero i cantieri navali e la manifattura meccanica. Ciò intensificò, anziché diminuire, l'odio confessionale, con i lavoratori protestanti, incanalati dall'Ordine d'Orange, quale "aristocrazia operaia", e quelli cattolici invece relegati a ruoli non qualificati; e con sanguinosi pogrom, impensabili in altri luoghi del Regno Unito, scatenati contro la popolazione cattolica, specie nei momenti di tensione politica, come quelli del movimento di O'Connell e poi quelli del movimento di Parnell.

Per quanto riguarda il nazionalismo irlandese, in assenza di un movimento politico riformatore riprese piede l'indipendentismo repubblicano. Già dall'intervento inglese nella guerra di Crimea nel 1854 reduci della Giovane Irlanda e delle azioni armate del 1849 insieme a nuove leve ripresero i contatti tra loro e con gli esuli negli Stati Uniti e i deportati in Australia. Vi fu un fiorire di associazioni e comitati patriottici, talvolta travestiti da società culturali, e poi nel 1858, in Irlanda e a New York, venne fondata la Fratellanza Repubblicana Irlandese (IRB), organizzazione clandestina con giuramento²², votata a instaurare in Irlanda una repubblica democratica indipendente, che continuò a usare le associazioni, i comitati, le società come fronti legali per il proselitismo e il reclutamento. Divennero noti come *Fenians*, "guerrieri", con il calco anglicizzato da *Fianna*, per una felice intuizione del loro leader in America John O'Mahony (1816-77), reduce del '48 e studioso di antichità gaelica. A differenza della *Young Ireland* la questione sociale e i "men of no property" erano più che presenti nei loro programmi: "From its inception, its republicanism was defined far more so by its desire to act as an instrument of popular politicization than it was by its revolutionary ambition to form

²² La sua prima formulazione dichiarava: "I, [xy], do solemnly swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that I will do my utmost, at every risk, while life lasts, to make Ireland an independent Democratic Republic; that I will yield implicit obedience, in all things not contrary to the law of God to the commands of my superior officers; and that I shall preserve inviolable secrecy regarding all the transactions of this secret society that may be confided in me. So help me God! Amen". Riportato in O'Leary 1896, vol. I, 82: i 2 volumi, sono stati più volte ripubblicati in ristampa anastatica negli anni Settanta del XX secolo). Subito dopo, nel 1859, per cercare (invano!) di aggirare la condanna della Chiesa cattolica di ogni società segreta ne venne istituita una seconda versione, in cui la clausola di segretezza scompariva; in quanto organizzazione militare, era soltanto un giuramento militare: "I, [xy], in the presence of Almighty God, do solemnly swear allegiance to the Irish Republic, now virtually established; and that I will do my very utmost, at every risk, while life lasts, to defend its independence and integrity; and, finally, that I will yield implicit obedience in all things, not contrary to the laws of God [o, per candidati atei, "the laws of morality"], to the commands of my superior officers. So help me God. Amen" (riportato in Ryan 1945, 92).

an Irish republic” (McGee 2005, 15)²³. Il loro primo leader in Irlanda, James Stephens (1825-1901), anch’egli reduce del 1848 e in esilio a Parigi per alcuni anni, considerava la repubblica democratica che intendevano instaurare come equivalente al “benessere del lavoratore” e all’eguaglianza sociale, e riteneva che una radicale rivoluzione sociale sarebbe stata necessaria nell’isola perché le masse diventassero repubblicane: “Like all revolutionary movements of its era, the IRB attempted to recruit people from all social classes and cultivate an egalitarian spirit within its organization, both to sustain its political resolve and to make a political impact, allowing artisans and labourers, for example, to hold higher positions than members of various middle-class professions” (*ibidem* 2005, 17). I Feniani si diffusero rapidamente in tutta l’isola come partito politico di massa non dichiarato (ma del resto a quell’epoca non avevano competizione politica in campo nazionalista: i deputati irlandesi a Westminster, tutti della *upper class*, facevano parte o dei *Whigs* o dei *Tories*). L’organizzazione clandestina era cellulare (con cellule chiamate “cerchi”: il capocellula avrebbe cooptato nove membri, che a loro volta ne avrebbero cooptati altri nove, ecc.; i nove di un livello inferiore avrebbero in teoria dovuto conoscere solo chi li aveva reclutati), ma proprio la loro popolarità impedì che tali regole venissero di fatto osservate, così che la piaga costante dei movimenti rivoluzionari dell’isola dal tempo degli *United Irishmen* (e fino a oggi), l’informatore delle autorità o delatore, ben presto comparve come presenza costante. Essi asserivano il primato della direzione politica su quella militare (prima di un tentativo insurrezionale occorreva sviluppare un movimento nazionale di massa), ma preparavano le armi (spesso importate clandestinamente dagli USA) per la futura rivoluzione. La Chiesa di Cullen vide subito la minaccia, e cominciò a denunciare violentemente i Feniani come atei, mazziniani e anticristi (è famosa la frase di una lettera pastorale di denuncia contro di loro del vescovo di Kerry: “l’inferno non è sufficientemente caldo e l’eternità non è sufficientemente lunga per punire adeguatamente questi farabutti” (“eternity is not long enough, nor hell hot enough to punish such miscreants”, citato in O’Broin 1976, 133). I Feniani tennero botta, e furono il primo esempio di esplicito anticlericalismo nell’isola, invocando una netta distinzione tra le prerogative del clero delle confessioni religiose, in particolare di quella cattolica, in materia teologica e morale e la libertà dell’agire politico secondo la propria coscienza (tra di loro in effetti, e per la prima volta, vi erano, oltre a cattolici e protestanti, dichiarati agnostici e atei, seppur non moltissimi). Ma tra le classi popolari, e anche tra i

²³ Le due più importanti opere generali sui Feniani della IRB sono Ó Broin 1976, che ripercorre tutto il corso della storia dell’organizzazione come sviluppo evenemenziale; e McGee 2005, che sulla base di un attentissimo studio di tutti i documenti disponibili approfondisce l’analisi della politica e dell’ideologia della IRB dalla fondazione al 1910.

contadini dell'ovest dell'isola, essi si fecero rapidamente strada. Dopo anni di preparazione nella primavera del 1865 sentirono che era giunto il momento di tentare l'insurrezione, tenendo conto che gli unionisti americani avevano appena conseguito la vittoria nella guerra di secessione e che erano ai ferri corti con il governo del Regno Unito, che aveva invece sostenuto i confederati; e che l'esercito unionista, non ancora smobilitato, vedeva nelle sue file centinaia di migliaia di emigrati irlandesi, che in maggioranza detestavano l'Inghilterra e che spesso erano membri della filiale americana della IRB. Disgraziatamente il tempismo del Supremo Consiglio della IRB non fu dei migliori: i piani prevedevano l'insurrezione per l'autunno, che era di gran lunga troppo tardi, e comunque in luglio il governo di Sua Maestà, basandosi su una buona *intelligence*, arrestò o costrinse alla latitanza la dirigenza dell'organizzazione, e ne sopprime gli organi di stampa. Era così svanita l'occasione, il momento magico, per scatenare con la rivolta una guerra tra gli armatissimi Stati Uniti e il Regno Unito: il governo degli USA cominciò a trattare con quello inglese per un accomodamento diplomatico, e in Irlanda i Feniani dovevano difendersi dalla repressione. I Feniani americani organizzarono comunque due invasioni del Canada britannico, nel 1866 e nel 1868, ma in entrambi i casi, nonostante qualche successo sul campo, furono costretti a ritirarsi dal governo americano, che chiuse la frontiera impedendo loro rinforzi. In Irlanda la IRB, con una nuova dirigenza, tentò di nuovo l'insurrezione in diverse parti dell'isola nel febbraio e marzo del 1867, proclamando la Repubblica irlandese, democratica e a suffragio universale, per i lavoratori e contro l'oligarchia aristocratica degli sfruttatori e il governo monarchico, facendo appello alla classe operaia inglese²⁴.

Militarmente la rivolta fu un fallimento totale, ma le sue conseguenze favorirono i repubblicani della IRB: tre repubblicani giustiziati per l'uccisione di un poliziotto inglese a Manchester durante il tentativo di fare evadere un Feniano catturato divennero noti come "i martiri di Manchester", costringendo la Chiesa cattolica irlandese a indebolire la sua durissima ostilità verso l'organizzazione e suscitando manifestazioni annuali di commemorazione; e, soprattutto, le condanne a morte e le condizioni di detenzione dei prigionieri suscitarono un movimento internazionale per l'amnistia che diede alla IRB nuove reclute e un nuovo spazio politico in cui operare. Il governo liberale di Londra, guidato da W. E. Gladstone, si convinse che era maturo il tempo di togliere alla Chiesa anglicana la posizione di Chiesa di stato in Irlanda, e con il suo *Disestablishment* (1869) cessò la esazione della decima, tassa che tutti – non solo gli anglicani – dovevano pagare per il suo mantenimento, e che era un costante motivo di agitazione, soprattutto tra i ceti più poveri. L'avvocato di molti prigionieri repubblicani, Isaac Butt (1813-79), fondò

²⁴ Questa Proclamazione della Repubblica, che come quella della rivolta del 1916 era compiuta da un "Governo provvisorio", è riportata in Lee 2008, 56.

la *Home Government Association* (associazione per l'autogoverno), che vinse nell'isola le elezioni del 1874 per il parlamento di Londra con 59 deputati (contro 33 conservatori e 10 liberali), ridando vita a una forma parlamentare, costituzionale e riformista di nazionalismo, che venne presto appoggiata dal clero cattolico (previa promessa che l'istruzione in Irlanda, ormai in gran parte sotto il controllo di quella Chiesa, sarebbe sempre rimasta confessionalmente divisa).

Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), possidente anglicano (come del resto Butt) ne divenne il leader, rendendola più radicale, e impiegando l'ostruzionismo nel parlamento inglese (primo impiego di tale nuova tattica, necessario però dal momento che il gruppo parlamentare irlandese degli *Home Rulers* era isolato). Nel 1879 egli si accordò con la IRB, che era il movimento comunque più radicato sul territorio, e l'accordo divenne poi noto come "la nuova partenza": altra dimostrazione del fatto che tra nazionalismo riformista e nazionalismo independentista vi è sempre stato un continuum in Irlanda. Sembrava profilarsi una nuova carestia, e col sostegno dei repubblicani Parnell organizzò la *Land League* o lega per la terra tra i contadini non proprietari irlandesi, adottando di fatto il programma degli stessi Feniani (che già era stato delineato da Lalor) avente come obiettivo la completa riforma agraria, e scatenando una campagna di agitazione e lotta (*Land War*, 1879-82) che univa mezzi legali e mezzi illegali, come lo sciopero degli affitti, il sabotaggio e il boicottaggio. Obiettivo intermedio, che interessava soprattutto i grandi affittuari contadini, era quello delle "3 F": *Fair rent*, *Fair sale*, e *Fixity of tenure*: nel 1881 il governo le fece diventare legge, accompagnando però la misura con leggi d'emergenza contro gli agitatori. A differenza di O'Connell, che ribadiva in ogni occasione la fedeltà propria e "degli irlandesi" alla corona inglese, Parnell mantenne sempre una studiata ambiguità: non denunciava i rivoluzionari disposti a impiegare la *physical force*, anzi esaltava come martiri nazionali ed eroi patriottici non solo gli *United Irishmen*, ma anche gli *Young Irelanders* e i recentissimi Feniani del 1867, e ripeteva che nessuno poteva porre limiti alla marcia di una nazione verso la libertà (volendo fare intendere che anche una Irlanda indipendente sarebbe stata possibile). Parnell venne arrestato e la *Land League* sciolta: ma nella prigione di Kilmainham si accordò con il governo di Gladstone: esso avrebbe sostenuto l'estensione della legge sulle "3 F" ad affittuari contadini più poveri, che ne erano stati esclusi, e in cambio Parnell avrebbe placato l'agitazione nelle campagne. Alcuni gruppi di membri della IRB non erano stati d'accordo con la "nuova partenza", e ben tre gruppi scissionisti si diedero all'azione armata. Due di essi intrapresero una campagna di attacchi con ordigni esplosivi in Inghilterra, che durò dal 1880 al 1887; il terzo uccise nel 1882 a Dublino il ministro inglese per l'Irlanda e il suo vice (che erano i due funzionari, inferiori in grado solo al viceré, che esercitavano il potere esecutivo in Irlanda). Parnell ne approfittò per istituire sulle ceneri della *Land League* la *Irish National League*,

sotto il suo diretto controllo, come struttura territoriale partitica di sostegno collegio per collegio al gruppo parlamentare degli *Home Rulers*, che contò al suo apogeo ben 1200 sezioni. Come il movimento di O'Connell, essa vide il coinvolgimento massiccio dei sacerdoti cattolici, parrocchia per parrocchia. Disordini e agitazioni proseguirono comunque negli otto anni successivi: nel 1886 venne lanciato il *Plan of Campaign* per un nuovo movimento agrario, che prevedeva che i contadini non pagassero alcun affitto ai latifondisti, versandolo invece a dei curatori in vista di una riforma agraria che espropriasse i latifondi; esso venne condannato dalla Chiesa cattolica in quanto lesivo del diritto di proprietà. Dalla fine del 1885 l'*Home Rule* o autogoverno dell'Irlanda venne accettato in via di principio dal nuovo governo di Gladstone, che doveva la sua maggioranza in parlamento ai deputati irlandesi del partito di Parnell. Si trattava di un autogoverno alquanto limitato, visto che la tassazione, il bilancio, la polizia, l'esercito sarebbero rimasti sotto il controllo di Londra: ma fu sufficiente a scatenare nell'Ulster l'Ordine d'Orange, e a dare ai deputati conservatori dell'isola una più forte caratterizzazione di unionismo irlandese. Spaccò anche il partito liberale britannico: i liberali unionisti fecero da allora causa comune coi conservatori, per cui Gladstone dovette vincere nuove elezioni per continuare il suo governo. Nel 1887 l'*Home Rule* comunque non passò il vaglio del parlamento. L'agitazione continua in cui molti repubblicani della IRB erano impegnati entro il movimento di Parnell (vi furono molti di loro tra i deputati del suo gruppo, ma pochi di essi, assaporate le gioie di Londra, restarono membri della organizzazione indipendentista clandestina) fece sì che l'organizzazione nel suo insieme non si rendesse conto di essere stata semplicemente usata da quell'abile politico, e per fini antitetici al suo programma democratico radicale (la IRB, che aveva ben 31.000 membri in Irlanda nel 1881, cominciò a declinare sempre di più, abbandonata da militanti scoraggiati). Infatti il movimento di Parnell tendeva a cementare un blocco sociale di possidenti (tanto cattolici quanto protestanti) alla nuova borghesia cattolica che aspirava a esercitare qualche potere tramite qualche carica in un'isola autonoma, e soprattutto alla Chiesa cattolica, che avendo in mano l'istruzione (soprattutto primaria) in gran parte dell'isola, vedeva nuove possibilità per le sue aspirazioni temporaliste. E l'obiettivo *non* era l'indipendenza dell'Irlanda, a dispetto della retorica occasionale di Parnell e del suo *Home Rule Party*, ma un obiettivo molto, ma molto lontano dalla Repubblica democratica fondata sui lavoratori e a suffragio universale presente nel programma feniano.

La fine della parabola personale di Parnell fu rapida e brutale, e segnò anche la fine del suo movimento: il marito della sua amante di lungo periodo, che per lunghi anni Parnell aveva fatto eleggere come deputato del suo partito, chiese nel 1890 il divorzio dalla moglie, aprendo lo scandalo, e il vittoriano Gladstone non poté che intimargli di dimettersi dalla guida del partito; la Chiesa cattolica, che comunque non amava Parnell in quanto protestante e in quanto troppo indipendente, rincarò di molto la dose; e il suo partito si spaccò (le due

fazioni più numerose, antiparnelliani e parnelliani, si riunirono di nuovo in un unico partito solo nel 1900, mentre una terza fazione riconfluì solo nel 1912). Parnell decise di resistere, e un piccolo gruppo di deputati restò con lui, ma morì di lì a pochi mesi nel 1891. Un nuovo progetto di *Home Rule* di Gladstone venne fermato nel 1893 dalla camera dei lord, e i conservatori e unionisti, andati al governo nel 1895, vi restarono fino al 1905, prima guidati da R. Salisbury, poi da A. Balfour. Proprio i loro governi, all'insegna del motto "uccidere l'*Home Rule* con gentilezza", perseguirono e nel 1903 completarono un programma di riforma agraria, attuato tramite i *Land Purchase Bills*, già iniziato dai governi di Gladstone nel 1885, che smantellò i latifondi agricoli e creò una diffusa piccola e media proprietà contadina. Inoltre nel 1898 venne promulgato lo *Irish Local Government Act*, che per la prima volta istituiva nell'isola amministrazioni locali elettive; in quelle urbane permetteva di essere elette anche alle donne. Il sistema scolastico, pur confessionale, dimostrò la sua efficienza, diversificandosi (gli ordini religiosi cattolici avevano istituito scuole di secondo grado cui potevano andare anche i figli dei ceti più disagiati), così che in quegli anni l'Irlanda divenne uno dei paesi col minor tasso di analfabetismo al mondo. La borghesia cattolica nelle città continuò a crescere, così come i *big farmers* della stessa religione nelle campagne, con sempre maggiori appetiti sociali.

Il ventennio seguito alla morte di Parnell, fino alla nuova crisi dell'*Home Rule* e al periodo rivoluzionario (1912-1923), è noto come *Celtic Renaissance*, o "Rinascimento celtico". Delusi dalla politica, vista ormai come occupazione di poltrone (a questa funzione e scopo sembrava essersi ridotto il partito parlamentare irlandese), molti nazionalisti cercarono di dare un nuovo significato al proprio essere irlandesi. Molti di costoro erano membri della IRB, ormai ridotta a un migliaio di aderenti, in maggioranza a Dublino, il cui ultimo flebile segno di vita in questo periodo furono le celebrazioni pubbliche per il centenario del "Novantotto". Molti altri erano giovani che, per la prima volta nelle loro famiglie, avevano ricevuto l'istruzione secondaria, a differenza degli artigiani, operai e contadini autodidatti che avevano costituito il nerbo della IRB. Altri erano devotissimi cattolici clericali, pertanto influenzabilissimi dalla Chiesa e dai suoi interessi. Il risultato fu l'idea di una "Irlanda Irlandese" e, in quanto tale, necessariamente gaelica; e, in quanto gaelica, necessariamente cattolica, e pertanto alquanto esclusiva, anche se i membri protestanti del movimento sembravano non rendersene conto. Come scrive il McGee, "The Catholic 'Irish-Ireland' movement effectively completely supplanted the influence of the old IRB during 1899-1902 and assumed the role the IRB formerly played in shaping popular nationalist discourse in Ireland" (2005, 347).

In questa sede non è il caso di ripercorrere minutamente gli eventi successivi, che credo noti ai lettori: basti ricordare che nel 1884 venne fondata la *Gaelic Athletic Association*, ad opera di Feniani, ma fatta propria immediatamente anche dal loro tradizionale rivale, il clero cattolico, che aveva lo scopo di riportare in voga gli antichi sport gaelici, escludendo quelli ingle-

si e, nelle intenzioni, facendoli scomparire; e che nel 1893 venne fondata la Lega Gaelica, che aveva il compito di insegnare agli entusiasti la lingua irlandese, ormai parlata solo in alcune zone dell'ovest dell'isola, per poterla poi, in una futura Irlanda liberata, sostituirla completamente all'inglese. Il suo presidente, lo studioso protestante di letteratura gaelica Douglas Hyde (1860-1949, primo presidente dell'Éire dal 1938 al 1945), ne aveva posto le premesse con una lezione intitolata *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland* (Hyde 1892). Come succede nel caso di fioriture cultural-politiche di questo genere, affiorava ogni sorta di idee stravaganti e di personaggi bizzarri. Uno di questi, Arthur Griffith (1871-1922), fu ispirato dall'esistenza dell'Impero austroungarico ad elaborare la teoria della doppia monarchia, per cui il Regno Unito di Gran Bretagna e Irlanda avrebbe dovuto imitare quel modello, con l'isola quale Regno d'Ungheria. Uno dei concetti di questo generale fenomeno culturale, come "risorgimento celtico" o "risveglio gaelico" o "Irlanda-Irlandese" era quello di "*sinn féin*", irlandese per "contare sulle proprie forze". Nel 1905 Griffith attribuì quel nome al partito che intendeva fondare. Il Sinn Féin di Griffith intendeva presentarsi alle elezioni fino a che non vi fosse una maggioranza di suoi eletti, i quali avrebbero però dovuto astenersi dal prendere posto nel parlamento di Londra finché la corona non avesse accettato di instaurare la duplice monarchia; e il regno d'Irlanda così creato avrebbe dovuto seguire lo stretto protezionismo di Friedrich List (economista tedesco d'inizio Ottocento; il che ebbe effetti tragici nel futuro). Dopo un paio d'anni di elezioni con percentuali minime il partito di Griffith scomparve dalla scena politica; ma all'indomani della Rivolta di Pasqua del 1916 la stampa inglese prese a definire la rivolta "rivolta del Sinn Féin" (anche se Griffith e il suo gruppuscolo non vi avevano partecipato), per cui quando i ribelli dovettero l'anno dopo intervenire in campo politico adottarono lo stesso nome (e Griffith stesso) per il loro partito, che aveva programmi nell'insieme differenti dall'originale²⁵.

Il ritorno al governo di Londra dei liberali di Asquith nel 1905 stimolò la coagulazione di una nuova forma, eccentrica, di nazionalismo irlandese, o perlomeno di nazionalismo in Irlanda. Di fronte al rinnovarsi della minaccia dell'*Home Rule* (come mostrarono gli eventi successivi lo slogan unionista "*Home Rule is Rome Rule*" non era in realtà affatto infondato), e vedendo che da decenni solo un pugno di candidati unionisti riusciva a farsi eleggere al di fuori del nord-est dell'isola, gli unionisti dell'Ulster, che erano indissolubilmente legati all'Ordine d'Orange e al suo odio confessionale verso i cattolici in difesa della supremazia protestante, in quella zona ancora ben presente ed evidente, decisero di dotarsi di una propria organizzazione politica, autonoma rispetto agli altri unionisti irlandesi. Essi cominciavano ad individuare

²⁵ Su Arthur Griffith vedi il recente McGee 2015.

una identità e specificità diverse da quelle irlandesi: non solo contro l'Irlanda cattolica, ma con sottile differenziazione dagli altri unionisti isolani. I due principi affermati dall'orangismo erano la fedeltà alla monarchia inglese *in quanto protestante*, e la difesa del popolo protestante tramite il mantenimento dell'unione con la Gran Bretagna; popolo protestante che nell'Ulster non era però inglese o irlandese, ma "britannico". Infatti i coloni delle *Plantations* loro antenati, a differenza di quelli del resto dell'isola, erano in grande maggioranza scozzesi, non inglesi, come testimoniano a tutt'oggi i dialetti della zona; e la popolazione protestante dell'Ulster comprendeva tutte le classi sociali, non solo *landlords* e borghesi, come quella del resto dell'isola. Autoproclamata identità nazionale "britannica" che si rafforzò nei decenni successivi, specie dopo lo stabilirsi dello stato (paradossalmente, con proprio distinto *Home Rule!*) dell'Irlanda del Nord con la partizione del 1921.

Dopo una lunga diatriba costituzionale che portò alla limitazione del potere di veto della camera dei lord il governo liberale di H. H. Asquith preparò nell'aprile 1912 un nuovo progetto di *Home Rule* per l'Irlanda. Gli unionisti dell'Ulster, organizzati nell'*Ulster Unionist Council*, firmarono in cinquecentomila la *Solemn League and Covenant* (riprendendo il titolo dell'alleanza del 1643 per sconfiggere re Carlo I tra i presbiteriani di Scozia e il partito parlamentare inglese), in cui si impegnavano a resistere con tutti i mezzi, compresa la violenza armata, all'imposizione dell'autogoverno irlandese da parte del governo e del parlamento britannici, rendendo noto che avrebbero preferito essere governati dall'imperatore tedesco piuttosto che dai nazionalisti irlandesi. Approfittando del fatto che la consueta legge speciale contro il possesso di armi e le milizie armate era da poco scaduta senza venire rimessa in vigore, fondarono la milizia armata degli *Ulster Volunteers* per dare forza alla loro opposizione. Intanto i loro leader cominciarono a introdurre l'idea che, se proprio l'autogoverno irlandese era inevitabile, le nove contee dell'Ulster ne venissero esentate. A Dublino nel corso di uno sciopero generale la polizia aveva attaccato i manifestanti, uccidendone alcuni, e il settore del movimento operaio che faceva capo al sindacalista rivoluzionario marxista James Connolly (1868-1916) decise sull'esempio degli unionisti dell'Ulster di formare una milizia civica dei lavoratori, lo *Irish Citizen Army*. Anche l'ordine paramassonico (ma nazionalista e cattolico) degli *Irish National Foresters* decise di dotarsi della propria banda armata. Quanto ai repubblicani della IRB, dopo il 1911, con l'ispirazione del vecchio prigioniero politico feniano Tom Clarke (1858-1916) e sotto una nuova e più giovane dirigenza, essi avevano ricominciato a reclutare nuove leve scaturite dal "risveglio gaelico". Con sapienti manovre favorite dalla eccitazione del momento riuscirono nel novembre 1913 a fare istituire gli *Irish Volunteers* come organizzazione armata di tutto il nazionalismo irlandese per difendere e in caso imporre l'*Home Rule*, usando come uomo di paglia l'accademico e studioso del passato gaelico Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945). Gli ufficiali dell'esercito inglese della più grande base militare in Irlanda dichiararono per iscritto che si

sarebbero rifiutati di reprimere gli unionisti dell'Ulster in caso di conflitto. Gli *Ulster Volunteers* ricevettero a Larne, indisturbati, 24.000 fucili tedeschi dalla Germania; gli *Irish Volunteers* ne ricevettero a Howth solo 900, ma l'esercito inglese intervenne sparando contro la folla, uccidendo alcuni civili. La moda di costituire milizie cominciò a diffondersi in tutto il Regno Unito: conservatori e unionisti minacciavano il governo di rivolta armata qualora cercasse di applicare l'*Home Rule* all'Irlanda. Si profilava una guerra civile britannica quando invece intervenne quella mondiale. L'autogoverno per l'Irlanda venne approvato con il *Government of Ireland Act 1914*, ma la sua applicazione venne sospesa per tutta la durata della guerra. In Irlanda il partito parlamentare irlandese invitò la popolazione ad arruolarsi nelle forze armate britanniche per difendere il Belgio e le "piccole nazioni", e i loro membri si ritirarono dagli *Irish Volunteers*, che restarono così milizia soltanto del nazionalismo radicale della "Irlanda irlandese".

La Rivolta di Pasqua venne sì decisa dalla risorta *Irish Republican Brotherhood* (quando all'ultimo momento scoprì che era stata decisa alle sue spalle l'ignaro MacNeill mandò un contrordine agli *Irish Volunteers*, il che fece sì che essa non si estendesse oltre Dublino), ma con la partecipazione dello *Irish Citizen Army* e persino dei *Foresters*. L'insurrezione non aveva alcuna possibilità di vittoria: era piuttosto una testimonianza sacrificale eroica, secondo la visione di uno dei suoi leader, il poeta e insegnante cattolicissimo Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), che proveniva non dalla tradizione democratica feniana, ma dal risveglio gaelico. Gli insorti combatterono bene, tra lo stupore degli abitanti di Dublino, e occorse all'esercito e alle cannoniere inglesi una settimana prima di poter piegare la loro resistenza, riducendo in rovine alcuni quartieri della città. Il primo giorno della rivolta, lunedì dell'Angelo 24 aprile, lessero e distribuirono la Proclamazione d'Indipendenza, dal contenuto sì democratico, repubblicano e ugualitario, ma ben più romantico e "gaelico" di quella dei ribelli del 1867. Tra i sette firmatari vi erano Clarke, Pearse, e il sindacalista Connolly. Invece di passare immediatamente per le armi tutti i ribelli catturati (come anche avrebbe potuto fare, dato che la Proclamazione dichiarava fieramente che i tedeschi erano i "gallant allies" degli insorti), l'esercito britannico cominciò uno stillicidio di corti marziali e di fucilazioni che si protrasse per un mese (anche se infine i fucilati furono solo quindici, inclusi i sette firmatari della Proclamazione), e che – come era successo per i "martiri di Manchester" del 1867 – fece mutare completamente il vento presso l'opinione pubblica dell'Irlanda nazionalista "moderata", clero cattolico incluso: quelli che erano apparsi poche settimane prima dei pazzi e degli scriteriati divennero i più puri tra gli eroi della nazione. Il governo inglese fece terminare le corti marziali, e gli insorti prigionieri, insieme a centinaia di civili catturati un po' a caso in base al loro nazionalismo "irlandese-irlandese" anche se con la rivolta non avevano avuto nulla a che fare (come MacNeill e Griffith), vennero trasferiti in campi di prigionia, per poi venire liberati a sca-

glioni nell'anno e mezzo successivo. In prigionia si diedero all'attività consueta dei prigionieri politici: dibattere le strategie e pianificare il futuro. Tra loro si distingueva un giovanotto insorto originario della contea di Cork e membro della IRB, Michael Collins (1890-1922), che approfittò della pausa per riorganizzare l'associazione segreta. Il consenso per il partito parlamentare irlandese, che aveva spinto i giovani dell'isola ad andare a morire nelle trincee francesi per conto del nemico inglese, evaporò, come dimostrarono alcune elezioni suppletive in cui trionfarono prigionieri candidati per protesta. Si cominciarono a riorganizzare gli *Irish Volunteers*, ma questa volta in forma clandestina, e assunsero il nome di *Irish Republican Army* (IRA), "Esercito Repubblicano Irlandese". Alle elezioni del dicembre 1918 il partito degli insorti, Sinn Féin, stravinse, con 73 eletti al parlamento britannico, mentre il partito parlamentare riusciva a salvarne solo sei, e gli unionisti dell'Ulster ne ottenevano 26.

Gli eletti del Sinn Féin si rifiutarono di accettare i loro posti nel parlamento britannico, e si riunirono il 21 gennaio 1919 (36 di loro non lo fecero, perché in prigione) costituendosi in *Dáil Éireann* o "Parlamento d'Irlanda", proclamando di nuovo l'indipendenza della Repubblica irlandese. Il resto è noto: lo stesso giorno cominciò la guerra di guerriglia condotta dallo IRA, che impiegò più di un anno a prendere vigore (e che fu un modello per i movimenti anticoloniali del resto del mondo). Nel luglio 1921 il governo britannico chiese e ottenne una tregua, dopo avere però separato sei delle contee dell'Ulster, quelle del nord-est, in quattro delle quali vi era una forte maggioranza unionista, che comprendevano le città di Belfast, di Derry e di Armagh, costituendole come Irlanda del Nord sotto autogoverno locale. La Chiesa cattolica, il mondo degli affari, e il vecchio personale politico del partito parlamentare irlandese, ora riciclati in "repubblicani" e "indipendentisti", premevano perché la guerra non ricominciasse; i negozianti irlandesi a Londra vennero facilmente spinti, tra lusinghe e minacce, a firmare il 6 dicembre 1921 un trattato di pace, "*the Treaty*", che sanciva la partizione del paese e che costituiva le 26 contee del sud come Stato Libero d'Irlanda, con la condizione per i suoi legislatori di giurare fedeltà al sovrano di Gran Bretagna, e con l'occupazione da parte delle forze inglesi di quattro basi navali. Certo, era più di quanto qualsiasi autogoverno o *Home Rule* previsto in precedenza garantisse. Al di là delle ambizioni e del cinismo del maggiore tra i leader politici dei ribelli che si espresse contro il Trattato, Eamon De Valera (1882-1975), è indubbio che, dopo avere fatto giurare più volte nel corso della guerra e della tregua ai volontari dello IRA fedeltà alla Repubblica indipendente e unita, la soluzione imposta dal Trattato risultava una svendita intollerabile. Inoltre dal punto di vista legale e formale i deputati del Dáil erano stati eletti in tutta l'Irlanda, alcuni nel nord-est, per cui l'assemblea legislativa che doveva votare su un trattato che divideva l'isola non corrispondeva a una sola delle parti divise. Dal lato della accettazione del Trattato si schierarono la Chiesa cattolica nella sua gerarchia dell'isola (che già salivava all'idea di imporre il proprio

potere temporale nel paese), gli interessi costituiti proprietari e commerciali, e la borghesia benestante. Il Dáil, lo IRA, la IRB e il Sinn Féin si spaccarono; nel voto decisivo con cui nel gennaio 1922 il Dáil accettò il trattato il voto i favorevoli furono solo 64, i contrari 57. Mentre i volontari dell'Ulster, ora divenuti forza di polizia ufficiale dell'Irlanda del Nord unionista, impazzavano insieme alle folle lealiste contro la parte nazionalista della popolazione, nel nuovo Stato Libero d'Irlanda le due fazioni, i pro-trattato e gli anti-trattato, si preparavano o a una ricomposizione del fronte indipendentista, o alla guerra. Di fronte alla minaccia inglese di intervenire direttamente (le loro forze erano ancora presenti in città) il presidente del governo provvisorio della nuova entità, poi capo delle forze armate Michael Collins scelse di attaccare a Dublino le forze anti-trattato, il 22 giugno 1922. La guerra civile nello Stato Libero durò fino al 24 maggio del 1923 (quando il capo politico dei ribelli, De Valera, diede l'ordine di nascondere le armi e smettere la lotta armata), e fu molto più sanguinosa della stessa guerra d'indipendenza. Tra le vittime ci fu lo stesso Michael Collins, nell'agosto 1922. Il governo di William Cosgrave (1880-1965) applicò rappresaglie feroci, con la fucilazione e la tortura di prigionieri. Anche i danni materiali furono enormi. Oltre a questo, i 26 vescovi della Chiesa cattolica nell'ottobre 1922 scomunicarono le forze anti-trattato. Laici anti-trattato fecero appello al Vaticano, dal momento che la scomunica non veniva inflitta per motivi di fede o di morale. Il nuovo papa, Pio XI, cercò di dare loro un contentino inviando monsignor Alessandro Luzio come suo legato per cercare di mediare tra il governo di Dublino e gli insorti. I vescovi irlandesi prima boicottarono il legato pontificio, poi chiesero al proprio governo di dichiararlo persona non grata e di espellerlo dal paese. Dal momento che Pio XI era papa da pochi mesi, e che fino a pochi mesi prima la stampa cattolica internazionale aveva glorificato l'eroica Irlanda, nazione cattolica in impari lotta con gli oppressori, invece di scomunicare questi vescovi ribelli decise di abbozzare, lasciando loro campo libero.

3. Una Nazione, o diverse? Un'isola indipendente e divisa

Le due Irlande così sanguinosamente stabilite, Stato Libero di 26 contee e Irlanda del Nord di 6, non furono esperimenti pienamente riusciti, tanto dal punto di vista sociale quanto da quello culturale. O, per dirla in altri termini, rappresentarono un continuo carnevale della reazione. Da entrambe le zone proseguiva l'emigrazione iniziata con la Carestia; e da entrambe le zone gli intellettuali fuggivano.

Nella neonata Irlanda del Nord gli unionisti al potere si affrettarono a modificare il sistema elettorale per le elezioni locali, facendo sì che la rappresentanza della parte cattolica e nazionalista della popolazione (che, sentendosi tradita, non amò dalla partizione in poi alcun politico del sud) fosse del tutto irrilevante. A questo aggiunsero leggi eccezionali severissime dirette alla repressione del nazio-

nalismo irlandese (non necessariamente di quello repubblicano indipendentista), che contemplavano anche la fustigazione. Una atmosfera di bigottismo repressivo coprì le sei contee del nord-est fino a quando, per l'esplosione di una nuova fase di conflitto armato alla fine degli anni Sessanta, nel 1972 il governo britannico fu costretto a sciogliere il governo locale e a riprendere il controllo diretto della zona, cominciando ad abolire le leggi discriminatorie emanate dagli unionisti. Dal punto di vista economico essa, separata dal suo naturale retroterra, fu un quasi completo fallimento.

Nel sud una parte degli sconfitti della guerra civile, guidati da De Valera, accettarono infine, nel 1926-27, di essere eletti nel parlamento dello Stato Libero, protestando comunque formalmente per il giuramento di fedeltà al re loro imposto, e costituirono il partito politico di opposizione *Fianna Fáil* ("Guerrieri del destino"). Il Sinn Féin antitratato continuò a presentarsi alle elezioni su un programma di astensione, con sempre minori successi. Lo IRA antitratato continuava ad addestrarsi e a reclutare in clandestinità, restando in buoni rapporti tanto col partito di De Valera quanto col Sinn Féin. Il governo dello Stato Libero era l'espressione del nuovo dominio della borghesia cattolica: gli ideali egualitari dei feniani e i "men of no property" non contavano nulla. La Chiesa cattolica dell'isola aveva coronato il suo sogno temporalista. Libera ormai dalla sorveglianza dello stato britannico e dallo scrutinio delle altre confessioni, senza più temere serie ingerenze vaticane, tramite politici sempre più ossequienti rafforzava il suo controllo sul paese, faceva passare leggi censorie, impediva qualunque sviluppo che non le andasse a genio, e costruiva un allucinante sistema concentrazionario e di sfruttamento ai danni di bambini, donne e poveri la cui posteriore rivelazione pubblica, a partire dagli anni Novanta, provocò la rapidissima secolarizzazione della già chiamata "isola dei santi". Come già quando era parte del Regno Unito e *de facto* colonia inglese, il nuovo stato continuò a reggersi su leggi eccezionali e leggi d'emergenza. Figli del "risveglio gaelico" tanto i governi dei vincitori della guerra civile quanto quelli posteriori di De Valera imposero l'insegnamento del gaelico nelle scuole e la sua conoscenza come condizione per essere assunti nel servizio pubblico, con particolari incentivi per il *Gaeltacht*, le poche e poco popolate zone in cui l'irlandese era ancora la prima lingua: ma senza risultati di cui vantarsi, giacché negli anni Ottanta anche gli ultimi villaggi in cui esso era parlato passarono all'inglese. Dal punto di vista economico si cercò di applicare, e fino al 1959, il protezionismo assoluto di List, con risultati disastrosi (il paese, agricolo, era comunque di dimensioni troppo piccole per poter attuare un esperimento del genere, e l'esportazione verso la Gran Bretagna di prodotti agricoli e l'importazione da essa di manufatti era di fatto completa e obbligatoria). L'emigrazione, che era diminuita negli ultimi due decenni del dominio inglese, ritornò a essere inarrestabile²⁶.

²⁶ A proposito del primo quindicennio dello Stato Libero si veda Regan 2000.

Nel 1932 il partito di De Valera, sostenuto dallo IRA, riuscì a conquistare la maggioranza in parlamento, prendendo il governo. A loro onore i vincitori della guerra civile non cercarono di fare un colpo di stato. Le poche misure sociali che oggi si chiamerebbero “populiste”, a favore cioè degli strati più poveri della società, vennero prese tra gli anni Trenta e gli anni Cinquanta dai governi di De Valera, con effetti poco risolutivi, dato l’impianto strutturale. L’attenzione dei primi governi del Fianna Fáil fu rivolta a liberarsi dei lacci che il Trattato del 1921 imponeva allo Stato Libero. Già gli Statuti di Westminster del 1931 avevano stabilito l’uguaglianza e l’indipendenza legislative dei *Dominions* del Commonwealth britannico (cui lo Stato Libero era equiparato) con la Gran Bretagna. Una campagna di scontro politico, detta “guerra economica” per l’imposizione di dazi reciproci, venne condotta rispetto al governo di Londra dal 1932 al 1938. Uno degli scopi di questa azione di De Valera era senza dubbio di liberarsi gradualmente della competizione dello IRA, mostrando che la sua esistenza era ormai inutile. Passo fondamentale fu la scrittura di una nuova Costituzione nel 1936, compiuta in stretto contatto con prelati cattolici, entrata in vigore nel 1937. La nuova costituzione (che cominciava con “Nel Nome della Santissima Trinità”) aboliva il nome di Stato Libero, sostituendolo semplicemente con *Éire*, il nome dell’Irlanda in irlandese. Essa stabiliva che l’irlandese era la lingua ufficiale, e l’inglese solo una seconda lingua ufficiale, e imponeva i termini irlandesi per i nomi di tutte le istituzioni e le cariche statali. Inoltre, cancellando qualsiasi riferimento alla Gran Bretagna e al suo monarca, aboliva la carica di viceré o governatore, mettendo quale capo cerimoniale dello stato il Presidente d’Irlanda (il primo fu Douglas Hyde). Rivendicava come territorio dello stato l’intera isola d’Irlanda, e riconosceva la “posizione speciale” della Chiesa cattolica nel paese²⁷. Nell’aprile del 1938 la “guerra economica” e istituzionale con la Gran Bretagna finì tramite l’*Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement* stipulato col primo ministro britannico Neville Chamberlain, che rese all’Irlanda le quattro basi navali ancora occupate e le permise così, poi, di restare neutrale nella seconda guerra mondiale²⁸.

Il nazionalismo di De Valera insisteva nella retorica tradizionale mutuata dalla Giovane Irlanda di Davis, con però un’accentuazione del tratto confessionale cattolico e una esaltazione di una società contadina mitizzata (era anche lui figlio del “risveglio gaelico”). Quanto al rapporto con lo IRA, dopo essersene servito a fini di organizzazione dei votanti e di difesa contro le frange più scalmanate dei *Free Staters* (le *Blueshirts*, alquanto balordo e contraddittorio tentativo di sperimentare una forma di fascismo irlandese), e dopo avere ad esso sottratto con diversi provvedimenti un buon numero di

²⁷ Vedi *Bunreacht Na hÉireann (Constitution of Ireland)* 1937.

²⁸ Si veda a questo proposito in italiano Michelucci 1996-1997.

volontari (dalle pensioni per i veterani antitrattato della guerra civile, esclusi da esse dal governo di Cosgrave, fino all'arruolamento nel 1932-33 di un gruppo di alcune centinaia di volontari come nuova polizia politica armata), nel 1936 De Valera decise di mettere l'organizzazione fuori legge. L'Esercito Repubblicano adottò nel 1938 una linea militaristica che lo portò a compiere una campagna di attentati con esplosivi in Inghilterra e di attacchi in Irlanda del Nord, e di irruzioni per procurarsi armi nei depositi dell'esercito irlandese. Sopraggiunse di lì a pochi mesi la guerra mondiale, che rese queste attività dello IRA poco rilevanti per quanto riguardava la Gran Bretagna, ma relevantissime per quanto riguardava De Valera, che intendeva tutelare la neutralità dell'Éire nel conflitto mondiale quale prova d'indipendenza. Fece quindi calare il pugno di ferro: con nuovi provvedimenti eccezionali i repubblicani furono messi in galera e in campi di concentramento per la durata della guerra, mentre la squadra speciale di polizia di cui sopra sparava agli irriducibili nelle vie di Dublino. I malaccorti repubblicani proseguirono lo scontro anche dopo l'inizio della maggiore guerra, e alla fine di esso, nel 1944, lo IRA era stato pressoché spazzato via, tanto al nord quanto al sud: ma, mentre i volontari giustiziati dal Regno Unito furono solo tre, quelli giustiziati dallo stato di De Valera furono il doppio. Ricostituitosi con fatica il movimento dopo la guerra, tra il 1956 e il 1962 lo IRA tentò di fare una "campagna del confine" contro lo stato unionista dell'Irlanda del Nord (conclusasi con nulla utilità e una ventina di morti tra le due parti, senza che truppe britanniche dovessero soccorrere gli unionisti), escludendo questa volta ogni attacco contro lo stato del sud; ma nuovi provvedimenti eccezionali rimisero i repubblicani in prigione fino alla fine della campagna.

Appunto i nazionalisti più estremi di De Valera, quelli dello IRA e quelli del Sinn Féin, alla fine della guerra civile avevano dato vita a un bizzarro e paradossale fenomeno: il "legittimismo repubblicano". Mentre nel 1919 il parlamento dei ribelli aveva in effetti riconosciuto come proprio valido fondamento la Rivolta di Pasqua e la sua Proclamazione d'Indipendenza (avrebbe potuto invece limitarsi alla legittimità conferita dal voto popolare del dicembre 1918), il Sinn Féin e almeno parte dello IRA dopo il 1923 facevano risalire ancora più indietro la propria legittimità, fino a una espressione del giuramento feniano del 1859: "I [...] do solemnly swear allegiance to the Irish Republic, now virtually established". Un "now virtually established" che secondo loro rimandava ancora più indietro, fino agli United Irishmen. Una ininterrotta tradizione di legittimità repubblicana, con contenuti di radicalità sociale e di disposizione all'uso della violenza armata per fare avanzare la causa della indipendenza nazionale. Quanto al presente, agli occhi dei legittimisti repubblicani era evidente che l'unico governo valido e lecito della Repubblica irlandese, da centotrenta o centoquaranta anni comunque "virtualmente istituita", era costituito dai deputati del Dáil rivoluzionario del 1919-21 che non avevano ceduto al nemico e non avevano tradito, né accet-

tando il Trattato del 1921, né entrando nel partito di De Valera nel 1926. Gli ultimi sette di loro ancora in vita, in base alla stessa concezione, nel 1938 dichiararono che da quel momento l'unico legittimo governo della Repubblica irlandese sarebbe stato l'organo direttivo ed esecutivo dell'Esercito Repubblicano, l'*Army Council* composto di sette membri, cui trasferivano la sovranità per il futuro, fino alla vittoria completa della Repubblica "virtualmente istituita". Il "legittimismo repubblicano" è continuato fino a oggi. Quando nel 1969 – iniziato il conflitto nel nord - molti volontari si ribellarono alla dirigenza dello IRA che aveva preso il controllo alla fine della campagna del 1956-62, dirigenza che aveva fatto proprio un marxismo staliniano che a loro giudizio abbandonava i principi repubblicani irlandesi, gli scissionisti che diedero vita a IRA e Sinn Féin "*Provisional*" fecero appello all'ultimo membro sopravvissuto del Dáil per avere conferma della propria posizione. E quando nel 1986 lo stesso movimento repubblicano Provisional accettò di porre termine al suo astensionismo riguardo al parlamento di Dublino, i nuovi scissionisti tradizionalisti (che poi organizzarono il Republican Sinn Féin e il Continuity IRA) chiesero ancora allo stesso anzianissimo deputato di giudicare la loro interpretazione. Gli stessi Provisional, comunque, hanno considerato il proprio Army Council come unico legittimo governo dell'Irlanda almeno fino all'inizio degli anni 2000, anche se in pubblico scantonavano al riguardo. Un elemento, questo legittimismo nato negli anni Venti, che precedentemente non sembra fosse mai esistito nelle periodiche fioriture del movimento repubblicano.

Quanto alla ideologia e alla composizione sociale, lo IRA dagli anni Venti fino alla fine del secolo ha mantenuto la stessa composizione sociale prevalente che avevano i feniani della IRB dell'Ottocento: classe operaia, artigiani, contadini, esercenti, gestori di pub, qualche insegnante, insomma "men of no property" in stragrande maggioranza rispetto a borghesi, possidenti, agrari, commercianti, professionisti. Quindi persone le cui aspirazioni ben si rispecchiavano nell'idea di una repubblica democratica indipendente, socialmente egualitaria. Corrispondenza tra Feniani e IRA che forse deriva dal fatto che la società irlandese è rimasta per alcuni aspetti fortemente classista nonostante il trascorrere di molti decenni, con l'aggiunta della permanenza della questione nazionale e della presenza della corona britannica nell'Irlanda del Nord dalla Partizione. Quanto all'ideologia, il fatto che uno dei leader e martiri della Rivolta di Pasqua, Connolly, fosse un marxista fece sì che anche nello IRA, e fin dalla guerra civile, vi fossero nel caso di alcuni, o di gruppi, tentativi di innestare sul tronco repubblicano elementi di socialismo, più o meno marxista, più o meno ortodosso. In particolare negli anni Trenta (vedi Hanley 2002), poi di nuovo negli anni Sessanta (con spaventevoli risultati, quali gli *Officials* e le loro scissioni: vedi Hanley 2009), poi ancora tra i Provisional dalla fine degli anni Settanta. In ogni tempo vi sono stati nei due movimenti dei protestanti,

per quanto minoranza talvolta minima, e persino nell'Ulster. Riguardo a infiltrazioni di altre ideologie, anche se lo IRA militaristico (così come lo erano state alcune scissioni dei feniani) del 1938-44 oggettivamente aiutava lo sforzo bellico nazifascista, solo due, su migliaia di membri del movimento, vennero infettati da quella tabe che, certo, era l'opposto di tutto ciò che i feniani della IRB amavano. Ma, di nuovo, sembra che in quei due casi fosse invece all'opera l'"Irlanda-Irlandese" dell'inizio secolo nella sua forma più esclusivistica e razzista²⁹. Allo stesso tempo il laicismo repubblicano ha avuto nel XX secolo delle oscillazioni che non si erano mai viste nell'antica IRB: negli anni Venti e Trenta capitava talvolta che reparti locali dello IRA agissero nelle campagne come polizia per la repressione del vizio e l'incoraggiamento della virtù su incarico di sacerdoti cattolici; e nel 1950, quando ricostituirono il movimento repubblicano come organismo unico (da quel momento il Sinn Féin sarebbe stato solo il volto politico dello IRA), i dirigenti dello IRA chiesero ai vescovi cattolici di controllare il giuramento di adesione all'Esercito e i loro statuti politici e sociali per accertare che non vi fosse niente di contrario alla dottrina cattolica: cose che nessun feniano della IRB si sarebbe mai sognato di fare.

In sostanza, come per ogni fenomeno storico ricorrente, come abbiamo visto accadere per il nazionalismo irlandese riformista o costituzionale o "moderato", da O'Connell a De Valera, così per il repubblicanesimo indipendentista dagli *United Irishmen* al tempo presente gli stessi temi riaffiorano, tra una epifania e un'altra, con somiglianze ma anche con differenze significative a seconda del mutare dello sfondo, e delle mode anche transnazionali del periodo. Certo è assurda, come notava Owen McGee nelle conclusioni del suo volume sulla IRB, l'idea nutrita da molti repubblicani irlandesi del XX secolo, e fortemente influenzata dal singolare "legittimismo repubblicano" di cui abbiamo detto, di una continua, mai spezzata tradizione indipendentista da Wolfe Tone ai giorni nostri.

Quanto all'Irlanda di oggi, finito almeno per ora il lungo conflitto nel Nord e con lo stato britannico con l'anch'esso lungo processo di pace, essa non ha ancora raggiunto l'unità. E la stessa Irlanda, che specie nella Repubblica ambisce a essere multiculturale, libera da ogni precedente bigottismo, aperta al mondo globalizzato e in particolare alla Unione Europea, in che misura è indipendente? Vedrà scaturire ancora forme di nazionalismo? E quali e quante? Una, nessuna, o centomila?

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²⁹ Sul più noto dei due, vedi O'Donoghue 2010.

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L'Armenia moderna: rinascita nazionale e risorgimento mancato

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Abstract:

From the beginning of the 18th century up to the 1915 genocide, Armenian culture underwent a complex, intensive modernization process of a very ancient identity, strongly underpinned by Christianity. After centuries under Islamic domination, this process developed in the shape of a well-organized convergence with Europe as a primarily cultural, but also political model. "Rebirth" (*veracnund*) and "Awakening" (*zart'onk'*) are the traditional keywords in a modernization process begun in the 18th century by the Christian humanism of the Mekhitarist Catholic Monastic Order in Venice and the "eccentric" enlightenment of the Indian colonies, continuing in the nineteenth and early 20th centuries by means of wide-ranging polycentric activity, which led to significant progress in the cultural field. However, this process could not evolve politically, mostly owing to an international situation that was opposed to Armenian national aspirations. Instead of a "Risorgimento" the Armenian people, during the 20th century, experienced the tragedy of genocide and the suffering of a *diaspora*, especially in the earlier stages. This negative situation was only partially softened by the setting up of a small independent republic in 1918, initially under a soviet type regime and now in a state of precarious independence.

Keywords: Armenian identity, Diaspora, Genocide, Modernization, Resilience

1. Un popolo antico

Pochi popoli hanno una storia tanto antica e complessa come quella degli Armeni¹. Formatasi intorno al VI secolo a.C. in seguito a processi etno-gene-

¹ Per un quadro generale della storia armena si vedano gli studi di Dédéyan 2002; Hovannisian 2004; Panossian 2006.

tici che videro presumibilmente la fusione di elementi locali e indo-europei², gli Armeni sono stati dapprima sudditi dei Persiani achemenidi e dei Macedoni, per poi creare un proprio importante e vasto regno che attraverso varie vicissitudini sopravvisse sino al 428 d. C., quando venne spartito tra i Persiani sasanidi e i Bizantini. Agli inizi del IV secolo ebbe luogo la conversione di questo popolo al cristianesimo, che da allora costituisce un elemento fondamentale della sua identità storica e culturale. Intorno alla metà del VII secolo anche l'Armenia venne costretta ad accettare la dominazione araba, ma alla fine del IX secolo ritrovò la sua indipendenza sotto la dinastia bagratide. Quella che seguì fu un'epoca di grande splendore culturale, ma la forza dell'Armenia venne presto compromessa dalla frammentazione "feudale" del paese, sinché i Bizantini se ne impadronirono nuovamente tra il 1021 ed il 1045, per essere poco dopo sostituiti dai Turchi selgiuchidi.

2. *Madrepatria e colonie*

Da allora e sino al 1918 gli Armeni non ebbero più un proprio stato nei territori della madrepatria – ma ne crearono uno in Cilicia che sopravvisse sino al 1375³ – e venne progressivamente meno il loro tradizionale sistema socio-politico, per alcuni aspetti simile a quello dell'Alto Medioevo europeo, con una scarsa rete urbana, un potere reale limitato dalla preponderanza della nobiltà, che in tempo di guerra costituiva una formidabile cavalleria corazzata. La fine dei regni nazionali nella madrepatria e in Cilicia, provocata soprattutto da una serie di devastanti invasioni (dopo i Selgiuchidi sono da ricordare almeno Mongoli, Turcomanni e Ottomani), determinò la dissoluzione del tradizionale sistema tribale-feudale del popolo armeno, la cui società passò allora da un sistema a "maglie strette", nel quale i membri della nazione vivevano su un territorio circoscritto costituendone l'elemento dominante, ad uno a "maglie larghe", con vasti intervalli spaziali tra le comunità armene, separate tra loro da popolazioni etnicamente e culturalmente diverse (cfr. Manoukian 1988, 76-77). Se anche in precedenza erano riscontrabili dinamiche di emigrazione di questo popolo, soprattutto nell'impero bizantino, tale processo si intensificò sensibilmente dopo la scomparsa dei regni nazionali. Benché la maggior parte degli Armeni rimanesse nella madrepatria, sempre più numerosi furono quelli che scelsero la via dell'emigrazione. Iniziò allora una vera e propria dispersione di questo popolo, destinata a rafforzarsi progressivamente in seguito al peggioramento delle condizioni di vita nella madrepatria, ormai quasi completamente

² Sulle complesse e controverse questioni riguardanti l'etnogenesi degli Armeni faccio riferimento alle posizioni più diffuse e accettate Hewsen, Feydit 2002, e Russell 2004. Importante anche il più recente articolo di van Lint 2009.

³ Boase 1978; Mutaftian 1988; Mutaftian 1993; Ghazarian 2000. Al regno armeno di Cilicia sono dedicati anche alcuni capitoli del volume di Hovannisian, Pavaslianeds 2008.

inserita in un contesto politico e culturale islamico⁴. Tra le tappe più significative di questa diaspora armena possiamo ricordare: 1) la Cilicia; 2) la Crimea; 3) l'Europa orientale; 4) l'Italia e l'Europa occidentale; 5) la Persia; 6) l'Impero ottomano; 7) la Georgia; 8) l'India; 9) l'Impero russo.

In seguito a questo processo migratorio, una parte consistente del popolo armeno conobbe una sorta di “mutamento antropologico” sviluppando rimarchevoli attitudini commerciali ed imprenditoriali, in precedenza relativamente poco presenti al suo interno (cfr. Zekiyani 1997, 39-49; Panossian 2006, 75-100). Gli eventi storici posero infatti il popolo armeno dinanzi ad una sfida – nel senso toynbeeano del termine – in seguito alla quale si creò una situazione di sdoppiamento antropologico e sociale tra le comunità della madrepatria e quelle diasporiche che, *mutatis mutandis*, perdura ancora oggi.

Sin dal XVII secolo esisteva una solida e ramificata classe media, soprattutto commerciale, che si affiancava all'unica istituzione nazionale superstita – la Chiesa – come elemento guida della società armena, promuovendone la modernizzazione, almeno da un punto di vista economico (cfr. Kouymjian 1995). E questa classe si era formata essenzialmente in diaspora, nella vasta rete delle colonie armene. Come è stato osservato, a differenza delle colonie greche e latine, ma anche del moderno colonialismo europeo, gli Armeni:

[...] non *colonizzano*, cioè non *impongono* la propria cultura perché privi di un retroterra che conferisca loro possibilità concrete in tal senso. [...] Privata [...] la madre patria delle sue colonne portanti, queste si ricreeranno in un certo qual modo in diaspora, a Costantinopoli, a Tiflis, in Polonia, come risultato di un'esigenza di sopravvivenza comunitaria [...]. (Zekiyani 2000, 143)

In effetti, dopo il crollo dei regni nazionali furono proprio le colonie armene a manifestare un forte vitalità culturale, di fronte ad una madrepatria devastata da invasioni e dominazioni straniere. Fu nelle colonie che si ebbero infatti i passi fondamentali dello sviluppo della cultura armena moderna. Le dinamiche delle colonie armene sono per certi versi accostabili a quelle di altre comunità diasporiche, in primo luogo l'ebraica⁵. Si tratta nell'un caso come nell'altro di gruppi mobili diasporici, per riprendere il modello proposto dal politologo americano John Armstrong, che appartengono alla cosiddetta *archetypical diaspora*, in cui ha un particolare ruolo l'identità religiosa, in assenza di una grande madrepatria alle spalle, come è invece il caso di altri gruppi mobili diasporici quali i Tedeschi, nell'Europa centrale e orientale, o i Cinesi, nell'Asia sudorientale (cfr. Armstrong 1976; Armstrong 1978).

⁴ Per comprendere le dinamiche di questo fenomeno sono fondamentali le riflessioni sulle distinte nozioni di “colonia” e “diaspora”, cfr. Zekiyani 1966a. Si vedano anche gli articoli di Ter Minassian 1997 e Ferrari 2013.

⁵ Su questo aspetto, in particolare per l'epoca moderna, si veda Hovannisian, Myers 1999.

Occorre tuttavia osservare che ovunque le condizioni esterne fossero favorevoli, le colonie armenie svilupparono un modello particolare di “integrazione differenziata” che si distinse nettamente sia da quello “assimilatorio”, in cui la comunità diasporica viene assorbita dalla società circostante, sia da quello “di ghetto”, in cui la sopravvivenza è assicurata a prezzo di una chiusura, volontaria o coatta, all’ambiente esterno. “Integrazione differenziata” significa cioè il mantenimento dei caratteri fondamentali della propria identità (religione, cultura, lingua) pur nell’inserimento nella società circostante, della quale si assorbono al tempo stesso alcuni, se non tutti, gli elementi salienti. In questo senso, il concetto di “integrazione differenziata” è strettamente collegato a quello di “identità polivalente”, che denota proprio una situazione di compresenza di più culture in una medesima persona ed in una medesima comunità. Una situazione poco diffusa nell’Europa moderna, soprattutto in quella occidentale, segnata dalla secolare tendenza all’omogeneizzazione politica, sociale e culturale su cui si sono costruiti nei secoli gli stati nazionali, ma assai diffusa nei sistemi imperiali dell’Europa centrale e orientale e del Vicino Oriente. L’esistenza di identità “polivalenti” è peraltro caratteristica soprattutto delle comunità non dominanti, ed in particolare di quelle che per le ragioni storiche più differenti si vengono a trovare in una posizione “di frontiera” o “di diaspora” (Zekiyan 2000, 164-173).

Lo sviluppo delle attività artigianali, mercantili e finanziarie, che hanno in seguito reso famosi – ma non sempre amati – gli Armeni in tutto il mondo, è stato quindi una risposta vitale ed energica allo sradicamento forzato dal territorio ancestrale ed alla necessità di adattarsi alla realtà diasporica. Gli Armeni giunsero infatti, soprattutto nei secoli XVII-XVIII, a controllare in larga misura il commercio tra Oriente e Occidente grazie alla fitta ed efficiente rete di rapporti e relazioni creatasi tra le loro numerose colonie. Uno studioso di storia economica ha osservato che gli Armeni “[...] have been the most successful of trading groups in the broader Asian trade and the individual fortunes they accumulated were at least as great as those of the most successful merchants in London and Amsterdam” (Curtin 1984, 203-204)⁶. Le ragioni del duraturo successo del commercio armeno, dall’India all’Etiopia, dalla Cina all’Europa, sono molteplici: dalla scelta di operare in regioni trascurate dai rivali all’abilità nell’uso dei più diversi mezzi di trasporto, dagli stretti legami tra le diverse comunità diasporiche alla tradizione di esperienza diplomatica e mediazione culturale trasmessa di padre in figlio. A questi elementi ne va probabilmente aggiunto un altro, di carattere strettamente culturale, vale a dire il rapporto privilegiato degli Armeni con la modernità.

⁶ Di particolare interesse per la ricostruzione del commercio armeno in quest’epoca lo studio di Arslanian 2011.

3. *Gli Armeni e la modernità*

Il processo di modernizzazione degli Armeni ha seguito percorsi autonomi, strettamente collegati alle specifiche dinamiche del contesto socio-culturale e politico in cui erano inseriti. Su tale processo ha comunque influito non poco la stessa particolarità della lunga storia di questo popolo.

Per gli Armeni, cristiani sin dall'inizio del IV secolo ed impegnati per secoli a mantenere una identità culturale nella quale l'elemento religioso giocava un ruolo essenziale, il lungo inserimento nel contesto politico e sociale islamico, che pure deve essere analizzato in tutti i suoi differenti aspetti e momenti, determinò sicuramente una fase di profondo declino. I secoli XV-XVI costituirono per gli Armeni, privi di ogni autonoma statualità, inseriti in imperi musulmani più o meno oppressivi, dispersi in una diaspora spesso dinamica ma pur sempre dolorosa, il periodo più oscuro della loro millenaria storia. In tutto questo periodo l'Europa cristiana fu, nonostante le differenze confessionali⁷, una sorta di terra promessa, alla quale si guardava con trepidante speranza, in un atteggiamento di messianica attesa⁸. Numerose missioni, guidate da ecclesiastici per via del ruolo di guida esercitato dalla Chiesa su tutte le comunità armene in assenza di ogni potere civile, tentarono in questo periodo di mantenere vivo il legame degli Armeni con l'Europa cristiana. Tuttavia, al di là di generiche promesse, tali missioni non ottennero alcun aiuto concreto. I tempi delle crociate erano passati e nella Realpolitik degli stati moderni un'azione a favore dei cristiani del Vicino Oriente risultava del tutto improponibile (cfr. Sisakian 1981, 21). L'Europa rimase quindi un miraggio, la cui immagine si modificò peraltro con il passare del tempo, integrando l'aspetto religioso con quelli – politici, culturali e socio-economici – della nascente modernità. Per gli Armeni, pertanto, il processo di modernizzazione equivalse in pratica a quello di europeizzazione, consentendo loro di accoglierlo in maniera più indolore di quanto è risultato possibile ad altri popoli del Vicino Oriente e, più in generale, extra-europei. La ricezione della modernizzazione, cioè, li riaccostò alla civiltà cristiana dalla quale erano stati allontanati da secoli di forzato inserimento in un contesto islamico ed asiatico, configuratosi con il passare dei secoli non solo come ampiamente estraneo e minaccioso, ma anche come arretrato rispetto alla modernità europea.

⁷ Sulla Chiesa Apostolica Armena – appartenente al novero delle Chiese che non accettarono le tesi cristologiche del Concilio di Calcedonia del 451, note quindi come precalcedonite – si vedano soprattutto gli studi Arpee 1946; Mécérian 1965; Kaloustian 1969; Heiser 1983; Pane 2005.

⁸ Su questo tema rimando al mio articolo, “La salvezza viene da Occidente. Il messianesimo apocalittico nella cultura armena”, in Ferrari 2008a, 47-64.

Il processo di modernizzazione della società armena è stato solo di recente oggetto di studi specifici. In precedenza questo aspetto veniva non tanto ignorato quanto inserito in approcci storiografici differenti, in particolare nelle categorie di “movimento di liberazione”, “sviluppo”, “rinascita”, “risveglio” (*azatagrakanšaržum, zargac’um, veracnund, zart’onk*). A partire dagli anni 80 del XX secolo, tuttavia, questo aspetto ha iniziato ad essere preso autonomamente in considerazione, senza dubbio risentendo delle discussioni che su tale problema avevano luogo nella cultura contemporanea, soprattutto occidentale. Senza tuttavia che si sia giunti ad un accordo definitivo sulla natura e la stessa cronologia della modernizzazione tra gli Armeni. Esiste infatti un sostanziale contrasto tra gli studiosi che si basano sui dati economici, secondo i quali il periodo moderno inizia per gli armeni nella prima parte del XVII secolo, con una fase di gestazione premoderna nel XVI, e quelli che – facendo riferimento agli aspetti culturali – pospongono invece questo ingresso al XIX secolo (cfr. Zekiyān 1997, 13). Si tratta in effetti di due fenomeni differenti: da un lato si osserva la comparsa di nuove strutture sociali nelle comunità armene, in particolare nella diaspora, dall’altro la mentalità rimase ampiamente tradizionale per tutto il XIX secolo, soprattutto nelle aree rurali (cfr. Kouymjian 1995, 220). In ogni caso la transizione alla modernità non fu per gli Armeni una cesura improvvisa e rivoluzionaria, ma piuttosto il compimento di un lungo processo evolutivo, al cui interno possono essere individuate quattro fasi fondamentali: a) un periodo di gestazione, che va dai primi decenni del XVI secolo, quando a Venezia vennero stampati i primi libri in armeno, sino all’illuminato patriarcato di Movses IV Ta’ēwac’i (1629-1632); b) una seconda fase, che vide la fioritura del capitalismo armeno, grosso modo dal 1630 al 1700, data in cui venne fondata la congregazione mechtarista; c) un periodo umanistico o di “rinascita” (*veracnund*, 1700-1840), a sua volta da dividere in una prima fase, “mechtarista”, di rivitalizzazione dell’eredità religiosa e culturale armena ed una “illuminista”, che si sviluppò inizialmente nelle colonie dell’India; d) infine il periodo della secolarizzazione, che si può convenzionalmente far iniziare intorno al 1840, quando l’uso della lingua volgare cominciò ad essere prevalente. Quest’ultimo periodo è spesso indicato come epoca del “risveglio” (*zart’onk*) e durò sino al genocidio del 1915 (cfr. Zekiyān 1997, 26-29).

La dispersione geografica e la grande capacità di recepire gli stimoli esterni, senza perdere con questo i punti salienti della loro specificità nazionale, hanno in effetti consentito agli Armeni – come peraltro anche ad Ebrei e Greci – di accogliere i fermenti della modernità con notevole anticipo rispetto ad altri popoli del Vicino Oriente e farsene inoltre attivi propagatori in questa regione, tanto nella sfera culturale quanto in quella socio-politica⁹. Un’attitudine favorita certo anche

⁹ Per uno sguardo d’insieme sui processi di modernizzazione nel Vicino Oriente si veda Polk, Chamberseds 1968; Yapp 1987.

dal fatto che, come si è accennato in precedenza, la modernità si presentava loro come frutto di quell'Europa cristiana dalla quale erano stati separati da secoli di inserimento nel contesto islamico. Pertanto non ebbero luogo tra loro i fenomeni di radicale contrapposizione ad una modernità europea ed occidentale, che hanno invece caratterizzato ed ancora caratterizzano altre realtà extra-europee. Tra gli Armeni la resistenza alla modernizzazione ebbe invece carattere limitato ad alcuni aspetti di tale processo che, nel suo insieme, venne quindi largamente recepito per il duplice significato positivo che assumeva ai loro occhi, in quanto veicolo di progresso e di avvicinamento all'Europa.

Ma è importante comprendere come al di là del loro essere, o sentirsi o essere percepiti, spesso in maniera stereotipata, degli "Europei in Asia"¹⁰, gli Armeni poterono in effetti sviluppare un atteggiamento recettivo nei confronti della modernità europea proprio in virtù della secolare capacità di mantenere una "identità multidimensionale" e di porsi in una relazione di "integrazione differenziata" con i diversi ambienti in cui si sono trovati a vivere¹¹. Anche nel rapporto con la modernità gli Armeni hanno quindi confermato quel ruolo di mediazione, di "frontiera", tra culture e sistemi che sembra costituire la loro cifra specifica. Un dato che si osserva sia tra gli Armeni occidentali¹², questo aspetto dei quali è ben noto, che tra quelli orientali, che si dimostrarono altrettanto attivi nel recepire la modernità mediata dalla cultura russa ed a rendersene rapidamente interpreti. Nell'ambito della creazione artistico-letteraria, ad esempio, ma anche nell'attività economica, in primo luogo nello sviluppo capitalistico ed industriale della Transcaucasia alla fine del XIX secolo che, come vedremo, fu in misura notevole opera degli Armeni. Gli Armeni orientali, inoltre, furono promotori di modernità anche al di fuori della Russia. Basti pensare al loro ruolo nella modernizzazione culturale e politica dell'impero ottomano¹³ e di quello persiano¹⁴ tra Ottocento e Novecento.

In questo senso la modernità, più che un momento di lacerante rottura o di assoluta innovazione, può essere considerata l'ultima delle sfide provenienti dall'esterno e che la cultura armena, nel corso della sua storia millena-

¹⁰ Così, tra gli altri, li definì l'armenista russo Jurij Veselovskij (1872-1918). Cfr. Veselovskij 1972, 390.

¹¹ Su questi concetti si vedano soprattutto gli studi di Zekiyan 1990b; 1993; 1995; 1996a; 1996b.

¹² Per quanto discutibile, la distinzione – di origine essenzialmente linguistica – tra gli Armeni occidentali, che vivevano nell'impero ottomano, e quelli orientali, insediati invece nell'impero persiano ed in quello russo, continua ad essere ampiamente usata e conserva una sua utilità.

¹³ Si pensi al loro ruolo nelle industrie, nelle banche, nei commerci, ma anche nello sviluppo del teatro turco moderno, nell'introduzione della massoneria o nell'attività costituzionale. Cfr. Zekiyan 1997, soprattutto 61, 74-75.

¹⁴ Su questo aspetto si vedano gli studi di Hamid 1973; Chaqueri 1988.

ria, ha sempre saputo accogliere ed integrare senza perdere per questo la sua identità specifica, ma riplasmandola di volta in volta in base a nuove sintesi (cfr. Zekiyan 1997, 22).

4. *Il problema dell'identità nazionale armena moderna*

All'interno del problema generale della modernizzazione degli Armeni è di particolare rilevanza l'evoluzione nel periodo trattato dell'autocoscienza "nazionale". L'uso costante del termine "nazionale" (*azgayin*) all'interno della cultura e della storiografia armena deve essere posto a confronto con gli esiti della riflessione sul concetto di nazione che negli ultimi decenni ha suscitato molto interesse, soprattutto in reazione o in risposta alle tragedie derivanti dai nazionalismi nel XX secolo. Tale questione è stata affrontata da una vasta messe di studi di diverso orientamento, spesso stimolanti, ma non sempre rispettosi della realtà storica, sovente piegata a generalizzazioni forzate e deformata da intenti ideologici di dubbia legittimità¹⁵.

Nella prima metà del secolo, aldilà dell'atteggiamento verso il nazionalismo come ideologia, la maggior parte degli studiosi e dell'opinione pubblica era convinta che la nazione fosse un dato altrettanto "naturale" del linguaggio o addirittura del corpo umano (cfr. Smith 1992, 37). In particolare questa concezione è presente nelle opere di quelli che possono essere considerati i fondatori dello studio accademico del nazionalismo dopo la prima guerra mondiale, vale a dire C.B. Hayes e Hans Kohn. Del resto l'evoluzione politica generale di questo periodo, fondata – come sanzionato a Versailles – soprattutto sul riconoscimento dello stato-nazione, sembrava legittimare pienamente tale impostazione. Che nella seconda metà del XX secolo è stata tuttavia messa in crisi tanto dalla costituzione di importanti stati non nazionali – quali India, Nigeria, Indonesia – quanto dal revival etnico di popoli inseriti in nazioni storiche, dai Fiamminghi ai Bretoni ai Baschi. Inoltre, hanno pesato in questa nuova valutazione anche fattori come la forte limitazione dell'autonomia nazionale provocata dalla lunga appartenenza ai due blocchi ideologici durante la Guerra Fredda e la crescente globalizzazione economica (Smith 1992, 38). Tutto questo ha iniziato ad imporre nuovi approcci allo studio del problema delle nazioni. Una nuova tendenza, che sulla scorta di A.D. Smith possiamo definire "modernista", sostiene che "la nazione, lungi dall'essere un elemento naturale o necessario nella struttura della società e

¹⁵ All'interno dell'immensa bibliografia sul nazionalismo mi limito ad indicare i testi più significativi del dibattito che ha avuto e continua ad aver luogo su questo tema: Hayes 1931; Kohn 1944; Kohn 1955; Kedurie 1960; Deutsch 1962; Lemberg 1964; Hroch 1968; Deutsch 1969; Kedourie 1971; Smith 1971; Kamenka 1976; Seton-Watson 1977; Smith 1981; Armstrong 1982; Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hroch 1985; Smith 1986; Hobsbawm 1990; Smith 1992; Fabietti 1995; Periwal 1995; Delanty, Krishan 2006; Jones 2006; Gat, Yakobson 2012.

della storia, è un fenomeno esclusivamente moderno, un prodotto di sviluppi estremamente moderni quali il capitalismo, la burocrazia e l'utilitarismo secolare. [...] Le nazioni ed il nazionalismo si possono far risalire alla seconda metà del diciottesimo secolo; tutto ciò che sembra essere simile, nell'antichità o nel Medioevo, deve essere considerato fortuito o eccezionale" (ivi, 40).

Nonostante esista una corrente definita usualmente "primordialista" o, in una variante più flessibile, "perennista", che reimposta la questione del dato nazionale collegandolo all'etnicità, intesa come un'estensione della famiglia e quindi come unità di base dell'organizzazione sociale (cfr. Shils 1957; Gertz 1963; Van den Berghe 1979; Fishman 1980), la posizione "modernista" appare oggi prevalente a livello scientifico. Tuttavia, secondo l'indicazione di Smith, probabilmente il più equilibrato ed autorevole studioso odierno di questi problemi, non è opportuno dicotomizzare forzatamente le due posizioni, perenniste e moderniste, ma occorre invece prestare attenzione ai momenti di continuità non meno che a quelli di rottura nell'ambito della vita associata delle diverse culture, tradizionali e moderne, agricole e industriali: "Vi sono stati importanti mutamenti nei sentimenti collettivi, persino cambiamenti di forma, ma questi sono avvenuti all'interno di una struttura preesistente di lealtà e identità collettive, che ha condizionato i cambiamenti tanto quanto essi l'hanno influenzata"¹⁶.

Il dato nazionale va quindi considerato al di fuori dei rigidi assunti delle due scuole contrapposte, senza considerarle né un dato primario e naturale dell'esistere umano né "un tic nervoso del capitalismo", ma tenendo ben presente la continuità dei processi storici ed i rapporti sottili tra le nazioni moderne e le più antiche etnie, e tra il nazionalismo moderno ed altri tipi di sentimento collettivo. In particolare occorre evitare un discorso generalizzante, che trascuri la specificità dei dati storici concreti o che li utilizzi in maniera superficiale e strumentale al solo fine di dimostrare la validità di un dato criterio interpretativo. Se è vero che non sono pochi i casi di tradizioni ed etnie "inventate" per andare incontro alle esigenze, reali o presunte, della modernità, non è meno vero che in molti altri casi le nazioni moderne e gli stati-nazione si sono costituiti sulla base di "etnie stabili e durevoli". Co-

¹⁶ Smith 1992, 50. Ancora A.D. Smith ha portato un notevole contributo in queste ricerche sostenendo la necessità di studiare non solo i dati "oggettivi" di una comunità etnica (popolazione, risorse economiche, sistemi di distribuzione), ma anche quelli soggettivi, soprattutto "gli attributi più permanenti della memoria, del valore, del mito e del simbolismo". Su questa base lo studioso inglese contesta molte delle posizioni di perennalisti e modernisti. In particolare, senza accogliere la tesi dei primi sul carattere naturale e primordiale del dato nazionale, A. D. Smith insiste sulla necessità di correggere l'approccio modernista alla luce dell'evidenza di come molte nazioni continuino tradizioni e simboli di etnie preesistenti, organizzati in quello che egli, seguendo ancora J. Armstrong, chiama *mythomoteur*, vale a dire il complesso mito-simbolico che è alla base di un determinato sistema etnico e politico (ivi, 54).

me avviene, ad esempio, tra gli Ebrei o tra gli stessi Armeni, soprattutto grazie alla forte continuità identitaria intorno alle rispettive tradizioni religiose (Smith 1992, 201-266).

Questo approccio consente a mio avviso di leggere con maggiore fedeltà alla realtà storica il dato della persistenza dell'elemento etnico o nazionale *tout court*, senza peraltro sminuire la portata della frattura determinata dalla modernità, intellettuale, socio-economica e politica, la cui affermazione ha posto le condizioni per la nascita delle nazioni in senso moderno e degli stati-nazione¹⁷. Ma, come osserva ancora Smith:

[...] anche se le rivoluzioni del capitalismo industriale, dello stato burocratico e dell'educazione di massa laica rappresentano uno spartiacque nella storia umana che è paragonabile alla transizione neolitica, esse non hanno cancellato o reso obsolete molte delle culture o delle identità formatesi nelle poche premoderne. Esse hanno certamente trasformato molte di esse; altre le hanno distrutte, altre ancora amalgamate e riportate in vita. Il destino di queste culture e identità è dipeso tanto dalle loro caratteristiche interne, quanto dalla ineguale incidenza delle rivoluzioni moderne. Infatti gli elementi costituenti di queste identità e culture possono spesso essere adattati a nuove circostanze accordando loro nuovi significati e nuove funzioni. Perciò diventa importante una indagine sullo stato dell'identità culturale di una data comunità alla vigilia della sua esposizione alle nuove forze rivoluzionarie, al fine di localizzare la base della sua successiva evoluzione in una *nazione* pienamente dispiegata. (*Ibidem*, 31)

In questo senso un contributo importante è stato portato dagli studi di Miroslav Hroch, che ha analizzato le costanti della nascita delle nazioni moderne sulla base dell'evoluzione storico-politica, sociale e culturale di alcune popolazioni dell'Europa settentrionale e centro-orientale. Lo studioso ceco ha individuato all'interno del processo di modernizzazione dell'identità nazionale di tali etnie tre fasi distinte: a) un piccolo gruppo di intellettuali, spesso appartenenti al clero, elabora l'idea di nazionalità e sviluppa un "atteggiamento scientifico verso la nazione"; b) il numero di questi intellettuali aumenta e si rivolge alle masse per conquistarle ad un programma di emancipazione culturale e poi politica; c) fase nazionalistica di massa¹⁸.

Gli studi di Hroch non prendono in considerazione gli Armeni, il cui caso presenta del resto notevoli differenze (l'estrema antichità, la memoria di regni nazionali, la forte individualità religiosa intorno alla Chiesa apostolica, la diffusione

¹⁷ Di notevole importanza in questa evoluzione appare quel complesso di fenomeni – migliori collegamenti, accresciuta sicurezza, diffusione di scuole e giornali, affermazione degli eserciti di leva e così via – che K. Deutsch ha definito di "comunicazione sociale". Cfr. Deutsch 1962.

¹⁸ Hroch ha sviluppato queste tesi dapprima in due opere pubblicate a Praga (Hroch 1968) e *Obzreny malých evropských narodů. Narody severní a východní Evropy* (1971), quindi in Hroch 1985.

di una vasta diaspora pur nella persistenza dell'insediamento nella madrepatria) rispetto a quelli di popoli più "giovani" come Estoni, Slovacchi e così via¹⁹, ma il suo schema di evoluzione può essere utilmente applicato, pur con le inevitabili precisazioni, anche all'insieme della società armena (orientale e occidentale).

Per quel che riguarda il Caucaso meridionale, l'approccio "modernista" allo studio del problema-nazione è stato esplicitamente utilizzato da R.G. Suny – uno studioso statunitense di origine armena – con particolare riferimento ai casi armeno e georgiano²⁰. Gli esiti di questa impostazione appaiono stimolanti, spesso provocatori nei confronti della interpretazione storica dominante, in particolare di quella armena, che lo studioso statunitense definisce troppo isolata da quella universale ed eccessivamente concentrata su se stessa, poco critica e spesso dilettantesca in molti suoi interpreti (cfr. Suny 1993, 2). In particolare Suny contesta l'idea che la storia armena costituisca un insieme continuo ed omogeneo, pervaso sempre dai medesimi ideali e da uno spirito unitario, mettendo cioè radicalmente in discussione il teleologismo storiografico che reinterpreta forzatamente il passato alla luce del presente, vale a dire alla formazione della moderna nazione armena. Suny pone questo "essenzialismo" alla base dell'ideologia nazionalista armena (ivi, 4). Egli propone invece un'idea più aperta del concetto di nazionalità, fondata su una valutazione critica delle fonti storiche, nella consapevolezza del carattere spesso arbitrario delle tradizioni, talvolta inventate più spesso ricreate e manipolate (ivi, 5). Nel caso armeno, dopo la frattura rappresentata dal crollo dei regni nazionali in Subcaucasia ed in Cilicia, la memoria del passato nazionale è stata a lungo preservata solo da monaci colti, sino a culminare nell'opera dei Mechitaristi, che nel XVIII secolo pubblicarono le antiche cronache e scrissero storie del popolo armeno fondate su di esse. Ma secondo Suny in questo modo sarebbe stata elaborata una immagine continuista ed unitaria della storia armena in contrasto con una realtà storica fatta di "migrazioni, invasioni, conquiste e brutali stermini", cosicché ben scarso fondamento può avere, se non a livello appunto di "comunità immaginate" o di "tradizioni inventate", l'idea di una qualsiasi continuità tra un armeno pagano dell'Armenia dell'epoca achemenide (VI-IV secoli a.C.) e un abitante dell'odierna Erevan (ivi, 7). Né, continua lo storico statunitense, l'Armenia storica può essere in alcun modo considerata uno stato-nazione in senso moderno, data la sua struttura sostanzialmente feudale. Subito dopo queste perentorie affermazioni, però, lo stesso Suny deve ammettere che "[...] though political solidarity was weak among Armenians, there was a commonality of language, an attachment to territory, and fierce devotion to the national religion" (ivi, 8).

¹⁹ Del resto in un articolo più recente Hroch distingue chiaramente tra i popoli portatori di una memoria storica di statualità (dai greci ai serbi ed ai lituani) e quelli che nel loro passato non avevano mai raggiunto tale livello (estoni, sloveni, slovacchi ecc.). Cfr. Hroch 1995, 69.

²⁰ In particolare negli studi raccolti in Suny 1993 e Suny 1994.

Il punto è proprio qui. Gli armeni pre-moderni non costituivano – né potevano evidentemente costituire – uno Stato-nazione in senso moderno, ma erano ed avevano consapevolezza di esserlo, una “nazione” (*azg*), strutturata su una comunanza di linguaggio, territorio, religione, nonché su memorie e tradizioni comuni. La crisi politica e culturale determinata dalla fine della statualità nazionale mise in pericolo la continuità e persino l’esistenza del popolo armeno, che riuscì tuttavia a sopravvivere in condizioni difficilissime ed assai differenti da quelle tradizionali – soprattutto nella diaspora – senza perdere per questo la sua memoria storica ed il suo vivo legame con le tradizioni nazionali, in primo luogo religiose. Privati di un territorio proprio, soggetti a dominazioni straniere, nella madrepatria come nella diaspora, gli Armeni divennero in questa fase della loro storia essenzialmente una comunità religiosa, e come tale vennero riconosciuti dall’esterno, in particolare nel sistema ottomano dei *millet*²¹. Ma quando, ormai in epoca moderna, gli stimoli provenienti dall’esterno, in primo luogo da un’Europa sempre più secolarizzata, presero a diffondersi nelle diverse comunità che costituivano il popolo armeno, questo iniziò a riorganizzarsi assumendo progressivamente i caratteri della nazione moderna e tendendo alla forma di organizzazione politico-sociale prevalente nel mondo moderno, lo stato-nazione. Di qui i processi di secolarizzazione, territorializzazione, politicizzazione, vale a dire quell’insieme di fenomeni di trasformazione e modernizzazione dell’identità nazionale che hanno sicuramente avuto luogo all’interno della società armena a partire dal Sette-Ottocento, ma la cui natura deve essere intesa in maniera equilibrata, non condizionata ideologicamente.

A mio avviso, l’insistenza di Suny sulla necessità di problematizzare il processo di sviluppo delle nazioni in maniera più aperta e critica di quanto sia comune in molte storiografie nazionali, non solo in quella armena, contiene delle indicazioni positive ma necessita al tempo stesso di alcune fondamentali precisazioni. Almeno nella sua formulazione estrema, la tesi secondo la quale le nazioni sono prodotti della modernità risulta chiaramente inaccettabile nel caso degli Armeni. La loro millenaria e ben documentata tradizione storica non può evidentemente essere comparata con quella di nazionalità che si sono formate o hanno preso coscienza di sé solo in epoca moderna. E si tratta di una tradizione storica che mostra, nonostante le non poche cesure, una sostanziale continuità, chiaramente percepibile anche a livello di autocoscienza. Continuità non significa però fissità, e non è quindi possibile negare al suo interno la presenza di processi di trasformazione anche profonda nei diversi momenti del divenire storico. Ma, per l’appunto, di trasformazione si tratta, non di “invenzione” o “immaginazione”, categorie suggestive che rivelano pe-

²¹ Sul sistema dei *millet* si vedano soprattutto alcuni saggi in Braude, Lewis 1982; Braude 1982a; Davison 1982; Karpát 1982; Issawi 1982.

rò sovente una sostanziale vacuità se confrontate con i dati storici e culturali reali di una popolazione come quella armena. Al punto che all'espressione di "comunità immaginate" si potrebbe, forse con eccesso polemico, contrapporre quella di "categorie immaginate". In effetti, nel caso armeno con più evidenza che in altri, l'approccio "modernista" al dato nazionale sembra scontrarsi con una continuità di tradizione e autopercezione che è certo corretto studiare in maniera critica, rivelandone limiti e falsificazioni²², ma non con intenti aprioristicamente ipercritici, che denunciano nella loro esasperazione un'attitudine ideologica non meno fuorviante di quella nazionalista²³.

Anche se non vi è dubbio che all'interno della storiografia armena vi è stato un processo di mitologizzazione culminato nella pur mirabile *Storia degli armeni* (*Patmut' iwnhayoc'*, I-III, 1784-1786) del mechtarista Mik'ayēl Ćamĉ'ean (cfr. Zekiyan 1987, 471), al cui interno molto può e deve essere messo criticamente in discussione²⁴, questo non significa che frantumare, sminuzzare ed infine negare la continuità della storia e della cultura armena nel suo complesso renda un buon servizio alla conoscenza storica. In particolare sembra inaccettabile la disinvoltura con cui si trascurano in questa ottica i chiari segnali con i quali gli Armeni hanno mostrato nel corso dei secoli una precisa consapevolezza della loro specifica identità storica, linguistica, politica, culturale e religiosa. Pensiamo alla dichiarata esigenza, già nel V secolo dopo Cristo, di ideare un proprio alfabeto per veicolare il messaggio cristiano senza dipendere dalle culture confinanti, in particolare greca e siriana (cfr. Ferrari 2016a). Oppure, nello stesso secolo o in quelli immediatamente successivi, alla presenza di precise esplicitazioni di una consapevolezza nazionale nelle grandi opere storiografiche di Eliše e Movses Xorenac'i, tradizionalmente datate al V secolo e portatrici peraltro di due diverse impostazioni ideologiche, da allora compresenti nella tradizione armena. Se il primo fu l'iniziatore di quella linea che ha identificato fortemente l'identità armena con il cristianesimo²⁵, il secondo – nella sua grande e controversa *Storia degli Armeni* – elaborò una concezione dell'identità nazionale in qualche modo autonoma dal dato religioso²⁶. Si tratta in effetti di un autore concentrato

²² Questo fenomeno è stato particolarmente intenso negli anni post-sovietici, che hanno visto una forte contrapposizione tra parte delle nuove leve storiografiche della repubblica indipendente ed alcuni studiosi operanti in Occidente, soprattutto negli Stati Uniti, spesso di origine armena. Al riguardo si veda soprattutto Aslanian 2002.

²³ Su queste tendenze ipercritiche nei confronti della storia armena si veda Zekiyan 1997, 25, n. 2.

²⁴ Su questo aspetto rimando a Ferrari (c.d.s.).

²⁵ Eliše 2005, 117. A questo riguardo si veda anche Gugerotti 1999.

²⁶ Su questo autore e sulla complessa questione testuale legata alla sua opera storiografica – la cui datazione varia da quella tradizionale del V secolo sino alla metà dell'VIII e per la quale rimando alla traduzione inglese di R.W. Thomson 2006 – esiste una bibliografia

sulla storia e la coscienza nazionale armena, il che è di particolare interesse per quel che riguarda il discorso identitario che stiamo qui affrontando. Per Xorenac'i, che esalta la continuità della nazione armena ed indica nell'epoca pagana addirittura un modello, l'armenità è infatti un valore da studiare e amare indipendentemente dal cristianesimo (Zekiyan 1987, 474-477). La sua concezione "etnico-nazionale" era chiaramente incentrata sui concetti di patria (*hayrenik'*) e nazione (*azg*). Tra l'altro, in Xorenac'i il termine *azg*, pur conservando il significato originario di generazione, discendenza, razza, inizia anche a indicare la coscienza collettiva d'una comunità unita da legami genealogici, linguistici, storici. *Azg* esprime cioè il concetto etico-spirituale di *ethnos* più che quello strettamente fisiologico di *genos*, mentre il termine patria, *hayrenik'*, dapprima inteso come luogo di nascita, diviene poi espressione geografica di spazio occupato dall'*azg* (ivi, 475). Tra l'altro quest'uso chiaro e indiscutibile del termine "nazione" da parte di un autore come Xorenac'i – in questo caso conta poco se sia del V secolo, come afferma la tradizione, o di qualche secolo successivo, come sostiene la maggior parte degli studiosi, soprattutto occidentali – costituisce anche un elemento di confutazione della netta affermazione di Hobsbawm secondo la quale tale concetto è eminentemente moderno²⁷. E tali evidenti manifestazioni di una autocoscienza "nazionale" chiara e distinta potrebbero accumularsi all'infinito, attraverso i secoli ed in tutti i luoghi in cui gli Armeni si sono trovati a vivere, nonostante la profonda crisi determinata dall'estinzione della statualità nazionale, dall'affermazione di una sempre crescente dimensione diasporica, dall'inserimento forzato in contesti culturali e politici estranei e spesso ostili. Fondamentale in questa fase per mantenere l'identità nazionale armena è stato il ruolo della religione, in particolare della Chiesa Apostolica, che per secoli ha costituito il principale referente non solo spirituale, ma anche culturale e politico del popolo armeno, secondo una dinamica simile a quella conosciuta da altre comunità nazionali, in particolare da quella ebraica.

Dinanzi a tutto questo la tesi secondo la quale le "nazioni" sono un prodotto dell'età moderna sembra quanto meno inapplicabile allo specifico contesto armeno. A meno che non si chiarisca che il discorso riguarda lo stato-nazione oppure il nazionalismo, questi sì prodotti della modernità e della sua

molto vasta. Per una "difesa costruttiva" della datazione tradizionale si veda la monografia di Traina 1991, mentre l'articolo di Garsoïan 2003-2004 costituisce una forte riproposizione della più diffusa posizione "demistificante" nei confronti del Corenese.

²⁷ Lo storico inglese accumula numerosi esempi, anche linguistici, per dimostrare l'assunto che il moderno concetto di "nazione" sia una novità storica, ma non si cura di analizzare casi contrastanti con la tesi prediletta. In particolare non tratta, o lo fa con molta frettolosità, i casi in cui nel corso dei secoli e talvolta dei millenni si manifesti all'interno di una determinata comunità etnica una forte e continua, pur se non immutabile, coscienza di sé. Cfr. Hobsbawm 1991, 19-25.

elaborazione ideologica, pur se legati anch'essi a dati e realtà che affondano le loro radici in passato spesso assai remoto. Nel caso armeno, cioè, non sembra legittimo ignorare l'evidenza di un'antica ed ininterrotta autocoscienza, concretizzatasi a lungo anche nella costruzione politica di una successione di diversi regni nazionali. Nonché, dopo l'esaurimento di ogni autonoma stualità, nel diffuso e documentato ideale di liberazione nazionale²⁸.

Antichità e continuità non significano tuttavia, come si diceva prima, immobilismo e fissità. L'identità nazionale armena ha conosciuto nella sua lunga storia una continua evoluzione ed in particolare ha risentito, come tutte le altre, della frattura rappresentata dalla modernità, che ha determinato una trasformazione non di poco conto nella sua strutturazione sociale ed anche nella sua stessa autocoscienza. Il fine di questo studio è proprio quello di seguire tale trasformazione in uno dei diversi ambiti in cui ha avuto luogo, vale a dire all'interno delle comunità inserite nell'impero russo, prima che la rivoluzione del 1917 determinasse una nuova fase, "sovietica", di questo processo di modernizzazione.

5. *Gli Armeni e la cultura europea*

Nel corso del XIX secolo proseguì quel processo di riavvicinamento degli armeni all'Europa, iniziato già nei secoli precedenti grazie alle numerose colonie, da Amsterdam a Livorno, da Marsiglia a Venezia. Da queste colonie, ed in particolare da Venezia, dove la congregazione mechtarista diede inizio alla sua grande opera di rinascita culturale²⁹, tale rinnovamento (*veracnund*) si irradiò nel resto delle comunità armene, in primo luogo quelle dell'impero ottomano, soprattutto nella capitale Costantinopoli. Fu questa la via diretta e "occidentale" del processo di "modernizzazione" (o "europeizzazione") degli Armeni, che riguardò principalmente quelli dell'impero ottomano. In tale processo ebbero un ruolo determinante la Francia, che al suo prestigio culturale univa un influsso tradizionalmente notevole nel Levante, ma anche l'Italia, grazie ai suoi antichi rapporti con il popolo armeno. Non a caso nel nostro paese si formarono molti tra i protagonisti della moderna cultura armena, dal musicista T. Čuxajean, ai poeti Pešikt'ašlean e Varužan. Orientale da un punto di vista geografico, ma occidentale per l'essere a stretto contatto con le acquisizioni dell'illuminismo inglese, può essere considerato l'interessante sviluppo delle colonie armene dell'India, che nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo e nella

²⁸ Per uno sguardo d'insieme sulle aspettative ed i progetti di liberazione nazionale conserva tutto il suo valore l'opera di Hovhannisyam 1959.

²⁹ Su Mechtar e sul ruolo dei mechtaristi nella nascita della moderna cultura armena si veda Bardakjian 1976; Zekiyan 1977; Adalian 1992; Zekiyan, Ferrari 2004.

prima metà del XIX ebbero un ruolo importante nella nascita del pensiero politico e della pubblicistica moderni³⁰. L'altra via, indiretta e "orientale", di questa penetrazione della cultura europea fu quello attraverso la Russia che, a sua volta impegnata in un complesso processo di europeizzazione, divenne per gli Armeni che vivevano al suo interno il principale canale di recezione, sia pure mediata, della cultura moderna³¹.

Tanto tra gli Armeni occidentali quanto tra quelli orientali la rinascita culturale del XIX secolo avvenne sotto il segno di una crescente secolarizzazione, fortemente influenzata dal contemporaneo sviluppo della società europea. Nonostante l'attiva partecipazione di numerosi religiosi a questa nuova fase della vita culturale della nazione (basti pensare al ruolo di figure come Ł. Ališan, G. Patkanean, Xrimean Hayrik e così via), la Chiesa perse progressivamente la sua tradizionale egemonia culturale, soppiantata dalla nuova *intelligencija* laica.

Il primo segno di questa evoluzione può essere considerato la nascita sin dalla prima parte del XIX secolo di nuove istituzioni scolastiche in tutto il mondo armeno, a Costantinopoli, Smirne, Trieste, Calcutta, Parigi, Venezia. Si trattava di scuole libere dal controllo della Chiesa, il cui peso materiale ricadeva sulle organizzazioni corporative o di singoli benefattori laici. Nell'impero russo lo sviluppo educativo della comunità armena seguì un cammino diverso ma egualmente proficuo. Le prime scuole armene moderne vennero fondate nelle colonie di Astrachan' e Grigoriopol' (1806), quindi a Mosca (il celebre istituto Lazarev nacque nel 1814) e a Tiflis/Tbilisi (il Nersisean aprì nel 1824). La scolarizzazione armena ricevette un impulso decisivo dopo l'emanazione nel 1836 del *Položenie*, uno statuto che sottometteva la vita della Chiesa al controllo statale, ma le riconosceva il diritto di creare scuole parrocchiali e diocesane, che iniziarono a nascere numerose (cfr. Ferrari 2011, 130-140).

Una vasta rete scolastica si diffuse quindi nel corso dell'Ottocento in tutto il mondo armeno, dapprima nelle più sviluppate comunità diasporiche, poi nei territori della madrepatria, sia nell'impero ottomano che in quello russo, consentendo una notevole crescita del livello culturale. Secondo alcune fonti, alla fine del XIX secolo gli studenti armeni delle scuole dell'impero ottomano erano circa un decimo dell'intera comunità, una media molto alta per gli standard dell'epoca. Un terzo di questi studenti era di sesso femminile (cfr. Zekiyān 1997, 71). Nell'impero russo, nel 1895 gli studenti armeni erano circa 20.000, con circa 270 scuole (Cfr. Ałayan *et al.* 1981, 762).

³⁰ Si veda a questo riguardo il mio articolo "L'eccentrico illuminismo armeno. Le colonie dell'India nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo", ora Ferrari 2003, 103-126.

³¹ Cfr. Ferrari, "L'Araxes si fonderà con la Volga...". Considerazioni sui rapporti culturali armeno-russi in epoca imperiale", in Ferrari 2003, 151-176; Khachaturian 2009.

Importanti canali di recezione della cultura europea erano anche istituzioni come i collegi francesi di Costantinopoli e Galata, mentre non pochi erano gli studenti che completavano i loro studi nelle università europee. Se gli Armeni di Turchia preferivano quelle francesi (Parigi, Nancy, Montpellier e così via) e italiane (Padova in testa), quelli russi frequentavano di solito le università dell'impero zarista oppure si recavano in Germania e Svizzera.

La nascita di un sistema scolastico moderno, sorto senza disporre di alcun supporto statale, ebbe anche un ruolo decisivo nella soluzione della questione della lingua. Il *grabar*, la lingua della grande letteratura classica e medievale armena, risultava però incomprensibile alla maggior parte del popolo e non era quindi funzionale alla desiderata modernizzazione culturale. Dopo un dibattito di grande intensità che toccò il culmine intorno alla metà del XIX secolo, il *grabar* venne progressivamente abbandonato a favore della lingua letteraria moderna. Una lingua che si sviluppò in due varianti, l'occidentale e l'orientale, che si formarono proprio nelle principali istituzioni scolastiche armenie per consentire la piena comunicazione sovra-dialettale tra docenti e studenti, e si affermò definitivamente nella seconda metà del XIX secolo (cfr. Nichanian 1989, 283-330).

Un altro importante fattore di modernizzazione fu l'affermazione di una stampa periodica, anch'essa presto in lingua volgare, che raggiunse in pochi decenni un notevole sviluppo sia tra gli Armeni dell'impero ottomano che tra quelli dell'impero russo. Anche in questo ambito le colonie furono all'avanguardia rispetto ai territori della madrepatria. *Azdarar* (Il Monitore), la prima rivista armena, uscì infatti nella dinamica comunità di Madras, in India, tra il 1794 ed il 1796 (cfr. Sirinian 2012), seguita poi da altre a Venezia, Costantinopoli, Smirne, Tiflis e così via. Nella seconda metà del secolo la stampa periodica armena si diffuse impetuosamente e soprattutto i quotidiani resero possibile la creazione di stretti e continui canali di comunicazione con l'Europa, sia a livello di notizie che di idee.

La formazione della lingua letteraria volgare rese possibile anche la nascita e la diffusione di una nuova letteratura che si pose immediatamente all'interno dei generi letterari europei³². Un inserimento iniziato peraltro già dai Mechitaristi che, pur scrivendo in *grabar*, avevano posto la loro autonoma creazione artistica nell'ambito dei canoni classicisti. Di qui la teorizzazione compiuta da Eduard Hiwrmiwz nel suo *Manuale di poesia* del 1839 e soprattutto il capolavoro del classicismo armeno, il poema epico *Hayk l'eroe* di Arsen Bagratuni, apparso del 1856. Come si vede, l'affermazione del classicismo all'interno della letteratura armena ebbe luogo quando questo era ormai tramontato da tempo nelle principali letterature europee. Anche il ro-

³² Sulla letteratura armena moderna si vedano soprattutto i volumi di Bardakjian 2000; Basmajian, Franchuk, Ouzounian, Hacikyan 2005.

manticismo, il realismo ed il simbolismo vennero assimilati dalla letteratura armena con un ritardo che si andò tuttavia riducendo progressivamente, sinché alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale l'evoluzione letteraria armena era anche sincronicamente accordata a quella europea.

La comparsa di questa nuova letteratura fu preceduta da un'imponente attività di traduzione, che rispecchiò gli influssi dominanti nelle due comunità armene principali, quella turca e quella russa. Se tra i primi l'influsso principale fu francese e secondariamente italiano, tedesco e inglese, tra i secondi i generi letterari europei si diffusero principalmente attraverso la mediazione russa.

Nell'ambito letterario la prima opera in lingua volgare (orientale) fu *Le ferite dell'Armenia* (*Verk' Hayastani*) di Xačatur Abovean (1809-1848), composto nel 1840-1841, anche se pubblicato solo nel 1858, un notevole romanzo storico che apre la stagione romantica della letteratura armena. Sulla sua scia si pose una serie di scrittori – Mikael Nalbandean (1829-1865), Gamar K'at'ipa (1830-1892), Raffi (1835-1888) – fortemente influenzati dall'impegno civico della contemporanea letteratura russa, ma concentrati al tempo stesso in primo luogo sui destini del popolo armeno.

Tra gli armeni occidentali hanno grande rilievo le figure del già ricordato mechtarista Ł. Ališan (1820-1901), poeta in *grabar* e volgare, poi dedicatosi a studi storici, e di Mkertič' Pešikt'ašlean (1828-1868), che studiò nel collegio Muradian di Padova, attivo organizzatore culturale e il primo poeta del romanticismo armeno-occidentale, il cui vertice fu raggiunto dalla breve stagione lirica di Petros Durean (1852-1872).

La prosa armena occidentale in volgare fece la sua comparsa dopo il 1850, seguendo i generi letterari europei – novella, romanzo e così via – in uno spirito ancora genericamente romantico. Presto si affermò tuttavia una nuova generazione letteraria – tra gli altri ricordiamo Arp'iar Arp'iarian (1852-1908), Yakob Y. Paronean, (1843-1891), Grigor Zōhrap (1861-1915), Eruand Ōtean (1869-1926) – che fornì precisi quadri realisti, ma anche interessanti schizzi satirici, di Costantinopoli e della realtà armena (cfr. Oshakan 1983, 65). Un fenomeno letterario quanto mai interessante di questa fase sono i romanzi di Srбуhi Tiwsab (1842-1901), nei quali si espresse un'altra conseguenza del sempre più stretto contatto con la cultura e la mentalità europea, vale a dire l'aspirazione all'emancipazione femminile.

Anche tra gli Armeni dell'impero russo vi fu un progressivo trapasso dal romanticismo al realismo, soprattutto nell'ambito del romanzo, in cui si distinsero alcuni validi scrittori, come Murac'an (1854-1908), Vrt'anēs P'ap'azean (1866-1920), Lewon Šant' (1869-1951) e soprattutto Širvanzadē (1858-1935).

Ma il frutto migliore della letteratura armena moderna, tanto nella variante orientale quanto in quella occidentale, va visto nella generazione poetica apparsa sulla scena nell'ultimo decennio del XIX e nei primi del XX. Una generazione generalmente definita modernista, da un lato quanto mai

sensibile alle più recenti esperienze letterarie europee, in particolar modo al simbolismo, dall'altro protesa a recuperare un legame vitale con la tradizione popolare. Tra i poeti armeni orientali di questa linea ricordiamo soprattutto Yovhannes Y. Yovhannisean (1864-1929), Yovhannes T'umanean (1869-1923), Avedik' Isahakean (1875-1957) e Vahan Terean (1885-1920) e tra gli occidentali E. Tëmirčibašean (1851-1908), Intra (1875-1921), Siamant'ò (1878-1915), Daniël Varužan (1884-1915).

Un altro fattore di grande importanza nel processo di occidentalizzazione culturale e sociale degli armeni fu la rapida affermazione del teatro che si diffuse nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento soprattutto in quelle che erano allora le capitali degli Armeni occidentali e orientali, vale a dire Costantinopoli e Tiflis. Dopo una fase in cui le scene armene videro soprattutto opere, sia in *grabar* che in volgare, che fondendo classicismo e romanticismo esaltavano le glorie dell'antica storia nazionale, in seguito trionfò anche nel teatro l'orientamento realista, che toccò il culmine nell'opera del commediografo Gabriel Sundukean (1825-1912).

Nella sfera artistica, come già in quella letteraria, nel corso del XIX secolo gli Armeni accolsero progressivamente i canoni artistici europei che sostituirono quelli tradizionali, in larga misura caratterizzati da influssi orientali, soprattutto turchi e persiani. In pochi decenni la nuova arte armena raggiunse una notevole sintesi tra i nuovi modelli europei e la tradizione nazionale³³.

Un nuovo e più funzionale sistema di trascrizione della musica tradizionale armena fu elaborato a Costantinopoli, intorno al 1815, da Y. Limončean (1769-1839). Figure come K. Kara Murza (1851-1902) e soprattutto Komitas (1869-1935) svolsero in seguito un'incessante opera di raccolta e studio del patrimonio musicale armeno, sia laico che liturgico. Al tempo stesso nasceva nelle diverse comunità armene una produzione musicale inserita nei moderni generi europei. Un musicista formatosi al conservatorio di Milano, T. Čuxajean (1837-1898), compose nel 1868 la prima opera lirica armena, *l'Arsace II*. A. Spendiarean (1871-1928), che studiò a Pietroburgo, fu invece il fondatore della musica sinfonica armena³⁴.

Anche nell'ambito delle arti figurative ebbero luogo analoghi mutamenti. Agli inizi del XIX secolo dominava ancora la pittura tradizionale, ma gradualmente i principi dell'arte figurativa europea ebbero il sopravvento. I maggiori risultati in questo campo furono ottenuti dagli armeni russi che si formarono presso l'Accademia di Pietroburgo, dove sino agli inizi del secolo studiarono numerosi artisti armeni, molti dei quali divenuti famosi. In pri-

³³ Per uno sguardo d'insieme sui processi di rinnovamento della cultura armena si veda Erkanyan 1982.

³⁴ Ivi, 228-229.

mo luogo Yovhannēs Ayvazean (Ivan Ajvazovskij, 1817-1900)³⁵, che eccelse soprattutto nelle marine, nel cui genere ha una riconosciuta rilevanza mondiale e, a partire dai primi anni del Novecento, Martiros Sarean (1880-1972).

In definitiva, se all'inizio del XIX secolo la vita culturale ed artistica degli armeni, soprattutto di quelli della madrepatria³⁶, era ancora ampiamente inserita nelle forme tradizionali, "orientali", largamente influenzate dalle culture turca e persiana, assimilate nel corso dei secoli precedenti, nel corso dell'Ottocento questa situazione mutò radicalmente grazie alla rapida e creativa assimilazione dei modelli occidentali. Particolarmente interessante a questo riguardo è l'affermazione di A.N. Pypin nella sua recensione al primo dei due volumi previsti di *Letteratura armena (Armjanskajabelletristika)*, uscito nel 1893, in cui si sottolinea come la rinascita letteraria armena sia avvenuta completamente all'interno dei generi europei: "Queste forme sono quelle usuali della letteratura europea, la novella, il romanzo, il dramma, la poesia lirica e così via; il contenuto, naturalmente, risente degli influssi più o meno profondi della cultura europea, combinati con le aspirazioni di un patriottismo illuminato: odio per la schiavitù, dignità della personalità umana, amore per l'istruzione. Questa influenza era necessaria, poiché nel terreno indigeno non c'era nessuna base per la nuova letteratura" (cfr. Grigor'jan 1974, 282-283).

Il carattere sostanzialmente positivo di questa recezione non è ovviamente messo in discussione, né da Pypin né dagli esponenti della nuova cultura armena. Troppo intensa era la soddisfazione di essersi lasciati alle spalle un passato "asiatico" di arretratezza e soggezione per lasciare spazio a resistenze culturali consapevoli. Poca attenzione sembra essere stata prestata al fatto che questa recezione dei modelli europei, per quanto fruttuosa possa essere stata, determinò d'altro canto il declino di buona parte delle forme culturali tradizionali, ad esempio della poesia popolare degli *ašut*, i cantori erranti della regione subcaucasica culminati in Sayat' Nova (1712-1795), autore di mirabili versi in armeno, georgiano e turco-azeri³⁷.

Occorre tuttavia distinguere a mio giudizio all'interno di questo processo di occidentalizzazione tra quanto fu autentico sviluppo, vale a dire estensione della produzione artistica e sua crescita qualitativa, e quanto fu invece solo mutamento di parametri stilistici. A meno che non si voglia sostenere che l'abbandono di modelli artistici "orientali" e la recezione di quelli "occidentali" costituisca di per sé un progresso qualitativo. Oppure che l'interse-

³⁵ Su questo pittore rimando a Ferrari 2017a.

³⁶ Per madre patria o Armenia storica si intendono i territori che avevano fatto un tempo conosciuto, una statualità indipendente e nei quali gli Armeni erano ancora numerosi, anche se soltanto in alcune regioni – per esempio intorno al lago di Van – costituivano ancora la maggior parte della popolazione.

³⁷ Su questa figura segnalò soprattutto Dowsett 1997 e Sayat-Nova 2015. A questo poeta è dedicato anche il celebre film *Il colore del melograno* (1968), di Sergej Paradžanov (1924-1990).

carsi di molteplici influenze che per secoli ha caratterizzato l'arte e la cultura armena sia *ipso facto* un disvalore rispetto ad una produzione basata invece su tradizioni e motivi esclusivamente nazionali. Una posizione di questo tipo sminuirebbe non solo il significato di straordinarie figure multiculturali come quella di Sayat' Nova, perché non compiutamente "nazionali", ma più in generale quell'attitudine alla polivalenza culturale che non costituisce certo uno degli ultimi meriti della tradizione armena. Inoltre, una simile caratterizzazione dell'adesione da parte degli Armeni ai modelli artistici occidentali lascia intravedere un'impostazione non solo eurocentrica, ma anche vagamente razzista. Così, ad esempio, parlando del ritardo con cui la musica moderna si diffuse tra gli Armeni, uno studioso armeno del periodo sovietico ne individua la causa non solo nella "condizione di arretratezza" e nell'"assenza di quadri specialistici", ma anche nella secolare influenza della musica persiana e turca sul popolo. E continua: "[...] per vincere questo influsso era necessario un lungo lavoro; occorreva estrarre dalle profondità del popolo i motivi autenticamente nazionali e le espressioni native, depurarli dalle incrostazioni straniere, rielaborarli e su questa base creare una nuova musica nazionale corrispondente al livello culturale della musica contemporanea. È per questa ragione che si diede tanta importanza alla trascrizione e pubblicazione dei canti popolari, allo studio della musica spirituale medievale. Un lavoro faticoso che diede i frutti sperati, portando ad una intensa produzione musicale nazionale in quasi tutte le forme della musica moderna" (cfr. Erkanyan 1982, 210).

È evidente come un'ottica di questo tipo presupponga l'idea di una superiorità dell'arte moderna, cioè occidentale, su quella "orientale" (turca e persiana) e di quella "nazionale" su quella "interetnica". Un'idea che si può condividere o meno, ma di cui deve comunque essere chiaro il carattere soggettivo.

In ogni caso la recezione dei modelli culturali di origine europea cominciò a dare frutti particolarmente significativi negli ultimi anni dell'Ottocento e nei primi del Novecento tanto nella sfera letteraria quanto in quella artistica. Alla vigilia della Prima Guerra Mondiale il popolo armeno aveva compiuto un'opera di rinnovamento davvero notevole, che ne aveva trasformato profondamente le dinamiche culturali, economiche e sociali, sia nelle colonie che nella madrepatria.

6. *Il Risorgimento mancato dell'Armenia*

A questa rinascita culturale non corrispose invece – e non solo lessicalmente – un "Risorgimento", vale a dire un processo di (ri)unificazione e indipendenza politica degli Armeni. Per una serie di complesse circostanze storiche questo processo non riuscì a concretizzarsi ed il popolo armeno subì tra il 1894 ed il 1923 una serie di dolorosi eventi – emigrazione, conversioni forzate, deportazioni e

massacri, culminati nel genocidio del 1915 – che hanno in sostanza vanificato la speranza di un Risorgimento nazionale simile a quello conosciuto nel corso dell'Ottocento dai popoli cristiani dei Balcani o dall'Italia³⁸.

A differenza di questi paesi, infatti, l'Armenia era divisa tra tre imperi: l'ottomano, il russo ed il persiano. Nel corso dell'Ottocento soprattutto gli Armeni dell'impero ottomano – la cui condizione peggiorò per molti aspetti in questo periodo, almeno per quel che riguarda la popolazione delle regioni anatoliche – cominciarono a muoversi in direzione di un'auspicata autonomia o indipendenza, come già Greci, Serbi e Bulgari prima di loro. Il loro movimento di liberazione era peraltro condizionato da una situazione oggettivamente più difficile di quella delle suddette nazionalità, in quanto gli Armeni erano insediati nel cuore stesso dell'impero, in vasti territori estesi dal Caucaso meridionale alle coste del Mediterraneo, ma praticamente in nessuna regione costituivano la maggioranza assoluta della popolazione, vivendo ovunque frammisti a Turchi, Curdi ed altre popolazioni musulmane. In un simile contesto, le speranze armene erano fondate in gran parte sull'appoggio delle potenze europee e della Russia. Anche se l'inserimento degli Armeni nell'impero russo può essere considerato nel complesso molto positivo (cfr. Ferrari 2011), la Russia non era in realtà interessata a far nascere uno stato armeno indipendente ai suoi confini meridionali, anche perché dal punto di vista etnico gli Armeni non sono Slavi e da quello religioso – per quanto cristiani – non appartengono alla confessione ortodossa. Nei loro confronti mancava in tal senso una spinta ideologica simile a quelle panortodossa o panslava che legittimò e favorì invece l'appoggio russo a Greci, Serbi e Bulgari. Pertanto, l'idea di creare uno stato armeno indipendente in questa fase non venne mai presa in considerazione da Pietroburgo. Né lo fu da parte degli stati europei, nessuno dei quali era realmente interessato a tale prospettiva, che poteva realizzarsi solo in seguito ad una dissoluzione dell'impero ottomano dagli esiti quanto mai pericolosi. Si deve infatti ricordare che tutti i moti nazionali dell'Ottocento furono condizionati in modo decisivo dall'appoggio o meno delle potenze europee. La Grecia ebbe l'appoggio di Gran Bretagna, Francia e Russia, l'Italia quello di Francia e Gran Bretagna, Serbia, Bulgaria e Romania ancora quello della Russia.

All'interno della più ampia *Questione d'Oriente*, la realizzazione delle aspirazioni armene dipendeva in effetti da una serie di circostanze esterne che non si combinarono mai in senso favorevole (cfr. Sidari 1961; Somakian 1995;

³⁸ Proprio il nostro paese, peraltro, ha costituito un importantissimo polo di riferimento culturale e ideologico delle moderne aspirazioni nazionali armene. Come è stato osservato, "Tra queste [ideologie] va annoverato in modo particolare l'influsso del Risorgimento italiano, in quanto il movimento della Rinascita era rappresentato dalla Congregazione mechtarista di Venezia, ed una notevole parte degli intellettuali e degli operatori culturali del successivo Risveglio si erano formati a Venezia, a Padova o a Parigi, nei collegi diretti dagli stessi Padri mechtaristi" (cfr. Zekiyan 1982, 34).

Bloxham 2007). In particolare, la rivalità tra la Russia e le potenze europee, in primo luogo la Gran Bretagna, danneggiò profondamente gli Armeni, i quali non possedevano forze sufficienti a realizzare autonomamente un proprio “Risorgimento” politico. Il risultato massimo al quale potevano realisticamente pervenire era il loro inserimento più o meno completo all’interno dell’impero russo, in un contesto politico e sociale comunque più favorevole di quello ottomano, rimandando ad un momento successivo la questione dell’indipendenza. Il sostegno europeo all’impero ottomano in funzione antirussa, soprattutto nel corso della guerra di Crimea (1853-1855) e del Congresso di Berlino (1878), pregiudicò invece l’espansione zarista nei territori anatolici dell’Armenia storica, che in effetti fu limitata alle regioni di Kars e Ardahan. Se nel trattato di San Stefano, che seguì la vittoriosa guerra con l’impero ottomano del 1877-1878, Pietroburgo impose a Costantinopoli la presenza di proprie truppe in Anatolia sino alla realizzazione delle riforme a favore della popolazione armena (articolo 16), questa condizione fu cancellata dal successivo Congresso di Berlino che, pur riconoscendo alla Russia il possesso definitivo di Kars e Ardahan, prevedeva invece (articolo 61) che il ritiro russo avvenisse prima dell’attuazione delle riforme, delle quali si facevano peraltro garanti tutte le potenze europee. Come già era avvenuto dopo le precedenti guerre russo-ottomane, ancora una volta numerosi Armeni d’Anatolia si insediarono nei territori caucasici dell’impero russo. È probabile che un diverso esito della Guerra di Crimea e di quella russo-turca del 1877-1878 avrebbe evitato l’insorgere della Questione Armena all’interno di quella d’Oriente e soprattutto il suo tragico esito.

In tal modo, invece, la maggior parte degli Armeni rimase inserita nell’impero ottomano, in attesa di riforme che in realtà non vennero mai applicate. Inoltre, le autorità ottomane cominciarono a dubitare sempre più della lealtà di questo popolo, la cui causa veniva perorata, per lo più in maniera strumentale, da potenze straniere. Soprattutto il rapporto degli Armeni con la Russia era visto con particolare sospetto. Anche se l’accusa di essere una quinta colonna di Pietroburgo costituisce una parte sostanziale dell’ignobile opera di falsificazione storica che la Turchia continua a portare avanti riguardo al genocidio degli Armeni, non vi è dubbio che tra questa popolazione e la Russia esista da alcuni secoli e sino ad oggi una coincidenza di interessi effettiva, pur se non certo completa³⁹.

Si può quindi osservare come il rapporto positivo tra Russia e Armeni, che in diverse condizioni storiche avrebbe potuto determinare un sostegno fondamentale del “Risorgimento” di questo popolo, sia stato invece una delle cause – o dei pretesti – per il suo quasi totale annientamento all’interno dell’impero ottomano (cfr. Ferrari 2017b).

Non si è trattato peraltro di una privazione soltanto territoriale: l’eliminazione pressoché totale dell’élite culturale, la spoliazione economica, la di-

³⁹ Interessante il recente Önel 2017.

struzione quasi completa dei monumenti artistici ed il processo di negazione e falsificazione storica che prosegue ancora oggi hanno in realtà sostituito le aspirazioni “risorgimentali” armenie con il loro opposto, un genocidio fisico e culturale che sarebbe stato sostanzialmente completo se non vi fosse stata una presenza armena anche al di fuori dell’impero ottomano, in particolare in quello russo. In questo senso si può parlare di un “Risorgimento spezzato” dell’Armenia, la cui tragicità appare chiaramente se posta a confronto con il corrispondente processo dell’Italia o di nazionalità balcaniche come la Bulgaria.

Non solo non riuscì agli Armeni di riottenere l’indipendenza dei territori nazionali, ma questi hanno in grandissima parte visto la loro scomparsa. Dopo i terribili, ma non definitivi, massacri degli anni 1894-1896 e del 1909, l’esito ultimo della Questione Armena è stato in effetti il genocidio del 1915, che annientò quasi totalmente gli Armeni dell’impero ottomano⁴⁰. In questo modo è stata spazzata via anche l’aspirazione degli Armeni a ricostituire uno stato nazionale su una parte ragionevolmente vasta del loro territorio storico.

7. *Genocidio e diaspora*

Questa tragedia costituisce uno spartiacque tragico e fondamentale nella storia del popolo armeno, dopo il quale nulla è più stato come prima.

Nel 1914 gli Armeni al mondo erano circa quattro milioni e mezzo, un terzo dei quali viveva fuori dell’Armenia storica (cfr. Dédéyan 2002, 483). La parte più consistente di coloro che ancora rimanevano nella madrepatria (*erkir*, “il paese”) viveva nell’Impero ottomano. E proprio qui il popolo armeno ha conosciuto la tragedia maggiore della sua lunga e travagliata storia. Come ha scritto, pur tra mille cautele “diplomatiche”, uno specialista di storia ottomana come lo studioso francese Paul Dumont, occorre partire da “[...] una semplice constatazione: alla vigilia della Prima Guerra Mondiale, in Turchia c’erano probabilmente più di 1.500.000 Armeni; qualche anno più tardi, in seguito ai massacri, alle deportazioni e agli esili, se ne censirono solo 70.000” (cfr. Dumont 1999, 671).

In realtà una delle specificità più dolorose di questo genocidio consiste nel fatto che oltre all’annientamento fisico, gli Armeni hanno conosciuto una sorta di irreversibile sradicamento dalla loro terra ancestrale. La maggior parte dei territori dell’Armenia storica è stata completamente e criminalmente svuotata della popolazione che vi viveva da quasi tre millenni. Da allora, oltre a rifiutare ai sopravvissuti ed ai loro discendenti il diritto di ritornare in

⁴⁰ La questione del genocidio armeno è trattata in numerosi testi, tra i quali segnalo: Ternon 2003; Dadrian 2003; Akçam 2005; Flores 2006; Kévolkian 2006; Bloxham 2007; Arslan, Berti, De Stefani 2017.

patria e di reclamare i beni confiscati⁴¹, la Turchia ha infatti operato consapevolmente con tutti i mezzi a disposizione di uno stato moderno per ridurre, deformare o persino cancellare la stessa memoria della millenaria presenza armena nei territori anatolici⁴². Questa politica coerente e sistematica non ha soltanto provocato tra gli Armeni uno stato d'animo di frustrante e disperata privazione⁴³, ma ha anche reso sostanzialmente impensabile un loro ritorno nella maggior parte dei territori ancestrali, ormai divenuti parte integrante della repubblica turca.

La dinamica diaspora/madrepatria che da secoli caratterizzava il popolo armeno è quindi profondamente cambiata dopo il tragico periodo 1894-1923. Come si è visto, in precedenza la maggior parte degli Armeni continuava a vivere nei territori ancestrali, sia pure senza indipendenza politica ed in condizione di sudditanza, spesso discriminata ed insicura, e le colonie – per quanto numerose e dinamiche – costituivano la parte minoritaria di questa popolazione. Da allora la maggior parte del popolo armeno vive in diaspora, in una situazione di sostanziale ed irreversibile sradicamento dall'antica madrepatria. Per questa ragione alcuni studiosi preferiscono introdurre una distinzione sostanziale, qualitativa oltre che quantitativa, tra la situazione di diaspora precedente il 1915 e quella successiva, che viene definita “diaspora radicale” (cfr. Zekiyani 2000, 160, n. 5) o “Grande Diaspora”: “[...] la Diaspora cambia radicalmente sotto il profilo sociale: essa comprendeva inizialmente l'élite o le élites della nazione, mentre la grande massa contadina caratterizzava la società rimasta nelle terre ancestrali. Nel XX secolo, da una Diaspora delle élites, si passa a una Diaspora di profughi e la terra ancestrale si svuota dei suoi abitanti armeni” (cfr. Dédéyan 2002, 484).

A differenza delle antiche colonie, questa diaspora di sopravvissuti – che inizialmente era in larga parte costituita da orfani e comunque da persone che avevano conosciuto orrori di ogni sorta – risultava del tutto destrutturata; occorsero decenni perché agli Armeni riuscisse di riorganizzarsi all'interno di realtà politiche, sociali e culturali diversissime. Per decenni i membri delle famiglie tenteranno disperatamente di ricongiungersi, come dimostrano gli avvisi di ricerca che sino agli anni sessanta del Novecento hanno riempito le pagine della stampa armena. Proprio la famiglia ha costituito il nucleo della vita degli Armeni della diaspora, tra i quali prevale l'endogamia ed i matrimoni misti sono limitati (cfr. Ter Minassian 1997, 31). Ovviamente, nel corso dei decenni si è registrata una notevole evoluzione tra i membri delle diverse comunità diasporiche. Le differenze tra la prima generazione, costituita da persone nate nella madrepatria, e quelle suc-

⁴¹ Cfr. Ter Minassian 1997, 25. Su questo tema si veda inoltre Baghdjian 1987.

⁴² Per una analisi più approfondita di questo aspetto rimando a Kouymjian 1985; Ferrari 2005; Ferrari 2016b; Ferrari 2016c.

⁴³ Sugli aspetti psicologici del genocidio armeno si veda Zekiyani 1998, 233-234.

cessive, nate e formatesi in diaspora, sono notevoli. E notevolmente diversi sono anche stati i destini di chi è rimasto nei paesi del Vicino Oriente e chi ha invece trovato spazio in Europa, America e Australia. Da tempo esiste ormai una vera e propria sociologia della diaspora armena, che ne studia dinamiche, aspirazioni, successi, nevrosi (Ter Minassian 1997, 32-33; Ferrari 2009).

Quello della diaspora armena è in effetti un mondo complesso, diversificato, mutevole. In primo luogo occorre ricordare le comunità del Vicino Oriente, ancora cospicue anche se in costante diminuzione, soprattutto quelle del Libano e della Siria (circa 200.000 persone)⁴⁴. Si tratta di comunità che parlano la variante occidentale dell'armeno moderno e conservano forti strutture comunitarie. Come in passato, infatti, è soprattutto nei contesti "orientali" che le comunità della diaspora armena riescono a conservare meglio la loro identità grazie alla conservazione in queste regioni di elementi dell'antico ordine "imperiale", rivolto più alle comunità che agli individui in quanto tali. Tuttavia l'emigrazione che sempre più colpisce tali comunità in seguito all'instabilità della regione ne pregiudica notevolmente il futuro. In questo senso il destino delle comunità armene del Vicino Oriente è assai simile a quello degli altri cristiani della regione (cfr. Ferrari 2008b).

In Occidente le comunità diasporiche più grandi sono negli Stati Uniti (un milione e mezzo circa) e in Francia (oltre 400.000), seguite da quelle di Argentina, Canada, Australia e così via. In Italia la comunità armena è piccola, tra le 2000 e le 3000 persone, ma molto bene inserita ed attiva⁴⁵. In tutti i paesi occidentali le comunità armene hanno raggiunto buone posizioni sociali ed economiche, ma la minaccia dell'assimilazione appare oggi forte come in passato.

Un caso differente è rappresentato dalla grande diaspora armena presente in Russia ed anche, ma in misura minore, in altri paesi ex sovietici. È una situazione che riflette gli strettissimi legami che si sono creati tra gli Armeni orientali e il sistema politico, economico e culturale russo a partire dai primi dell'Ottocento. Si parla di una presenza in Russia di oltre due milioni di Armeni, che tuttavia sono in stretto contatto con la repubblica armena, dalla quale molti di loro provengono (cfr. Galkina 2006).

8. Il periodo sovietico (1921-1991) e la nuova indipendenza

Il genocidio, tuttavia, non ha completamente privato gli Armeni di una dimensione territoriale e statale, per quanto limitata. Infatti, nella maggior parte del territorio storico armeno conquistato dalla Russia nel corso dell'Ottocento, nacque una piccola repubblica, indipendente dal maggio 1918 al di-

⁴⁴ Su queste comunità si veda Migliorino 2008.

⁴⁵ Sui rapporti degli armeni con l'Italia esiste una vasta bibliografia: Zekiyani 1978; 1990a; 1996a; Mutafian 1999; Ferrari 2003; Manoukian 2014.

cembre 1920, che entrò poi nell'Unione Sovietica sino al 1991⁴⁶. Fu il primo stato armeno dopo la caduta del regno di Cilicia nel 1375. Uno stato fragile, dalla superficie minuscola, con meno di un milione di abitanti, 300.000 dei quali superstiti del genocidio e altrettanti di etnia azera, minacciato di annientamento dai Turchi e con conflitti territoriali con Azerbaigian e Georgia; l'occupazione bolscevica alla fine del 1920 pose fine all'effimera repubblica, ma fu vista con sollievo dalla maggior parte della popolazione.

L'Armenia orientale si trovò così ad essere nuovamente inserita nella sfera russa, o meglio sovietica. Questi territori conobbero un rapido consolidamento del carattere nazionale coll'arrivo di molti Armeni provenienti da altri paesi, soprattutto da Georgia e Azerbaigian. La crescita demografica dell'intero paese fu notevole, soprattutto nella capitale Erevan, passata in pochi decenni da 30.000 abitanti a un milione. Il paese era governato a livello locale da un'élite nazionale, anche se spesso culturalmente russificata. Nella nuova capitale nacque anche la prima università armena, mentre aveva inizio l'industrializzazione: industrie agro-alimentari, poi chimiche, tessili, metallurgiche (Dédéyan 2002, 417). Tutto questo, però, avveniva nel contesto delle dinamiche politiche e culturali sovietiche: repressione delle classi alte e dei leaders della repubblica indipendente, lotta antireligiosa, collettivizzazione forzata delle terre, ondate di purghe (particolarmente grave quella degli anni 1936-1938).

Il notevole contributo armeno nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale fu premiato con la nascita dell'Accademia delle Scienze (1943) e con l'elezione nel 1945 di un nuovo *katholikos*, ma anche rivendicando per breve tempo i territori armeni passati alla Turchia nel 1920 e incoraggiando un'immigrazione proveniente soprattutto dalle comunità del Medio Oriente che si sarebbe rivelata disastrosa perché sottoposta rapidamente a dure repressioni politiche (Dédéyan 2002, 424-426). Dopo la morte di Stalin nel 1953 la repubblica conobbe una relativa normalizzazione politica, una crescita economica, culturale e demografica. Progressivamente si osservò una sempre più forte manifestazione del sentimento nazionale, ovviamente in latente contrasto con l'ordinamento ideologico sovietico. Tra gli Armeni va segnalata in questo senso soprattutto l'imponente manifestazione dell'aprile 1965 per commemorare il 50° anniversario del genocidio, mentre cominciava a rafforzarsi la rivendicazione della regione autonoma del Nagorno-Karabach di distaccarsi dall'Azerbaigian (cfr. Mouradian 1993).

Una questione aggravatasi negli ultimi anni sovietici, che ha provocato un conflitto con l'Azerbaigian tra il 1991 ed il 1994 e ha quindi condizionato pesantemente il percorso della repubblica armena, divenuta indipendente do-

⁴⁶ Sulla prima repubblica armena restano fondamentali i volumi di Hovannisian 1971; 1982; 1996a; 1996b.

po il crollo dell'URSS nel 1991⁴⁷. Nonostante la vittoria militare, la questione di questo territorio conteso continua a compromettere sensibilmente lo sviluppo della repubblica armena, che per le sue ridotte dimensioni e l'ostilità storica con il potente vicino turco avrebbe particolare bisogno di una stretta collaborazione con tutti i suoi vicini. In questa situazione, pur avendo rapporti normali con Iran e Georgia, il principale *partner* politico e militare continua ad essere la Russia, che mantiene una importante presenza militare nell'Armenia indipendente (cfr. Ferrari 2007, 126-128). Il legame privilegiato, ma al tempo stesso obbligato, con Mosca – peraltro accompagnato da una forte propensione occidentale, favorita dall'esistenza di comunità diasporiche particolarmente numerose ed influenti in Francia e negli Stati Uniti – ha esiti bivalenti: da un lato costituisce una garanzia di sicurezza nei confronti dei suoi vicini ostili, ma dall'altro limita notevolmente la libertà di azione della repubblica armena, soprattutto nei confronti degli Stati Uniti e dell'Unione Europea⁴⁸. In effetti, la precarietà territoriale, economica e politica dell'Armenia dei nostri giorni è una conseguenza diretta del genocidio del 1915 che ne ha duramente colpito la consistenza demografica, la dimensione territoriale, la forza politica ed economica.

Tuttavia, nonostante la difficile situazione politica della piccola repubblica indipendente e la dispersione diasporica della maggior parte del popolo armeno, credo sia opportuno concludere questo scritto con le parole del poeta Hovhannes Širaz (1915-1984):

“Il destino armeno”

Ci hanno battuti da tempo, però
Gli Armeni hanno vissuto, vivono e vivranno di nuovo.

Ci hanno battuti mille secoli, però
Gli Armeni hanno vissuto, vivono e vivranno di nuovo.

Siamo stati colpiti di genocidio, però
Gli Armeni hanno vissuto, vivono e vivranno di nuovo. (AA.VV. 2012, 59)

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⁴⁷ Su questo conflitto si veda soprattutto lo studio di De Waal 2003.

⁴⁸ Sull'Armenia contemporanea si veda soprattutto il recente volume di Ghaplanyan 2018.

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Speaking about Resilience: Interview with Mkrtich Tonoyan

Mkrtich Tonoyan

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SMR: How did you come up with the idea of an artist exchange between Ireland and Armenia?

MT: I always had a personal interest in Ireland and a special connection to this country.

There are many stories about Irish and Armenian connections in medieval time and I thought if the distance couldn't make a barrier back then, why not do it now when everything is so much easier with the forms of communication that we have today. At first it was just an idea but when I met the Irish artist Ian Joyce at the HweiLan International Artists Workshop in Taiwan in 2006 we thought about ways in which this idea could come to life¹. We had shared interests in many things like language, etymology and found – to our surprise – many common Armenian and Irish Gaelic root words.

We decided to start a long-term cultural exchange project between our countries involving our own arts organizations: Akos Cultural NGO, which I co-founded in 2002, and Cló Ceardlann na gCnoc (Cló), which Ian Joyce set up (with Oona Hyland) in 1999 and is located in the Irish Gaeltacht. The following year Ian Joyce came to Armenia for research, then I visited him in Ireland, and he came again to Armenia. The culmination of our collaboration was when we got generous financial support from the European Commission for the *Samkura* cultural exchange project; a project lasting more than 2 years that enabled, amongst other things, Irish artists to come to and work in Armenia and participate in the ACOSS artist-in-residence program and Armenian artists to visit Ireland².

¹ For more information about this artist workshop see <<http://2006hweilan.blogspot.am/>>.

² Also see <<http://www.creativeeuropeireland.eu/culture/projects/case-studies-backup/samkura>>http://www.acoss.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=39&Itemid=58&lang=en (05/2018).

SMR: Please tell us about your first visit to Ireland, and the work you produced there.

MT: My first visit to Ireland was in 2009, when I got a 2-months scholarship to participate in the artist-in-residence program at Cló and to produce an on-site artwork based on the research I conducted there³. During my research, I discovered many similar old tales and legends, similar motives in Christian monuments known as Celtic cross and in Armenia as the Cross Stone (Khachqar).

The work I created in Ireland was a video interpretation of an on-site installation imitating the landscape of Donegal. It relates to the first impression I got when I was walking among the mountains and hills and near small lakes on the bog. The ground there is turf and local people cut this turf in the shape of a brick, dry it and burn in the winter. I asked myself what keeps people here alive here in such an unstable climate and on such infertile ground? How do they sustain life here and build their houses, when the earth itself is so soft? Then when I went to cut the turf, I discovered there were rocks underneath the turf that would allow them to build their houses on top of these rocks. Speaking about resilience, I believe, that their faith and pride in their ancestors is like these rocks. I also discovered that the character of the Irish is as contradictory as his landscape. You must go deeper to see his or her essence, which is like a rock, a rock he or she has chosen for him- or herself. Very similar to the experience or essence of being an Armenian.

This is why when I entered the room of unknown artist (the room of Seosamh Finn) in Min an Lea near Gortahork, Co. Donegal, which was entirely built from rocks on rocks, I told myself that the first part of my installation was already done - done by their history of struggle. I only added natural materials typical for this region: turf, wool, stone and wooden sticks. I photographed every step of the installation and used natural materials typical for this region: turf, wool, stone and wooden sticks. Using all of these photos and sound recordings of the sea waves I made an artist video⁴.

The concept of the work is originally from a skype chat I had with Ian Joyce that I would like to share:

[9:04:42 PM] Ian Joyce said: All days are extreme, it is the days of love and mediation that are for me at the foot of Mount Ararat⁵.

[9:04:43 PM] Mkrtich Tonoyan replied: All days are extreme, it is the days of love and mediation that are for me at the foot of Mount Errigal⁶.

³ Detailed information about the participants and the outreach of this project can be found here <http://www.acoss.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73:a-new-stage-in-collaboration-with-clo&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=50> (05/2018).

⁴ You can watch the video here: <<https://youtu.be/stjtaCgPtjM>> (05/2018).

⁵ Mount Ararat is holy for all Armenians in the world and evokes a strong sense of national identity.

⁶ Mount Errigal is a holy for the Irish living in Donegal and has almost the same meaning for them as Mount Ararat has for Armenians.



Fig. 1 – Untitled
Courtesy of Mkrkich Tonoyan

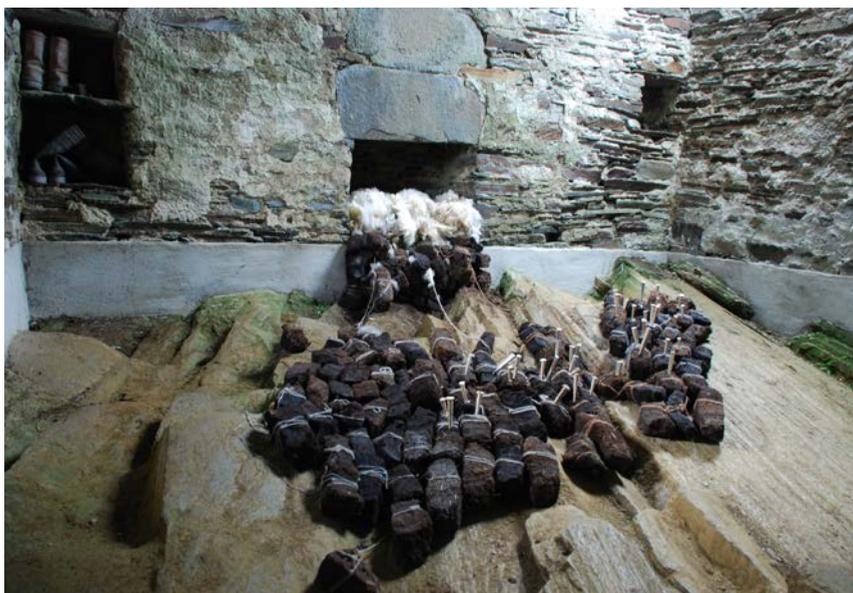


Fig. 2 – Untitled
Courtesy of Mkrkich Tonoyan

From Armenian Red Sunday to Irish Easter Rising: Incorporating Insurrectionary Politics into the History of the Great War's Genocidal Turn, 1915-16¹

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Abstract:

The Ottoman Armenians is not in doubt. But historicizing these events within the context of diverse and segmented Armenian responses to the 1914-1918 war has proved more problematic, not least as acknowledging any element of separatist or even insurrectionary intentions might appear to give retrospective legitimacy to the claims that the Ittihadust regime was acting against a genuine security threat. In considering the origins, scope and outcome of the Ottoman-Armenian collision by comparative reference to a synchronous British-Irish dynamic, this essay seeks to more than simply illustrate how peoples across the globe were thrown through the maelstrom of war into unlikely, including sometimes murderous contact with one another. More importantly, its purpose is to probe how for all the singularity of the *Medz Yeghern*, the Armenian fate might be understood within a broader landscape of emergent European secessionist nationalism and imperial response both during and in the aftermath of the Great War.

Keywords: Armenian Genocide, Dashnaksutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), Easter Rising, Irish Republican Brotherhood, World War I

1. Introduction

Are two momentous events on the same day, in succeeding years, taking place at opposite ends of the European continent, a sufficient basis for

¹ This essay is an elaboration of a talk given to the Trinity College, Dublin Historical Society on 28 March 2017. I am grateful for the opportunity which their invitation afforded.

historical linkage? In Armenian collective memory, Red Sunday, 24 April 1915, has come to be nationally marked and commemorated as the beginning of the Ittihadist-initiated and organised genocide of Ottoman Armenians – the Medz Yeghern though in fact what happened that day was the mass round up and deportation of up to 270 leading lights in the Armenian cultural and political community in Constantinople to two holding centres in Ankara (Townshend 2015, 149-151). It was later, when the mass deportations from eastern Anatolia got under way that the majority of this Constantinople elite were murdered. However, an exact year later, on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, over 1800 miles to the west, in Dublin, the then provincial capital of British Ireland, the republican green, white and orange tricolour was unfurled over the city's General Post Office. This marked the opening of the Irish Easter Rising against London rule. Preemptive round-ups of potential lead protagonists as urgently advised by the viceroy went unrealised (Kévorkian 2011, 251-254). Even so within less than a week the Rising was expunged in a furious hail of British artillery shells and heavy machine gun fire. Total defeat notwithstanding, 24 April is a date of veneration in the Irish republican calendar and a subject for national commemoration one hundred years on from the Rising.

How can two such unrelated events, the serendipity of their dates notwithstanding, have any causative connection or consequence except as disparate outcomes of the larger catastrophe of the Great War? True, like something out of Tolstoy's verdict on history by way of the Napoleonic wars as a great mass of people locked into movement "from west to east and from east to west", Irishmen unwittingly found themselves party to the events of Red Sunday (Sanborn 2005, 290). The Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter Ittihad) round ups in Constantinople were precipitated by the imminence of the Anglo-French landings on the beaches of Gallipoli, some 150 miles away, in which, on the following day, Irish fusiliers of the 29th division, alongside ANZAC and other imperial troops fought and died. Much larger number of Irishmen in British uniform would suffer a similar fate a few months later, in August 1915, as the British attempted to break the Gallipoli deadlock with further disastrous landings at Suvla Bay, yet also at the very height of the first wave of Armenian deportations and killings (Jeffrey 2000, 37-78).

That as many as 4000 Irishmen died in the eight month Gallipoli campaign perhaps offers some tenuous point of connect between Irishmen and Armenians in the Great War. Small nations, like the Serbs and Belgians too, or if one prefers "little allies", these peoples were seemingly on the same side as partisans in the Entente struggle pitting initially Britain, France and Russia against the German-led Central Powers, the Ottoman empire, by late 1914, included.

Except that is not our story. Or at least can only be a problematic part of it given that it misses a whole other part, the exclusion of which could be read as either historical myopia, or a conscious sleight of hand. The picture of

loyal Irishmen fighting for and with the British empire to defeat the Turks, is indeed totally discombobulated when set against the Easter Rising in which other Irishmen consciously committed treasonable acts against the crown, as if they were repudiating any affinity between themselves and those serving in British uniform, not to say aided and abetted by the enemy, the Germans. But then, through the former prism, this would make the insurrectionists a trojan horse, seeking to deliver a stab in the back to the Entente war effort. By the same token, the Ittihadist regime's Armenian Red Sunday round-ups the previous year were carried out as a preemptive strike against those who were assumed to be aiders and abettors to the British landings, as they potentially broke through to Constantinople. In other words, the vanguard of an Armenian population, which supposedly was awaiting for the signal for a wider insurrection against Ottoman rule. Or put differently again, another trojan horse whose aim was to disrupt the internal security of the Porte at a moment when it was being mortally threatened by foreign invasion. This truth, if it were a truth, would place the cause of Armenian nationalism and that of Irish nationalism not on the same side of the wartime, geo-political equation but on diametrically opposite sides.

Again, however, our comparison jars, or simply falls apart at this point, given that there is little evidence of a general Armenian insurrectionary movement in 1915, any more than a year later there is much evidence of a general Irish uprising. Yet on one level this only muddies the water further for it is precisely in the respective states' responses to insurrection, real if partial, in the Irish April 24 case, debatable or largely imagined in the Armenian April 24 case that the outcomes radically diverge. Whether or not the perceived Armenian threat had some underlying reality, the regime's reaction went far beyond anything obviously proportionate. Rather, the Ittihad entered into a policy of genocide. By contrast, British retaliation in the Irish case though severe and brutal, cannot carry the genocidal epithet, at least not at this given moment in time. Indeed, it is in the overwhelming nature of the Ittihad assault on the Armenians and the manner in which it *morally* has overshadowed everything else which has also had one long-term, negative side-effect for historians; the blocking out or placing off-limits of any legitimate consideration of radical Armenian insurrectionary politics in the Great War – either on its own terms, or by way of comparative analysis. So much so that to unequivocally confirm that there was an optimal genocide in which up to one million Armenian men, women and children were slaughtered and *at the same time* there were *some* Armenian advocates or practitioners of what Irish historians would refer to as advanced nationalism – thus, thinking and acting in ways not unlike, for instance, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) – would seem to represent not just a category error: a confusion of two elements but an unconscionable attempt to deflect from where true responsibility for the genocide lies.

Rather, however, than getting sidetracked by defending the merits of historicization against Holocaust-informed arguments as to the essence of evil, my inclination is to take a cue from Jo Laycock's recent plea for "the possibilities for moving beyond the national narratives which continue to dominate the field, in particular through connecting the case of the Armenian Genocide to what has been termed a 'transnational turn' in the writing of the history of the First World War" (Laycock 2015, 93). This essay thus seeks to address the confusion or plain contradiction alluded to above by adopting an integrative approach considering different strands of political action, or indeed non-action within the Armenian national camp alongside Irish parallels.

To embrace within this discussion in both cases minority elements who were prepared to consider and then act out radical, insurrectionary programmes for national freedom, does not mean that we either have to front load these programmes or treat them in adulatory terms. For the personal record, I find the romanticised, commemorative martyrology often invested in the IRB, Dashnaksutiun, or armed "freedom fighters" anywhere, highly suspect. Equally, an implicit hierarchisation of worth founded on valorising heroic Armenian fedayi or Gaelic believers in the idea of blood sacrifice for the good of the cause at the expense of those who acquiesced, were passive, silent, or ran away, may itself radically distort the historical record. Even, especially, when set against the reality of the Medz Yeghern. Yet by the same token, it seems to me important that a contextualised consideration of that same genocide incorporates the flesh and blood role of Armenian national actors, some of whom were seeking *avant la lettre* to take advantage of the possibilities that the war held out, even before the defensive struggle against the Ittihadists became a matter of sheer existentialist necessity. To acknowledge their existence, alongside other like-minded, avant-garde nationalists in other theatres of the Great War thus highlights the central problematic for Armenians in their ongoing quest for a universal genocide recognition: the imperative to make these actors temporarily invisible in order to streamline an essentialist narrative in which only victimhood counts.

Fortunately, for fear of the bad smell which this statement might elicit, there is an emerging historical tendency which is seeking to 'think' Armenian history within a much broader, global landscape, the genocide included and in which comparative questions may be legitimately asked. In particular, Sebouh Aslanian has recently breathed fresh air upon what he has inferred as a stultified, sometimes monolithic, even politically self-serving national monument of "bloated historical memory" by challenging – just as a recent generation of Jewish historians have done vis-a-vis a more traditional "lachrymose" conception of Jewish history – that Armenian history has to be like this too, or that the preservation of a people's identity in the wake of genocide has to eschew a critical approach to their past. Aslanian's riposte has been to demand a less parochial, less insular, and more interactive and con-

nected view of Armenian history as a sub-field of world history, even while reaffirming the obvious; that the Medz Yeghern was the great, overwhelming catastrophe of Armenian contemporary existence. This ‘think’ piece follows a similar path in attempting to ask difficult but necessary questions aimed at understanding the trajectory of Armenian national politics within the wider urge towards national self-determination as a consequence of the 1914-1918 trauma. This is not to propose a “teleological and linear unfolding of the nation-form [...] towards its natural nirvana of the nation-state” (Aslanian 2014, 130-134). It is, however, to pose a key conundrum as to why by the end of the war the advanced nationalists almost everywhere on the European or near-European stage, the Armenians as much as the Irish, had come from the margins to centre political stage.

Yet the paradox particular to the Armenians is that this radical tendency while central to a prior and then subsequent staging of national struggle as it has informed collective national memory and memorialisation has been largely blanked out or obfuscated in relation to the key period leading up to, including and immediately after the genocide. This essay does not suggest new information on the matter. Instead, by reference to the Irish parallel it simply sketches a comparative, exploratory pathway into the fraught and contested arena of Great War national politics, the role of Armenian insurrectionists included. We pursue this by a three part set of comparisons each one signposted by the names of metropolitan and provincial cities within the British and Ottoman empires.

2. Constantinople – London

In the spring and early summer of 1914, before war clouds cast their giant shadow across the continent, the auguries for some sort of resolution of Irish and Armenian questions seemed both promising and plausible. State authorities at the Porte and Westminster were engaged in protracted negotiations involving leading representative spokesmen from the main Armenian and Irish political parties respectively. To be sure, it was foreign powers, not Ittihad, who had initiated the latest set of proposals. Even so, and albeit under duress, the Porte’s acceptance of the 1914 Armenian reform plan, as the British government’s commitment to the passing an Irish Home Rule Bill, represented singular developments which, if they had been carried through into practical implementation, might have morally disarmed and very possibly led to the complete sidelining of the advocates for liberation struggle.

In Ireland the demand for an autonomous and self-governing island of Ireland within the framework of an ongoing constitutional though subordinate relationship to London had been the subject of two previous failed late 19th century efforts. Now constitutional changes denying an historic veto repeatedly exercised by the House of Lords, provided the Liberal Asquith gov-

ernment with a window of opportunity to pass Home Rule into law. It came with the clamouring for and full backing of the elected Irish Parliamentary party (Dangerfield 1976, 113-117). By a rather different route the Russian-initiated, Great Power-backed reform plan for the six Armenian vilayets and province of Trabzon – again a reworking of an earlier failed effort – paved the way for direct European supervision of the region, with particular responsibility for the resolution of Armenian grievances. While not a programme for secession, or even Armenian autonomy, with leading political and religious figures from the Armenian National Assembly central to the programme's formulation, the reform package even in its diluted 1914 version, remained substantially weighted towards Armenian interests as against other especially Kurdish and Circassian groups on the plateau (Kieser, Polatel, Schmutz 2015, 285-304). With a Norwegian and a Dutch inspector readied in Constantinople in the early summer to take up their supervisory posts in the vilayets, the Reform Plan took on the force of law as did Asquith's Government of Ireland Act when it received Royal Assent on 28 September.

That by this juncture the Great War was already in full catastrophic swing in the West and about to be driven down an even more apocalyptic path by Ittihad adherence to the German side in the east, is testimony enough to the still-born nature of these developments. Home Rule was suspended for the duration of the war, the Reform Plan repudiated by the Porte. By the end of the war both projects were utterly redundant. Worse, one could persuasively argue that they actually accelerated the ensuing road to state-community conflict, perhaps further inferring that even in peace time neither project could ever have been implemented without recourse to massive violence.

The Russian Reform Plan's resurrection in 1912 came at a moment when Ottomania was reeling from a first set of disasters in the Balkan wars. Having lost almost the entirety of its European territory, the so-called Mandelstam scheme seemed to be pointing towards a more deviously Byzantine route by which the Porte would be wrested of almost half its remaining Anatolian heartland too. That in itself could be interpreted as a *casus belli*. The fact however that key figures in the Ottoman Armenian establishment had been party to the project, over the heads of their erstwhile and in some cases ongoing Ittihad interlocutors, not to say in foreign embassies in the very heart of Constantinople, could equally be viewed as hostile even treasonable acts (Kévorkian 2011, 153-165). Meanwhile the whiff of cordite was in some ways even more palpable in a London moving from a drawing board Home Rule to practical implementation. Opposition from Ulster Protestants – the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) – intent on sabotaging the plan by way of the illegal gun-running into northern Ireland ports of almost 25,000 modern German rifles and ordnance to match, in April 1914, was met by the self-formation of an Irish Volunteer force in the overwhelmingly Catholic south intent on its decisive implementa-

tion (Dangerfield 1976, 110-115). London was thus faced in the summer of 1914 with a situation in Ireland in some ways more akin to eastern Anatolia than a Western democracy ruled by law, with sectarian para-military forces facing each other off, dark talk of (and provisional state planning for) the partition of Ireland, and the prospect of a real, no holds-barred civil war.

However, before one dismisses out of hand the likelihood of either reformist programme ever being peacefully realised, a word in their defence. In the metropolitan world before August 1914, national grievances within imperial states were still sometimes perceived as resolvable (one thinks particularly of Austria-Hungary) without a maximalist recourse to complete and irrevocable national separation. The very idea of a devolved Ireland but still within some wider British framework thus speaks not just to realities of power but to ideas of rapprochement and accommodation as most clearly expressed by John Redmond, the head of the Irish party. This tendency reaching back into the 19th century was pursued in spite of and perhaps because of the depth of Catholic Irish resentment against historic subjugation to and continuing rule by the English through 'the viceroy' in Dublin Castle and in economic practice, through a landowning Protestant Ascendancy. Over and beyond the political struggle, not to say a cultural one in which Catholic Irish were repeatedly held in a contempt bordering on overt racism, the issue of land rights, and loss, further embedded in bitter memory through a perceived absentee landlord class's un pitying response to their peasants' mass starvation, death or flight abroad in the Great Famine of the 1840s, highlighted the necessity for a political process which would effectively return Irish land to an Irish people².

It is perhaps significant that land rights, or more precisely the lack of them for an Armenian peasantry reeling from decades of lawless, violent encroachment from Kurdish tribal overlords and muhajir settlers were also at the core of Ottoman Armenian efforts to come to an accommodation with the post-1908 incumbents at the Porte and on the basis of the ongoing integrity of the empire. The notion is not outlandish. A pluralist Ottoman equality of peoples overriding a historic hierarchisation based on Muslims over millet dated back to the mid-19th century Tanzimat period of constitutional reform³. Then repudiated by the sultan Abdul Hamid II, Ittihad and Dashnaksutiun were closely aligned in their conspiratorial anti-Hamidian programmes and strategies for a change of regime and return to the constitution. Once ostensibly achieved in the 1908 Young Turk revolution, elected Dashnak deputies, as other leading Armenian politicians, shared a common milieu with Ittihad in the subsequently re-inaugurated parliament in Con-

² See Foster 1988, Chapters 8, 14, 16, 17, for critical overview.

³ See Hanioglu 2008, for Tanzimat overview.

stantinople, identified in key respects with the latter's progressive, modernising goals, and often joined them in electoral lists and platforms. They mixed socially too just as Irish Party MPs did in London, especially with radical Liberals and Labourites. When the Young Turk movement was in danger in April 1909 from more reactionary forces, Ittihadists including latter-day *genocidaires*, Talaat and Dr Nazim, took refuge in the homes of high-ranking Armenian political friends (Kévorkian 2011, 43-74).

To be sure these close relationships were put under acute strain as the regime faltered in the face of anti-Armenian massacres which swept from Adana across Cilicia in the wake of the counter-revolutionary moment. Subsequent re-priminations, charges and counter-charges of bad faith or worse, equally soured the joint commission which the two parties set up a few months later to report on social problems on the plateau and to consider a land reform programme aimed to address entrenched feudalism on the one hand, and the range of arbitrary – and hence extralegal – exactions of peasants, Armenian and non-Armenian, on the other. It was Ittihadist dilatoriness or unwillingness to carry through in any meaningful manner on this programme which the Dashnaks held as grounds for the formal termination of the alliance in August 1912 as undoubtedly it also acted as a goad to the initiation of *pourparlers* with the Great Power embassies (Kaligian 2009, 53-59; Kévorkian 2011, 131-135). Still, this was not the end of Dashnak efforts to work with the regime. Nor were the Ittihad themselves yet so publicly ill-disposed to their erstwhile Armenian comrades to ignore the fact that in the essentially triangular ethnic struggle on the plateau, Armenians were the obvious counterweight to the Kurds and arguably the more reliable and loyal allies. Indeed, when in spring 1914 Kurdish tribes in the Bitlis region rose with rather overt Russian backing in armed revolt, Dashnak cadres were authorised to arm themselves against Kurdish attack and even on occasion to support regular Ottoman troops against the insurgency (Kaligian 2009, 184).

Even as war loomed, there were no clear signs that Armenian-Turkish, and more specifically Ittihad-Dashnak relations were in complete meltdown. News that the other main Armenian revolutionary party, the Hnchaks, in their September 1913 congress held in Romania had resolved to take up again “violent revolutionary tactics” to defeat Ittihad’s “criminal plans” were in turn greeted with alarm by many former party stalwarts within the empire who had been increasingly moving towards an entirely more moderate reformist position. Moreover, as mobilisation got under way, leading Armenian religious and political spokesmen affirmed their support for the war effort and to the integrity of the empire. At the local level, on the plateau, the tenor of these statements was corroborated by valis and other local officials who reported back to the Porte news of vocal Dashnak support for and assistance in the mobilisation schedule. *Union sacrée* between Ottoman state and peoples thus seemed to be the order of the day just as it was elsewhere among the

belligerent powers (Suny 2015, 196-197, and 220-221). If there were doubts, not to say restiveness among the wider Armenian population at the new, post-revolution innovation whereby non-Muslims were liable for military service alongside Muslim able-bodied menfolk nevertheless, for the most part, there was a resigned compliance among an estimated 200,000 Armenian men eligible for induction into the army (Mann 2005, 136).

Irish elite pronouncements of loyalty to empire were altogether more profuse. Again, in the van was Redmond who in a House of Commons speech on 3 August, the day before Britain declared war on Germany, pledged that the Irish National Volunteers in the south would join forces with the Protestant ones in the north both to defend the island of Ireland and the British empire of which it was part, in its hour of need. Redmond was prepared to be more proactive still, issuing a manifesto in the following month in which Home Rule was due to pass into law, calling on Irishmen to join the British colours “for the defence of the sacred rights and liberties of small nations and the respect and enlargement of the great principle of nationality” (Hennessey 1998, 86). Indeed, with that in mind he urged the British government to create a recognised Irish army. No such specific entity was authorised by Westminster but there was an early surge of Irish nationalists responding to Redmond’s call to arms; a significant proportion of the some 200,000 Catholic as well as Protestant Irish who served in the British army during the Great War. Among them would be members of the 16th Irish Division slaughtered in the months after the Dublin Uprising on the Somme, as also those in the 10th Irish Division caught up in the carnage the previous year at Gallipoli⁴. By then, however, the war had so unravelled the tenuous sinews of rapprochement as to leave the political field seemingly open for decisive if albeit differently traumatic Irish and Armenian uncouplings from imperial subservience.

3. Van – Dublin

An early indication of things to come in Ireland manifested itself at the very outset of the war when the original founders of the Irish Volunteers led by Eoin MacNeill repudiated Redmond’s co-option of the movement and organisationally broke away to re-found it effectively as the potentially insurrectionary arm of the IRB. Initially, the split still favoured the Redmondites whose newly named National Volunteers were estimated to number all but 11,000 of the 180,000 strong force prior to August 1914 (Hennessey 1998, 91). Yet thereafter the seepage from the moderates to the radicals was marked before it ultimately turned into a post-Easter Rising flood. It was not just

⁴ Jeffrey 2000, 5-7, for evaluation of the number of Irishmen who served.

that Redmond's declaration of a "war for high ideals" (86) sounded increasingly hollow not least when Asquith almost simultaneously reneged on the promise of an all Ireland Home Rule by pronouncing that there could be no British action to coerce Ulster to the fact. A year later, the breach widened with the apparent snub by the War Office, not least to Redmond himself, when there was no official mention of the role of Irish regiments in the Gallipoli campaign when other British units were cited in dispatches and suitably lionised (109).

The Irish were as used to being historically treated by the British, in military affairs as everything else, as a lesser form of pond life, or just simply invisible, just as Armenians were used to the pejorative connotations of Ottoman dhimmi status. Irish sensitivity to the shackles of British contempt was undoubtedly a factor in the founding of Sinn Fein, "We ourselves" in 1905. Its founder, Arthur Griffith, forcefully articulated the case for a free, sovereign and independent Ireland. It was argued Griffith, the only framework in which the Irish could participate on Britain's side in the war. As it was, Sinn Fein provided the key nexus for opposition to Irish recruitment. Its politics including its contesting of Irish seats against the Irish party, did not however translate into overt support for the insurrectionary strategy of the IRB, not least as Griffith's focus was on constructive non-compliance to British rule (including not taking up won seats in Westminster), not on fighting against impossible odds. It may have been in part Westminster animus against Sinn Fein's obstructive tactics which led them to misread the Easter rising as Sinn Fein-directed and organised (Kee 2000, 438-460).

Where Sinn Fein, the IRB and other advanced nationalist groupings held common ground was in their fervent adherence to the Irish cultural and more specifically language revival particularly fostered from the late 19th century by the Gaelic League. Explicit in this movement was an opposition to the Anglicisation of Ireland which in turn intensified the search for the folkloric, literary, and historic roots of an 'authentic' Ireland before or beyond Anglo-Scottish domination. If the recovery of an almost defunct peasant vernacular was the seedbed of a modern Irish national identity formation – as essentially nurtured by an urban, educated, middle class – its political counterpart was the valorisation of those who in more recent times had sought to ferment anti-British insurrection. The IRB of the Easter Rising thus specifically saw themselves in a long-line of "Fenian" warriors going back through the failed IRB uprisings in Ireland and Canada of 1867, to the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798, and its key sequel, the Robert Emmett-led attempt to seize Dublin castle and other key strategic locations in the city, in 1803 (Foster 1988, 431-460). With the exception of 1798, none of these uprisings had come remotely close to their goal but then for Padraic Pearse, one of the leaders of and recognised voice of the 1916 rising what mattered was not that they had militarily succeeded but through their sense of mission, blood sac-

rifice and martyrdom to the cause had shown the way to how Ireland could yet be redeemed “from acquiescence to the Union” (Townshend 2015, 99).

Such arguments might underscore how the shapers of 1916 – with their almost mystical sense of nation on the one hand, acute anxieties about how that ideal was in danger of being subverted by a febrile self-governing relationship within Britain on the other – were in key respects a minority tendency remote from the daily life of the majority of ordinary Irishmen. That said there was a point of confluence. It was over the matter of conscription. For all Redmond’s declarations in support of the war effort, and their heeding by many Home Rule nationalists, there were droves of others in grass-roots rural Ireland who saw conscription over the horizon and the suppression or the radical nationalist press, plus the deportation of agitators who spoke out against it under the wartime Defence of the Realm Act, as proof of its imminence. By the autumn of 1915 the supposed threat was producing a veritable stampede of young men to North America. But already a year earlier, in September 1914, elements of the Irish Volunteers, IRB along with the trade unionist leader, James Connolly, had taken their cue from a planned Dublin recruiting rally in which Asquith and Redmond were due to speak to carry out a *coup d’état*. With only eighty armed men responding to the call, the would-be insurrection was called off. But then there was no conscription in Ireland (Hennessey 1998, 125). Nor before 1916 was there a descent into violent internal conflict. Paradoxically, the promise of Home Rule plus the allegiance of the Sir Edward Carson-led UVF to Britain put paid – albeit temporarily – to that outcome.

The situation was wholly different on the Ottoman eastern Anatolian plateau as it merged with the Russian Caucasus. Even before the overt Ottoman attack on Russian Black sea ports on 29 October, the plateau had been in a state of ugly ferment for months. The levels of violence whether perpetrated by the army, the so-called *Teskilat-i-Mahsusa* (Special Organisation) local militias, or by ethnic protagonists as they attempted to defend their own communal space, were already a portent of the “war of all against all” conditions which would be prevalent in the latter years of the war. Having put so much purchase on the Reform Plan but alert to the fact that in practice it was already moribund, Armenian leaders were thus faced with an exquisite dilemma. They could follow the lead from *Ittihad*, or more precisely, its leading light, Dr Sakir, when he and two other Special Organisation emissaries pitched up at the end of the Dashnak’s congress in Erzurum in early August 1914. In return for helping to foment insurrection on the Russian side of the border, Sakir’s Dashnak interlocutors were led to understand that the Porte would back an autonomous Armenian state on both sides of the border (Kévorkian 2011, 175). Yet that would place the Ottoman Dashnaks in direct confrontation with their fellow Armenians who were Russian subjects, the eastern wing of the Dashnak party included. Alternatively, the Ot-

toman Armenians could succumb to the blandishments from the other side, the Russians, or that matter, the French, or the British. Signals by way of Count Vorotsov-Dashkov, Russia's viceroy in the region, included one from the tsar towards the end of 1914 informing the Armenians of their "brilliant future" (Salahi Sonyel 2000, 82). The Russians however were prepared to go further, actively encouraging by way of the Dashnak-dominated Armenian National Bureau in Tiflis that Armenians on the Ottoman side of the border join with fellow Russian Armenian *druzhiny* – volunteers – in taking up arms against the Porte (Bloxham 2005, 73; Reynolds 2011, 117).

These sorts of bribes were hardly unique to the Armenian situation. The Russians made them equally at the time to Ottoman Nestorians and Kurds, as much later in 1916, Sir Mark Sykes in London toyed with another British-led, anti-Ottoman "small would-be nations" combination this time made up of Arabs, Jewish Zionists and Armenians. In fact, as the war deepened as did the Great Power military stalemate, the notion of attempting to entice troubled or troublesome *ethnies* on the enemy side to one's own interest became, for Central Powers as for the Allies, almost par for the course. The Ottomans were equally participants in this dangerous game of ethnic mobilisation, Muslim groups such as the Adzhars on the Russian Caucasus side of the border, one potential focus; while encouraged by the Germans, the Sheikh-ul-Islam's declaration of jihad was designed to foment rebellion especially in British India and Egypt (Levene 2017, 30, 34).

For groups like the Armenians, or for that the matter the Irish, the key issue – that is, for any element within the group both with national aspirations and at the same time ready to entertain a relationship with the 'enemy' – was the quid pro quo, the return, in other words, on their high risk investment in the undertaking. The prospect of aligning oneself to the enemy's chances of victory might seem to present opportunities for national fulfilment which otherwise might have appeared remote if not delusional. Yet the price of participation contained a nasty sting on two counts. Firstly, there was the blood price, literally, how many men could you offer as cannon fodder. And it is significant that numbers were often quite fantastically plucked out of the air by both patrons, or supplicants, often as equal indication of their desperation. At the time of the February 1915 planning for the so-called Alexandretta feint, for instance, in which the British were considering a diversionary landing in Cilicia in support of their main Dardanelles objective, an irregular auxiliary force of 15,000 Armenian Zeitunlis was conjured up seemingly out of nowhere. This figure however would be trumped by French confabulations that 100,000 Greek insurgents would rise in support of an Entente landing in Asia Minor while British military intelligence in Cairo a little later got into their heads the same or more Arabs in Ottoman uniform turning their guns on their Turkish officers in an even more fanciful flight of wish-fulfilment (Bloxham 1991, 176-178). But there again, just before the Easter Ris-

ing, Count Plunkett, the father of one its key protagonists, delivered a letter to the Pope claiming that the Irish Catholic nation had an “effective force of 80,000 trained men” ready for action (Townshend 2015, 123).

Which brings us to the second sting. However much numbers of supposed insurgents, Irish, Armenian, Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, Arab – were inflated or not, however much indeed any of these forces really counted for something, or not – they fed into a climate of paranoia, suspicion, hysteria and spy mania which gripped all the main belligerents almost from the war’s outset. The paranoia centred precisely on those *ethnies* who were considered most suspect if not downright traitorous to the state’s war effort. Thus, if it were *perceived* as true that any such ethnic group was organising disruption and sabotage in the rear of the actual fronts, by attempting to cut communication and supply lines, for instance, perhaps as a prelude either to a more widespread people war, or, then again, in support of foreign enemy invasion, then the state in turn might claim its worst fears had been realised. The argument had an inbuilt circularity, not least as all the belligerents were trying to foment exactly such uprisings among their enemies ‘subject’ peoples. That said, the very charge of insurgency was bound to expose any so accused community to the state’s special and extraordinary security measures, retribution, or worse.

So, how much evidence is there to suggest there was an insurrectionist agenda within the Armenian camp? Some of the reportage is unclear or contradictory. We know that there were intense discussions at the summer 1914 Dashnak Erzurum congress on what the party ought to do. In the wake of the arrests just weeks earlier of most of the Hnchak leadership in Constantinople on charges of anti-state conspiracy and with it the effective destruction of that party organisation, it is surprising that, equally sensing danger to themselves, the Dashnaks maintained a clear official line of support for the Porte. That said, there were dissenters who broke away to throw in their lot with the Russian Armenian *druzhiniy*. One notable example was Hovhannes Kachaznuni, who tasked by the congress with making contact with the western bureau to request they desisted from their volunteer programme, on arrival in the Caucasus joined the *druzhiniy* himself (Suny 2015, 221)⁵. Another was the almost legendary revolutionary, Armen Garo. Already in the Caucasus was the equally legendary Andranik who had only recently arrived from the Bulgarian front opposing the Ottomans in the Balkan wars, where he had led a several hundred strong Armenian volunteer battalion. This role he now resumed under the aegis of the Russian Caucasus army. Andranik in particular represented a strand in Armenian advanced nationalism founded on the idea of liberation through armed action and in which he had been a par-

⁵ Sonyel 2000, 83-85, for contrasting interpretations.

ticipant since the 1880s, not least as a fedayi in the second Sasun uprising in 1904 and before that the fabled 1901 battle of the Holy Apostles Monastery⁶. His revolutionary career as that of Armen Garo thus offered a connecting thread back into a recent history of defiant resistance to Hamidian or Kurdish depredations, including the earlier Sasun uprising of 1894, and the 1862 Zeitun rebellion, in each case against seemingly impossible odds. But it also provided more than simply an emotional lifeline, given the anti-Armenian atrocities which preceded and followed but an 'awakened' latter-day confirmation especially among an increasingly literate and European-orientated Armenian middle class that warrior heroes and martyrdom were embedded in two millennia of national narrative.

In the precise context of conflict on the plateau and in the Caucasus in 1914 and early 1915 it also meant that the *druzhiniy* had veteran violence specialists at their helm who made the IRB likes of Pearse or Joseph Plunkett look like innocents abroad. In the early months of a shifting and very porous front, the evidence suggests a merciless warfare in which local Christian and Muslim communities who were unable to flee paid the price in untold atrocities. In short, the *druzhiniy*, where they could, gave as good as they got. The actual numbers who were Ottoman renegades is sketchy, a recent compromise estimate is of between five and eight thousand, a mere fraction of those conscripted into the Ottoman army (Mann 2005, 136). Yet their presence in the Russian battle line-up, especially at the first major Ottoman military disaster in the Caucasus, at the battle of Sarakamish in early 1915, was magnified in elite Ottoman military and Ittihad political circles into proof of a more general Armenian perfidy.

In fact the Caucasus was not only the arena in which some Armenians were willing to make common cause with the Entente. Nor were they only revolutionary Dashnaks or Hnchaks. We have already intimated that early planning for the Dardanelles campaign involved the notion of an Allied landing on the Cilician coast. Privy to these developments was Boghos Nubar, who had previously been the Armenian diplomatic interlocutor in negotiations for the Armenian reform plan. Appointed by the Catholicos as head of the Armenian National Delegation (AND), in practice representing a much more elite and socially conservative tendency than the Dashnaks, Boghos Nubar nevertheless from November 1914 established contact with General Maxwell, head of the British military command in Egypt with a view to creating volunteer units there not unlike those under Vorontsov-Dashkov. The latter indeed was in turn privy to the Boghos Nubar proposal that a Zeitunli-led uprising in Cilicia would help open up a British bridgehead at Alexandretta providing for an eventual link-up with the Russians and their

⁶ Chalabian 1988, for a suitably hagiographic account.

Armenian partisans on the plateau. A further Armenian contribution to the project would be provided by several thousand diaspora volunteers most specifically provided by the Armenian National Defence Committee of America, who had also approached the British through the latter's Boston consul (Bloxham 2005, 80-82; McMeekin 2015, 241-243).

There is a shocking irony in the fact that the British shelved plans for the Alexandretta feint in spring 1915, given that retrospective assessments suggest this was the most "exquisitely vulnerable point in the Ottoman empire's wall of natural defences" (Anderson 2013, 96). A single warship, HMS Doris, had in fact penetrated Alexandretta's meagre sea defences and made an unopposed landing there in December 1915. A successful bridgehead from here might conceivably have cut the Ottoman empire into two entirely transforming the Entente's chances of bringing about its rapid defeat. With the Ottomans in retreat from Cilicia and the plateau, and what Sean McMeekin describes as Boghos Nubar's "kind of liaison Armenian government-in-embryo" (2015, 173) enabled by way of military materiel and open Entente support, perhaps not only might the deportations and hence genocide from eastern Anatolia have been forestalled but the way prised open for a more radical, more pro-Armenian version of the AND's Reform Plan agenda. Except all this is clearly counter-factual. Though Boghos Nubar would attempt to resurrect the Cilicia scheme to the British in July having upped the ante to 25,000 Armenian co-combatants while also this time making clear the humanitarian urgency of the matter, as far as the British were concerned, bogged down as they were in their self-inflicted Gallipoli quagmire, the project was dead in the water (McMeekin 2015, 173).

Even so, the AND scenario did contain aspects grounded in reality, though with unanticipated but catastrophic consequences. Though Boghos Nubar's figures were clearly exaggerated, anti-conscription feelings did engender a localised resistance among some young Armenian Zeitunlis which appears to have been an indicator of wider Armenian disaffection as well as desertion, both in Cilicia and elsewhere. The Zeitun rebellion, for what it's worth, seems to have been more a spontaneous grass-roots affair rather than anything politically coordinated, though Boghos Nubar, at the distance of Cairo, appears to have been operating on the assumption that a Cilician uprising was conceivable, going so far as to inform Maxwell in early February that local Armenians would offer the British "perfect and total support" (Arkun 2011, 221-243; McMeekin 2015, 173).

What matters much more about these developments however is their timing. In the wake of Sarakamish and with the first Anglo-French naval bombardments of the Dardanelles in February, followed up with greater force the succeeding month, panic set in the Ottoman capital, plans for the government's evacuation to inland Eskişehir were put in motion and one critical observer, the US ambassador to the Porte, Henry Morgenthau, reckoned that

the whole Ottoman edifice was “on the brink of dissolution” (Morgenthau 1918, 158). It was in the context of this potential “strategic meltdown”, producing again in McMeekin’s words “a perfect storm of paranoia” that the Ittihad – regardless of whether there was an actual, coordinated Armenian threat or not – acted as if they were getting their retaliation in first (McMeekin 2015, 234). Towards the end of February, the Ottoman General Staff sent a directive to field commanders removing all Armenian officers and men from headquarter staffs and senior positions of command. In quick succession, a general order from War Office supremo and *regime triumvir*, Enver Pasha, disarmed all Armenian serving soldiers with their reduction to labour battalions, while co-triumvir and Interior Minister, Talaat Pasha, ordered the deportation of Armenians from Dortyol a coastal rail hub close to Alexandretta. Almost simultaneously, the third triumvir and Syrian region supremo, Cemal Pasha, extended the initial deportation order to include Armenians from across Cilicia, first men, then women and children too, while mercilessly hunting down and executing all alleged Armenian rebels in the Zeitun region. Open season on the Armenians across the empire had yet to be officially declared but at least politically speaking that moment came on the eve of the Gallipoli landings when Talaat paved the way for the Constantinople round-ups with a new directive to the Ottoman High Command ordering the elimination of Hnchak, Dashnak and Boghos Nubar organisations on grounds of their incipient revolt. Meanwhile, back on the plateau especially in and around Van, the vilayet with the most significant and compact Armenian population, or indeed across the border around Urmia, in technically neutral Persia where Armenians (and Nestorians) had been armed by the Russians to parry major Ottoman incursions, no such declaration of Ittihad intent was required: directly state-orchestrated or promoted violence had been rising to a crescendo of mass atrocity for months (Kévorkian 2011, 227-234; Suny 2015, 234-237, 253-259, 272-275).

From this perspective, the open Dashnak-led rebellion in Van from mid-April 1915, and its successful defence until Russian and *druzhiny* relief the following month, should be read neither as the cause of, or justification for the Ittihad anti-Armenian agenda as it emerged thereafter but rather as the climax to the violent breakdown of Ottoman-Armenian relations on the plateau since the onset of the Great War. To be sure, the Dashnaks would not have been able to mount such an effective defence against the increasing firepower – including artillery – of Ottoman Third Army units deployed against them, without an arsenal of Mauser pistols and Russian weapons and ordnance smuggled into the city in preceding months. Nor without the organisational and planning skills of a veteran Dashnak fighter, Arum Manukian (McMeekin 2015, 227-235). In its own terms, the tenacity of the Van defence against overwhelming odds is extraordinary and heroic, the immediate consequences of which were, when the Russians broke the siege on 18

May, Aram became, albeit at Russian behest, “the first Armenian supreme authority in the region in more than half a millennium” (Suny 2015, 260). It also meant that when the Russians were forced to evacuate the region two months later, at least some of the Vanets is avoided the wider fate of Armenians by then being deported or exterminated en masse.

Certainly, by contrast with the Dublin rising, for which most sanguine observers would agree “that the insurgents had no intelligible, or militarily speaking intelligent, blueprint”, the Van uprising had some positive effect. But then such an upbeat comparative analysis instantly falls down for a more fundamental reason (Townshend 2015, 111). After Easter 1916, the Irish volunteer movement and its yet to be properly mobilised cadres in the Dublin hinterland remained still intact as a potential future fighting force. Yet the Armenian *druzhiny*, dependent as they were on Russian or other Allied whim, had, bar those at Van no reserve force from within the plateau or Cilicia to draw on, should their leaders ever attempt an offensive posture. And the reason is a further stark contrast to the Irish situation. By 1916, the majority of “battle-age” Ottoman Armenian men were dead. Conscripted into the wider Ottoman army, but not into specific Armenian units where they might have been able to defend themselves, when they were reduced to unarmed labour by Enver’s February 1915 directives they fell into a trap where as soon as their Ottoman commanders received further instructions, or choose off their own volition to act, they were subject to mass slaughter. We know far too little about the particular circumstances of these events⁷. What we do know is that the Armenian recruits’ disappearance into the void, plus that of most remaining adult males on the cusp of the deportations, meant that in gendered terms there was no element in the community in the rear of the front to protect the otherwise most vulnerable: women, children, sick and the old, who would subsequently be wiped out in the genocide (Jones 2000, 201-202).

It raises a more general question as to degree to which any would-be ethnic insurgents, Armenian, Irish, or other, included in their politico-military calculations the consequences of their actions for the broad community for whom they were claiming to act. What guarantees were there that their open armed confrontation with the forces of empire would not provoke an altogether more vengeful retaliation or retribution? Sir Roger Casement, the key patrician exponent of German cooperation in the Hibernian cause, developing an already embryonic plan for alignment with Berlin as the strongest wartime card advancing Irish claims for sovereign independence, insisted that should the Germans then renege, for instance through annexation, it would then be overridden through Great Power outrage (Hennessey 1998, 133). Similarly, Armenian national efforts towards prising open the doors of

⁷ See Zürcher 2002, 187-196 and Kévorkian 2011, 240-242, for further assessment.

autonomy had strongly relied since 1878 on playing the international card. But diplomatic overtures where they blurred as they did in the case of Casement and Plunkett, as Boghos Nubar, into strategic plans based on foreign invasion protected one's population not a jot. On the contrary, in rendering it captive to the Trojan horse accusation, supposed safety became entirely dependent on the unlikely outcome of the invasion's complete and, above all, swift victory.

However, Casement was no more successful *vis-à-vis* the Germans than his Armenian counterpart was *vis-à-vis* the British in realising a watertight commitment to such an agenda, the support of the Fenian, Irish-American Clan na Gael notwithstanding, nor his own efforts to create an "Irish brigade" strike-force from Irish POWs in Germany (Kee 2000, 538-547). Having failed with the German-backed scheme, Casement opted for the putative brigade's never realised deployment with the Ottoman forces at Suez, a perverse oddity of our entwined narrative, underscored by Pearse's praise for wartime Turkish patriotism as like that of the heroic Belgians in defence of their soil (Pearse 1924, 216; Townshend 2015, 116-117). Yet at fundament, just as with Alexandretta in 1915, so on the projected West Irish beachhead in 1916, the absence of an invasion force, barring a scuttled German boatload of mostly captured Russian rifles, left the projected Easter rising literally high and dry⁸. Yet arguably its saving grace at least in human terms was that with Casement landed separately by submarine but too quickly captured to halt the insurrection, MacNeill's countermanding order sufficient to achieve precisely that among most Irish Volunteer units but not those mobilised in and around Dublin, the uprising took on the appearance of a very isolated affair. Certainly, at odds with many of the Catholic Irishmen who still believed that wearing the King's khaki was the surest route to Home Rule and at wide variance with much of demotic Dublin who took the opportunity of civil breakdown not to support the insurgents but to go on a mass looting spree, London was well-positioned to demarcate (if hardly exonerate) the majority of Irishmen and women from the actions of a few extremists and hotheads (O'Brien 1992, 258-273). Too quickly, however, did the Liberal Asquith government dispatch to Ireland one General Maxwell – the same general who had held off the Ottoman late 1914 attack on Suez – as military governor. Armed with the authority to rule under martial law and intent on doling out exemplary justice to all rebels, London's intervention to forestall death sentences on ninety of some 3,400 arrestees came too late to halt the execution of fifteen insurgent ringleaders including Pearse, Plunkett and Connolly (Townshend 2015, 269-299). Thereafter, London tried to rein

⁸ See "Aud 1916-Cork Shipwrecks", <<https://www.corkshipwrecks.net/1916aud.html>> (05/2018) for details.

in the forces of retribution, there were no mass reprisals; at least not in 1916 British-controlled Ireland. Yet the brutality of the British military in putting down the uprising, and above all the creation of martyrs, was treated by large swathes of Irishmen formerly ambivalent or even hostile to the insurrectionary tendency as an assault on the entirety of the Irish national cause.

4. Salonika – Belfast

Clearly, that still leaves one huge gulf between the scope and scale of British violence against the Catholic Irish, even as it accelerated towards Anglo-Irish war, and the Ittihad genocide against the Armenians. Even so, there is one further, if briefly stated, perspective to consider before drawing conclusions. In our first section, we emphasised the possibilities of accommodation in either case between state and community, obviating or diluting the urge to violent collision. Yet we have failed so far to fully identify and thus centre-stage the hard-line, indeed die-hard forces of “statist” resistance to any such arrangement. And here, despite the obvious difference in terms of outcome there are parallels. These might be summed up in the word “union”; in the notion of a marriage between imperialism and a strongly sectarian or identity-based nationalism; and in one other significant geographical “over the water” aspect: namely disaffected communities within provinces at one slight remove from the imperial heartland who saw themselves as having most culturally, cognitively, socially and economically to lose from any state-led political unravelling.

In the British framework it was in the areas of dense, historic, Protestant Anglo-Scottish settlement and supersession of the Catholic Irish, in Ulster, as centred on what by 1914, was the highly integrated and industrial port-city of Belfast, that opposition to Home Rule took on its most hard, unforgiving edge. If the Redmondites staked everything on support for the war in order to achieve their political freedom, Ulster Unionists under the leadership of Anglo-Irish patrician, Carson and Belfast magnet, James Craig, offered their support as a matter (to them) of sheer existential survival. Ulstermen consequently paid what their leaders would repeatedly iterate as the huge “sacrificial” price for their commitment to the Union in the battles on the Somme: their seminal 1916 event (Loughlin 2002, 136-145).

Yet, paradoxically, in the founding of the UVF four years earlier, they had already offered a version of the Union which was prepared to defy London in any attempted imposition of Home Rule, if necessary by armed confrontation with it. That said, the very threat had the potential to undermine the sinews of British liberal democracy, not least when in March 1914 as Asquith sought to carry through the policy, the majority of the army headquarters staff in Ireland, overwhelmingly of Ascendancy background, resigned in protest (Dangerfield 1976, 82-87).

Yet what is most intriguing about the so-called Curragh mutiny in terms of this discussion is its 1908 Ottoman resonances. Middle-ranking officers in the Third Army stationed in the great port-city and emerging industrial hub of Salonika, fearing rumours of a Great Power carve-up of Macedonia which would deliver the region to its former or present Christian subjects, sought to sabotage foreign intervention by marching on the Porte and demanding a return to the abandoned 1876 constitution. But behind this “Young Turk” mutiny-turned-revolution was not only the urgency of “saving the empire” but an equally visceral anxiety as to the fate of Muslims in Rumelia, that is what remained of Turkey in Europe⁹. Irish Unionists, fears of Papist atrocities, harking back to massacres in the 1640s, were nothing short of “foundational” (Beiner 2007, 373). For Ittihad’s Salonika cadres, whether born there or not, the fear was not based just on historic memory but contemporary reality, as fully realised in the Balkan states’ 1912 onslaught. At least 240,000 terrified muhajirs fled from a Macedonian and Thracian hinterland to the Salonikan choke-point and, where they could, took ship to the relative safety of Anatolia (Rankin 1914, 304). The city itself fell to the Greeks in late October. But even before that catastrophe had struck, in the closed sessions of its 1910 and 1911 congresses there – around the same time that Ulster Unionism was moving towards its own strident belligerency – Ittihad was debating how to shore up and strengthen what remained of the empire by ensuring the hegemonic position of the Turkish nation within it. New to this agenda was the notion of breaking up the alleged disloyal and seditious ethnies through dispersal to far parts of the empire where they would be dissolved among loyal Muslims populations, a policy one British observer likened “to pounding the non-Turkish elements [...] in a Turkish mortar” (Akçam 2004, 131; 2013, 258-279).

Whether such considerations were part of a predetermined, intentionalist agenda to carry out a root and branch destruction of the Ottoman Armenians is part of a different discussion. What matters here is the way in which Ittihad began ‘imagining’ a still imperial Ottomania through a nationalising prism of zero-sum struggle for space against internal ethnic competitors. What one historian of Great War Ireland has referred to as “a conflict between traumatic sensitivities of victimhood and triumphalist proclamations of victory” might equally apply to the way Ittihad transferred their sense of existential struggle from the other side of Bosphorus to eastern Anatolia, casting former Armenian partners in the process into Bulgarian-style bogeyman (Beiner 2007, 368; Suny 2015, 361-364). This besieged mentality as it infected the whole post-1913 Ittihad commanded, Ottoman edifice, in turn ensured that after they had done their worst in obliterating the Armenian presence on the pla-

⁹ See Dekmejian 1986, 85-96, for a significant “the personal as political” analysis.

teau the only meaningful politico-military direction for Dashnaks and the like, was that of confirming Ittihad's self-fulfilling prophecy. The path to Armenian independence in what would reduce to a tiny remnant of historic Armenia from 1918 would be paved with ongoing massacres committed by its militias against Muslims, inter-communal massacres *and* Kemalist massacres on a grand-scale against the starving survivors of the genocide, all in conditions of apocalyptic suffering¹⁰.

If the Irish situation would seem to diverge from this absolute nadir it was not however because the post-Easter Rising political ground had somehow shifted back to the middle. On the contrary, with Carson's star in the ascendant in Westminster politics where he led the combined Conservative-Unionist opposition to Asquith, and with the backing of David Lloyd George – the vastly more bellicose and pro-Unionist Prime Minister in waiting – for a permanent exclusion of six Ulster counties from the terms of Home Rule, the Redmondite position became entirely untenable (Hennessey 1998, 144-152). His party's electoral obliteration would be confirmed in the December 1918 British general election in which a now overtly IRB, Eamonn de Valera led and hence physical force-orientated Sinn Fein, swept the board in the south, proceeding to unilaterally declare an Irish independence with its own separate republican Assembly. But the tipping point on the road to military confrontation between Dublin and London as well as between Dublin and Belfast had already occurred at the one key moment in the war when London had itself been faced with military collapse and hence defeat: the moment of the initially, massively successful March 1918 German offensive on the Western front. Lloyd George's response was to rush to impose the one thing on Ireland no Westminster administration had dared yet do; conscription. From there, the decision – made without any Irish political consultation – was treated not as some emergency attempt to plug an acute manpower shortage but as a pretext to the dismantling of Home Rule and hence Irish liberty. A Sinn Fein led-resistance campaign but with support from across the national political spectrum was met in turn by the attempted round-up and arrest of some 150 leading Sinn Feiners, accused – with only flimsy, and quite possibly fabricated intelligence – of being party to a “German plot” to foment another Irish insurrection. Nevertheless, the intelligence was believed by British ministers (McMahon 2008, 24). It was in a strange way as if the events of 24 April 1915 had come full circle. But with one compelling difference. Save those who had died in British uniform, or in the Easter Rising, Ireland still had the majority of its able-bodied, battle-age menfolk – at least in principle

¹⁰ Hovannisian 1967, for the epic struggle against impossible odds; McCarthy 1995, esp. 198-200, 201, for atrocities committed in its name. See also Bloxham 2005, 103-105; Reynolds 2011, 197-198, 210-212.

– with which to parry the Empire striking back. Armenia had not. Most of its never-to-be freedom-fighters had signed their own death-warrant when they had acquiesced to their religious and political leadership’s counsel to enlist in the Ottoman army. In the subsequent wars of Irish and Armenian independence the cause of advanced Irish nationalism had a gender-based commodity which its decimated Armenian counterpart sorely lacked.

5. Conclusion

Within the wider catastrophe of the Great War, the Medz Yeghern stands out. The post-war absence of thousands of indigenous Armenian communities across Anatolia, and the fact that other groups, notably Kurds, were able to fill the ensuing political and cultural vacuum, confirms how thoroughly the Ittihad carried through its anti-Armenian extermination. While acknowledging its extraordinariness, this essay, however, has sought to draw parallels with another closely synchronous, wartime narrative the aim of which has been to propose that while at the extreme end of the violence spectrum, the Medz Yeghern remains an event which can be understood within a comparative historical framework. The scale of the brutality and atrocity committed by British forces, especially auxiliary units such as the Black and Tans in the Anglo-Irish war from 1919, or the reprisals and ethnic cleansing enacted by the UVF against Catholic Irish within Ulster in the same period, were clearly of a lesser scale than those enacted in Ottoman Armenia¹¹. They also lacked an exterminatory agenda. Even so, otherwise socially conservative elites and their plebeian supporters, especially in increasingly exposed citadels of a once guaranteed imperial heartland such as Belfast; as they struggled to find ways of preserving the territorial status quo against the encroaching nationalist challenge, evinced the same or very similar shifts to a more firmly exclusive sense of community, a more hostile attitude to those who failed to fit that prescript, and a more ready recourse to extreme violence when believing themselves threatened, as did their Ittihad counterparts.

But it was not just on the presumed hegemonic, national-imperial side of the equation that the war had a radicalising effect. We began by emphasising that until the summer of 1914, grounds for political accommodation between national Ireland and imperial Britain as between the claims of Armenian autonomy within Ottomania, were plausible: that the notion that “neither Britishness nor Irishness were mutually exclusive identities” had its Ottoman Armenian parallels, and that just as Irish republicanism was “an obscure minority obsession” so the urge to physical force solutions to the fu-

¹¹ See Townshend 1975, for an overview; Wilson 2010, for comparative analysis of the violence in Ulster.

ture of the plateau were far from mainstream Armenian politics (Hennessey 1998, 235-236). Under peacetime circumstances these were the calculations of dangerous men, and women. They hinted at ideologues prepared to throw a dice on the possibility of getting a step closer to a national dream while thinking little or nothing of the consequences in terms of the welfare of those for whom the vision was supposedly intended. Arguably worse, some may have calculated in classic national liberation fashion that state retribution meted out against that populace would fan a people's insurrection.

Nevertheless, the war undoubtedly offered opportunities to nationalists willing to play for high risks. By the very nature of being subject to another more dominant nation, these opportunities largely revolved around bringing into play some outside force or forces willing to entertain military support for insurrection as part of some quid pro quo. If for no other reason than that such a course of action would brand protagonists as traitors and thus liable to an exemplary punishment of they and most likely their families and communities, there was unsurprisingly no grass-roots rush to follow. In this sense, the Irish Volunteers and Armenian Ottoman *druzhiny*, like other similar ethnic mobilisations at the war's outset, while part of the bigger picture, remained marginal. Yet there was an obverse side of this coin. Standing on the sidelines was quite different to being compelled to don the uniform of a perceived imperial master. Lack of enthusiasm for getting killed was not just the wartime preserve of sub-altern groups, whether metropolitan or colonial. But where it took on aspects of mass disaffection the relationship was a close one. In some colonial instances, as for instance, in the Volta-Bani region of French West Africa, or the Semirechye districts of Russian Turkestan, conscription very often directly into a labour battalions, in 1915-16, was the spark to major proto-national insurrections which were in turn met by imperial armies or state-armed settlers with genocidal violence (Levene 2015, 65-72). Enforced conscription was equally a touchstone in both Ireland and Ottoman Armenia as to where many ordinary people's loyalties lay. Growing murmurs of disaffection leading to desertion or direct resistance in early 1915 Armenia had their close corollary in Ireland where the IRB used a rumour of compulsion as the pretext for their Easter 1916 mobilisation while the actual British attempt to enforce it two years later led to a nation-wide resistance not to say the threat of Irish troop mutinies in the British army, and was the undoubted catalyst to the Anglo-Irish war (Hennessey 1998, 126-127; Townshend 2015, 351). In other words, while the advanced Irish nationalist mobilisation in 1914 or even 1916 was premature, by 1918 – with conscription as the trigger – it was the subject of popular, national acclamation. This is also in line with what was happening elsewhere in ethnically subordinate regions of imperial Europe where towards the end of the Great War demands for national self-determination as very often encouraged by vocal diaspora groups, become the goad to large numbers of men in uniform (very often captured POWs) jettisoning one imperial allegiance for another national one.

The Armenian experience was neither aberrant nor apart from this ‘new normal’. Except in one joyless regard. The early mobilisations envisaged or realised by breakaway Dashnaks and AND, could only have followed the same trajectory as Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians and other would-be successor nation-states if there had been a reservoir of men in or out of uniform who might have been turned at some later stage. Actually, where AND, for instance, did recruit, as it did for the French-aligned Légion Arménienne, from late 1916, there were many willing volunteers. But the majority of these were from France, America and Egypt. The very few, who were from Ottoman Armenia, were genocide survivors or escapees (Bloxham 2005, 140-143, 150-151).

The Armenian experience of the Great War by way of the “genocidal turn” thus offers a strong indication as to how a population that mostly refrained from following the advanced nationalist route in 1914 had – at least among those who were still alive – become avant-garde advocates of precisely that by 1916. Equally, “The terrible beauty [...] is born” of Easter 1916, may not have converted all Catholic Irishmen into unequivocal Sinn Feiners but it certainly by then had discredited the alternative path of imperial accommodation (Yeats 2016 [1921], 53-54). The irony, of course, is that the ‘will to power’ alone in such asymmetrical military confrontations could never have been enough to win such little nations their dreams of independence. Ireland and Armenia needed international – especially at war’s end American – support to overcome their intrinsic weakness against imperial opponents. The Irish with at least a manpower to tap, got as far as achieving a state in the south, yet still under the aegis of the British crown and minus the six Ulster counties leaving Unionism triumphant in the north. In the final phase of this struggle, nationalist Irishmen fought nationalist Irishmen in this most bitter phase of “the Troubles”. An even weaker, militarily depleted Armenia having struggled to defend itself against resurgent Turkish-Kemalist forces had no choice but to accept absorption into the Bolshevik sphere as the only way to save itself from annihilation. In the now standard, post-1918 struggle for the modern nation-state, national-imperial or plain radical national, everything was seemingly allowable including compromise through force *majeure*, even genocide. Bar one thing: a return to the more fluid plurality of a world in which Protestant Ulstermen and Catholic neighbours, Armenian Christians and Muslim Turks, and many other peoples besides, could live in numbers and in safety alongside and together with.

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Sir Roger Casement on the Ottomans and Armenians in Britain's Great War

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Abstract:

The paper explores the reasons why Sir Roger Casement, the internationally famous humanitarian and future central figure in the 1916 Rising, took the hostile attitude he did to the Armenian cause and why he regarded the presentation of the events of 1915 merely as war propaganda. Casement was a complex character and not just a simple nationalist opposing British policy in the world from an Irish Republican position. It is argued that whilst Casement's transition from servant of Empire to Irish Republican anti-imperialist had an undoubted effect on his political stance, it was Casement's view of the Great War, in representing the moral collapse of Liberalism, that most fundamentally determined his attitude to the Armenians and how he viewed the events of 1915.

Keywords: Armenians, Great War, Liberalism, Ottomans, Roger Casement

Why did Sir Roger Casement, one of the most famous and influential humanitarians of his time take such a hostile attitude to the Armenian cause and why did he regard the presentation of the events of 1915 in Anatolia as bogus?

Casement has recently been described as one of the "precursors of the jurist Raphael Lemkin who helped to set the stage for his major legal achievement, the 1948 international proscription of genocide". According to this view, Casement played a key role "in the birth of modern human rights law and activism by helping to guide their development [...] toward a twentieth century consensus that mass death is unacceptable anywhere and that organized intervention is required to bring it to an end and hold those responsible to account" (see Kiernan 2011, 43).

Yet, just as Lemkin has been associated with the campaign to recognize an Armenian Genocide, Casement, at the time, the most substantial activist in humanitarianism, took a diametrically opposed view of the question, denying the validity of the atrocity allegations.

To understand Sir Roger Casement's view of the Armenians and Ottomans it is important to consider his world view. It should first be noted that Casement was a complex character. He was from a Protestant Anglo-Irish background and had been an honoured servant of the British Empire with a family tradition of service to the Imperial State. However, Roger's father had briefly joined the Hungarian Patriot rising against Hapsburg rule and had a sympathy for small nations (*ibidem*, 30). Casement had served under Sir Edward Grey as an employee of the Foreign Office and was on personal terms with his superior, with whom he had worked closely. Casement had performed extensive intelligence work for the British State in various parts of Africa and suggested and initiated military operations in the British war on the Boers¹. He had developed an English Liberal world-view prior to his Irish nationalist development and there is no evidence that he ever abandoned it. In many respects he had a similar social and political background to Lord Bryce, the notable campaigner for Armenia, in his Liberalism with Ulster connections. Casement had, therefore, all the aspects of a background that should have made him an advocate of the Armenian cause and an anti-Turk in the Gladstonian "bag and baggage" tradition, like Bryce.

However, Casement not only opposed the mainstream Liberal view on the Ottomans and Armenians but also reserved his greatest hostility for his former Liberal colleagues, Edward Grey and James Bryce. It is a hostility that can only be accounted for within the context of Casement's view that Liberal principles had been fundamentally betrayed in the launching of the Great War on Germany. This position of Casement's also separated Sir Roger from mainstream Irish nationalists whom he viewed as having gone over to Imperialism in their quest for Irish Home Rule from the Liberal Party².

In the second decade of the 20th Century Casement developed from being an Irish Home Ruler into a revolutionary Irish Republican and anti-Imperialist. However, an explanation of his position in relation to the Ottomans and Armenians and the events of 1915 is only partially revealed by this particular transition, which has a more evolutionary character than his reaction to British Foreign Policy. What is really fundamental in the development of Casement's position is his disillusionment, as an advanced and principled Liberal, with the Foreign Policy of his former superiors in the Liberal Government, which he came to believe, was orientated toward provoking a war on Germany for commercial purposes. Having predicted this course of events prior to hostilities Casement then saw what he took to be the moral collapse of English Liberalism in the support it gave to the Great War on Germany and the Ottomans from August 1914.

¹ See Mitchell 2013, 65-75, for further information.

² See Walsh 2003, for the development of relations between the British Liberal Party and Redmond's Parliamentary Party.

Casement's writings on British Foreign Policy and the Great War have long been available in various published forms, particularly in *The Crime Against Europe* collection (see Casement 1915). However, only recently have his further writings contained in the Berlin publication, *The Continental Times*, become known. These, often written under pseudonyms, contain his hitherto undiscovered thoughts on the political situation in Europe and the wider world from 1914 to his departure from Germany in 1916 to take part in the Rising. They supplement his *The Crime Against Europe* collection and shed much greater light on Casement's view of Britain's Great War on the Ottoman Empire.

Casement's published writings, along with his Berlin Diaries (see Mitchell 2016), reveal why he took the attitude he did to Britain's Great War, including why he went into alliance with Germany, and how this led him to take the position he did in relation to the Armenians and events of 1915.

1. Casement on the Events of 1915

Sir Roger Casement wrote in *The Continental Times* in October 1915:

A fresh 'Armenian Massacre' having been deftly provoked by a conspiracy engineered from the British Embassy at Constantinople, whereby English arms, money and uniforms, were to be furnished to the Armenians on condition that they rose against the Turkish Government, England now turns to the humanitarian impulse of the American people to secure a fresh sword against Turkey. America is being stirred with tales of horror against the Turks – with appeals to American manhood on behalf of a tortured and outraged people. The plan was born in the (British) Foreign Office; and the agency for carrying through the conspiracy against Turkish sovereignty in Armenia was Sir Louis Mallet, the late British Ambassador at Constantinople. (*The Continental Times*, 18 October 1915)

Casement, the great humanitarian and Honoured exposé of genocidal behaviour of "gallant, little Belgium" against African natives in the Congo and abuses of the rubber plantation workers in South America, was, therefore, dismissive of the claims of massacres of Armenians that began appearing in Britain in 1915. During the summer of 1915 British and U.S. newspapers had begun to report Turkish and Kurdish massacres of Armenians. Claims of up to half a million deaths appeared even at this stage. It was in response to these reports that Casement wrote his condemnation of Britain and Ambassador Mallet for what was happening to the Armenians.

Casement probably did not have firm evidence that substantial amounts of weaponry³ had begun to be filtered through to Armenian revolutionary

³ See McMeekin 2011, 145-156, for information about Tsarist military collaboration with Armenian revolutionary groups.

groups in Ottoman territory from the time of the British/Russian understanding of 1907, but he would have suspected it on the basis of his understanding of how the British State worked in these matters. In one of Casement's articles for *The Continental Times*, "England's Care for the Truth", Sir Roger uses the subtitle: "By One Who Knows Both" (*The Continental Times*, 30 July 1915).

The 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement, which partitioned Persia/Iran into spheres of influence among the two Powers, along with settling of other outstanding disputes in Asia, had been presented to the public as merely an accommodation between England and Russia in the so-called "Great Game" of Imperial rivalry.

Casement's writings in *The Continental Times* show that he suspected that the 1907 agreement was actually not an end in itself, but a rapprochement aimed at securing an informal alliance against a new Balance of Power enemy for Britain on the European continent – Germany. Britain was increasingly viewing Germany as the rising power in Europe, particularly in the commercial and naval spheres and its traditional Balance of Power policy determined that alliance be made with other powers to curtail or ultimately destroy the German development⁴. Therefore, arrangements were made with the two main former rivals, France and Russia, to settle disputes and re-orientate these Powers toward conflict with Germany. Planning was made through the newly established Committee of Imperial Defence as well as through military conversations by the respective staffs and Royal Navy intelligence to put into operation a war plan designed for a suitable occasion⁵. From 1911 Casement began writing about the direction of British Foreign Policy that was inevitably going to result in a world war.

The British/Russian agreement was meant on the British side to prepare the ground for the *Russian Steamroller* – the large armies that it was believed the Tsar could field, given the great Russian population – to be employed against Germany in a future war. It was part of the necessary encirclement of Germany, closing a large land area that Royal Navy Blockade was incapable of closing. Britain was fundamentally a Naval Power and did not have the military forces necessary to surround or defeat Germany on its own. It could contribute an Expeditionary Force of around 120,000 for the Western Flank, to be aligned with the French ally but Britain needed the manpower resources of the French and Russian armies to make any conflict with Germany effective.

The process of British/Russian alliance against Germany culminated in the secret Constantinople Agreement of 1915 in which the Tsar was rewarded

⁴ Casement puts forward the editorial of *The Times* of 8 March 1915 as proof of this in *The Continental Times*, 9 April 1915.

⁵ A number of publications deal with these developments but particularly see Hankey 1961. A review of the work of the CID is contained in Walsh 2016.

for the lend of his army and the keeping of it in the field against Germany, with his heart's desire – Constantinople/Istanbul. From this date onwards (1907) the Russians prepared the Armenian revolutionaries as a fifth column supporting the future invasion of Ottoman territories, now permissible with England as an ally rather than an enemy which had previously blocked its advance (the traditional British Foreign Policy toward the Tsar having been expressed in the famous music hall chorus: "The Russians Shall Not Have Constantinople!")⁶.

British Ambassador to Constantinople, Louis du Pan Mallet had a difficult role to play at the Porte. British Policy toward Istanbul was in a state of flux since 1907. The British State and English private companies were contributing to the defence of the Ottoman capital whilst making surveys of the defences. Britain was engaged in a naval alliance with the Ottomans and had contracts and control of the supply of ships to the Turks. Casement knew Ambassador Mallet personally and there was a series of correspondence between the two men a few years before the Great War. Ambassador Mallet mysteriously went "on leave" during a most crucial time in the summer of 1914. This was the July/August period in which it was understood in England that the Germans would desperately seek out the Ottomans as allies to break their isolation in the face of the Triple Entente. It was known that Enver Pasha had concluded that the Ottoman policy of neutrality would ultimately prove impossible with the Imperialist forces in alliance and on war footings. A defensive alliance was a distinct possibility. The question was: Did Britain want to go to war with the Ottomans as well as the Germans?

The British constructed a diplomatic record to serve the purpose of what their real objective was in relation to the Ottoman Empire. That record demanded Germany and the Ottomans be placed in the wrong. Provocations, which in themselves were causes of war, were made on the Turks, such as the seizing of their battleships being paid for by popular subscription, in British shipyards. Churchill also blockaded the Straits, cutting Istanbul off from the Mediterranean. And there was the shepherding of the Goeben and Breslau battleships into the Straits by the Royal Navy which helped compromise Turkish neutrality.

Ambassador Mallet was allowed to leave his post at this most crucial time, when prominent people, in England were decrying the fact that Britain, friend of the Young Turks, was losing them as allies because of atrocious diplomacy. He was not there during Churchill's breaking of the naval alliance and returned to Istanbul only a month after the British Declaration of War on Germany, when all the important events had occurred that sealed the fate of the Ottomans. Upon Mallet's return to his post he reported to

⁶ See Walsh 2009, 41-89. Also see Walsh 2017, 193-205.

Edward Grey that there was “a renewal of the insurrectionary activities of the non-Turkish races”, which would precipitate Russian invasion in the East. It appears that Ambassador Mallet’s role was to keep Turkey sweet – and neutral – until it suited Britain to wage War on the Ottomans. He advised the Russians on September 3rd, two months before the British Declaration of War on the Ottomans, not “to raise the question of the partition of Turkey at the present time” (qtd. in Uyanik 2016, 20).

There is no escaping the geopolitical logic of the situation: that war had to be waged on the Ottomans for the Tsar to believe he could acquire Constantinople and in order to keep his armies in the field of battle against Germany.

It is unsurprising that Casement, knowing all that he did about the inner workings of British diplomacy, took Ambassador Mallet to be a conspirator in the destruction of Ottoman Turkey and a collaborator with the Armenian revolutionaries, who were being armed and organised by the Tsar. Casement believed that Mallet could not possibly have been above all that was happening in the background unless he was a complete innocent with regard to Foreign Office policy. What was probably most likely was that the Ambassador, who was tremendously popular with the Porte, was allowed to cultivate a friendship with the Ottomans as a decent English gentleman who knew nothing of the turn in British policy against the Turks.

2. *British Policy and the Ottomans*

Sir Roger Casement was an insider who predicted the direction of British Foreign Policy and where it was leading and who proved correct in his estimation. From 1906 he began discouraging Irish recruiting to the British Army whilst still working for the Imperial State.

In 1915 Casement penned “The Sickman – A Fable That Cost Dear” for *The Continental Times* under one of his favoured pseudonyms “X of X”. It was published in the edition of 6 September. This article marked the Allied assault at Gallipoli and emphasised Casement’s view that it would prove disastrous for Britain. In the article Casement argued that the so-called “Sick man of Europe” – the Ottoman Empire – had chosen a German Doctor to revive its health when the Imperialist Powers had gathered around its bedside awaiting the handing over of the keys to the kingdom to them, so they could take over the Ottoman territories. For this reason, Turkey was marked down as an enemy along with Germany of the Triple *Entente*. Casement suggested that “it was agreed that two of the friends should attack the house by the front door, and another friend, whom they could see but afar off, by reason that the Sickman’s house and garden stood between them, should assail it by the back door”. So whilst England and France attacked the Ottomans from the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia, Russia invaded from the Caucasus.

Writing in *The Continental Times* under the pen-name “Dr. John Quincy Emerson” Casement pointed to Britain’s breaking of the Cyprus Convention of 1878, concluded between Lord Salisbury and the Ottoman Sultan, as an example of Britain’s bad faith:

England pledged her national word and ‘to defend the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan’ from Russian attack, and in return for this guarantee, the island of Cyprus was to be ‘occupied’ by her, Turkish sovereignty remaining legally intact, so that a *point of d’appui* for the defence of Asia Minor might be in the hands of the defending power.

In 1914 Russia declared war upon Turkey and the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan are invaded. England, although she was under no treaty obligation to Russia or bound by any agreement to that Power, her hands being ‘perfectly free’, as Sir Edward Grey assures Parliament repeatedly, and although she was bound to violate her treaty with Turkey and commits a double act of national dishonour.

She not only does not fulfil her promise to defend the invaded region she has taken under her protection, but she seizes the very gage entrusted to her keeping to assure the fulfilment of that promise and she co-operates with the invader by herself assailing the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan. She annexes Cyprus and joins Russia in the assault on Asia Minor.

So much for the sanctity of treaties when British interests call for their violation [...]. (“Still Further North”, *The Continental Times*, 22 October 1915)

The alteration in British Foreign Policy was first drawn attention to by W.T. Stead, the Gladstonian Liberal and famous journalist, who later perished on the Titanic. Stead, a fearsome anti-Turk (in his own words), noted at the time of the Balkan Wars that Sir Edward Grey was, unlike his predecessors, refusing to uphold the “Public Law of Europe” i.e. international law and treaties (see Stead 1911, 11-17). Although Stead had campaigned over the decades for an understanding between England and Russia that would preserve the peace, he began to suspect that the Anglo-Russian agreement concluded by Grey in 1907 was more than it seemed. It was not just a treaty of peace, which carved up Persia among other things, but was having a destabilising influence on the Balkans and further East.

Casement was, in many ways, in the same Gladstonian mould as Stead, suspicious of Liberal Imperialist Foreign Policy as a departure from the principles of Liberalism. He was, furthermore, keen to point out that while the Liberal Government had rallied its reluctant backbenchers around the Great War on Germany on the basis of treaty breaking by the Germans in relation to the neutrality of Belgium, it was quite prepared itself to ignore treaty obligations in relation to the Ottomans.

The Continental Times’s article “Sir Roger Casement on Sir Edward Grey” outlined Sir Roger’s theory of where Liberalism had gone wrong. With regard to Grey:

[...] for ten years, under the guise of a Liberal statesman, he has been used as a shield between the Foreign Office and all Liberal criticisms of its policy; the shield behind which, with a nominally democratic government in power the permanent plotters against German unity and expansion might develop their attack unseen, unchecked and uncontrolled by the forces that were supposedly the masters of English public action. The ten years of 'Liberalism' at the Foreign Office since 1905, under the nominal direction of a Liberal Minister, will go down in history as the most criminal, the most audacious and, I believe, in the end the most disastrous in all English history.

The war against Germany was decreed years ago by those powers that own the Foreign Office and drive, not guide, the English people, and the personality of the Foreign Minister had as little to do with the result achieved as the personal character of an Archbishop of Canterbury has to do with the policy of the Church of England.

Sir Edward Grey was by constitution, temperament and lack of training, no less than the absence of the special qualities needed, unfit for the post the exigencies of political party life placed him in charge of, on the return of the Liberals to office, after ten years of exclusion from power in December 1905. (*The Continental Times*, 18 October 1918)

Casement's tendency to see Sir Edward as a "docile and obedient tool" of darker forces in the British State is perhaps, wishful thinking, given Grey's knowledge of, and active participation in, many of the actions which led to Britain's Foreign Policy reorientation and war planning for what actually occurred in August 1914. However, Casement also argued that it was the Liberal's retreat from Gladstone's Home Rule initiative for Ireland that sowed the seeds of the success of the Foreign Policy that created the Great War.

Casement's argument was that British Unionist opposition to Irish Home Rule from 1886 had led to the development of the Liberal Imperialist tendency within the Liberal Party, which Grey, along with Asquith, Haldane and Churchill represented and which had come to dominance in the party. Open discussion of Foreign Policy had been suppressed by the leadership, along with the Gladstonian pledge to Ireland, in the interests of returning to power after the Chamberline split and long period of Conservative/Unionist rule. Foreign Policy had been removed from the party-political stage and become confined to the secret diplomacy and activities of a reactionary elite in the Foreign Office who were bent on war with Germany. They had insisted on the continuity of policy from the Unionist Government to the new Liberal Government of 1906. Sir Edward Grey was their favoured appointee and had been anointed Foreign Minister in a type of coronation in order to keep the control of foreign policy away from the dangerous Gladstonian Liberals.

The betrayal of Liberal principles Casement felt with regard to the British Foreign Policy he believed had caused the Great War led him to assemble the collection of essays for publication, *The Crime Against Europe*. This

collection was supplemented by his writings for *The Continental Bulletin* of Berlin in which Casement argues his case for viewing the World War as having been made in England in order to cut down a potential rival in the long tradition of Balance of Power. He described the alliance between Liberal England, France, its age-old enemy, and authoritarian, Tsarist Russia as an unnatural one aimed at securing British mastery of the Seas.

In is in the context of Casement's view of the Great War as an unnecessary catastrophe imposed on Europe and the wider world that his view of the Ottomans and Armenians must be understood.

3. Casement and James Bryce

After Sir Edward Grey, the chief object of Casement's animosity became Lord James Bryce, who had by this time become a central figure in the Liberal Imperialist intelligentsia and who was working in an official capacity in British Government information.

Bryce was a long-standing friend of the Armenian cause. He wrote *Transcaucasia and Ararat* in 1877, a travel book that had over one hundred pages of political reflections within it that were supportive of the Armenians and strongly anti-Ottoman. It was published at the time of the "Bulgarian Horrors" a substantial campaign in Gladstonian Liberalism against alleged Ottoman atrocities in the Balkans of which Bryce was part. In his writings Bryce presented a picture of the Armenians as a Christian people struggling valiantly against Ottoman oppression. He contrasted the civilized Armenians to the barbaric Turks, identifying the Armenian community as being destined for something greater, although lacking in nationalism and being a small minority in a Muslim region. A new expanded edition was published in 1898 after the Dasknaks had emerged, Armenian risings had occurred against the Ottomans and strong countermeasures had been taken against them.

Bryce's work was part of Liberal England's patronising of the Armenians in the late Nineteenth Century. The general thrust of this narrative was that the Armenians were a special people among the largely Muslim Ottoman subjects who were destined to become a nation, like the Balkan Christian nations who were rising against the Ottomans. The problem, however, was that there was little actual basis for nationhood among the Armenians due to their numerical weakness along with internal and geographical division. There was also no prospect that they could produce and sustain a state among the hostile conditions without the intervention of the Great Powers. Since Russia was the most likely of these Powers who could actively aid the Armenians and the Tsar was Britain's main strategic opponent in the region there was little hope for the Armenians. The future Lord George Curzon had condemned pro-Armenian sentiment in England as "fatal philanthropy" and Lord Salisbury had stated

that they should not rely on Britain to intervene on their behalf because the Royal Navy was incapable of traversing the Taurus Mountains. Of course, the 1907 agreement between England and Russia radically altered this situation.

Lord Bryce's most famous intervention on behalf of the Armenians was his famous 1916 "Blue Book" (Bryce 2000). However, prior to the issuing of the Blue Book on the alleged Ottoman atrocities against the Armenians, Bryce had issued an earlier report aimed at the Germans which attracted Casement's attentions.

In late 1914 Prime Minister Asquith chose Lord Bryce to investigate allegations of German atrocities in Belgium. In the Spring of 1915 Bryce issued his *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* on behalf of the British Government committee he headed.

In "The Far-Extended Baleful Power of the Lie", an article Casement had published in *The Continental Times* of 3 November 1915, the Irishman made a vigorous attack on the British Government and James Bryce, in particular. The idea of "Belgian atrocities" struck Casement as ironic since King Leopold and the Belgian Imperialists had been the prime exponents of atrocities that the Irishman had investigated (and been honoured for). The war-time British and Redmondite propaganda depicting Belgium as "Poor Little Belgium" would have not impressed Casement.

Casement suspected that his earlier reports of Belgian atrocities in the Congo whilst acknowledged, had been stored by the British Government for future leverage over the Belgian Government and employed in preventing the Belgians consenting to a German traverse of their territory, when war came. Because Casement believed Britain was intent on war on Germany for the best part of a decade he could see the value of his work for the British State. That made Casement think about the relationship between humanitarianism and *realpolitik* and how atrocity accounts could be used for political purposes without regard for the victims or its original formal humanitarian intention.

Casement had first met James Bryce at Delagoa Bay in 1895 when Roger was British Consul for Portuguese East Africa. Casement's appointment to Delagoa Bay showed how trusted he was by the British Foreign Office, which he served for seventeen years. With a British war on the Boers seen as inevitable Lourenco Marques, where Casement was located, became a place of great significance, one of the few ports outside of British territory through which arms and ammunition could be supplied for Boer defence arrangements. Casement's job was to keep an eye on what was moving from whom to whom and where to where for Britain. He received communications here from Joseph Chamberlain the Colonial Secretary, who was known to favour annexation of the Transvaal. Casement remained there until July 1898 before being transferred to West Africa, and then the Congo, where he made his fame as a humanitarian exposé of atrocities.

When Casement was returning from his second voyage up the Amazon in 1911 to investigate atrocities he was invited by James Bryce, who was at that time British Ambassador to Washington, to meet President Taft. Bryce cooperated with Casement to persuade the US State Department of its duty to protect the indigenous workers from abuses on the American continent (see Mitchell 2015).

In comparing his own work in that field with Lord Bryce's Casement suggested that "In my case they were investigated on the spot at some little pains and danger to myself. In Lord Bryce's case they were not encountered upon earth but fell, as it were from heaven, and had to be inspected with a very long telescope" (*The Continental Times*, 3 November 1915).

In June 1903, as British Consul to the Congo, Casement had made a four-month journey into the African interior to investigate atrocities. He informed Sir Edward Grey that he had "broken into the thieves kitchen" and described himself as a self-appointed "Criminal Investigation Department". From these dangerous on the spot investigations he had produced his 61-page printed report that became famous across Europe⁷. Casement estimated that as many as 3 million natives had died of disease, torture or shooting in 15 years. However, he was determined to collect as much evidence as possible to justify his claims. In the Amazon, Casement collected first-hand evidence of atrocities such as mass executions, maiming and barbarous treatment against natives on the ground (see Gilbert 2003, 12). Lord Bryce had nothing of the experience Casement gained in his singular energetic pursuance of evidence and it is unsurprising that Sir Roger viewed him as an imposter in relation to the authentic article.

James Bryce, historian of the Holy Roman Empire and academic, had been in Gladstone's last cabinet, had been appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland by the incoming Liberal Government of 1906. Although a Home Ruler, Bryce had failed to have the courage of his convictions and Home Rule for Ireland was left on the shelf the Unionist governments of the previous decades had placed it. Casement had met him on a number of occasions during this period. Bryce was then appointed British Ambassador in Washington where Casement met him again in connection with interesting the U.S. Government in the atrocities he had encountered in the Amazon. Bryce was a great success as Ambassador and was given a peerage as a result of his services. He was the perfect appointment, therefore, later in promoting a report on German atrocities in Belgium on behalf of the British Government which was mainly aimed at influencing opinion in America.

Casement and Lord Bryce were both Ulster Protestants of sorts (Casement was born in Dublin but raised in North Antrim whilst Bryce was more

⁷ See Kiernan 2011 for more information on this aspect.

an Englishman born in Belfast). But whilst Casement was the general article with regard to active humanitarianism, getting his hands dirty on the scene of atrocities and reporting on them, he considered Bryce to be an academic *poseur*. Casement wrote in *The Continental Times* of 3 November 1915:

I have investigated more *bona fide* atrocities at close hand than possibly any other living man. But unlike Lord Bryce, I investigated them on the spot, from the lips of those who had suffered, in the very place where the crimes were perpetuated, where the evidence could be sifted and the accusation brought by the victim could be rebutted by the accused; and in each case my finding was confirmed by the Courts of Justice of the very States whose citizens I had indicted.

Casement considered Bryce's enquiry into German atrocities in Belgium as a purely Government propagandist exercise established to blacken the name of the enemy with its printing presses prepared to publish a foregone conclusion. As for Bryce, Casement suggested that "it is not the jurist, not the scholar, not the historian who speaks" but "a hireling". It was "only necessary to turn to James Bryce the historian, to convict Lord Bryce, the partisan". Casement concluded:

Lord Bryce's name will be associated not with that Holy Roman Empire he sought to recall by scholarly research, but with that unholy Empire he sought to sustain in the greatest of its crimes by lending the weight of a great name, and prostituting great attainments to an official campaign of slander, defamation and calumny conducted on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilized nations during the last three centuries.

Casement described the work Bryce was doing, in describing German and Turkish atrocities on behalf of the British War effort, as both duplicitous and fraudulent. Casement believed that Britain was engaged in intentionally creating the conditions within which atrocities were bound to occur and then using them cynically as moral weapons against the enemy. Casement viewed Lord Bryce and others engaged in such a process as having departed from their former standards of objectivity and having become mere propagandists. Unlike Casement, they had abandoned their anti-war Liberal principles and become mere hirelings of their state, right or wrong. As such, their work could no longer be relied upon as truthful.

It was clear to Casement that in all this the Armenians did not matter one jot. They were only useful to Britain as cannon-fodder and atrocity-fodder. The more they suffered and died the better for the War effort, despite the efforts of those who pleaded their cause from a moral viewpoint.

Casement, of course, could not comment on Lord Bryce's *Report of The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* published in October 1916 (Bryce 2000). On 3 August of that year Casement had been executed for Treason by the British.

Angus Mitchell has recently written:

Later historians have recognized that the Bryce investigation raises awkward questions about the unsettling intersections between history and propaganda. In the war of words that conflicts inevitably produce, his report made a crucial contribution both to justifying entry into the war and to persuading the rest of the world of the righteousness of that intervention [...] Occupying the moral high ground is a vital step in the assertion and maintenance of victory. (Mitchell 2015, 38)

4. Armenians as an Imperial Instrument

The basis of Casement's hostility to the Armenian narrative produced in Britain lies in his view of the Armenians being used as an instrument of British Imperialism with regard to the war of destruction and conquest being waged on the Ottoman Empire. It should be stated that Casement had no animosity to the Armenians as a people and never wrote about whether their grievances against the Ottoman were valid or otherwise. He did not offer a view as to their claims for a national entity although he presumably would have opposed the idea of a "Magna Armenia", as supported by other Gladstonian Liberals and Irish nationalists such as T.P. O'Connor.

Casement's writings suggest that he was unhappy at the singling out of certain sections of humanity as having a monopoly of suffering. He could not conceive of what was happening in Anatolia as a completely one-sided affair and would have valued the loss of Muslim life as equally as Christian, unlike the English Liberal narrative.

Casement saw the Armenians in a similar light to the Greeks: in being, in his opinion, cynically used for the British interest and inevitably being let down in a manner that would prove catastrophic for them in the longer term.

Casement believed the Armenians were to be employed as pawns in the British game of destroying the Ottoman Empire through the promotion of Insurrection in the territories of enemy states. According to Sir Roger, the Turks were to be encouraged or provoked into arranging an "Armenian Massacre" to provide moral cover for the British Imperialist land grab of Palestine and Mesopotamia. That would tug at the heart strings of the English Liberals of the Gladstonian tradition and make them good war-propagandists. Arnold Toynbee and Lord Bryce were central to this aspect in Casement's view. Sir Roger predicted that the Armenians themselves were expendable for the British State, in all senses.

Undoubtedly, Casement was to prove as accurate in his depiction of the Armenians as mere pawns of the Great Powers in the Great War as he was with regard to the Greeks⁸.

⁸ See the article "A Pacific Blockade", published by Casement under the pseudonym Diplomaticus, in *The Continental Times*, 13 December 1915, for a good summary of Casement's view of Britain's use of the Greeks in the Great War.

Akaby Nassibian, the Armenian writer, concedes that “Armenia”, the nation was largely dependent upon British Imperialism and was not a going concern without it. But Britain encouraged and then let down the Armenians, as Casement predicted it would in 1915:

Britain’s interest in Armenian territory far outweighed her concern for the Armenian people [...] The war radically changed the direction of Britain’s interest in Armenia. As she was opposed to Turkey, she did not care about Ottoman integrity any longer. She was prepared to satisfy the territorial desiderata of her allies, Russia and France, over Armenia. Moreover, having secured by arms and agreements the certainty of her predominance over the Persian Gulf, she lost almost all interest in Armenian territory. The war, however, brought a drastic increase of interest in the Armenian people. Britain had to use all her material and moral forces to win the war. So she used the Armenian holocausts of 1915 to discredit her enemies [...] in order to wean American sympathy from the Central Powers, to show to her Moslem subjects the nature of the Turkish government they were being urged to fight, and in order to stimulate the war effort at home by indicating that the conflict was against cruelty, oppression and injustice. Britain also made use of Armenian manpower [...] to reinforce that disintegrating front after 1917. But in order to stimulate the Armenians Britain had to ‘pledge’ herself to the liberation of Armenia, an expression that was also used to counter the charges of the pacifists at home that the war was being fought for greed [...] At the end of the war [...] Britain was in the position of having made [...] the provision of a ‘National Home’ for the Armenians, one of the most ‘loudly advertised’ of her war aims [...] the public statements and the Treaty of Sevres given to vindicate these statements, again aroused hopes among the Armenians [...] and laid Armenia yet again open to the hostility of Turkey and now also to that of the other Caucasian states. The Treaty of Sevres, unaccompanied by real help, exposed Armenia to reprisals and in the end proved to be her doom [...]. (Nassibian 1985, 267-269)

Casement understood that the Great War was waged by Britain primarily for strategic and Balance of Power purposes and the moral gloss put on it by those Liberals who salved their consciences by presenting it as a moral war were deluding themselves and others. The substance of the British State which Casement had encountered in his work for it, and which planned the War to destroy the rising Germany and incorporate Ottoman territories in the British Empire, was not going to organise the Peace after it had won the War on moral terms. The logical result was that the Armenians would be encouraged into battle through the moral support they received from Liberal England and then would be discarded when the real substance of the British State, through its permanent military/political elite concluded settlements on the basis of power politics. In this Casement was undoubtedly proved correct. Arthur Balfour, then British Foreign Minister, tasked with offloading the Armenian problem to the Americans and washing England’s hands of them suddenly “discovered” that the principles of “self-determination”

worked against the Armenian cause because they did not actually constitute a majority in the area they claimed for an Armenian state⁹.

Along with that, although Britain appeared to have secured its global dominance by winning the Great War against Germany it had, as Casement also predicted, severely weakened itself in the process. It had had to enlist the power of the United States to complete its victory and had become financially dependent upon it. While Britain attempted to pass off the Armenian problem to President Wilson it proved incapable of dealing with the Turkish resurgence organised by Mustapha Kemal and had to overturn its treaty with the Ottomans and concede a more generous settlement to the Turkish Republic at Lausanne. There was no place for an Armenian state on Ottoman territory within it.

Casement was a consistent Liberal who was appalled at the great departure from principle that led to the catastrophe of the Great War. He saw what he described as moral hypocrisy from his former colleagues in Liberal England, stood his ground and chose sides with Germany, Ottoman Turkey and the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

The division in attitude toward the Armenians and Ottomans tends to run through Irish nationalism separating the Redmondite/Home Rule, Irish Parliamentary Party from the Republican anti-imperialist revolutionaries. The Redmondites contained a number of strong supporters of the Armenian cause, most notably T.P. O'Connor, who spoke on many platforms for the Armenians, including alongside General Antranik¹⁰. The mainstream Nationalist press like the *Freeman's Journal*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish News* of Belfast were strongly supportive of the Armenian cause and virulently anti-Turk. All also exhibited a strong Christian antipathy to the Muslim world with frequent reference to the typical prevalent stereotypes of the time.

The main exception to this in Ireland was the popular religious periodical *The Catholic Bulletin* which had a Sinn Fein orientation from 1916 and an Anti-Treaty position from 1922. This publication, which was edited by J.J. O'Kelly, took Casement's position and was generally supportive of Turkish nationalism, Mustapha Kemal and dismissive of the general narrative advanced with regard to the Armenians by the pro-Imperialist press in Britain and Ireland¹¹. One of the nations that the revolutionary Sinn Fein government of 1919-21 addressed its "Message to the Free Nations of the World" to,

⁹ See Gaillard 1921, 297-299, for dealings between Balfour and the U.S. diplomatic negotiators over Armenia during the 1920-1921 period.

¹⁰ See Buxton 1919, for the text of O'Connor's speech at Central Hall, Westminster with Lord Bryce and General Andranik on 19 June 1919.

¹¹ See Walsh 2009, 413-530 for extensive extracts from the Irish press during the period.

and attempted to establish diplomatic relations with, was Mustapha Kemal's revolutionary government in Ankara¹².

Roger Casement was not simply an Irish Nationalist availing of England's difficulty, or a hater of Britain and its Allies. He was actually a principled British Liberal standing up for the historic principles which he saw as being abandoned in the moral collapse of Liberalism in August 1914. And that is why he took the attitude he did to the Armenians, wrote what he did, and finally, did what he did at Easter 1916.

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¹² See *Dail Eireann Debates* 1-21, January 1919 and *Irish Department of Foreign Affairs* 104, NAI DE 4/4/2, 10 August 1921.

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An Irish Diplomat Reports from Armenia, 1983

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In May 1983, Pdraig Murphy, Irish ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1981-1985, travelled through the Soviet Republics of Georgia and Armenia on official visits. These trips were undertaken almost a decade after the Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs Garret Fitzgerald and his Soviet counterpart Andrei Gromyko agreed to exchange embassies between Dublin and Moscow in September 1973 – making the Republic of Ireland the last Western European nation to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR (Quinn 2014, 87). Murphy was the second Irish ambassador to Moscow, succeeding Ambassador Ned Brennan. Yet Irish-Soviet contacts have a longer history stretching back before the establishment of the Irish Free State itself (see, for example: *ibidem*; O'Connor 2004; Casey 2016a). Indeed, Murphy's trip to Armenia was not even the first journey by an Irish emissary to a periphery republic of the Soviet Union. By comparing Murphy's 1983 journey with an unusual precedent, the 1930 visit of Irish Republican David Fitzgerald to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, we can establish a wide historical backdrop for the full report.

In August 1930, David Fitzgerald, a veteran of the anti-Treaty side of the Irish Civil War, set out from London for Leningrad as a delegate of the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia¹. During a six week journey, Fitzgerald and comrades such as the veteran suffragette Charlotte Despard and the artist Harry Kernoff, visited several Soviet cities including Baku in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan was one of the original Soviet Republics which had the Red Flag raised above it as soon as Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War allowed them to take the Tsarist banner down. Fitzgerald certainly saw himself as an emissary of a government in the same mould as Murphy, though Fitzgerald's government, the Second Dáil of the post-Treaty Republican tradition, was a continuation of the revolutionary Republican parliament of the self-proclaimed Irish Republic of 1921-1922 rather than an internationally recognised state.

¹ For an analysis of the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia see Casey 2016b.

Yet despite these parallels, Fitzgerald's visit to Azerbaijan in 1930 and Murphy's Armenian trip of 1983 provide a stark contrast. When Fitzgerald visited the USSR in the early years of Stalin's "revolution from above", the Soviet nationalities policy was still in effect. This policy, as Terry Martin has demonstrated, was designed to "confront the rising tide of nationalism" in the post-Revolutionary period by "promoting the national consciousness of its ethnic minorities" (2001, 1). The promotion of minority languages and culture appealed to a Republican like Fitzgerald, whose socialist and republican politics sought to unite the working classes from both sides of Ireland's divided religious communities. In an interview with a Baku-based publication *Dawn of the East*, he praised the nationalities policy effusively and commented: "We have seen these races (Turks, Armenians, etc.) living now peacefully side by side" (1930). Yet, by the end of the 1930s, the Great Terror had shattered the fragile foundations upon which the nationalities policy was built. The chauvinistic tone Murphy described in this 1983 meeting with the Armenian Foreign Minister proved that the ethnically harmonious society which Fitzgerald spotted on the Soviet horizon was a mirage.

David Fitzgerald set out hoping to find a model socialist society and accepted all information that confirmed this vision. By contrast, Ambassador Murphy, and other Irish diplomats operating in the country decades after Fitzgerald, had little desire to transplant the political lessons of their Soviet experiences to their homeland. Fitzgerald's guides emphasised the revolutionary potential of the Soviet system, while Murphy's Armenian companion both underlined and emblemised its terminal condition. Although Murphy's trip was undertaken two years before Mikhail Gorbachev stepped into the role of General Secretary of the Communist Party, an event which heralded the period of reform which resulted in the ultimate collapse of the Soviet system, Murphy's report reveals that cracks in the structure were already beginning to show. He writes in clear and detailed prose grounded in the historical context of the country itself. Therefore, his account provides a curious glimpse into the measured analysis of an Irish diplomat casting his eye over a country that had several parallels with his own. Nonetheless, if such similarities were recognised by either Murphy or his interlocutor in the contemporary moment they appear to have gone unmentioned. We print the account of the journey here in full so that the reader can draw their own parallels:

Report by Ambassador Padraig Murphy, "Visits to Georgia and Armenia", 18 May 1983, National Archives of Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs, 2013/36/9²

4. Armenia too is an old civilisation having been Christianised even before Georgia, at the beginning of the fourth century. The present republic occupies only a part of historically Armenian lands. These, in Armenian presentation, covered a wide area of present-day north-east Turkey and north-west Iran. Such landmarks as Lake Van, Mount Ararat and the cities of Kars and Ardahan play an important role in Armenian history. Like Georgia, it found in association with the Russian Empire a means of protecting its Christian identity against threats from surrounding Muslim powers; in Armenia's case, principally Ottoman Turkey. Eastern Armenia, essentially the present Soviet Republic, was joined to Russia in 1828. The present republic assumed its current status in 1920.

5. Armenia today has a population of just over three million which is much more homogeneous than that of Georgia: almost 90% are Armenian by nationality and only 2.3% are Russians. It is also more industrialised than Georgia – necessarily so, because the land is for the most part very poor. 13-14% of domestic product is basic agricultural production. The republic is a major supplier of electro-technical goods, synthetic rubber and chemical fertilizers. However, the most notable element during my visit was the manifestation of Armenian chauvinism, with a strong anti-Turkish coloration. The Foreign Minister acted in effect as a spokesman for the Armenian community world-wide. At the same time, without the question being raised, he expressed his understanding for the activities of Armenian terrorists killing Turkish diplomats, and not, for instance, Mongolian diplomats that were being killed. He had readily at his command the figures for the Armenian diaspora: 2.5 million in all abroad, of which 800,000 still in Turkey, 800,000 in the U.S., 300,000 in France, 260,000 in Lebanon, 10,000 in Cyprus. He returned again and again to the Turkish genocide of Armenians in 1915, according to him, 2 million Armenians lost their lives on this occasion. He took his promotion of the Armenian cause so far as to hand to me pamphlets published in France in the earlier part of the century which said explicitly that Bolshevnik Russia had betrayed Armenia. An element in Armenian irredentism which kept recurring during the visit concerned Mount Ararat, which has a central place in Armenian historical memory. Although it is now in Turkey, it can be seen clearly from Yerevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia, and is constantly pointed out to visitors.

6. It is quite clear, of course, that the Foreign Minister of Armenia, in so expressing himself to visiting Ambassadors, is not conveying the foreign policy of the USSR. This is conveyed in Moscow and the Armenian element normally plays no role in it. At the time I was in Yerevan, for instance; Turkey was being praised in a *Pravda* leader for refusing to allow the U.S. boosting stations for Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe in Turkey; this in the interest of good Turkish relations with

² Murphy's account of his Armenian journey is preceded by a three paragraph description of a trip to Georgia. For the sake of accuracy, the original numbering has been preserved.

the USSR. At the same time, it is interesting to observe the room for manoeuvre which the Armenians are able to avail themselves of. An unspoken implication in the presentation of the Foreign Minister was that Armenia was associated with the USSR only because it had no other choice. As I have mentioned some of the literature he handed out accused the Bolsheviks (and the Russian Empire before them) of betraying the Armenians. There seems also to be a fairly lively influx of ethnic tourists into Armenia from the U.S. and France. It was striking that the country has a much greater consciousness of the external world than, for instance, Georgia. The Gullbenkian Foundation has provided much money for the restoration of historical, principally ecclesiastical monuments. An Irish connection is with the Matenadaran Manuscript Repository in Yerevan, which contains some 13,000 Armenian manuscripts going back to the 7th century. This corresponds with the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. The Armenian Apostolic Church plays a very central role in Armenia and I had the impression that it operates much more freely than the Russian Orthodox Church does in Russia. The ecclesiastical capital (and also one of the former historical capitals) Echmiadzin, was included in the itinerary arranged for by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and this is normally the case in Armenia. It is also normal for visiting Ambassadors to call on the Catholicos (Patriarch), said to be an impressive personality, who was born in Budapest. Unfortunately on the occasion of my visit he was visiting London.

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Trauma Stories as Resilience: Armenian and Irish National Identity in a Century of Remembering

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intersection of trauma, memory, and identity through the lens of resilience. Here we take resilience in its multiple, even conflicting meanings and resonances – encompassing continuity, persistence, and adaptation. Through the case studies of centenary commemorations in Armenia and Ireland and Northern Ireland, we highlight the ways in which the memory of traumatic historical events both reproduces and challenges dominant narratives of identity. The resilience of memory – its ability to adapt and evolve even as it lays claim to continuity – marks commemoration as a form of haunting, a return with difference that always disrupts the very borders it is deployed to secure. By focusing on resilience understood as the counter-memory that challenges the silencing and overshadowing of mainstream memory, we conclude that it manifests differently in such different cases, and find a surprising point of similarity: the resilience of memory is that it *remains*. Regardless of claims to timelessness or modernization, the vital function of memory is to persist, to linger, as the trace of the ashes of the conflicted past. In the two cases we look at, the resilience is expressed through counter-memory politics. Through this reflection on two very different cases, we gesture towards a theory of commemoration as resilience that has political implications for post-conflict and post-trauma states.

Keywords: Armenian Genocide, Centennial Commemoration, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Resilience

1. Introduction

Two small nations that have lived under colonial and imperial pressures have shown resilience in their national identity maintenance and expressions

throughout centuries. National identity stories, however, are not always embedded in glorified imageries and victories from wars. They often entail traumatic events and shape the national expression(s) for the generations to come. As Jabri contends, conflict is often

A constitutive element of collective identity, reproduced in collective memory through national narratives of past glories in the face of threats against national sovereignty and survival. A self-image based on notions of heroism, valour, and justice draws upon such collective memories and is actively reproduced in times of conflict. (1996, 139)

The collective memory of the conflict is at once an expression of resilience in the wake of trauma, and a vehicle for reifying and reinforcing the divisions at the heart of the conflict itself. Focusing on the cases of Armenian and Irish collective identities, our paper challenges national identity narratives expressed as stories of heroic struggles and glorified victories, often emphasized in the national identity literature. Here we start from the premise that “official” commemorations reflect a dominant, widely taken-as-given narrative of the past and its meaning in the present. Our usage here is akin to Olick’s conception of “frameworks of memory”: long-term structures of memory that resist individual’s attempts to escape them (2002). The pervasiveness of these frameworks or narratives is well-evidenced in the cases we consider.

We argue that despite the differences in the traumatic event, and the consequences of the trauma on national identity making, both collective identities, as the hegemonic national memory-makers, were disrupted by the counter-narratives and counter-memory that became more pronounced at the symbolic “moment” of 2015-2016. The representation of the experience of the trauma as a totalizing atrocity, and the need to strongly advocate a discourse of unity and maintenance of national identity was a necessary call for many nationalist leaders who wanted to preserve national identity against the project of annihilation by the Ottoman Empire in the case of Armenia, or against the possibility of being absorbed by imperial Britain and its proponents. But, over the years, this discourse of national identity has shown to be partial in both senses of the term – incomplete and biased – and thus, exclusive in its representation of the diversity of “Armenianness” or “Irishness”. As such, the boundaries of identity to strengthen the “we” are rigidly constructed against the “other” (Beukian 2014; 2018a) in order to recollect the violent disruptions from the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the 1916 Easter Rising into a unified identity. These mainstream narratives propagated by the state, leading political parties, community organizations, and the Church(es) in both cases have obscured and overshadowed diverse considerations of what it means to be Armenian and Irish.

We look at the contemporary narratives of national identity around the one hundred year mark for both cases. Both nations’ postcolonial and post-

traumatic experiences have heavily shaped their own perceptions of national identity. Both national identity constructions have been somewhat ingrained in victim identity as survivors of those atrocities – war and genocide, and (forced) diasporization on the one hand, and insurrection, civil war, and partition on the other. In Armenia and in Ireland and Northern Ireland, this national identity has also been set in opposition to competing claims of identification (Ottoman or Soviet, on the one hand, and British, Ulster, or Northern Irish on the other) rather than allowing for multivalent conceptions of national, ethnic, religious, and cultural expression. In this sense, the two cases represent small nations that continuously struggle to find their own voices and identities in a postcolonial global context and posttraumatic nation building context. Their aim is to be recognized and reconciled. Therefore, in both cases, the extent of the presence of the trauma due to the events that took place one hundred years ago in the context of World War I (World War I) is significant and strongly shapes the national discourse in Armenia and on the island of Ireland. The centennial commemoration in Armenia reinforced the attention on the open wounds (Cheterian 2015), as denialism of the Genocide and the inability to reconcile memories and recognize the other continue to cause pain and extend the intergenerational trauma. In Ireland and Northern Ireland, the unresolved legacy of the Troubles serves to continually re-open the wounds left by the revolutionary period a century ago.

We undertake this comparative endeavour by applying the methodology of most different cases: at first instance, the case of Irish and Armenian identity formation and post-trauma transition may seem very different to the reader. The difference lies in considerations of 1) the scale of the trauma itself 2) the socio-historical context (despite the similar timeframe around the World War I), and 3) the post-traumatic identity shaping was different as well, 4) the scale of loss and death is also different in each case: between 1 and 1.5 million Armenians were deported and massacred during the period of 1915-1923. Our comparative timeframe of trauma, constructed at around one hundred years, whereby the commemorations were planned at a large scale for both cases, can shed light on the trajectory and changes in the discourse of the trauma and post-memory. This is therefore the point of comparative discussion that can lead to productive conclusions around trauma, commemoration, memory and counter-memory as resistance.

The Irish case will analyse the various commemorations stemming from the “Decade of Centenaries” in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, with particular focus on the World War I and the 1916 Easter Rising. The conflicts of memory perpetuated north and south of the border will be explored comparatively with the case of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Armenian Genocide memory will be examined through narrative memory of the younger generations to show how Arme-

nianness is reimagined as a site of resisting the trauma through diversity and inclusiveness and a transformation of trauma expressions to break the silence of the private spaces of trauma. The paper aims to juxtapose experiences of shifting narratives of identity from survival to resilience in the context of the changing global environment and the increasing popular demands around meanings of Armenianness and Irishness.

2. Collective Memory, Trauma, and Counter-Memory as Resilience

The concept of resilience offers a bridge between trauma and memory; like memory and trauma, however, it is a term loaded with implication and contested meanings. What is resilience in both cases? How does it connect to post-traumatic nations and post-memory of the younger generations who are commemorating the one hundred year anniversary?

There is a lack of research surrounding resilience in the context of collective trauma and memory on the national scale, meaning how national identity discourses engage with resilience, especially in the context of a collective traumatic memory. We define resilience as the expression of counter-memory that engages with a critical rethinking of national identity or the memory of the traumatic event. Contesting the hegemonic and mainstream forms of nationalism and national identity, therefore bringing to light the need to break away from the idea of national identity as a single collective memory, Jeffrey K. Olick explains that, “[...] the origins of the concept of collective memory [is] in the crucible of statist agendas”, which leaves “reductionist tendencies” in the field for those working on the concepts of memory-nation (2003, 5). In addition, by rewriting these “traumas into a linear narrative of national heroism, [...] the state conceals the trauma that it has, necessarily, produced. Resistance to this rescripting – resistance to state narratives of commemoration – constitutes resistance to sovereign power” (Edkins 2003, xv; see also 5-6). Similarly, resistance to the mainstream memory transmission that silences and overshadows other expressions of remembering counters that linearity with national identity constructions in post-traumatic societies. Through the interplay of narratives and counter-narratives of memory, we explore discourses of trauma and the way in which resilience, understood as survival after trauma and existing and surviving despite trauma, is being redefined through memory in both the Irish and Armenian contexts.

Traumatic experiences that are engraved in the collective (and individual) historical memory of a nation do not “disappear” or “dissipate” over time (Beukian 2018a). As Dominick LaCapra explains, “Trauma brings out in a striking way the importance of affect and its impact on memory” (2016, 377), making it a necessary examination of historical events, especially in terms of understanding the ways in which the past is continuously within the present when a traumatic past lives in the nation’s memory. As such, the

“traumatic dimension of the political” to use Jenny Edkins’ phrase (2003, 8; on emotions and politics, see Ahmed 2014). In this paper, we argue that these traumatic memories articulate themselves in the constructions of the nation continuously over time, especially at a juncture of one hundred years that was given such importance in the sense of the international scope of its symbolic value for recognition (or its absence).

Collective memory is socially constructed over several generations and becomes the “homogenizing” element that binds individuals within a social context together by creating historic *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory, such as monuments, school history textbooks, national flags, commemorative or remembrance dates, museums, national songs, and so on (Nora 1984). The national identity is constructed around symbolic sites and events that become engraved in the history of the nation, that is what constitutes the “us”. The shared collective memory, as Marianne Hirsch correctly concludes, may be the result of the need of people to feel included and bonded in a group or in a “collective membrane forged by a shared inheritance of multiple traumatic histories and the individual and social responsibility we feel toward a persistent and traumatic past” (Hirsch 2012, 33-34).

But collective memory is neither static nor monolithic. Our exploration of the discourses of memory in Ireland and Armenia asks, of necessity, how they evolve and change, how they are challenged and resisted, what politics they serve, and what power dynamics are at play in these discursive negotiations. This approach can be taken as a kind of hauntology, in which “Hauntology, rather than taking for granted what it means to be political, asks after the processes by which it is constructed” (Auchter 2014, 17). With the haunting resurgence of counter-memory that always co-exists with collective mainstream memory explicitly focused on the losses, silences, and absences in the dominant commemorative narratives of the Armenian Genocide and the Decade of Centenaries, we aim to foreground the disjunctions of time, history, and ontology, the undecidability of presence and absence, present and past, that is at the heart of discourses of collective memory. Both Ireland and Armenia have constructed their national stories “out of the ashes” of tragedy, albeit on widely different scales and in different social, historical, political, and cultural contexts. But within the ashes of the past, there remains a trace – what Derrida also calls “the cinder” (1991) – of that which cannot be erased, the forgotten that insists upon remembrance. Bringing together the spectre and the cinder provokes a reconfiguration of the memory of these events. Reading memory as a spectral expression of resilience exposes the ways in which memory functions in post-conflict and post-trauma states: simultaneously as a unifying force, bringing linear order to the violence and uncertainty at the heart of the polity; and as a troubling and troublesome reminder of difference, discontinuity, and disruption.

Hirsch's study on the role of memory and its different forms of expressions reveals that post-memory is yet another way to bridge the historical traumatic events in one's lives to the younger generations in a family or community, through various symbolic systems. As Hirsch correctly and astutely observes, "Postmemory" describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up" (2012, 5). The transmission of these experiences left such powerful images and stories in the minds of the younger generations, that they almost "[seemed] to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 1999, 8). But as Gabriele Schwab perceptively highlights regarding the transmitted post-memory, the second and later generations whose parents lived through a traumatic event "become avid readers of silences and memory traces hidden in a face that is frozen in grief [...] The second generation thus received violent histories not only through the actual memories or stories of parents (postmemory) but also through the traces of affect, particularly affect that remains unintegrated and unassimilable" (2010, 14).

These counter-narratives by individuals, groups and collectives, or dissident political parties, who have, sometimes with important risks, challenged the homogeneity, heteronormative, and unity claims, and have created spaces to talk about potentials and possibilities of what it (could) mean to be Armenian, and Irish (or British, or Northern Irish), are what make the nations resilient. Counter-memory (or a resilient memory) is a form of resilience in that *it remains*. It persists, despite often being drowned out by the dominant voices. To develop this theoretical framework, we refer to the concept of the spectre/ghost by Derrida (1994); in its dual meanings of "remain" (to endure and persist) and "remains" (the corpse, the ashes), the ghosts of memory remind us that the resilient past is haunting in its absence even as it is recalled into the present/presence. As such, we posit that resilience is not about simply creating an absolute opposite of mainstream memory, on the one hand, and an opposing counter-memory, on the other; rather, we show that possibilities of memory-making inhere even within silences, erasures, and forgettings. Derrida conceptualizes this trace, this "remnant within the remainder" (1991, 13), as a cinder – what remains when even the ashes have been destroyed or swept away. *Something remains* even when there is an attempt to obliterate and erase – and that *something* can be discerned in memory.

These counter-memories are important because they help to ask questions about that framework, and help to locate voices and perspectives that contribute to a more inclusive identity, with porous boundaries. It is after all impossible to claim that Armenianness or Irishness constitute a similar criterion of identity through the "linear" time. Thinking about memories and the strength of the transmission of memories in families and collectives, the past could be viewed not as countering the present or the future, or regress-

ing them, but as simultaneously coexisting with them. As these traumatic and painful histories seem to be persistently intermingled, they exist in some simultaneity with the present. As such, the linearity of time is challenged in understanding the way trauma shapes national identity and the way it is transmitted through time and space to the younger generations (Sunny 1993; Parekh 1999; Craps 2013; Assmann 2016). As Jenny Edkins argues in *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*:

Memorialisation that does not return to a linear narrative but rather retains the trace of another notion of temporality does occur. It is found when the political struggle between linear and trauma time is resolved not by a forgetting of trauma and a return to linearity, nor by attempting the impossible opposite – speaking from within trauma – but by a recognition and *surrounding* of the trauma at the heart of any social or symbolic order. (2003, 16; emphasis in the original)

The non-linear trauma time – or queer time to borrow from Kulpa and Mizelińska (2016) – therefore assists in uncovering the silences and blurring the private and public spaces of memory. In the collective memory of conflict, resilience means that memory remains, even as it adapts and transforms to reinvent itself in each changed political moment (Graff-McRae 2010). Commemorations are ritualized events that are repeated with difference: “It is this gap between the repetition and the redefinition [...] that creates a political space for the contestation of conflicted memory narratives” (Graff-McRae 2014, 20). The centennial is especially important to think about resilience in this context – younger generations who carry the post-memory remember the genocide, trauma, and memory of their grandparents and history, but with difference. We argue that counter-memory exists in parallel to mainstream memory, and is always present to challenge its boundaries. For example, as will be demonstrated below in each case study, the ethnic boundaries of what constitutes Armenianness or Irishness have been contested and are increasingly more porous. Gendered identity constructions have also presented important challenges to each collective memory, and whose memory is being remembered.

In the aftermath of trauma, conflict, war or genocide, memory is what remains, persists despite attempts at its erasure. The endurance of memory as a collective connection to touchstones of identity (nation, state, community, language, religion) that have been undermined, damaged, or destroyed, contributes to a sense of resilience or fortitude, of survival in the face of an existential threat. Memory, through processes of commemoration and memorialization, is often seen as providing the basis for group cohesion, unity, and consensus. Through memory, the group lays claim to continuity and political legitimacy. Yet, as Derrida reminds us, memory not only remains: conceptualized as “the remnant of the remainder” (1991, 13), or the “remains of the

remains”, memory can be read as a type of *cinder*: “the remains of a burning” (2), an alternative paradigm for “the trace – something that erases itself totally, radically, while presenting itself” (1). For Derrida, “cinders name both the extreme fragility and the uncanny tenacity of the relation” between truth and its impossibility (2) – between language and the storytelling, between history and memory. As multiple, competing narratives of memory emerge to contest the discursive boundaries of the past and the present, the cinders of memory remain as a space of possibility, in which the political can be re-imagined. Thus, “cinders also name the resilience and intractability of what is most delicate and most vulnerable” (2), in that marginalized memories are never entirely obliterated. Even amidst dominant narratives that claim privilege, continuity, teleology, and endurance, the memories on the remainder contain the possibility to not only disrupt these claims, but persist to establish their own. What is important for our cases as well is to consider how counter-narrative is sometimes contained within the officially sanctioned or dominant discourse.

Resilience, as such, is to counter the mainstream views around the memory of the event, highlighting these counter-memories that are unsilenced; the moment of the centennial presented an important context for this resilience to be brought to light. But as memory, and its cognates commemoration and memorialization, is deployed as a bulwark against trauma, it functions in the same binary way as the so-called Peace Walls that separate Protestant from Catholic communities: as a form of defense, and as a means of exclusion. In other ways, the resilience of memory can either undermine or enable denialism by perpetrators. Thus in the resilience of memory there lies an inherent paradox: it serves both the continual process of adapting to trauma and the persistent re-production of conflict (Graff-McRae 2010; McGrattan 2013; McDowell, Braniff 2014). “[T]he past and its retrieval in memory hold a curious place in our identities, one that simultaneously stabilizes those identities in continuity and threatens to disrupt them” (Antze, Lambek 1996, XVI; see also Beukian 2018a). This dual, ghostly element of commemoration – memory simultaneously called into the present and contained in the past – enables a critical reading of the centenaries of the Armenian Genocide and the Decade of Centenaries in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

3. Armenian National Identity: 100 Years after the Genocide

“I wanted us to be able to celebrate our survival at the same time that we were mourning our losses, and that yes, this has been one hundred years of exile, but it’s also been one hundred years of survival, and a hundred years of strength [...]”¹. “I don’t really know how to answer this question. I like who

¹ These are Scout Tufankjian’s words during an interview, see Khandikian (2017).

it makes me. I like that I'm a fighter and I'm righteous and passionate and I feel like I have a century of survival in me"².

If there is one particular tragedy that Armenians collectively remember and (to a large extent) unite under, it is the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, when the Ottoman Turkish state organized and executed the killings of Armenians and their deportation to Der Zor. The Genocide is considered to be a national traumatic and tragic experience engraved in the collective consciousness of Armenians (Bakalian 1993; Bjorklund 1993; Pattie 1999; Marutyan 2005, 2009; Panossian 2006; Hovannisian 2007; MacDonald 2008). The Armenian Genocide memory constitutes a central essence of Armenian diasporic identity, making the official recognition of the Genocide “the sine qua non of the Armenian experience in the twentieth [and twenty-first] century,” as Anny Bakalian’s detailed study on the American Armenians reveals (1993, 154, qtd. from Ayanian, Ayanian 1987, 5; also see Panossian 2006; Hovannisian 2007; MacDonald 2008). Schools, community organizations, the Church(es), and “official” commemorations play the role of transmitting collective stories of suffering and the collective history of the Genocide (in history books for example). The importance and strength of the Armenian community organization is well emphasized in the literature (see for example Panossian 1998; Tölölyan 2000, 2007; Sahakyan 2015; also see the essay by Tchilingirian 2018). As Tölölyan explains in his study of diaspora organization and their sustainability: “In each post-Genocide diasporic community there was a varying but, on the whole, impressive level of commitment to rebuilding institutions that had existed in the prosperous old diasporic communities of the great imperial centres, especially Istanbul” (2000, 16). The Genocide of 1915 is in many ways the beginning of contemporary Armenian history that has shaped the conception of Armenianness for both the Armenian diaspora and the Armenians in Armenia, especially after 1965 for the latter, as a strongly unifying factor that defines the “us” – the Armenian imagined community – despite the historical, social, ideological, cultural differences that shape each Armenian community. But within this seemingly unified nation, the complexities of difference are striking and significant for the construction of the imagined community.

3.1 *Memory as Resilience*

The one-hundred-year anniversary brought forward a renewed look at the memory of Genocide and the feelings of victim identity, critically rethinking about agency and resistance as necessary focus points in addition to the con-

² Danielle Tcholakian’s words, mentioned next to one of the photos from *The Armenian Diaspora Project*, by Scout Tufankjian (*The Armenian Diaspora Project* 2015). Also see Tufankjian 2015.

ceptions of victimhood. The 2015 centennial anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was not a turning point in terms of developing more reconciliatory relations with Turkey. The latter's position on the Armenian Genocide however much softened over the years, has not yielded a significant discourse of change toward reconciliation or recognition of the crimes that the Ottoman Empire has committed against its own population in 1915-1923. However, 2015 marked an important point of discursive shift in Armenian collective identity related to the self-perception from victims of the crime against their people, to the self-image of empowered generation who are ready to confront the past with a renewed look at the role of memory for the Armenian people. The struggles associated with post-memory in the case of the Armenian Genocide descendants, and what ultimately could be said that the centennial commemoration brought to the fore, is not that there are necessarily some discrepancies in the interpretation of what happened during the Genocide (the historical details), but the mnemohistorical memory is what was contested: how we remember, who we remember, how we think about the post-traumatic justice and reconciliation. Kasbarian's recent article on the 2015 Centennial commemoration addresses similarly this point of bifurcation in Armenian identity, as she posits that "The commemorations were an impetus for many diasporans, individually and collectively, to reflect upon wider questions about who has the responsibility and authority to represent and mediate the collective past and present" (2018, 137; also see Beukian 2015)³. However, as we show in this paper and section on the Armenian Genocide, the contestation is more than the authority to represent, and is connected to the type of representation, the message of the commemoration, and how it shapes constructions of Armenianness through that. The contestation therefore lies in the variations of the commemorative moment itself, reflecting the increasingly strong presence of voices from the Armenian communities that counter the hegemonic discourse of the genocide as a totalizing experience that unifies Armenians or as an only-Armenian cause, due to the need to maintain the national identity and its existence, its survival. Critical engagement with the conception of Armenianness, who is included/excluded, who constitutes the "we" and under what terms, did/does not define the mainstream discourse of Armenianness, though is inevitably has to engage with it.

3.2 Resilience and Counter-Memory Making

An important instance that the time of the centennial – in this case the past five-ten years – seems to have brought to the fore is more attention to the question

³ Indeed, this is precisely the question whereby the Centennial was the "moment" of challenging the mainstream memory "makers" despite the internal competition of who owns this memory and who has the right to speak for all Armenians (see Beukian 2015; Kasbarian 2018).

of women's and children's fate in the Genocide and what that means for the nation and its history, and also what it means to the understanding of the Armenian Genocide. Therefore after a century has passed since April 1915, research on the Genocide more notably pays more attention to the particular suffering of women and children in the Genocide and the hidden Armenians' existence and identity (Çetin 2012; Altınay, Çetin 2014), and also the question of feminism – Armenian feminism in the Genocide era and at the brink of the establishment of the Turkish state, and even in the Armenian Republic (Beukian 2014, endnote 1). In the case of the Armenian tragedy, the role of the “hegemonic” and masculinized post-Genocide national identity building within and by diasporan organizations and institutions have emphasized that the collective tragedy of the genocide is a unifying trauma for all Armenians. However, the reality is different, and women and children/orphans experienced the atrocities in very different ways. The experience of women in the post-traumatic stages has also been marked by the burden of post-traumatic national reconstruction they carried, by marrying and giving birth to the new generation of Armenians, after suffering rape, slavery, and sometimes even after having to abandon their own children from their Turkish or Kurdish captors (and saviours). There was no psychological healing for these women. These stories and experiences have not surfaced in the recollections of the lived experiences, and are only coming to light today, particularly in the past decade or so, as the scholarship on the topic and documentaries reflect. It is for this reason that the emphasis on women is necessary here, without dismissing the idea that collective memory of a trauma has a strong impact on all members of the community, beyond gendered or religious differentiations.

In addition, gendered perspectives and analyses of the Armenian Genocide are not part of the national discourse and community discussions. This is quite noticeable when looking at the centennial commemorations of the Armenian Genocide in April 2015 and the various conferences held on that occasion. Only one major conference addressed the topic of gendered memories. The conference entitled “Gender, Memory and Genocide: An International Conference Marking 100 Years Since the Armenian Genocide” took place in Berlin in June 2015. Several prominent scholars of Armenian Genocide were featured on the programme as keynote speakers. In 2016, a conference entitled “Critical Approaches to Armenian Identity in the 21st century” was organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation, which, apart from traditional discussion topics on Armenian identity and diasporization, included presentations that tackled perspectives on gender and memory, by tackling feminist perspectives and postcolonial views. However, the mainstream literature on the Armenian Genocide continues to present a “unified and non-distinguishing” perspective of the impact of the Genocide. Instead, one can argue that the effect of the (often sexual) violence against women and children has a strong, often unexplored, impact in the Armenian post-Genocide national identity making (also see Tachjian 2009 on this point). Much of the work on women has also been

studied through the focus of post-Genocide feminist writers and the discourses produced through the publications of the Bolis (Istanbul) Armenian women who paved the way to make their voices heard (Ekmekçiöglü 2016). While their works may be misinterpreted or scrutinized as “non-feminist” by many western feminist authors, Lerna Ekmekçiöglü presents an important analytical perspective of Armenian feminism in light of the patriarchy of the Armenian community where these women were writing from and for, and also the patriarchal and oppressive Turkish State formed after 1923, upon the denialism of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923 and other minorities and the appropriation of their wealth (*ibidem*). These play a significant role in thinking about community building, especially in a post-Genocide context, where women had to be the cultural transmitters, reproducers, and carriers of the memory (Yuval-Davis, Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997; Beukian 2014; Shahnazarian, Ziemer 2014). In addition to the silence on the particular suffering of women, the absence of academic work on Armenians who converted to Islam raises serious questions about who is included in the conception of Armenianness, and, controversial as this may be, of who is included in the category of Armenian victim. In the recent years, with the opening up of the discussion on the question of the “hidden” Armenians in Turkey, especially due to the efforts and activism of Hrant Dink (Balancar 2012; Bedrosyan 2013; Altınay, Çetin 2014), has led many to visit and learn more closely about their history⁴.

The continued stubborn and persistent denial by the Turkish state of the Armenian Genocide, the pain and emotions of remembering the suffering of grandparents and parents for Armenians, and the generation of orphaned children that eventually built their lives in new lands, have moulded the Armenian national psyche, as reflected in the perceptions of Armenianness⁵. More specifically, the collective memory and traumatic recollections of the Armenian Genocide that are transmitted intergenerationally continue to play an important role in determining the collective identity of Armenians. The emotional, traumatic, and psychological impact of the Genocide then, is an important lens through which to examine and understand the transmission of identity and memory within a community or nation. Jenny Edkins similarly argues that the collective remembering of traumatic events shapes and moulds the construction of national identity and foreign policy-making (Edkins 2003; Langenbacher, Shain 2010; Becker 2014; Beukian 2015).

⁴ This silence on the Muslim Armenians has been noticed not only in Turkish scholarship, but strikingly in Armenian scholarship on the Genocide of 1915 – so in this sense, there is a dual silencing, both of women and Islamized Armenians from the “official” narratives of the Armenian Genocide (Altınay, Çetin 2014).

⁵ The Armenian diasporas attempted to recover their identity and maintain it through stages of purification imposed on the survivors, on the “saved” Armenian women from their Turkish and Kurdish saviors and/or abductors, and on the homogenizing habit uses of Armenianness.

3.2 Resilience as Counter-Memory: Rethinking and Resisting

While the mainstream national identity preserves the narratives of the Armenian Genocide as discussed, the one-hundred-year mark also created the space for the counter-memory of various individuals and groups to surface more strongly either to challenge or to become recognized by the mainstream narrative. For example, while previously the discussion around the Genocide focused on the universal suffering of all under this crime against humanity and the destruction of the national culture and the cultural networks, religious structures, and people, there is much more focus today on capturing the suffering of women and children, the variations of experiences of victims of the atrocity (including those who had to live alongside “perpetrators” in the “aftermath” of the events) and understanding the ways in which intergenerational trauma transmission continues to impact the nation. As Aleida Assmann posits through the concept of “shadows of trauma”, the “involuntariness and inaccessibility in the experience of those who engage with the traumatic past, both of those who are directly affected by it as well as those who come after” (2016, 5), reflecting how much the previous traumas continue to shape the national identity construction of a nation. This section will cover the particular case of the Armenian Genocide remembrance around the moment of the 2015 centennial. We argue that this moment has created the space for a rethinking on what the genocide memory means for Armenians: this includes questioning whose memory is going to be remembered and how, and in what ways this transmitted memory to the younger generations is meaningful in their pursuit for justice.

While it is difficult to capture all the complexities entailed in understanding how the counter-narratives function in the case of the Armenian communities that have long been led by Armenian political parties and organizations, and the Armenian Churches, the section will attempt to present the narratives of resistance also as taking place outside those “formal” structures of Armenian diasporic communities. This section shows how these counter-narratives have paved and claimed their way and right to the “public” arena of political action. We argue that the recent turn to mnemohistories and micro-narratives of family or personal suffering of grandparents has shed light on the intergenerational transmission of the trauma and the younger generations’ way of remembering the genocide – and these are discussed as counter-memory, as resilience, in the face of the Turkish state denialism.

Armenian scholars have long argued for a need to rethink of Armenianness and Armenian identity as the younger generations in the Diaspora are more globalized agents and respond differently to the essentializing calls for Armenian identity. Even though the boundaries of diaspora groups are in a constant process of change as they become increasingly porous, they require a redefinition and reframing of Armenianness (Bakalian 1993, for the case of Armenian Americans, for example). Turkish state’s refusal to recognize the Ar-

menian Genocide. The latter is a significant factor that continues to strengthen Armenianness in the diaspora despite the gradual loss of the spoken Armenian language among the third generation diasporans (Bakalian 1993).

Armenianness becomes the symbolic capital of being Armenian – meaning the elements of what makes one Armenian shift, transform, and present more agency in determining one’s “ethnic” and cultural identity. In a reflective essay on Armenian culture and identity, Kyle Khandikian (2017), a Salvadoran-Armenian-American writer and LGBTI activist currently living in Yerevan, wrote that:

There is a very false myth surrounding Armenian identity. It is the myth that we, regardless of religious creeds, national identities, political leanings, spoken languages, etc., are all Armenians. The truth, however, is that to deviate from the mainstream in this community means to be shunned and persecuted for not living up to fabricated norms and expectations. Identifying as LGBTQ is one such deviation, arguably the most abhorred by our fiercely patriarchal and heteronormative culture. Armenians are a diverse people, and that diversity does not suddenly end when it comes to sexuality or gender. There is an undeniable taboo surrounding homosexuality, and that taboo is just one part of a larger system of oppression that is fuelled, in my opinion, by shame.

Despite the calls for more inclusion, fluidity, and agency in the diaspora Armenian communities and in the Armenian diaspora media, Armenian community leaders continue to determine the role of what a “good” Armenian is – one is accepted within Armenian communities as an Armenian if they fulfil their role fighting for Armenian related Causes – which incidentally do not include questions of diversity and equality *within* Armenian communities (Beukian 2018b).

What we suggest the centennial really brought to the fore, is a call for justice in more transnationally located experiences and intersectional identities that mark the resilience of the Armenians, especially in the younger generation postmemory to express their own views on what and how to remember their grandparents’ suffering. For example, Stefanie Kundakjian (2016) attempts to link the Armenians’ history of Genocide to other situations of oppression: “Armenians must enliven our social movements and cultural losses by rising in solidarity with the Indigenous tribes and allies that are currently demanding the protection of Standing Rock against the Dakota Access pipeline”. This is therefore an indication on how the younger generation’s memory is not only driven by the narrative of surviving the Armenian Genocide, but is also inspired by the conceptions of struggle and survival as tied to various forms of oppressions and (settler) colonialism.

What we can notice around the time of the centennial is that such critical voices have become more engaged with a re-imagining of what it means to be Armenian – diaspora, post-Soviet, postcolonial, racialized, gendered, non-binary gender, and inclusive of those who identify as LGBTQ. While these instances are captured through blogs, novels, what we want to focus on in this part of the brief exploration on the way in which cultural trauma is expressed in digital

magazines, blogs, websites – overall digital platforms – as a way of expressing resilience in the face of the hegemonic discourses on memory and reflecting how the intergenerational transmission of memory occurs in ways that call for the trauma of genocide to be connected to other sufferings, actions and activism. Such resilience helps to more seriously reflect upon the call for more inclusion – gender, race, religion – by making Armenian intersectional identities the more inclusive alternative of post-Genocide Armenianness.

What seems to really be highlighted in the past five years or so is the increased visibility of voices that disrupt the heteronormative and heteropatriarchal Armenian identity that essentialized the Armenian experiences through its adoption of “whiteness” as a determined positioning of Armenian subjectivity. Instead these voices challenge those constructions and reposition Armenianness within a racialized experiential and postcolonial subjectivity to capture the realities of the younger generation(s), and reflect the need to reconnect with the past through the formation of alliances with those suffering within the white heteropatriarchal system. The digital format has been an important way the younger generations have relied on to create platforms of expression in forms of blogs, articles, artistic representations, videos on their oral history, and photographic representations of post-Genocide survivors – “beyond 1915” to use Scout Tufankjian’s words. One important example of such a critical way of connecting the Armenian Genocide trauma to other social justice issues is represented by The Hye Phen Magazine and Collective, who issued a statement on their website expressing the importance of connecting the survivor identity with the experience of diasporization and genocide, and in their words (2016):

As a community of genocide survivors still struggling with ongoing systems of erasure, imperialism, and marginalization, we understand that fighting for the recognition of our people’s genocide also means fighting against the United States’ and Canada’s genocidal systems against Black, Indigenous, and Chican@ bodies on Turtle Island (now called North America), as well as ongoing American/Western imperial military and capitalist corporate campaigns on other lands in the Global South, etc.

It is therefore the affective shift in genocide memory and trauma that concerns the newer generation of Armenians who attempt to make sense of not just how the events unfolded, the factual historical details, but perhaps more importantly, how that memory shapes their identity and their own intersectional self-identifications as Armenians and members of other ethnic/religious/racial “groups”. As Raffi Wartanian (2017) explains in his analysis on the ways in which identities are accepted and rejected based *vis-à-vis* the memory of the genocide:

Dispersion, assimilation, globalization, and liberalization have wrought a new chapter in Armenianness [...]. This dynamic stokes fears that the identity’s expan-

sion may cause its demise, spurring the marginalization of elements who objectively have much to offer the community. [...] One critical aspect [...] is the oppression of minority Armenians who represent religious, sexual, and political orientations that challenge (patriarchal) assumptions about Armenianness. This marks an unconscious extension of what the genocide attempted to carry out: a silencing of elements perceived as threatening to rigid identity formations coupled with an attempt to distract from corrupt and ineffectual leadership.

While the Armenian identity is emphasized, since the subjective experience is reflected through that identity, the reimagination of Armenianness is what is noticeable in the post-memory expressions. The younger generations also recollect their memory of the trauma in indirect ways that tie that traumatic experience to more universal claims of injustices committed against humanity (Kaya 2018). It is by the way Armenians position their trauma and suffering as a social justice issue, that is of global concern – association with Black movements, Indigenous peoples' struggles, feminist and queer movements, etc. – that the memory becomes more real to them. This is an important shift that is observed in the way in which post-memory is shaped and shapes the younger generation through Derrida's conceptualization of the ghost of memory that continues the haunt even in its absence – in this case one hundred years later, a denied trauma and suffering continues to shape the memory of the younger generation, not only in thinking about their own history and trauma, but in reclaiming their remains through the alliances with those who have suffered and continue to suffer imperialism/colonialism, heteronormative patriarchal system, and the denialism of the committed act against peoples. This powerful resilience is therefore (of course) not about objecting the mainstream narratives of the Armenian Genocide, instead it is about the understanding of the possibilities, as mentioned in our theoretical segment in the previous section, the possibilities of memory within the erasures and the silences. As such, these voices, we argue are what Derrida terms the remnant after cinder, whereby the post-memory survives the ashes and reclaims its presence through resilience as counter-memory.

These fragmented, yet very real, violent, stories are often incomplete, meaning one cannot trace family history or the particular path of the family members during the trauma, and constitute "haunting legacies". It is also important to think of the concept of survival, often used by mainstream identity constructions to highlight the unified experience of Armenians, and it is used here to show how we can in fact challenge the mainstream and capture the fragmented identities of Armenians that need to be reimagined through intersectional and postcolonial terms: what language they use, that they are thus able to make sense of their history and past in today's geopolitical and global realities, facing denialism, politics of recognition, and the perpetuation of the abuses of their memory by national and international politics.

3.4 *Resilience as Remains*

As such resilience today is strongly identified through the possibilities of thinking of the Armenian Genocide memory through that global struggle. Homophobic and exclusionary discourses have marginalized many Armenians. This moment of 2015 can help to question the heteropatriarchal and “white” Armenian identities to situate the Armenian experience within the postcolonial and post-Genocide context (Beukian 2018b). This is also the moment of potentiality that is expressed and that becomes evident through the agency of Armenian activists and individuals who have long resisted the official memory, or the mainstream memory that has excluded difference at the expense of conformity and exclusion. The moment of the possibility of achieving the shift in the collective mainstream memory that is heteropatriarchal, technically more bound rather than porous, and conscriptive of Armenian identity, precisely what activists want to achieve represents refusal of the older order of things by looking to the future (Muñoz 2009; Sargsyan 2018)⁶. Thinking of Armenianness in intersectional terms – in terms of race, sexuality, gender, nation, and diaspora – can more strongly reflect the Armenian experience in multilocal and transnational locations (Beukian 2018b). More importantly, and related to the main argument of this paper, intersectionality embedded in counter-memory can present an important challenge and potentiality to Armenian identity in thinking of the struggle for the recognition of the Genocide as not only an Armenian-focused cause but one that is more connected to other struggles and causes for justice and recognition. What ultimately *remains*, is not in the past or the present only, but is powerfully located in its futurity, in José Muñoz’s terms, for rethinking Armenianness in the post-centennial queer time.

4. *Irish National Identities: Conflicting Centenaries in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland*

“The memory of the Easter Rising [...] has long been haunted by an anxious question: is it over yet?” (O’Toole 2016).

What does it mean to consider resilience in the context of post-conflict transition in Ireland and Northern Ireland? The self-proclaimed “Decade of Centenaries”, held concurrently but not identically in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland from 2012-2022, offers a unique case study through which to examine two states which have experienced two very different trajectories emerging from conflict, and their responses to contested com-

⁶ For more works on the conception of futurity applied in various theoretical frameworks, see the forthcoming special issue of *The Armenian Review*, due to appear in Spring-Summer 2018, volume 56, issue 1-2, titled “Queering Armenian Studies”.

memorative events over time. Officially framed as an opportunity for ten years of collective reflection and engagement with the tumultuous decade that witnessed the foundation of both states, fittingly the decade in which it is being remembered has also proven to be fraught with international political and economic upheaval. Using the multiple connotations of resilience as frames, we explore the recent centenary commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme (a narrow, but crucial victory during the World War I) to excavate these points of divergence and the potential for a “shared history”. To conclude the section, we ask how these narratives may be reinforced or challenged through the upcoming anniversaries of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Partition, and the Irish Civil War. In doing so, we expose the ways in which the anniversaries and the discourses of memory embedded within them have been shaped by – and continue to shape – the complex political dynamics in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

4.1 Resilience as Endurance: Republicanism, the Republic, and the Rising

In Catholic-Nationalist-Republican histories, the concept of resilience is deeply intertwined with mythologies of overcoming: the mantra “It is not those who can inflict the most but those who can endure [suffer] the most who will conquer” (attributed to republican prisoner Terence MacSwiney, prior to his death while on hunger strike in 1920), is echoed in the teleological (but grammatically awkward) “our day will come” (*tiocfaidh ar lá*). The Easter Rising of 1916 has not only been inserted into this tradition over the last hundred years; its proponents actively modelled the event as an act of myth-making and a call-back to the long series of failed rebellions on the island. “Clinging tight to Easter 1916 – told as a heroic saga of national resurrection, of good v evil – has therefore been a convenient, even necessary, narrative in Ireland” (Reynolds 2015).

The point of access to the dominant memory of each event is still exclusive. Both communities explicitly deploy partial narratives of the past to legitimize and mobilize resilience as a political strategy, contributing to the frequent, and protracted, political stalemates in the post-peace process era. As Jonathan Evershed points out, “Loyalist commemoration of the World War I provides a contestational subscript to the prevailing orthodoxies of Northern Ireland’s post-Agreement politics” (2017, 25). Unionism has used commemoration as a way of closing off spaces in order to reaffirm aspects of identity under challenge; the 2012-13 flags protests, and the often hostile parading confrontations of that period, were deeply intertwined with narratives of commemoration surrounding the Ulster Covenant and the founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force. Meanwhile, the political backlash that accompanied any attempts to include northern Unionists in the 1916 centenary indicate that Unionism is still unable to fully engage with the Easter Rising on even a superficial level.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1998 Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, milestone anniversaries were deployed as tools to construct and solidify an emerging narrative of shared and inclusive history among nationalists and unionists on either side of the border (Graff-McRae 2010, 61). The 1998 bicentenary of the 1798 United Irishmen's Rebellion involved a deliberative process to foster an all-island consensus on the past (see Dunne 2013), and official statements by elected officials sought to make explicit linkages between the anniversary and the peace process (see Dáil Éireann 1998). Similarly, the 90th anniversary commemorations of the Battle of the Somme – which had traditionally been perceived as an exclusively unionist history – foregrounded a narrative of inclusiveness. However, while the remembrance of the Somme (and the World War I generally) has slowly become more of an open house, as the nationalist/republican community in the North cautiously began to challenge communal taboos surrounding any linkages to the British armed forces, and the Republic of Ireland overcame decades of neglect surrounding Irishmen who had fought in the World War I, it still sits somewhat uneasily alongside commemoration of the other formative battle of 1916: the Easter Rising (see Leonard 1996; Canavan 2004; Graff-McRae 2010, 78-113). Instead, the two events, and the discourses of memory that surround them, have become reified “as a crossroads of remembrance in modern Ireland, both for Catholic nationalists and for Protestant unionists” (Beiner 2007, 368), with few points of convergence. Rather than the “all-island” approach to inclusivity professed during the 1798 anniversary, the commemorations of 1916 continued to diverge into parallel events: the Somme at the heart of unionist remembrance, and the Rising celebrated as the seminal event in the nationalist version of history.

Constructed not only as foundational narratives of the two states, but also as mirror images or as parallel history, the commemorative discourses of the Rising and the Somme rarely intersect. When they do, they disrupt and undermine each other's claim to foundations, even as they attempt to construct a shared history (see Longley 1991, Graff-McRae 2010). The Somme has often been read as a foil or equivalent to the Easter Rising – as parallel origin stories for the respective states of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Yet, since the lead-up to the 90th anniversary, a narrative of inclusivity and shared experience has opened up⁷. Yet despite the gradual acknowledgement of a degree of shared experience, this inclusive space was limited to “official” narratives, and more particularly, to sites of commemoration in Belgium or France.

⁷ In some ways this has been carefully choreographed – such as the meeting between then-President Mary McAleese and Queen Elizabeth II, and the balance of British, Irish, and Northern Irish representation at recent centenaries at Thiepval and Messines.

While the centenary of the Somme appeared to continue the progress towards inclusivity seen in 2006, the anniversary of the Easter Rising appeared to remain a step too far for northern unionists. Then Taoiseach Enda Kenny asserted that “These (commemorations) have been put together in a very sensitive, comprehensive, inclusive way – both north and south” (*Belfast Telegraph* 2016a). While the Irish government was praised by the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for ensuring that the centenary events emphasized inclusivity and fostered reconciliation (*Irish News* 2016), the reconciliation to which she referred was between the Irish state and the its British counterparts, not between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. Newly appointed First Minister (and Democratic Unionist Party leader) Arlene Foster initially refused to attend any events associated with the anniversary of the Rising, deeming it a celebration of violence:

Easter 1916 was a very violent attack on the state. And it wasn't just an attack on the state. It was an attack against democracy at that time. When you look at the history of commemorations of Easter 1916 it is only relatively recently that the government of the Republic of Ireland have commemorated that occasion because actually it gave succour to violent republicanism here in Northern Ireland over many years. It would be wrong for me as the leader of Northern Ireland to give any succour to those sorts of people. (*Belfast Telegraph* 2016a)

When she later appeared to relent by attending an ecumenical service in Dublin billed as a commemoration of the Rising, Ms. Foster went on record to deny that it was a commemoration at all, asserting that the event was merely a historical discussion (*Belfast Telegraph* 2016b). The careful rhetorical manoeuvres deployed by the First Minister hinged on differentiating commemoration as “celebration” from “historical debate”. This unusual denial served to frame remembrance as condoning the event and forgetting (refusing to recognise) the event as a form of contestation, underscored the persistent reticence of the unionist community to acknowledge the significance of the Rising's legacy for Northern Ireland. The legacy of the Rising remains polarized, as the dominant commemorative discourse places the Rising at the heart of the “Republic” both real and imagined (Greenlaw 2004).

4.2 Resilience as Intransigence: Unionist Refusals to Forget and Refusals to Remember

The Decade of Centenaries began in Northern Ireland in a political environment already primed for conflict. Key legacy issues, from parading, flags, culture, victims, to inclusive community-building had been deferred by the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, displacing the troublesome past into the future. Fourteen years later these remained as significant challenges for both unionism and republicanism. Among the Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist

communities, resilience has historically been equated to resistance, particularly encapsulated by the vehement slogans of the late founder of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Rev. Ian Paisley: “Not an inch; No Surrender”. However, amidst the new framework of consociational government and parity of esteem instituted by the Belfast Agreement, Unionism perceived itself as a community under siege, as its eroding political dominance was mirrored in the cultural arena. Disputes over traditional parade routes and the flying of the Union flag underscored the role of commemorative events as political interventions. In the context of this transformed dynamic, Unionist narratives of resilience shifted between attempts to (re)assert endurance and intransigence while necessitating adaptation. This can be seen through the evolving layers of meaning surrounding the Battle of the Somme and its commemoration in Northern Ireland.

“Unionist and Loyalist commemorative discourse and practice” are neither monolithic nor homogeneous, “mirroring the political fragmentation of Unionism along class lines – a process that has been accelerated since the Good Friday Agreement” (Evershed 2017, 19). “Political conflicts within the Loyalist ‘community’ itself are also embodied through commemorative practice” (20). Parades that appear unified are frequently composed of fragmented, conflicting, and sometimes antagonistic groups. However, there is as much at stake in the Unionist illusion of consensus and unity as there is for their Republican counterparts: as Unionism struggles with the erosion of political, cultural, and economic dominance, the cracks and fissures of difference can be perceived as vulnerabilities. Traditional mythologies of Unionist history represent a residual memory, one of an imagined past in which the call “No Surrender!” was not tainted by compromise or dilution.

Like Republicans’ recent emphasis on the memory of the 1981 Hunger Strikes, the Unionist commemorative calendar was shifted somewhat between two Battles: the Somme and the Boyne. There is substantial political and ideological value in drawing connections between the two events, thus reinforcing the symbolism of Unionists as “holding their ground”. The coincidence of the dates of the two battles is something of a fudge: the Boyne is dated (and celebrated) on the 12th of July in the current calendar, but under the Julian calendar in effect in 1690, the battle took place on the 1st. During the Decade of Centenaries, the narrative of the Somme also sought to reinforce discursive linkages with other key events in Unionism and Loyalism – namely, the signing of the Ulster Covenant in 1912, and the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force a year later.

The inclusive potential of this commemorative discourse has also been limited by (bounded by, bound to) the symbolic and commemorative associations with the Battle of the Boyne and the founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). The 2013 UVF centenary commemoration featured men (and women) dressed in the uniforms of the 36th Ulster Division, visually reinforcing the genealogical continuity being claimed. The dominant memory of both events is still exclusive.

Both communities explicitly deploy partial narratives of the past to legitimize and mobilize resilience as a political strategy, contributing to the frequent, and protracted, political stalemates in the post-peace process era. “Loyalist commemoration of the World War I provides a contestational subscript to the prevailing orthodoxies of Northern Ireland’s post-Agreement politics” (Evershed 2017, 25). Where republicanism has adapted and deployed commemorative discourse in order to legitimize its claims to continuity despite splits and fractures (see Graff-McRae 2010, 2014), unionism has used commemoration as a way of closing off spaces in order to reaffirm aspects of identity perceived as under threat.

In the context of the flags protests of 2012-13, the anniversaries of the Ulster Covenant and the founding of the UVF heightened these longstanding tensions and gave them symbolic expression. In this way, the convergence (and symbolic elision) of the political challenges of the past and the present threatened to destabilise both the unionist paradigm and the detente established by the Belfast Agreement. Throughout the first five years of the commemorative decade, talks to resolve these legacy issues have been attempted no fewer than five times, and persist, more or less unchanged, today. Unionist commemorations during the first half of the “decade” can be interpreted as both an attempt to reaffirm and reinforce their traditional cultural touchstones in a time of political upheaval, and as a means of protest at the perceived losses that transformation had dealt their community.

4.3 Resilience as Adaptation: the New and Improved 1916

It is perhaps the president of the Republic of Ireland who has best articulated the necessity for the commemorations to adapt and evolve. In his January 2014 address to the Theatre of Memory symposium at Dublin’s Abbey Theatre, Michael D. Higgins called for the centenaries to acknowledge the people, places, and events that had been written out of the Irish “canon” of memory:

For years the First World War has stood as a blank space in memory for many Irish people – an unspoken gap in the official narratives of this state. Thousands of Irish war dead were erased from official history, denied recognition, because they did not fit the nationalist myth and its “canonical” lines of memory. (Higgins 2014, at 7:30)

Higgins also specifically noted his regret at “the women removed from both mythic constructs” (2014, at 8:00) – the hegemonic narratives of the Rising and the World War I. President Higgins’ call for a commemoration at once more introspective and broadly defined was reflected to a degree in the expansion of the popular discourse on both the Rising and the Somme in the period surrounding the centenaries.

Richard Grayson argues that a gradual reassessment of the historical narrative has taken place within mainstream republicanism, “focused not on the events of the Easter Rising itself, but on the context in which they took place,

namely the First World War” (2010, 326). While I would assert that the centenary of the Rising prompted, if not a wholesale reassessment, but a re-imagining and re-branding of the event and its pivotal place in the republican imagination, Grayson is correct to highlight the significant re-evaluation of World War I within republicanism, parallel to official Somme centenary events which appeared to overturn traditional divisions and exclusions through the participation of government representatives from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom: Irish President Michael Higgins, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers and Stormont Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness together marked the one hundredth anniversary at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge (Dublin). The World War I anniversaries were also constructed to emphasize points of convergence and co-operation between unionist and nationalist soldiers (the 36th and 16th Divisions, respectively); at Messines in Belgium, Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenney laid a wreath alongside the British Prince William, Duke of Cambridge in recognition of the soldiers from the Irish and Ulster Divisions who “fought side by side”⁸.

Thus it appears that the prospect of a shared commemoration of the World War I – one that reflects Irish involvement from different traditions within Ireland – is gaining some momentum in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, although it remains to be seen how far it penetrates beyond official levels (Pennell 2014, 97). As recently as November 2017, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar received equal levels of condemnation and support for his choice to wear a hybrid shamrock poppy in the Dáil. In a more circuitous fashion, Sinn Féin Member of the European Parliament Matt Carthy, speaking at St Finbarr’s Cemetery Cork in April 2017, gave voice to this conflicted equivalence:

Let me just make it clear – it is important that we remember those who fought in world wars; those people who were part of the Irish nation but for whatever reason decided to wear foreign uniforms, it’s absolutely legitimate that they should be remembered and should be commemorated [...]. But in no way can they be equated to the men and women who fought for our country in the GPO and in many cases, North, South, east and west for a free and independent Ireland – these men and women are our heroes; they are national heroes with a special place in our hearts and our history. (Roche 2017)

⁸ Moreover, as part of the wider program of remembrance of the World War I, commemorations of the Somme took place within an international context; along with local vigils in towns across Northern Ireland and an official ceremony in Dublin, remembrance ceremonies were held at the site of the battle in Thiepval, France, as well as across the commonwealth. See Pennell 2017.

The uneven nature of the commemorations across the island and across political allegiances indicate that, while shared commemorations of the Somme have functioned as a platform for reconciliation between the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, the potential for a shared memory to overcome divisions between the two jurisdictions of Ireland or between the two communities in Northern Ireland has not been fully realized⁹. Moreover, despite the proliferation of officially sanctioned commemorative committees and the seemingly careful scripting of official events, the potential for violence still hung at the shadows. Pennell characterizes this as

a level of anxiety about the implications of not taking ownership and control of the narrative. Too much is at stake to let the memory of the war, at its centenary moment, be left unsupervised and vulnerable to appropriation by the ‘wrong’ type of organisations. [...] lest something more unsuitable occur. (2017, 268)

Resistance to these official attempts to construct a shared site of remembrance did manifest in more sinister form: in a no doubt deliberate echo of the 1987 Enniskillen bombing, which killed 11 people attending a Remembrance Sunday ceremony, in November 2017 a viable explosive device was left at the cenotaph in Omagh. While device was destroyed by police and no injuries were incurred, the ghostly trace of the Troubles continues to reinforce the partition of remembrance into distinct Unionist and Nationalist camps.

For its part, the Easter Rising is similarly haunted, for all its attempts to adapt and remain at the heart of national remembrance. Recalling the pledge of the 1916 Proclamation to “cherish all the children of the nation equally”, the 2016 centenary brought to the fore new perspectives on the Rising, particularly highlighting the stories of women (with a focus on members of the Cumann na mBan), LGBTQ figures in the Rising¹⁰, children¹¹, members of

⁹ The dynamic of shared remembrance was also uneven between Northern unionists and Great Britain: despite their mainly shared frame of reference around commemoration of the World Wars, Northern Ireland was not wholly included in the UK-wide centenary programme. This could be interpreted as reflecting the claim that unionist fealty to British culture is not often returned in kind.

¹⁰ See Ciara 2016 and Sheehan 2016. A few journalistic pieces also placed a focus on male gay figures within the independence movement, most prominently Roger Casement, see, for example, Walsh 2016.

¹¹ The Department of Children and Youth Affairs engaged in consultations with school children on how best to commemorate the children killed during the Rising. The report, entitled *Children Seen and Heard 1916-2016*, sought to literally bring children’s voices to fore. In June 2016, O’Higgins also hosted a special children’s commemoration at the President’s official residence. In the lead-up to the Somme anniversary, many schools (in Northern Ireland and in the Republic) engaged in a programme to “adopt” an Irish soldier who had fought in the World War I, prompting students to research the war, the conditions

the Royal Irish Constabulary and British soldiers who put down the insurrection¹², and innocent bystanders. Yet this apparently more evolved and nuanced remembrance also required a forgetting. For the Republic of Ireland, it has been easier to glorify Countess Markievicz than to acknowledge the women victimized by the Magdalen Laundries, or the tiny, unmarked graves of the Tuam mother-and-baby home – or to ask how these tragic remains linger at the heart of the Constitution, in the form of the 8th Amendment. For northern republicans, it is to forget that women’s rights were always subsumed to the “greater” project of securing a united Ireland (see Graff, McRae 2017; see also Olivia O’Leary 2016).

4.4 Resilience as Remains

The upcoming anniversary of the War of Independence and the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which set in motion the trajectories of the emerging Irish and Northern Irish states, will put notions of inclusivity and consensus to the test. President Higgins attempted to convey the challenges inherent in any invocation of the unsettling past:

When the time comes, very soon, to commemorate those events of the early 1920s, we will need to display courage and honesty as we seek to speak the truth of the period, and in recognising that, during the War of Independence, and particularly during the Civil War, no single side had the monopoly of either atrocity or virtue. (*Irish Independent* 2017)

In the current climate of political deadlock and cultural standoff under the shadow of Brexit, it is hard to imagine that either the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland can meaningfully engage with the troubling ambiguities of the events of 1919-1923. Like Derrida’s cinders, the buried but not forgotten memory of partition and civil war remains as remains – the true foundation of both states that neither wants to claim.

5. Conclusions: Lessons From the Past, in the Present, For the Future

This is the time of 1915/6, to borrow from Ahmed Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod who argue that the impact of the Nakba catastrophe on Palestinian national imagining is marked by survival; in their words: “The Nakba is of-

soldiers endured, and the reception they faced if they returned home (www.myadopted-soldier.com). The project, is also seeking to expand its mandate to encompass those who participated in the Easter Rising, the War of Independence, and the Irish.

¹² See BBC 2016. As an example of de-commemoration, or attempted erasure or memory, see McGreevy 2016.

ten reckoned as the beginning of contemporary Palestinian history, a history of catastrophic changes, violent suppression, and refusal to disappear. It is the focal point for what might be called Palestinian time” (2007, 5). Similarly, the time of 1915/1916 also shapes the national discourse of our two cases, and the post-trauma comes to symbolize the survival of the Armenian and Irish nations, despite attempts to exterminate it – in this way, it is also “the time of the cinder” (Derrida 1991, 13). This section brings together the two case studies by weaving them through a narrative of resilience, memory, and counter-memory, in the (non)linear imagining of the nation (states).

The two cases are strikingly similar in the ways in which they demonstrate the politics of memory constructed as, and through, frameworks of resilience. While their differences are not minimal, as we explain throughout the paper, such differences can offer important lessons for studying cases related to collective memory and trauma. In both cases the centennial offered us a moment of reflection and thought around the changing narratives of identity from the perspective of the younger generations who are no longer connected to the events in direct lines of survivors. The cases of Armenia and Ireland embody the multiple, complex ways in which memory is implicated in the discursive construction of resilience, even as memory is itself a vehicle for resilience. The events of a century ago lay the foundations of a collective narrative – a shorthand, a code – that allows those events to act as a cultural referent, one that is politically inscribed with differing meanings of resilience. Yet, counter-memories, the ghostly, and the trace have their own claims to resilience that simultaneously demands an expansion of the narrative and threatens to unravel it.

As Jessica Aughter contends, the traumatic past “is invoked by the state in order to legitimate its own crafting, to materialize the very being of the state by removing the spectre of uncertainty” (2014, 19). In both Armenian and Irish contexts, history, memory, and identity have been woven together through narratives of resilience as a bulwark against this spectre of uncertainty. As endurance and continuity, as survival and persistence and adaptation, resilience – or the element of resistance – is also inherent in the counternarrative. We notice that in both cases, resilience by the mainstream groups and state, have adopted the “traditional” narrative, in the aim of creating and maintaining a sense of unity against the struggle of denialism; this is what we can understand as a century-old position of survival. Mainstream commemorations play on strategies of resilience (endurance, continuity, adaptation, intransigence, inclusion) to construct and reinforce dominant narratives that tie together identity and nation. However, conceiving of memory as spectral reminds us that the coherent narrative delineating the boundaries of past and present, us and them, with more rigid boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, is not secure and cannot be taken as given.

While these narratives obscure and marginalize other perspectives on the past, these counter-memories have a resilience of their own; as expressions of

the inexpressible, the trace, the spectre, or cinder, these memory narratives serve to disrupt the illusion of unity and homogeneity upon which exclusive the conception of belonging is founded. Even within the mainstream position, we have outlined the changes that took place within the Armenian and Irish memory narratives that aim toward a more inclusive stance toward the “other”, the women and children’s particular role and suffering during the traumatic events, and the sexual minorities in each context who show their commitment to the cause of fighting denialism within the limited inclusiveness in the essentialized group identity. These spaces of expressions, however, were not “granted” to these subaltern groups, instead, they were claimed and demanded as acts of resilience against the mainstream narratives of memory and trauma. This is what we term as adaptation as resilience: the attempt to adapt and advance one’s position in order to survive the changes in the hundred years, recognizing the challenges that are being brought forth by an evolving process of reconceptualizing the ethnic identity and the trauma narrative and impact itself – how post-memory is reflected after the one hundred year mark necessarily creates those challenges. Most powerfully, their experiences shine a light on the ways in which a century of memory has left open small spaces of resistance. In the discursive shifts that have seen their narratives of the past evolve and fragment even as they seek to claim continuity and unity, what remains of memory is being reclaimed by those who have been silenced or written out of the story.

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The Genocide and the Rising: Drama Reassessing the Past

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Abstract:

This essay proposes a comparative analysis of the plays *Exile in the Cradle* (2003), by Lorne Shirinian, which dramatizes the Armenian Genocide (1915), and *The Patriot Game* (1991), by Tom Murphy, which revives the Irish insurrection known as Easter Rising (1916), focusing on their female characters, who did not experience those events but still face their aftermath. When compared, besides the consideration about women and how they have been excluded from the traditional accounts, both texts reveal a dialogue with respect to resistance, national liberation and its implications for future generations. In this sense, revisionism may be also a form of overcoming unfortunate components and adjusting the understanding of the past.

Keywords: Drama, Easter Rising, Genocide, Tom Murphy, Lorna Shirinian

1. Introduction

Carved with a pungent trail of ravage and deprivations, Armenian and Irish historical narratives are real tales of colonial exploitation. In this regard, Ireland's Easter Rising of 1916 and the 1915 Armenian Genocide stand as pivotal records in the history of those people. The insurrection of 1916, a double-edged sword in Irish history, has been seen both as a profoundly important and a profoundly unnecessary event for the reason that, even defined as a moment of terror and tragedy because of the irreparable loss of human lives it caused, this premature Irish rebellion, controversially, would change the nature of English rule forever, bringing freedom to Ireland. In Armenia, the genocide, which began with the deportations and forced marches that preceded the vast extermination of the Armenians by the Turks, rendered unforgettable and disturbing images of horror and mass killing. As socio-

political events, the Easter Rising and the Genocide have a lot in common concerning resistance, national liberation and its implications for future generations. The plays *Exile in the Cradle* (2003), by the Canadian Lorne Shirinian, which dramatizes the Armenian Genocide, and *The Patriot Game* (1991), by the Irish Tom Murphy, which revives the Irish rebellion, present retrospective assessments of those specific historical moments by representing female characters that did not experience the events by themselves but that still face their aftermath in a future time. In this sense, a feminist consideration of the two works may also suggest a dialogue with respect to women and how they have been excluded from the traditional accounts. Shirinian's play describes the huge gap in communities where the genocide's memories still echo, at the same time placing feminine figures who question the extent to which such unfair past offers a regulating framework for their transplanted diasporic identities. Murphy's play, which takes a different route from the mainstream Irish-Literary-Revival-based theatre, placing a female narrator as a key character, reveals Murphy's attempt to expose a particular view about the events of the Rising.

A comparative reading of these two dramatic texts from different cultures goes beyond literary purposes. To Greene (1995, 143), comparative literature is the laboratory or workshop of literary studies which lead us to the humanities. All in all, this analysis intends to demonstrate how drama may also embrace issues which transcend the literary realm and a specific cultural domain, ones which deal with actual human quandaries and may lead the readers to a broader and more thoughtful conversation.

2. *The Patriot Game: Reviving and Revising 1916*

Tom Murphy (1935-2018) was born almost twenty years after the 1916 Easter Rising, a violent uprising mounted by Irish rebels that would result in war. This insurrection, considered the birth of Ireland's independence movement, occurred between Easter Monday, 24 April, and Saturday 29 April. It was supported by approximately 1,800 members of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. It was quickly crushed by British forces, but not before the destruction of the city, hundreds of civilian deaths, and the certainty of a violent period between England and Ireland in the near future. The 1916 Easter Rising was a decisive moment for Irish history and the process of independence. In the 1940s, during his childhood, the only surviving rebel of 1916 was the president of Ireland, Eamon de Valera, one of the greatest names in charge of implementing the Irish national project. So, if Murphy did not live the Rising itself and its peculiar form of nationalism, he did not escape the idealised atmosphere promoted by the Irish government which sought to portray a truly Gaelic country, emphasising the rural life. Many Irish writers saw themselves and their concerns as being allied to those promoted by public

politics, bound up in the higher unity called Ireland. These writers embraced, and were embraced by, this single movement which also included their readers. However, Murphy kept himself apart from this romantic version of the country for, although “the official ideology of Irish politics at this time was that the ideal Ireland was rustic and Gaelic [...], de Valera’s famous vision of a bucolic rural paradise was broadcast when Murphy was fifteen, and it held little for the urban working-class of which he was part” (O’Toole 1994, 25). Murphy had a different attitude towards this national vision, firstly because he grew up in a working-class family which did not occupy any space in the prevailing vision of the period, and secondly, because “he always thought of himself as an urbanite” and, in doing so, “this sense of not being a part of the rural Ireland that was the established ideal was crucial in his consciousness as it would be in his plays” (*ibidem*).

Murphy revisited Ireland’s most famous insurrection in 1965 when he wrote *The Patriot Game*. Having worked consistently for BBC and Thames TV throughout the 1960s, Murphy was initially commissioned by the former to write the play for the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising as a television docudrama, but it was never aired. The docudrama is a type of historical and political play which retells the plans and part of the Rising. Although it was written in 1965, its first performance on stage occurred only on 15 May 1991 at the Peacock Theatre. Divided into twenty-four scenes, the plot is basically the representation of some moments prior to and during the Rising. The characters have the names of real people involved in the insurrection and the whole story is presented by a young woman who narrates the events with a critical eye and expresses her attitude to the nationalism of the period.

The imagery of nationalism is built into the play, since it examines the planning and some moments of the Rising itself, and uses the leaders and other historical figures involved in the event, reasserting the importance of the Rising in the Irish collective memory. One of the few characters in Murphy’s play who is not associated directly with the real event is the narrator. While names like Connolly, Pearse and MacDonagh appear throughout the plot, the narrator is the most present character in the play, recounting the story and sometimes interacting with the Irish leaders. “The actors’ play is framed by a story told by a female Narrator, who is extremely critical of the whole venture of the Rising and wary of what Murphy calls the nationalist emotion” (Poulain 2006, 15). The theatrical reconstruction of this intense nationalistic period through a sceptical female narrator suggests an attempt at reading the real events from a different perspective, particularly concerned with feminine impressions of nationalism: more than retelling the story, she expresses her feelings and conceptions about the Irish leaders’ deeds and their concept of nationalism. Furthermore, her view of the insurrection seems to be focused on the disorganised and despairing aspect of the battle which echoes Michael Collins’ real reflection about the rebellion, “These are sharp reflec-

tions. On the whole I think the Rising was bungled terribly, costing many a good life. It seemed at first to be well-organised, but afterwards became subjected to panic decisions and a great lack of very essential organization and co-operation” (Coogan 2005, 126-127).

Murphy’s non-traditional attitude to the promotion of nationalistic sentiments made it possible for him to depict a new form of understanding the Easter Rising. When the author re-envisaged the insurrection, the traditional and romanticised version of the insurrection, which had seemed to be so fixed, natural and reasonable, gave place to different perspectives, including a reflection on how Irish women experienced it.

It is Murphy’s capacity to entangle themes of nation, gender and identity, as he does in *The Patriot Game*, which makes his plays so thought-provoking in relation to the complexities of these connections. Although Murphy is not considered a playwright primarily concerned with feminist topics, in *The Patriot Game* he expressly approaches feminism by placing a female narrator as a key character in the play. Since this narrator carries a critical perception about the Rising, Murphy suggests that women’s involvement in a nationalist state has been complex, and questions the very concept of nationalism. Although nationalist projects require the participation of women, there are imaginary lines restricting their place and role, almost always defining them as a passive group:

Nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as ‘national’ actors: mothers, educators, workers, and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. (Kandiyoti 1996, 312-313)

Given this problematic of the nationalist movements, Murphy challenges this tradition by putting a woman in a central role who decides to focus on the part of the story that interests her. Murphy uses her to point out the perception women had of nationalism.

Both before and after 1916 Irish women lived in a patriarchal community in which they were denied any agency and ended up accepting gendered nationalist ideologies which portrayed them in traditional roles, assimilating this position and behaviour as an accurate enactment of who they were and how they lived. The symbolic roles of women were shaped by a nationalist atmosphere according to political purposes. One of the archetypes promoted by the Irish State, for instance, was the employment of a family iconography which subordinated women to domestic roles, and, women were relegated to a domestic sphere being expected to respect the limits imposed by socially constructed boundaries. The predominant role was that of the desexualised sacrificial mother, which provides the imagery of “Mother Ireland”. Marga-

ret Pearse is the other female character in *The Patriot Game* who contributes to Murphy's reflection on the impact of nationalism on Irish women. In real life, Pearse's mother represented the perfect embodiment of the Irish sacrificial mother for Ireland's society of the period. Her two sons, Patrick and Willie Pearse, were executed soon after the Rising, a fact which raised her to the status of mother of the nation and transformed her sons into national martyrs.

Murphy wrote the play in a period when the female role in Irish society was very different to what it had been in 1916. It seems that the female narrator reveals Murphy's own opinion about the revolutionary acts and ideas; his political convictions are more closely related to internationalism than nationalism. So, why does Murphy place a woman as his narrator? By choosing a female narrator, in addition to meditating on the role of women in the Rising, Murphy puts women in evidence and also questions the insistence by other playwrights in focusing on male roles. Most plays which retold the revolutionary events did not approach women's participation in the struggle nor the troubles they faced during the revolt:

Dublin's 1935 commemoration reinforced the idea that the Irishwoman belonged at home. The organisers of the spectacle erased the proto-feminism of the 1916 Rising and allowed the sacrificial woman to enjoy a notable pre-eminence. In this way, the complicated ambiguities of the original Easter proclamation were flattened and reduced in an easily-promulgated 'populist' form of theatre favoured by Fianna Fáil. (Moran 2005, 72)

Women did not play a great part in the insurrection itself; however those who did were almost deleted from the historical records in the years that followed the Rising. This situation implies the undeniable connection between feminist questions and nationalism. Strategically Irish politics tried to reduce female engagement in war in the years which followed the insurrection, especially when Ireland became an independent country and Éamon de Valera became the president. His government had an apathetic attitude in relation to the participation of women in the Easter Rising since this could act against the new political ideals, and hamper promoting the united family in the new State; "so de Valera's government camouflaged the ambiguities of the 1916 rebellion under the homogenised and anti-feminist carapace of Fianna Fáil" (*ibidem*, 69). However, Murphy was fully conscious of the link between new State's project and national policies, he once stated, "Eamon de Valera, an Taoiseach [Prime Minister], in a famous, much-commented on speech, saw us as a happy people, enjoying frugal comforts, with comely maidens dancing at the crossroads. [...] We didn't complain; we conformed. Nobody wanted 'to go getting their names up'. 'Be wise' could be said to be the slogan of the times" (Murphy 1992, xii).

In *The Patriot Game*, as in other plays, Murphy brings two worlds to the stage, which means he leaps from past to present, and vice-versa, during

the play's course. The play is the story of a preceding event told by a narrator who is clearly a modern-day figure from the 1990s. Past and present are on the stage at the same time in the figure of the narrator and the participants in the insurrection. When her narrative is interrupted by historical sequences from 1916, it is her voice drawing something from the past into the present. Murphy's relationship to this historical event is, according to O'Toole's description, similar to the relationship between writer and history, it is not something existing "in isolation; it arises, rather, from his relationship to his own society and his own time"; so, *The Patriot Game* is, presumably, "a way of tilting the present at an angle in order to see it more clearly", or, at least, it is a way of rethinking the attitudes and feelings emerging from the nationalistic environment of 1916 (1994 [1987], 112).

In her first appearance on stage, the narrator reveals a discontented attitude as Murphy's stage directions make clear:

The NARRATOR, a young actress, comes in and watches from a distance. She is wary of PEARSE, both frightened and fascinated by him and, to conceal this, she tries to affect a detached superiority. (Offstage he could be a boyfriend or a brother who gets out of control.) The narration appears to her to belong to another age and in her modern-day image (leather-jacket and white dress) one suspects that she takes liberties with it – 'yeh?' She is determined to keep control of herself; she loses her resolve every now and again, as in her very first line; she doesn't like the emotion of nationalism, 'it doesn't exist'. (1992, 93)

The appearance of the individual narrator before the collective action represents the relation between the social mentality and the individual one, also, the connection between historical as well as political events and the intimate perception of individuals, recurring themes in Murphy's work. "And what is true of individuals, is true of societies also, that at times of change and crisis the past and the future come into collision and the unspoken traumas of the past demand to be uttered" (O'Toole 1994, 79). Therefore, in *The Patriot Game*, the collision of past and future takes place through the junction of the narrator and the participants in the insurrection on the stage, and she is in charge of uttering the consequent traumas, her own and those of society concerning the Rising. Through the individual mind it is possible to see what is happening in Irish society's consciousness mind and so Murphy puts into the narrator's mouth what were very probably the unspoken traumas of the whole of society. Reassessing the memory of the events from her own perspective, her voice makes the audience aware that the memories of the past are not exactly or simply what happened, they are also invented. In other words, when we think of past as the foundation for the present and future it is not based solely on facts but also on inventions, even tyrannical and stultifying illusions. She courageously manifests her feelings, her anger about the losses and the bloodshed, something very difficult for the

Irish people, afraid of exposing their traumas because they were nourished by the fixed belief in the glorious significance of having an original national identity. They were supposed to accept the battle as something necessary for the achievement of an authentic Irish identity; if they revealed their negative feelings towards the rebellion, they believed they would be dismissing the idea of a unified Ireland.

The opening moments of the play present the audience with an immediate contrast between the narrator and the rebels through her modern image. The author differentiates the narrator's time from the period of the event in a device that suggests an immediate sense of anachronism; she is from the contemporary world experiencing an event from a previous time. The men are from 1916, and the narrator is from 1991, or whatever year when the play is performed. That is what Murphy does with time, he dilates it.

Already, in his first full-length play, we have the roots of a notion which is essential to Murphy's theatre as it develops over a quarter of the century, the notion of time as being, not linear, but simultaneous. In Murphy's plays time does not pass in a straight line, with one event following another as cause follows effect. Instead, there is more than one time frame in operation on stage, with things being connected by the fact that they occur simultaneously in different time frames, rather than by the fact that they follow one another logically. [...] this notion is essential to the great leaps into magic of Murphy's later plays, and to the politics of transformation which informs them. (O'Toole 1994, 60)

Contrasting the period of the narrator's appearance and that of what she is narrating also has the function of suggesting the modern attitude of Irish people towards the rebellion in 1916. O'Toole comments on this particularity, directing our attention to the fact that *The Patriot Game* is composed by a past story being told by an individual from the modern generation (1994). When the narrator says, in the opening scene, "The Disgraceful Story of 1916, by Tomas Macamadan (Son of the Idiot)", she is distancing herself from the story and showing the audience that the other characters in the story are in a different time. Taking into account the fact that the play was written in 1965 and was intended to be performed in 1966, it is worth considering the changes in society that had occurred over those fifty years. When Murphy refers to the modernity of his young female narrator, besides indicating the present attitude of Irish society, he is showing how a revolt which took place fifty years before directly impacts on the new generation. The relationship between the story she tells, and the audience's real life is not one of the simple storytelling, but one of reflection, to think again about the insurrection in order to decide if people should change the way they feel about it or deal with it.

In his description of her, Murphy defines her attitude towards national culture: "she doesn't like the emotion of nationalism, 'it doesn't exist'" (1992, 93). She seems to be the only person on stage aware of this national-

istic mechanism and, thus, for the most part, she is extremely critical of the insurrection, trying to indicate to the audience the dark side of nationalism. According to Poulain “she provides context and transitions between dramatic sequences and sometimes suspends action to voice her own disparaging comments, always striving to retain a tone of controlled irony [...]” (2006, 23).

When Connolly appears for the first time in the play, although the Narrator says “he was an internationalist”, she reveals in her following line that “the nationalist side of his nature would get him” (Murphy 1992, 96). Connolly was committed to wider issues, especially to the workers’ cause; he had spent some years in the USA and had given speeches at international meetings there in favour of the working class. Although the Narrator acknowledges that Connolly had a different sense of nationalism, she says that the power of the national spirit would suppress his internationalism. This proves to be true for Connolly was persuaded to join the rebels just months before the insurrection. On 17 January 1916 he was stopped by a car while he was walking on the street and was brought to a meeting with the other insurgents who did everything to convince him that his efforts to help the working class would only succeed if they solved Ireland’s question first, and they received Connolly’s agreement. In Scene 4, the Narrator says “and Connolly was goin’ his own road, bent on his own class of international revolution, but losin’ his personal battle to nationalism” (Murphy 1992, 103). The Irish atmosphere was full of the national spirit. At this time, Connolly was a popular and influential figure on the Irish scene, so his involvement in the nationalist cause suggests how influential and powerful national culture was in Irish society.

Murphy’s Narrator refers ironically to the national ideals of the leaders of the Rising, trying to show the audience the ambiguities of the national culture. Moreover, Murphy does so using a female figure who guides the audience attention throughout the play towards an understanding of the way women viewed and felt about the insurrection. In fact, there is a subversion of the predominant patriarchal discourse about the Easter Rising which frequently persisted in blurring the female participation in the event.

The play does not end hopefully; it breaks the bonds of illusion and provokes a profoundly disillusioned feeling in the audience. Portraying images of disillusioned people, in *The Patriot Game*, Murphy makes us reflect about the conditions of women during one of the most polemic periods in Irish history. He proved that “this breath of politic words”¹, touching women’s reality will be a topic to be discussed for a long time.

¹ From Yeats’s poem, “The Rose Tree”. It was written in April, 1917, and its theme is the Easter Rising.

3. Exile in the Cradle: *Sloughing Off the Genocide*

Lorne Shirinian was born in Canada in 1945, thirty years after the Armenian Genocide. This dreadful event has an outright impact in the writer's life, since his parents were survivors of this mass killing episode. His parents' families were killed in the genocide and then his father and his mother were raised in orphanages in Turkey and Greece until they were brought to Georgetown, Ontario, north west of Toronto to a farm home for Armenian orphans. His father arrived in 1924 and his mother in 1927. He grew up with the stories of the survivors as many would often come to his home in Toronto, and from then on, Shirinian has been trying to become these people's voice by making their experience known through his writings. He has also been a political activist, but since 2010, he has dedicated himself solely to writing. His memories are intimately connected to his work (Shirinian 2017). Currently, Shirinian is a retired Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. His area of research has been the way the Armenian Genocide has affected cultural production. Throughout his working life, he has also written about crime fiction, film noir, literature and film of the Holocaust. In addition, he has written many books of poetry, fiction and drama as well as scholarly monographs and essays (Shirinian 2017). He has published 25 books, and his recent work is a memoir titled *Motion Sickness* (2017)².

This essay takes a special look at Shirinian as a dramatist and, more specifically, at his play, *Exile in the Cradle* (2003), a four act play which revisits the 1915 Armenian Genocide. There have been two productions, both in Toronto and directed and produced by Seta Keshishian and Jolanta Izmirliyan, respectively. It was first performed on 23 April 2006 at the Sir John A. Macdonald Theatre and on 5 September 2006 at the Fairview Theatre. Its outset represents the early moments of the genocide and the imagery of such a deplorable period of Armenian history, then moves to the present in Toronto, where several generations of Armenians cope with the imminent break-up of their family. In this regard, the play has much to tell about the actual history. Although the Armenians are not in front of the disaster they faced at the time of the genocide, they are constantly confronted with its upshots, as the diaspora phenomenon, since about seventy per cent of the Armenian people live outside the Republic of Armenia. The first act, "Forgiveness", revives real moments of the bloodshed lived by this people. The two Armenian characters, Pierre Srabian and Hagop Kesserian, are victims of the Armenian Genocide which began on April 24. The second act, "Moon Monologue", is essentially an internal monologue by Pierre,

² For further information about Lorne Shirinian's life and work, access: <<https://www.lorneshirinian.com>> (05/2018).

who survived the Turk attack. This act sets the tone to what happens next in the play, the Genocide aftermath for this family. The other two acts depict Pierre's daughter, Armig, and her family, after the loss of two loved ones, dealing with aspects of living with genocide while family issues in all its complexities continue. The playwright refers to it in the epigraph at the beginning of the play: "for all those who suffered the Armenian Genocide and for those who still feel the pain" (Shirinian 2008). *Exile in the Cradle* is a play that spans several generations since the Genocide to show that the trauma and pain, like acid burns its way through generations of families (Shirinian 2017).

The first act starts in Istanbul with the representation of the moment when all the Armenian suspect of antigovernment opinions, especially artists, intellectuals and community leaders are arrested and taken to the police station. There are the characters, Pierre, a twenty-five-year-old poet, and Hagop, a wealthy fifty-three-year-old food merchant, both Armenian, sitting and facing each other on benches in a passenger compartment on a train. It is April 26, 1915, in Constantinople; they are arrested and taken into the police station, kept there for three days and then forced to get into the train without knowing what their future would be. Hagop, who is wounded in the chest, hopes he is going to be spared from the turmoil because of his friendship and commercial relations with influential Turkish men.

PIERRE: What do you think is going to happen to us?

HAGOP: Internal exile for a while, I suspect, until things in the capital calm down. Then, they'll bring us back. [...]

HAGOP: I have faith all will be well.

PIERRE: You're a fool, there's nothing to base it on. When the train slows, I'll jump. I'll go over the border to Yerevan or Tiflis. (Shirinian 2008, 34)

On the other hand, Pierre seems to be quite aware of what is going to happen to them if they stay on that train which has no final destination, except the loss of their lives. Thus, Pierre plans to escape to the mountains to avoid the fury of the Turkish soldiers and the wrath of Kurdish villagers (42). In fact, Pierre has been aware of the government's cruel methods of reform well before the bloody attack. As a poet, his writings about politics did not give the Turks what they wanted to hear, on the contrary, Salim, a member of the government who is in charge of the deportation of the Armenian intelligentsia from Constantinople, accuses Pierre of producing subversive contents. In the final conversation among the three in the train, Salim makes clear the real motivation of that deportation.

SALIM: Armenian no longer have any import in our new country.

HAGOP: But the empire has always been a place of many peoples. Armenians were here centuries before Turks arrived. We have always been a loyal community.

SALIM: When we push back the Russian and the British, there will be only the empire of the Turkish people, stretching through Armenia into central Asia. This is Turania! (36)

Furthermore, he assures Pierre that he and his group will not allow any record of brutal events:

SALIM: People will learn what we tell them. We will become the source. There will be no others. Against your rumors, we will produce archival documents detailing your ambitious and treachery against the empire. We have acted to prevent a civil war. [...] We have only to plant a single seed of doubt to succeed. (40-41)

Salim's words in the above excerpt are endorsed by the arguments that "two levels of authority were at work in the organization of the Armenian Genocide" and that "informal" methods were used to keep in secret or even to destroy unofficial messages (Winter 2003, 91). Bearing this in mind, the title for the first act, "Forgiveness", is purely ironic. In a collection of essays, *The Landscape of Memory* (2004), Lorne Shirinian wrote an essay titled "The Armenian Genocide and the Issue of Forgiveness". According to him, there can be no forgiveness given the level of destruction and pain and the continued denial caused by the Genocide (2017).

The other three acts represent characters in a future time; among them, Pierre, in Act 2, is the only one who experienced the events by himself. The others, Armig and her daughters, did not live the Genocide, but on account of the painful living memories from the past, they still face the effects in their lives. In the second act, Pierre lives what he envisioned in the first act, just before breaking free and running into the night to take his chance at survival escaping from the Turkish hands. He foretells,

For generations, old and young will bear this pain. We'll be a people haunted by images of columns driven into exile and deathly visions in mountains and the eastern deserts, our life's blood gorging rivers. The sound of sabers and bayonets will steal our sleep. Village mobs screaming their hate for us as they tear children from their mother's arms will forever deny us peace. And always, the sound of this train. [...] Something must remain. Someone must remember us. (Shirinian 2008, 41-42)

"Moon Monologue" portrays Pierre as a ninety-five-year-old man living solitarily, surrounded by the ghostly memories of the Genocide. He does not have any one to share his pain and torment, but the moon "They came in the spring when the flowers were in bud and spilled our blood on the roses [...] Oh, moon, what I have seen. When they pushed us off the train at Ayash, I took off and ran and ran" (43). In this monologue he gives a detailed narration of the atrocities suffered by the Armenian intellectuals at Ayash, who in their majority did not survive. Pierre also gives more information about

what happened to him after the war: “[...] I returned to Constantinople and looked for my family, but none survived. [...] I went to Paris. I never thought I would see it again, but I returned and began to write. I taught poetry. I became human again. [...] I don’t remember why I came to Canada” (45). In the play, his character is represented as the last Armenian poet who survived the Genocide. In a conversation with his daughter, Armig, who also writes poems, he affirms that his poetry is not led by his own free will, but that it is “pure memory made flesh through the word” and a “final gasp of the old culture” (46-47). As if it was not enough being confronted with inescapable feelings of loss through death, these characters encounter a challenging process of assimilation and acculturation. Their writings, therefore, seem to be an uplift for their reason for living, and even a form of rethinking how they incorporate their own history and these cultural questions.

OLD PIERRE: [...] What will you call your new book?

ARMIG: *Sloughing Off.*

OLD PIERRE: What do you think you’re sloughing off?

ARMIG: Old habits, ways of thinking and being. (47)

In fact, the poetry provides them some relief and encouragement to continue, even under so many bitter remembrances. When Armig leaves Pierre’s house, despite his recurrent melancholic mood, he seems to be motivated by her daughter’s arrangement for a reading.

OLD PIERRE: It’s too good to be true, a reading, someone to listen to my work again [...], a last chance, sprig of hope against the final despair. My new manuscript. I must prepare...

(He rises very slowly from the chair, obviously weak. He stands and turns toward the audience with a deathly look on his face then falls back down into the chair. He recites.)

and so

the train departs

should you see my mother... (48)

Pierre dies. His final speech is concluded by the actor who represented the young Pierre in Act One. At this moment an interesting confrontation of past and present is given through a single character featured by two actors at the same time on stage, one representing the past, the young Pierre, who witnessed the actual events, and the other representing the present, the old Pierre, who faced the traumas of the Genocide in his old age. However, his death is not the end of the connection between the sorrowful past and the present, for such bond is still alive through the preserved memories of the Genocide.

The living members of this family seems clung to the Armenian past generations, although they are “exiled” in a diasporic community facing the

assimilation of a new culture and identity. In Acts Three and Four the characters are in a deadlock between living an exile from the past or from the future. It is interesting to see how the playwright highlights women's representation in these two last acts, unfolding the narrative predominately based on the three female characters, Armig and her two daughters, Liz and Helen. Pierre's death in Act Two is followed by Armig's husband death whose funeral is represented in the very beginning of the Act Three. Until the end of the play the female characters are in the foreground. That's a very significant inversion, since it seems women have been very often kept in the background of Armenian culture. According to Sona Zeitlian, they have not been treated fairly in literary history even though there have been many exemplary Armenian women (qtd. in Janbazian 2015).

In fact, women have held a relevant participation in national history and have been agents for a number of social accomplishments, since they constitute about half of the Armenian population. However over the years, they have been ignored and excluded from the narratives framed by men.

Nevertheless, in terms of commitment with the national culture, these female characters hold divergent points of view. Liz, Armig's older daughter, and her husband feel summoned to preserve their distant past. While her younger sister, Helen, constantly tries to escape from being defined as part of the Armenian community. Aversely, Liz cannot find her own identity. Even being born and living in Canada, she is not able to turn her back to her Armenian past. To her, being part of the community and preserving the past alive is a form of giving voice to those who suffered and maintaining her own identity and her family's.

HELEN: Just what is it what you're trying to preserve, Liz?

LIZ: Everything we remember. What we were and what we are. Some presence. Some way of being Armenian here. [...] We have to keep the faith with the past. (Shirinian 2008, 55)

On the other hand, despite the profound and crucial fissures left by their Armenian heritage, these characters are also depicted before the possibility of reconsidering this relation with their past. In contrast to Liz, Armig and her younger daughter, Helen, are gradually resisting to an identity dictated by the past events because they claim their future. In this sense, the play questions to what extent such unfair past offers a regulating framework for their transplanted diaspora identities, revealing the differences lived by these communities where the Genocide memories still echo. Helen, in a certain way, is in a constant denial of her Armenian past, she wishes to live "her" life without being held back by the Genocide. Her character is the most detached from the myth of her heritage.

HELEN: Armenians and Turks. I don't give a damn about them. They're never going to be free of each other. You, know, when we were younger and he talked about it, telling us the stories that his parents told him, and listening to Mom's Dad, I felt as if I were in one of the deportation columns, that my life was meaningless. I hated that feeling. I hate the Turk for what they did to us then, I hate them now for what they're still doing to us. But I can't let this be part of my life. I'm not going to be another victim three generations later. I can't live with this hate, these images. (52)

Seen in these terms, Helen is very different from her sister Liz. Even the memories of her father, telling them about the Genocide when she was a child, hurt her. She does not want to live her life based on what happened in her family's past, on the contrary, she wants to take control of her own life, creating space for new possibilities in the new culture she is placed now. "I want to be free to explore my potential. Being Armenian is a net" (53). While Liz and Helen seem to live in a constant tension because of the adverse way each of them deals with the Genocide issue, Armig presents herself prudently with respect to the conflict between her ancestry and the chance to begin again. Like Helen, her attitudes reveal she is open to the process of change,

ARMIG: Maybe we'll be Armenian in a different way. I know it sounds ironic, but it might be the only way to retain something meaningful of our heritage while everything else around us weakens and disappears.

HARRIET: It's such a risk. We can't give up our identities like that.

ARMIG: I'm not suggesting we do. We have to be open to the process. I'm afraid that before much longer we won't have a choice in the diaspora. The old world without a context in the new isn't encouraging (58),

but according to the author, she proposes a conscious change "as resistance and as a form of self-direction. This is her way of taking control of her own agency and creating a space that will allow for new possibilities of Armenian cohesion, unity, and solidarity in the diaspora" (73). Armig is aware of the importance of her past, she respects her family origins, since she even writes about it in her poems and, at the end of the play, retells the Genocide to her granddaughter, Yerchanig, fictionalizing it, motivated by the need to pass it on to the new generations; but at the same time, she refuses to impose the national question ostensibly to her family. Pierre's daughter observes that the Genocide has become a kind of *cliché* of Armenian history and that there is a certain emotional automatism every time it is mentioned. Through this female character, the play proposes a reconsideration of such overemotional reaction and what leads to it. Furthermore, it brings to light the fact that identity and traditions can be perfectly questionable and subject to change, especially in a diasporic context.

4. *Final Considerations*

These comparative considerations of *The Patriot Game* and *Exile in the Cradle*, first of all, make evident Skloot's statement: "The theatre's lasting influence lies in its ability to extend the limits of our language and imagination" (2008, 9). In this regard, Murphy's and Shirinian's plays broaden the literary dimension and engage more fully with the wide range of arts and as consequence both authors reach human and social spheres, demonstrating, through their text, a concern with humanity and a sort of global consciousness. Their works provide revisionism of very significant past events that occurred in their national history which took place more than one hundred years ago, but that today still impact directly in matters of national identity and culture. *The Patriot Game* is a revision of the history of the Rising, since the development of the ideas of the historical moment it revisits are different from the official or traditional ideas of a particular group, proposing new insights and reflections about the topic that are different from those of the Irish dominant culture. Murphy's play deals with a troublesome question which concerns "exclusively" the Irish. Although in a more profound analysis of the history of Ireland as a colony, the English share the responsibility in the causalities and deaths caused to the Irish people, the 1916 Rising was a bloody event premeditated and caused by the Irish themselves. In a certain way, Murphy puts the Irish against themselves in order to reassess their attitudes and choices. While *The Patriot Game* revives this Irish internal questions in need of revision, *Exile in the Cradle*, from another standpoint, revives the Genocide, in accordance to the history told by the Armenian people. Thus, initially, Shirinian revisits the historical moment not as a form of revisionism to deal exclusively with Armenian issues, but as an attempt to give voice to those who suffered in silence without any opportunity of survival: "[...] none of us is guilty of anything but being Armenian. That's our crime" (2008, 38). And it is when the play unfolds, that the dynamic between the characters and their dealing with heritage provide the adequate context to a reconsideration about the Armenian internal question.

Besides the approach on the national issue, both dramatists acknowledge and represent the feminine participation for they depict women as key and important characters. Both Armenian and Irish women have a remarkable track record in social and national history. Zeitlian points out that "Throughout Armenian history, women have held various roles in the national reality – from Armenian queens and princesses ruling in the medieval period, to female participation in the national liberation struggle of the late 19th and early 20th centuries" (qtd. in Janbazian 2015). There were several female members and ministers of Parliament during the years of Armenia's First Republic. Moreover, Armenia was one of the first countries to give women the right to vote and the

first one to appoint a female ambassador, Diana Abkar. Similarly, the experience of women in Ireland proved to have its own characteristics dating back to the dawn of Irish civilization. In the context of Gaelic tradition, for instance, women's status was very similar to men's in many aspects. But, unfortunately, the contribution of Irish women to history has been underrated because of the emphasis on the singularity of the Irish experience and due to the prioritization of the political track which drove the female participation away and assigned women a marginal role (Parra 2016, 50).

Therefore, the theatrical reconstruction of a historical past and its subsequent outcomes, predominantly, through female representations suggests an attempt at reading the real events from a different perspective, also concerned with how women have undergone these episodes. The Narrator in *The Patriot Game*, and Armig in *Exile in the Cradle*, do not only retell the story to others, but they express their feelings and conceptions about the influence of these national occurrences in their reality. Shirinian and Murphy could spotlight the complex female existence in national contexts, since although Armenian and Irish women have dealt with all the consequences of their national history, they are not remembered in historical records, being restricted to imaginary lines which define their place and role, almost always passive.

Another important aspect of the plays is the presence of two worlds on the stage, giving the audience a feeling of leaping from one world to another. The plays' collision of past and present takes place through the junction of characters that witnessed the actual events with characters that are living the consequent traumas which persistently remain. In *The Patriot Game* past and present are on the stage at the same time in the figure of the modern-day narrator, clearly from 1991, and those of the participants in the 1916 insurrection. *Exile in the Cradle* also embodies present and past, first because it is a play which begins exactly reviving the actual 1915 Genocide and finishes portraying an Armenian family of modern days dealing with the heavy burden of their national past. Second, as in *The Patriot Game*, Shirinian's play places past and present on the stage at the same time when Old and Young Pierre confront each other at the beginning of Act 2. Young Pierre speaks to Old Pierre of Toronto in 1985: "On some nights, I dream of Pierre, sitting alone in this apartment, dreaming of me" (Shirinian 2008, 42). In a sense, both playwrights offer their audience the possibility of experiencing simultaneously different times and spaces through a conflict that arises between memory and present understanding, which makes them able to rethink the attitudes and feelings emerging from the historical moments.

In conclusion, the analysis of *The Patriot Game* and *Exile and the Cradle* provides meaningful insights into the dynamics of how a past event can dictate the life of future generations. Furthermore, both plays surprise the audiences by placing some female characters, though depicted in different conditions and backgrounds, as subversive elements in the revision of a nation's historical past. Representing important moments in the national history of Armenia and Ire-

land, Shirinian and Murphy, respectively, invites us to reassess the implications of past episodes and the subsequent unspoken traumas they caused. Reassessing the memory of the events from the perspective of different characters contributes to expand the understanding about the past and the different possibilities for the future, suggesting that revisionism may also be a form of adjusting the comprehension of the past and overcoming unfortunate components from cultural traumas.

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“Resilience is performed in our very own imagination”: An Artistic Intervention

Phelim McConigly

Artist

part 1

My experience in Armenia started with a curiosity about that city, Yerevan, and its people.

I found a welcoming, warm, community of engaged artists which accepted us into their surroundings, from the space of Karoyan Gallery, to the celebration of one artists new born child on our first evening.

After introducing our working process on situational practice, we started collaborating with Armenian artists, from studio visits to spontaneous ideas for working on shared interests, growing quickly from five to fifteen artists. Shared experience existed beyond national or cultural agendas. Multiple backgrounds meeting simultaneously, involving mostly anecdotal, superfluous possibilities of conversations, where imagination holds the most influence.

(I have no idea what Armenia and Ireland could have in common, except those things that are common to post-modernism or globalist tendencies. Resilience for me lies in the personal agendas of those who see the possibilities of using imaginative ways to recuperate loss.)

Resilience is performed in the imagination of individuals. This imagination, built on the precarious existence of artistic endeavour, can be used in the search for roles of the artist as global citizen. *Dienstag abend*, with a focal point on situational practice in a collaborative nature, exemplifies these principles by bringing disparate parties together to find that imaginative and resilient potential together.

My experience in Armenia is one that created an ethos of understanding that does not bridge national and cultural divides, but creates a situational moment where imagination takes hold, superseding everything else.

part 2

Probably. (Yerevan, September, 2017)

There is some complicity in tourism, even when trying not to be one, but as a tourist of situations in a space where new relations are possible – situations mirroring tendencies tied to relations – many, often, – real or transient collections.

From the ground to the 8th floor, talking sometimes here about movement, there about covering, reserved ideas between new parties, new situations. How can a situation afford new knowledge? Reserving old knowledge for new situations, a constant reservoir of situational tendencies, recuperative, generative qualities showing resilience.

Not to sound hopeful.

Knowledge should be, could be generated, not driven... in passing.

First I heard.

Some sound, like a taxi horn from Armenia, taxis, here - they sound different.

After that, some things fell into place, the colour of tuff stone a marker, a guide.

“First time in Armenia?” – the only question asked on entry.

“Why don’t you speak Armenian?”

In response to the text of Mkrtich Tonoyan where stones root heritage also published in this journal, I would like to reflect on my relation to both those places:

I’ve been to Mt. Errigal – its close to my father’s birth place, and I’ve seen Ararat, from a distance. They are both full of symbolism of the heaviness of specific identities. I would prefer to think of roots as changeable - soft, and decaying over time, give warmth when treated right, but moveable objects, changing with their situations: not defining the characters that inhabit the stories they tell, but capable of mimesis of the desires they embody. Tuff/Turf!



Fig. 1 – ICA Yerevan, taken by Sophie Thun
Collage by Phelim McConigly, September 2017



Fig. 2 – Armenian Centre for Contemporary Experimental Art,
taken by Ana de Almeida, September 2017

“Our revenge will be to survive”: Two Irish Narrations of the Armenian Genocide

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Abstract:

The 1915-1922 Armenian Genocide has been the subject of memoirs and historical accounts, most of them written by diasporic Armenians, but, unlike the Shoah, has not inspired much creative literature. It is therefore the more surprising that the latest fictional accounts should come from Ireland. *Anyush* (2014), the novel of Limerick-born Martine Madden, and a film called *The Promise* (2015) by the Irish director Terry George, both tell moving and impossible love stories which are a thin pretext for eliciting empathy for the sufferings of the Armenians and fighting the lack of recognition of the genocide. While giving a graphic description of the abuses at the hands of Turkish soldiers and of the nightmarish journey of the deportees starved to death, decimated by epidemics and herded through mountains and deserts with no precise destination except death, the two authors evoke memories of similar past and present actions in the world intended to annihilate an ethnic group with its language and culture. Writing about one group resonates against the histories of the others, in a sort of *mise en abyme* of blind human violence and ethnic hatred. The interest of Madden and George in the historical facts concerning this large Christian minority of the Ottoman Empire, much as it was inspired by compassion and a desire to denounce this still unrecognized massacre, may be due to a special sensitivity to the suppression of identity linked to a nationalist reading of the history of Ireland and more particularly of the Great Famine.

Keywords: Martine Madden, Resilience, Terry George, The Armenian Genocide, The Great Famine

1. Introduction

The Armenian Genocide, which took place in the middle of the World War I resulting in the loss of one-and-a-half million lives, has been the object

of witness literature, memoirs and historical accounts but, unlike the Shoah, has not inspired much creative literature or filming.

It is therefore surprising that the anniversary of the dramatic events of 1915-1922 in the Ottoman Empire should have been marked in Ireland of all places, through two remarkable productions: a novel, *Anyush* (2014), by a debutante writer from Limerick, Martine Madden, and a film, *The Promise* (2016) by a well-known director, Terry George. While *Anyush* was Madden's first novel, George was a director whose fame had been well established by *Hotel Rwanda* and several films about the Troubles (*The Boxer*, *In the Name of the Father*, *Some Mother's Son*). Because of his sensitivity to troubled nations and his interest in bringing history to life by making it the background of engaging love stories, he was enrolled by a millionaire producer of Armenian origins, Kirk Kerkorian, to mark the hundredth anniversary of the massacre and fight the indifference, indeed the negationism, regarding Armenia's past.

That two Irish people should have chosen to write about the tragic happenings that took place in the Ottoman Empire, right when Ireland was commemorating its own, often painful, events which eventually led to independence, suggests that their interest in the historical facts concerning the Armenian population, much as it was inspired by compassion and a desire to denounce this still unrecognized massacre, may be due to a special awareness of the suppression of identity such as had also been at work, although less violently, within the context of the British Empire.

Armenians, in ways reminding of the plight of the Irish, the Jews, native Americans or more recently, Bosnians, Christian Syrians, the Rohingya in Myanmar or the hordes of refugees landing on Mediterranean coasts after terrifying travels, fit into a category of people whose national, cultural or religious identity is or was denied or threatened with obliteration and whose historical experience is marked by injustice and persecutions. Writing about one group resonates against the histories of the others, in a sort of *mise en abyme* of blind human violence and ethnic hatred. The tale of one beleaguered people duplicates that of another and condenses the ultimate meaning of all the similar stories that resemble it. Once a culture starts categorizing members of its community as "us" and "them" and denies the humanity of the Other, that country is on the way that leads to genocide. This is what happened in the Ottoman Empire but also in Ireland before its independence.

Novels such as *Anyush* or the film *The Promise* have the purpose of obtaining the belated result of calling attention on the Armenian Genocide in the context of other similar atrocities (as the Armenian producer hoped). The impossible love story of a Turkish captain, Jahan Orfalea, with an Armenian girl, Anyush, in Madden's eponymous novel, becomes a pretext for describing the life and sufferings of this large Christian minority of the Ottoman Empire. In the background are the unspeakable horrors of those years, the brutality of the Turks displayed through harassment, killings and mass-deportation but also

the resilience of the heroine and her people who maintain their self-respect, generosity and dreams in the face of racial and confessional violence. The reunion of Anyush with her daughter Lale, the fruit of her relationship with the Turkish captain, and their survival and emigration to America to join the Armenian diaspora are the symbol of the resilience of their race.

Similarly, *The Promise*, also revolving around a love story, the triangle between a woman of Armenian origins, Ana, and two men, the American reporter, Chris, and the Armenian medical student, Mikael, ends after many shocking examples of cruelty, with the wedding, in the safety of America, of Yeva, Mikael's niece, one of the few survivors of the family group whose tragedy we follow in the film. Her uncle, also a survivor, toasting the bride in the final scene of the film, remembers her deceased parents "and all those families lost in an attempt to wipe our nation from the face of the earth" and affirms that they are still with them, restating Armenian resilience: "We're here. We're still here". As Ana had earlier said when Mikael was expressing his desire for revenge, "Our revenge will be to survive", a phrase that echoes Bobby Sand's "Our revenge will be our children's laughter". This voluntary or involuntary echo is a hint that George finds some analogies between the resistance of the two people, the Armenians and the Irish, in the face of repeated attempts to wipe them out.

As does Madden.

In the course of a FaceTime interview, Madden recognizes that although when she started writing her novel she was not aware of any resemblance between the two situations, while researching the Irish Famine for a story intended for young adults she "did realise that we'd had a genocide of our own. And in many ways it was just as horrible" (Madden, October 3, 2017, see below).

2. *The Historical Background*

In the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, numerous Armenian communities – Christians of the Gregorian orthodox denomination with a language and a culture of their own – existed in the middle of a Moslem majority, in the North-East of Turkey, as in the fictional Mushar, a village on the coast of the Black Sea, near Trebizond, described in *Anyush* or the one at the south-eastern border, Sirun, where the protagonist of Terry George's film lived.

In spite of the alleged regime of tolerance of the Ottoman Empire towards racial and confessional diversity and the respect the Armenian community had enjoyed at the court of the Sultan, the Armenians who, like the Greeks or the Jews, lived in their homogeneous communities in Constantinople or in Anatolia, maintaining their language, religious rituals and traditions, had actually experienced much harassment throughout history. The image of tolerance of the Empire put up for foreigners was belied by historical reality: repeated persecutions and little-known *pogroms* had taken place several times before the

1915 events, leaving much hostility and suspiciousness between the two people. In the novel, we are reminded of this by the hideaway and love-nest of Anyush and Jahan, the ruins of a church that had been destroyed and burnt down by the Turks in grandma Gohar's youth. It becomes a symbol of the long enmity, which the Romeo-and-Juliet-like love-story cannot heal.

Madden takes a two-pronged approach to the telling of history: on the one hand, we see history in action as the protagonists of the novel love, suffer and die; on the other, history is told by a number of witnesses. Information about a tormented pre-Genocide past comes first of all from the tales of the old people. Gohar, Anyush's grandmother, illustrates the long history of oppression and prevarication with memories from her youth as when "the Turks issued an order declaring that Armenian taxes were to be doubled. Twice what the Turkish farmers were expected to pay and twice what [her] family could afford" (Madden 2014, 121). As a consequence, their house and land were confiscated and sold for a fraction of its value to a rich and devious Armenian, Kazbek, as an award for his collaboration with the Turks and his activity as an informer. Anyush and her mother now have to do his laundry to pay him rent for what was once theirs. It is not surprising, then that Gohar, on discovering her granddaughter's relationship with a Turkish soldier, should warn her:

No Turk is a friend to Armenians. Why do you think Armenians cannot buy land, only work it for some Turkish landlord until we're too old or too broken to be of any use any more? Oh our men are good enough as war fodder, or for the labour gangs, but for nothing else! We're mules to them, Anyush. Less valuable than the dogs on the street. [...] There hasn't been a single generation of Armenians who weren't burned or tortured or had their women raped by the Turks. (Madden 2014, 120)

The positive Turkish protagonist of the novel Captain Orfalea, also furnishes some information to the reader by complaining about a "nationalistic fervour spreading throughout the country like fire so that 'Armenian' [...] had become a dirty word" (Madden 2014, 99). The movement of Young Turks initially progressive and reformist, had, in fact, turned chauvinistic with the emergence of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) contrary to the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society that had prevailed in the Ottoman empire and was promoting Pan-Turkism instead with a view to control the large Turkic communities within Russia. The Armenians that resided mostly in areas of strategic value for the CUP's expansionist goals were accused of being sympathetic to Russia. Thus at the beginnings of World War I, under the cover of political and military necessities, the latent hostility of the past was turned into a systematic government project of ethnical cleansing of which the Armenians were the target. As Dr Trowbridge, a long-time resident of the area, puts it: "The war is just what the Turks have been waiting for – the perfect opportunity to wipe out an entire race" (Madden 2014, 148).

Jahan understood that scapegoats were needed to divert attention from the poor results of the war but he could not suspect the form nor the extent the reprisal would take although he had noticed that the Armenian soldiers who had been conscripted at the beginning of the war and served in his battalion earning his respect were no longer heard about, causing his concern. In the best of hypotheses “they had been demobilized and assigned to unarmed battalions” or, as he had heard say, “they had been shot because of their allegiance to the Russians, or set free and used as target practice” (Madden 2014, 26). In the film, *The Promise*, this is precisely the situation in which Mikael finds himself after he has been sent to a work-camp as an Armenian soldier not bearing weapons. The systematic slaughter of the Armenians had started before the fateful spring of 1915 with the murder of the able-bodied males already drafted into the Ottoman armed forces. At the start of *Anyush* the village was only inhabited by women, children and old people.

Later in the novel, when the naïve and well-meaning Captain Orfalea had left the village where he was on duty and had been separated from his beloved, he was fed new information (passed on to the reader) through which he began to understand what was at stake:

A rumour was circulating around the German barracks that Armenians were being deported to Syria. Whole villages, Armin claimed, were being emptied of their Armenian population and moved to the desert near Deir al-Zor. Jahan listened with growing unease. In Constantinople he had seen for himself the empty Armenian premises, windows broken and shopfronts defaced. Newspapers rife with nationalistic fervour and anti-Armenian propaganda, and at every street corner talk of how the Nationalists were going to restore Turkey to its glory days with no place for Armenians or Greeks. (Madden 2014, 229)

However, the principal device adopted by Madden in order to provide some historical background to a situation that is mostly ignored (the author herself admits that in spite of honeymooning in Turkey “I had known next to nothing” about “Turkey’s role in the Armenian Genocide” (Madden, Face Time Interview, October 3, 2017, see below) is that of interspersing the narrative of escalating violence affecting the main characters with entries from the journal of an American missionary doctor, Charles Stewart, who had emigrated with his wife at the turn of the century to study trachoma which was endemic in the area. In her carefully researched novel, Madden bases these entries on historical testimonials by foreign eyewitnesses (missionaries, diplomats, journalists).

The debates between a naïve Stewart and a realistic fellow-doctor, an English man called Paul Trowbridge who knows the situation well, illustrate the two faces of the Empire’s attitude towards the Armenians. At the beginning of the story, Dr Charles Stewart appears as a sympathizer of Turkey affirming that he has “seen no evidence of [...] discrimination and find[s] the Turks a fair-minded, tolerant sort of people” (Madden 2014, 46).

When Paul warns him about signs of impending disaster, Stewart comments, “I wasn’t about to get embroiled in one of his theories about a Turkish conspiracy” (Madden 2014, 126) because Paul “has a particular bias toward Armenians [...] and believes, [...] that they are subject to all sorts of harsh rules and regulations at the hands of the Turks” (46). As the doctor and his wife become enmeshed in the life of the village taking care of the primary needs of the population through the creation of a health clinic and hospital, schools and workshops and, later on, as the situation deteriorates, of soup kitchens, his naïve view of the situation will be given the lie.

Although at times clumsy and tedious, these diaries are an important part of the novel, filling in on the historical background and providing summaries of events not directly represented. But, more importantly, they record the doctor’s change of heart under the pressure of evidence:

The Turks are the ruling class, the oppressors, if you like, even though historically the Armenians were here first. And the Kurds are fierce hill tribes who think nothing of killing his man for a horse or his money. They command respect even from the Turks. That leaves the Armenians, who are viewed by the government as being sympathetic to Russia, the old enemy, and so have little chance to improve their station in life. (Madden 2014, 39)

As the story advances, and his role changes from that of an observer to that of an active participant and sufferer in the story (one of his own daughter succumbs to the cholera caught from the Armenian children the family was taking care of), he will become himself a protagonist, fearing the violence of the Turks as the rest of the population he is trying to help and protect. *Anyush* is also Dr Stewart’s story. His slow awakening to the horror reflects what happened in the Western world with its slow recognition of the genocide and its acceptance of Turkey’s negationism. Stewart, in the epilogue of the novel, sounds prophetic of such forgetfulness:

How soon we forget. Hetty believes it was only to be expected, that people’s hearts and minds are drawn to other causes, other tragedies, and she’s probably right. In my lifetime, Armenians and their story will be forgotten. On this side of the world, at least, it will only be amongst those of us who lived through that terrible time that anything of it will be remembered. (Madden 2014, 369)

The novel also gains weight and credibility by staging some real historical figures. One of them is Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, a friend and protector of the Stewarts who, however, is mostly powerless when it comes to helping them and their cause (as he was in real life). Another important fictional presence is Armin Wegner, the German photographer who denounced the Armenian martyrdom through his writings and pictures. Armin strikes a friendship with the good Turkish Captain, Jahan Orfalea who is impressed and at times “made uncomfortable and occasionally ashamed” by the pictures the German has taken

even before the genocide and which are not “of Turkish palaces and landscapes, but of orphaned children, and street beggars, and buildings collapsing under the weight of those who lived in them” (Madden 2014, 228). Through conversations with him the naïve Orfalea is first made aware of what was actually happening.

Wegner also proposes to accompany Orfalea, to the displeasure of both Turkish and German authorities, when the latter, to his great dismay, is assigned to escort the Trebizond Armenians to the interior, “the lot of them. Every last one [...] Any man, woman and child of them. When you leave Trebizond, there will be no Armenian in it” (Madden 2014, 231). This fictional trip will give Wegner the opportunity for capturing his many images of the deportation while Orfalea will be instrumental in saving the tale-telling photographic plates of the German and consigning them in safe hands so that later on they will be used by Wegner to document and denounce the atrocities committed by the Turks and make a plea at the Peace Conference of 1919 for the creation of an independent Armenian state. Thanks to a coincidental meeting (there are many coincidences in the plot), Wegner, tells Anyush that her daughter is still alive and (supposedly) in the care of the Stewarts on their way back home to the United States and he also sends a letter to Jahan telling him that Anyush is in Lebanon pining to have news of her daughter. So Wegner is the *deus ex machina* behind the bitter-sweet ending of the novel when Jahan returns Lale to her mother in Beyrouth, where she is a refugee, just as she is about to emigrate to America.

Madden in her interview recognizes her debt to the German photographer. While digging in search of information about Armenians, she “came across Armin Wegner’s photographs of the genocide and those pictures were a revelation in the worst possible sense. [...] I had known nothing about the Armenian Genocide. My research started from there”) (Madden, 3 October 2017, see below).

Both Morgenthau and Wegner also appear briefly in *The Promise* where, however, the telling of the historical background is minimal, in the form of voice-over and through the reading of some of Chris, the journalist’s, reports for the Associated Press.

3. *The Two Plots*

The general development of *Anyush*, excluding the love-plot and individual stories, is well summarized in its various phases by the recurring dream Dr Stewart has after his return from Turkey:

I have a recurring dream where I’m in the village again. It is springtime and the lemon trees are in blossom. The square is crowded, full of people singing and dancing, much as it was on the day of Vardan Aykanian’s wedding. There is music playing, the oud and the doumbek. People are happy and everything is as it should be. I am standing among them smiling and clapping when I notice the music grow quiet. To my right, I see the band players, all the old men, put their instruments at their feet and disap-

pear into the lanes and side streets. They are followed by the women, and then the young girls in their summer aprons and scarves.

I am weeping now because I know they will come for the children next.

And even as the thought takes shape I see a child walk into a darkened alley.

All the children.

I call out but they cannot hear.

Try to hold them back but I cannot reach.

And there is silence.

Terrible silence.

I stand in the square alone, watching until the last child has gone. (Madden 2014, 371)

3.1 Pre-Genocide Period

The springtime idealized by Dr Stewart was not as idyllic as he remembered it in his dream, but the months preceding the official beginning of the genocide (April 24, 1915) were still a time when normal life could go on in Mushar, the fictional village on the Black Sea near Trebizond where the minority population of Armenians eked out a miserable existence almost under siege, surrounded by the hatred of the dominant Turkish and Moslem majority and in their turn fearing and despising the host country. Although most of the men had been conscripted and no news were heard from them, the few remaining ones worked for the Turks doing necessary construction (for instance Vardan Aykanian, Parzik's fiancé), the women tended their farms, did the washing for richer people (as Anyush and her mother); the children studied or learned trades at the school and workshops established by the Stewarts; chemists, doctors, nurses, priests exerted their tasks, admittedly in the middle of hardships. There were courtships (the wild Husik following Anyush everywhere "like a lamb"), love stories (the Romeo-and-Juliet-like love affair between the Armenian girl, Anyush, and a Turkish captain, Jahan Orfalea), marriages (Vardan and Perzik's with its tragic ending). All this took place despite the many warnings that things were not well.

The tone of violence of the novel is set by the very first scene which also introduces the main characters. "The air blew cold in the wake" (Madden 2014, 9) when Turkish soldiers came to the village, dominated at one end by a mosque and at the other by a Christian church. The first consequence is that a young boy, Kevork Talanian, who was trying to stop the looting of his impoverished farm, is savagely beaten by the soldiers under the eyes of his sisters, Sosi and Havat, a mentally handicapped girl, and their generous friend, Anyush (the heroine of the novel), who has brought some food to the starving family. Kevork is then dragged to a tree by a ferocious soldier nicknamed The Ferret (one of the villains of the story) and hanged "his face turning red and beginning to darken" and "his tongue pushing past his lips" (17).

Fortunately, thanks to the intervention of the Turkish hero of the story, the good Captain Jahan Orfalea, the boy is saved in the nick of time and the culprit punished. A current of attraction is established between Anyush and Jahan, yet,

despite the Captain's show of humanity, she exclaims in distrust: "He's a Turk [...] They are all the same" (23). But after several encounters in the village, at a wedding, and, especially along the coast and on secluded beaches where Anyush likes to walk and bathe, the two fall in love. What was at first like a game, becomes a passionate relationship, and their tender and sensuous meetings take place in a ruined Armenian church burnt down by the Turks in the days of her grandmother's youth. Nevertheless, the mementoes of the old enmity and the horrors that happen during their relationship do not affect them. "They were the limits of each other's existence, citizens of a country all their own. They were in love, and because it was forbidden and endlessly precious, they risked everything for it" (118).

Yet things had become increasingly rough. The marriage of Vardan Alkanian with Anyush's best friend Parzik, celebrated according to the old festive traditions in spite of the hardships endured by the village, ends up tragically. The father of the bridegroom, an old man, is set up to appear to have hidden weapons in the hay barn. Despite the Captain's and Dr Stewart's efforts, Alkanian is tried for treason and the episode ends with another hanging which this time cannot be stopped. The body of the old man will be left hanging for weeks in the village square as a reminder of the arbitrariness and hatred of the Turks.

This wedding, as we find out from Dr Stewart's diary, took place on the 21st of April 1915, just a few days before what Armenians call "Red Sunday", the 24th of April, considered the official starting date of the carefully planned genocide. On that day began the surprise rounding up of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Istanbul willed by the nationalist Young Turk triumvirate of Enver, Talaat, and Jemal Pashas controlling the Ottoman Turkish regime. It was the start of the campaign by the Turkish government to eradicate Armenians from Turkey, foreshadowed by events such as the ones narrated in *Anyush*. As the narrator writes, "The hanging of old man Aykanian marked the start of everything that was to come. While the year wore on and events beyond the village were already casting a long shadow, Anyush thought only of Jahan" (Madden 2014, 115). And Jahan only of Anyush until, fearing to lose her and wanting to protect her from the dangers she faced, he proposed to marry her. Anyush was divided between delight and fear. She had felt a fool for dating Jahan and had feared how her mother would "disown her or throw her down the well" and her friends turn the cold shoulder on her. She realized that "if she married Jahan, she would lose the right to call herself Armenian" (157). And yet, "Nothing could spoil this day. [...] All through the wood she had whispered her name to the leaves, Anyush Orfalea. Bayan Anyush Orfalea, Bayan Anyush Charcoudian Orfalea. There was a rhythm to the names together, a perfect fit" (156-157).

But the outcome of a third horrible episode puts an end to the dream of the star-crossed lovers. The halfwit Havat had been found in an abandoned house in the woods, lying in her own blood, her hands tied behind her back, her tongue cut out, her hip dislocated. As it transpired from Captain Orfalea's

enquiry, she had been chain-raped by a group of soldiers of another regiment who took turns in assaulting her in the wake of their commanding officer, Nazim Ozhan, one of the rapists. An indignant captain Orfalea reports naively the crime to Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, believing in the fairness and sense of honour of the army. His letters, predictably, are left unanswered. Right on the day of his proposal, Ozhan's soldiers come for him, arrest and escort him to Trebizond where he is put on a ship sailing for Constantinople. Unable to say good-bye to his beloved, he hurriedly lets her have his parents' address in Constantinople so that they may at least correspond. But no letters will be exchanged between the two. When Jahan's father is told that his son intends to marry "an Armenian peasant" someone from "a breed not to become involved with" (Madden 2014, 180), he gives orders to intercept all the letters that are exchanged between the two with the consequence that Anyush will not be able to tell Jahan she is expecting a baby from him. The feelings of Anyush and Jahan for each other will be dried out by disappointment and resentment. They will meet again in the harrowing second and third phases of the novel but things will never be the same

Thus ends the first phase of Dr Stewart's dream, as "the music grows quiet" (371).

The pre-Genocide situation is presented in rosier tints in George's *The Promise*: Mikael's family had been for generations the chemists in the village of Sirun in the south-east of Asia, mixing drugs for Armenians and Turks alike. Mikael is a promising student, who has been able to enter the Imperial Medical Academy of Istanbul by getting an advance on the dowry of his affluent promised bride. In the elegant household of his uncle, a well-to-do merchant of the capital, he meets the sophisticated Ana, an Armenian woman raised in Paris, who is involved with an American reporter, Chris. Mikael falls in love with her even while striking up a friendship with Chris.

Like other fictional works on the Armenian question, such as *Skylark Farm* (2007; *La masseria delle allodole*, 2004) a memoir written by an Italian of Armenian origins, Antonia Arslan, *The Promise* describes initially the life of the wealthy Armenian bourgeoisie whose riches were coveted and whose refinement and success in society were envied, thus partly justifying the hatred of the Turkish population. Moreover the expropriations and seizure of the wealth of the prosperous Armenian community was to be a precious financial support for the war effort. Madden, instead (as Franz Werfel in the epical novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, 1934; *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, 1933) chooses to exclude the privileged classes from her story and sets her novel among destitute people whose situation of hunger and landlord prevarications presents several points of contact with the history of Irish cottagers. The catastrophe that follows is expected and feared by the villagers used to maltreatment and unfairness but comes as a surprise to the wealthy and respected Armenians of *The Promise* or of *Skylark Farm*. When on 24 April 1915, during the roundups

of the most prominent Armenians of the capital, Mikael's uncle is imprisoned, the unbelieving young man, who had avoided conscription in the Ottoman army thanks to his good and powerful Turkish friend, Emre, tries confidently to save his uncle but is detained himself and sent to a prison labour camp from which after many dire vicissitudes, he escapes.

As in *Anyush*, love dominates the first part of *The Promise*. The tale of the triangle may be unconvincing as some critics have noted, because it frustrates the desire to find out more about the genocide taking place in the background, but this is exactly what the director aimed at. "A love story at the centre of a political event is a form that has been used frequently in the history of film" says George in an interview on You Tube. You need a love story to make historical events come to life and awaken the public's empathy. The models he cites, films that "moved him and educated him" are *Casablanca*, David Lean's *Doctor Zhivago* or movies by Warren Beatty or Spielberg. The films he prefers are those "that strive to tell the story of an every man or woman that got plunged into a terrible situation (be it in Armenian villages, Rwanda, or English prisons detaining innocent people) and manages to survive and help others survive. "There is no greater story to be told than that".

3.2 Persecution in Action

The second phase of the two tales illustrates the continuation of Dr Stewart's dream with many similarities. "[T]he disappearance of all the old men into the lanes and side streets, followed by the women, and then the young girls and finally the children" (Madden 2014, 371), corresponds euphemistically to the open and continuous violence that has established itself in the villages in the months preceding the actual deportation. In *Anyush*, the period after Jahan's departure is marked by the darkening of the situation. The violence of Ozhan's soldiers is such that people dare not leave their homes, rumours of death-lists circulate, several persons disappear (including Perzik's husband, Vardan) and people try to escape to nearby Batum in Georgia. As Dr Stewart reports: "Our village begins to look like a ghost town. The Armenian houses are empty, the contents stolen and the doors kicked. The few animals left have been taken or butchered so that even the air itself seems to reek of blood. And those that still have homes are being evicted from them" (Madden 2014, 166).

Violence outside the home is duplicated by violence at home. To hide her shame when her pregnancy begins to show and protect and feed her starving family, Anyush accepts to marry her long-time admirer, Husik, the son of the family's rich landlord, Kazbek, a violent man who had beaten his wife to death, had raped Khandut, Anyush's mother, when she was nine and was the informer who had caused the arrest and death of old Alkanian and of many other Armenians of the village. Besides Husik's ferocious love-making, Anyush will have to submit to the imposition of the patriarchal authority Kazbek

exerts over her by beating and even raping her. Only the birth of Lale (tulip in Turkish), a baby with a tulip mark on her chest, will provide some consolation.

Punctually Dr Stewart's journal registers the sad events and the dire poverty of the area "experiencing the worst famine in years. It is depressing to see this once fertile land look as desolate as the Sahara. The grain withers from the root, as if it had been burnt by fire and the people are surviving on wild mustard and turnips" (Madden 2014, 63). The situation is reminiscent of what had happened in Ireland about fifty years before. The missionaries try to grow a vegetable garden and keep some animals to help nourish at least the children and they establish, like the Quakers in Ireland, a soup-kitchen.

In *The Promise* the period of preparation for the deportation march is concentrated in just a few scenes. Mikael returns to Sirun, after escaping adventurously from the camp, to find a replica of what was happening in Mushar. The Turks were threatening and harassing the Armenian townspeople. Out of a sense of duty, he hurriedly marries his ancient betrothed although he is still in love with Ana, and tries to find refuge in a remote area in the mountains. When, however, his wife becomes pregnant and is in danger for her life, he returns to the village leaving her to the care of his mother as he tries to get help from a Red Cross centre nearby where, he discovers, Ana and Christopher are working taking care of Armenian orphans. Along the way back to Sirun, Mikael and his friends discover the site of a massacre where most of his family has died. The active phase of the extermination has started.

3.3 *The Deportation*

In Mushar, an impotent Dr Stewart is the witness of the beginnings of the deportation which he tries to stop and gets beaten himself: "On every road from the village I had witnessed people being herded like cattle: women and children, old people who should have been in their beds, the sick and the frail marching without provisions or water. Many had been walking in bare feet with no protection from the sun" (Madden 2014, 251).

The convoy of Trebizond Armenians is to be escorted by Capt. Orfalea who after eight months of comfortable exile in his elegant home in Istanbul has been re-instated to carry out this unpleasant duty. To make things even worse, he will be supported by the rapist, Captain Ozhan and his regiment. Jahan, who has finally understood that this evacuation is not the necessary relocation to safer regions as he thinks, hopes at least to be able to save or protect Anyush, but their meeting at the village is cold; he discovers she is married and she lets him believe the baby to be her husband's. She distrusts him because he has abandoned her and has accepted this hateful role. "The soldier she had met under the trees was not Jahan. He was a stranger, an instrument of the Government and an officious Turk" (251). Before and during the march she rejects his help. Only when Jahan is thrown off his horse and badly wounded

because of a trick played on him by the Ferrett, does Anyush finally reveal to him that the baby is his and asks him to hide it in the wagon that will carry him away to the hospital where his leg will be amputated. As for herself, she refuses to be taken to safety on that same wagon because she wants to tend her dying grandmother, Gohar. Soon after Jahan's departure, however, the lieutenant urging them to get moving saw that "Gohar's lips were closed, her fingers laced at her breast and two small pebbles covered her eyes" (Madden 2014, 308). In scenes such as these the courage and resilience of Anyush begins to show: she sacrifices her love and safety because blood links are more powerful and her duties regarding her grandmother's death and her daughter's well-being more important.

Scenes such as the preceding one are recurrent in both novel and film. Children, friends, beloved ones like Gohar or Mikael's mother, are left by the road or in the gutter dying or dead and given a hurried funeral at best. Parzik's baby boy is born and abandoned while the mother lies in a wagon consumed by fever. The marchers' clothes are reduced to rags, Gohar was walking with only one shoe. The deportees carry few personal effects and provisions but, even so, along the way they are frequently robbed and have to leave behind anything that slows down their progress. After a few days of marching they are completely destitute. They sleep mostly in the open with no bedding nor shelter. Cholera and dysentery spread through the caravan and the camps. Not only do disease, hunger, dehydration and exposure claim the lives of the Armenian deportees but they are also a target for criminal tribes set loose on them by the authorities, such as the Shota who had a reputation for rape and murder.

The Promise starts with a long shot of the harrowing procession of wagons and marchers, women especially, carrying children in their arms or supporting the elderly. The two works have, actually, many points in common in their descriptions of the deportation of the Armenians, probably because both authors resort to the same visual and written sources, some published genocide memorials but, principally, Wegner's photographs. *Anyush* and *The Promise* put into words and moving pictures the impressions those photographs made on the viewers. In an interview published in *Writing Ireland*, Madden narrates to her interviewer, Margaret Bonass-Madden:

I came across the photographs taken during the genocide by a young German soldier called Armin Wegner, and to say they were heartrending is a gross understatement. Photographs of dead mothers and children, people starved to death or beaten, others marching in a grim line until they fell down from exposure, hunger and exhaustion. Pictures of women crucified, decapitated bodies and horrors so unthinkable as to seem unreal. (Bonass-Madden 2014)

Moreover, George introduces many allusions to other ethnic tragedies putting the Armenian story in the perspective of a history that has disproved the

United Nations' resolution of 1948, and its motto "Never again" by turning it into "again and again". The prisoners herded into train wagons for animals evoke the trains of the Shoah; the capsized boat that provokes Ana's drowning is a clear reference to the present refugee crisis and the deaths by water near Italian or Greek coasts. Looking backward, the adventurous travel towards safety evokes that of Irish immigrants on coffin ships. Episodes from other fictional works are integrated into the film. For instance, Mikael's group joins the refugees of Werfel's masterpiece and fights off with them the Ottoman army on Mussa Dag where Mikael's mother dies. Their armed resistance is another example of resilience as is Khandut's killing a soldier who was about to rape her daughter. Anyush then dons the dead man's clothes and escapes with the help of Jahan's faithful lieutenant, Kadri, braving many dangers. Anyush's will to live and be reunited to her baby will sustain her until she reaches Beyrouth where she will eventually work in an orphanage for Armenian children waiting for the papers that will allow her to emigrate to the United States where she thinks her daughter is with the Stewarts.

As in the case of Madden who uses various real sources, the script of *The Promise* draws much from actual reports for the Associated Press whose fictional author is Chris. He and Ana, play a similar role to that of the Stewarts, in particular by tending a group of orphans as do the American missionaries who, when the deportation starts, take many young children into their house trying to feed and protect them from a cholera epidemic to which even one of their daughters succumbs. Finally the babies are wrenched from their protectors' house with the pretence of taking them back to their parents but they are sown into sacks and thrown into the sea. The orphans of *The Promise*, instead, accompany Ana, Chris and Mikael back to Sirun and then on the road when the latter discovers that most of his family with the exception of his mother, have been massacred by Turkish troops. Most of the orphans die on the way and during the resistance on mount Mussa performing the role children have in this sort of stories, as Dickens knew well, that of evoking heart-wrenching indignation and awakening empathy. The most harrowing scene in the Stewart story is when the children are taken by the soldiers: "Everyone present would remember the moment" (Madden 2014, 299).

Dr Stewart's dream closes with the thought of children: "I am weeping now because I know they will come for the children next [...] I stand in the square alone, watching until the last child has gone" (371). These are also the concluding words of the novel itself: the death of innocent children is the most harrowing topic but in their survival lies a promise for the future. And the children, both in *Anyush* and in *The Promise*, survive. Lale is returned to her mother and together they will emigrate to America as will Yeva, Mikael's niece, and some of the orphans. They will become part of the diaspora and their new life, their smiles but also their memories will be their revenge.

4. Conclusion

The role of novels such as *Anyush* or films such *The Promise* is similar in purpose to that of an international alliance called “Genocide Watch” which is trying to call attention to past and ongoing genocides in the hope of preventing them as is stated about in their *Project No Genocide*:

Despite the development of technology and the Internet in the 21st century, many high-profile crimes against humanity remain silenced, and have not been convicted by the world community. Therefore, our main task is to report the truth about the tragic events that have left a trail of blood in history. Nowadays we recognise them as genocide or tragedy against humanity. After all, we hope that the truth will help to avoid future recurrence of mass ethnic killings. (Stanton 1996)

Genocides do not come in the form of armies facing each other, with use of weapons on both sides, starting with declarations of war and ending with peace treaties. Although the purpose is still that of killing those considered “enemies”, the enemy is a part of the community, different from the majority because of ethnicity, language or religion. The annihilation is often preceded by an Othering process consisting first in vilification, equating for instance its members with animals or considering them wild, dirty, lecherous or treacherous. Hate campaigns are raised with accusations of plotting or betrayal. Then come curtailing of legal rights, imposing penalizing taxes, denial of education and prohibition to own property, bear arms or obtain travel documents. Inter-marriage is forbidden or frowned upon. These are preliminary steps before a state organization proceeds to the extermination of the harassed “Other” by segregation into ghettos, concentration camps, confinement to famine-struck regions, marches or transportation in inadequate vehicles (death-trains or coffin ships) towards destinations that are tantamount to annihilation. Mbembe calls these situations “death worlds” and the government action behind them “necropolitics” (Mbembe 2003, quoted by Petković 2017, 321).

Petković adopts this phrase in her essay on Joseph O’Connor’s *Star of the Sea* (2002) applying it both to life on the coffin ship and to the flashbacks of famine-struck Ireland. Madden and George do the same regarding the forced exodus of the Armenian civilian population at the beginning of the past century in Turkey, maybe bearing in mind similar “death worlds” in their own country.

What happened in the Ottoman Empire, as detailed by the two authors, happened in many other societies as well, including English-dominated Ireland. The Ottoman Empire’s attempt to get rid of its minorities mirrors in a magnified way, what has been defined as a “genocidal tendency in the British treatment of the Irish” (O’Neill 2010, 307). While the attempted neutraliza-

tion of the Irish identity was executed mostly through the suppression of its language and culture, it occasionally took the form of quasi-massacres. The confiscation of land with the forceful displacement of local population to a barren west, in the 17th century, deportation in slave-ships of Irish soldiers as indentured-workers, reprisals on private citizens as in the Cromwellian massacre of Drogheda, non-intervention in the case of the Famine, evictions and forced emigration on coffin ships are examples of a similar, though muted, form of ethnic cleansing taking place in Ireland. The ways of the Ottoman Empire, and of its heir, modern Turkey, to get rid of its Armenian and Greek minorities, could be read, when written by an Irish pen, as an allusion or reminder of the problems and injustices suffered by the Irish.

However, in spite of the Herods of this world, some always manage to escape the massacre of the innocents. The people are not suppressed. They survive through their resilience: they form new political entities, create diasporic societies that absorb the best of the old and of the new worlds. They survive in literature, film, music, the visual arts. They survive through memory and in the smile of the children. In spite of some shortcomings, both the novel and the film manage to pass on a message of compassion and hope.

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“The Armenian Genocide and a Genocide of our Own”
In conversation with Martine Madden

DAB: What were the circumstances that led you to write Anyush?

MM: In the late 1980's I lived in Abu Dhabi in the Middle East with my husband and became friends with two Lebanese-Armenian women. When I mentioned that we had honeymooned in Turkey they asked me if I knew about Turkey's role in the Armenian Genocide. I had known next to nothing about it, and they related some of the facts, but I was too young at the time to grasp what they were telling me. Many years later I remembered our conversation and started to do a little digging. That was when I came across Armin Wegner's photographs of the genocide and those pictures were a revelation in the worst possible sense.

DAB: Armin Wegner? The man who denounced the Armenian “martyrdom” in writing and through the photographs he shot, making a case for the creation of an independent Armenian state?

MM: Yes, he was stationed in the Ottoman empire in 1915 and although he is only one of several eye-witnesses who photographed what they saw, he took the vast bulk of the pictures. I remember one of a woman and her two children lying at the edge of the road, all of whom had clearly starved to death. And another of three Armenian doctors hanging from a bridge, where the Turkish soldiers who had killed these men posed nonchalantly for the photograph. It reminded me of the pictures taken by the British and Canadian soldiers who had liberated Bergen Belsen, but unlike the Holocaust, I had known nothing about the Armenian Genocide. My research started from there.

DAB: This, I understand, was your first published book. Had you written anything else before? And of what kind?

MM: I had written a few poems and some articles. This was my first attempt at a novel. The book was published in 2014.

DAB: Did the closeness of the anniversary of the genocide, which started in 2015, influence your choice of an Armenian subject?

MM: Definitely not. I started to write *Anyush* in 2006 when the 100th anniversary was a long way off. Believe me, if I could have had the book written and published earlier, I would have. As it happened it worked out well. There was certainly more interest coming up to the 100th anniversary.

DAB: Are you writing or written anything else? On what subject?

MM: I'm working on a novel set in India at the beginning of last century about a young Indian boy in which a character from *Anyush* makes a brief appearance.

DAB: Are you writing or have written anything about Ireland?

MM: Yes, I'm also working on a book for young adults about the sinking of a ship at the time of the Famine in Kilkee, County Clare.

DAB: Are there any connections between these new projects and the one that led to the writing of Anyush?

MM: Actually I remember thinking while writing *Anyush* that we were very lucky in Ireland never to have experienced something as terrible as the Armenian Genocide. But a little bell was ringing at the back of my mind, and only when I started to research the Irish Famine did I realise that we'd had a genocide of our own. And in many ways it was just as horrible. I had to remind myself that between 1845 and 1852 Ireland lost 4 million people to starvation and emigration. When you see it written in black and white, it's a shocking statistic. Undoubtedly, the British used subtler ways for getting rid of the Irish religious and ethnic minority in their Empire but we might recognize some similarities. I think the British thought of themselves in Ireland as enlightened, benign rulers, and in some respects, they were. But it takes only one or two individuals who have absolute belief in their own superiority and the "natives" inferiority to have a devastating effect. Irish history is littered with them and like the Young Turks who instigated the Armenian Genocide, a handful of men were responsible for the Famine. Some of them, I'm sorry to say, were Irish. So yes, many similarities; deprivation, starvation, bodies in ditches, and emigration leading to a huge diaspora, just like the Armenians.

DAB: Would you then say that apart from compassion, your interest in the Armenian cause was also motivated by your being Irish?

MM: Most of all I think it came from being human. But the Irish certainly have a fellow feeling for the underdog, and the Armenian Genocide moved me in the way that perhaps only the Holocaust previously had.

DAB: Nationalist discourse sees a "genocidal tendency in the British treatment of the Irish" and considers the Great Famine as an unrecognized genocide. Would you agree that the actions of the Ottoman Empire mirror in a magnified way similar propensities in the British?

MM: I certainly agree that the Famine was the greatest tragedy ever to happen in Ireland at the hands of a foreign government. But my sense of both the Armenian Genocide and the Irish Famine, is that they happened for different reasons, and that the Turkish attitude to Armenians was and possibly still is very complex.

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1916 and Other Commemorations

edited by

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Foreword

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“History is the enactment of ritual on a permanent and universal stage; and its perpetual commemoration”.

Norman O. Brown (1966, 116)

“Commemoration marks out the special from the ordinary, or the extraordinary, from the everyday, and acts of commemoration are about retaining in the memory, or committing to the memory, events, developments and people from the past. When we mark anniversaries or other important historical or cultural movements [...], we assign meaning to an event, occurrence, or lives of individuals or groups that we deem to be important to who we are as a society”¹. This statement, with its blend of brevity and wit, perfectly summarizes what Commemoration means and implies: the present depends on our knowledge of the past, and the past is at the core of our cultural, social and individual memory; Commemoration is therefore a ritual cohesive act, an experience that helps to transform historical knowledge into “collective memory” (Halbwachs 1992; Olick 1999).

Since 2012 Ireland has been celebrating a series of events that took place in the decade 1912 to 1922, the so-called Decade of Centenaries (and Commemorations)², which impacted on the foundation of the Irish State and on Irish collective memory, and is now experiencing a pivotal historical moment, having made choices which could lead to the construction of a truly socially-just Nation and which will be part of the collective memory of the future. This section of *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* includes six contributions which explore the idea of remembrance, investigating and reconsidering the notions of Commemoration and/or Memory as major discourses in contemporary Ireland, in the wake of the Decade of Centenaries and beyond it, reflecting their multiple means of transmission and the different levels of engagement with the past.

Carla de Petris's essay deals with the Irish participation in World War I – “a strange story of amnesia and recollection”, and the memory of that event in Irish poetry, theatre and fiction – showing that there has always been a “strong link” between that traumatic episode in history and the Irish present. Richard Allen Cave reviews *Signatories*, a brilliant, subversive Commemoration project

¹ <<http://www.creativecentenaries.org/toolkit/what-commemoration>>.

² <<http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/>>.

dealing with the dramatization of the experiences of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence awaiting execution at the hands of the British, underlining the novelty of the dramatic approach devoid of rhetoric, sensationalism and melodramatic strategies. Oscillating between personal and collective memory, in his contribution – an evocative combination of autobiography and socio-political commentary – William Wall explores how the memory and resonance of 1916 has functioned in different ways and times in Ireland. Patricia Hughes’s recollection of a dramatic event in her own family history challenges the “collective memory” of Yeats, clarifying controversial and conflictual events in the poet’s life: remembering the tragic death of her grandmother Honor Bright, Hughes provides new insights into Yeats’s biography. Andrea Binelli’s essay investigates how the futurology inherent in today’s collective memory of 1916 was revisited by “Yes and No” campaigners in the mainstream debate preceding the same-sex marriage referendum in 2015: the results of the referendum show how the call to equality and democracy advocated in 1916, and constantly forgotten over the last hundred years, has finally found a response (powerfully confirmed by the recent Repeal of the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution and its near-total abortion ban). Inspired by two recent exhibitions – the *Queer British Art 1861-1967* at Tate Britain in London, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of consensual sex between men, and *Oscar Wilde: l’impertinent absolu* held in Paris at the Petit Palais, Richard Allen Cave’s “Three Icons” proposes some reflections on how an Irish icon – Oscar Wilde – functions in cultural memory, highlighting “the importance of sites of memorialisation” and the role of visual “objects of remembrance” in the social construction of organisational memory (Bell 2012, 4).

These six contributions show how processes of remembrance and the practice of Commemoration are deeply rooted in Irish society; they are a ritualistic vehicle of collective memory creating socially, politically and culturally shared meanings. To conclude, a note from the Creative Centenaries website: “Being sensitive to this relationship between culture, society and commemoration creates space for thinking about the ways we can commemorate in a positive way. Marking the importance of certain events, movements, or people [...] giv[es] us the opportunity to imagine ways to consider the past and shape society for a better future”³: I am certain that an Ireland of “potent possibilities” (Laird 2018, 30-38) lies ahead.

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³ <<http://www.creativecentenaries.org/toolkit/what-commemoration#pid-17>>.

“Invention gives that slaughter shape”: Irish Literature and World War I¹

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Abstract:

This essay deals with a number of works by poets, playwrights and novelists who tackled the theme of the Irish participation to World War I. The crucial point was about the divided loyalties of Irish soldiers enlisted in the British Army at a time when Ireland was at first fighting for Home Rule and later, on Easter 1916, engaged in a hopeless but decisive uprising. Can literature change the world? Yeats invited the poet to remain disdainfully silent in time of war but, notwithstanding this, was forced to deal with its painful consequences because of the death of Major Gregory, son of his dear friend Lady Augusta. Sean O’Casey had a totally different approach to the theme, using the theatre to create a collective response to its futility. Some decades later Frank McGuinness in one of his most successful plays maintains that “Invention gives that slaughter shape”. Francis Ledwige who died on the Belgian front, the only Irish “war poet”, gave “shape” in his poems to his own divided loyalties to Britain and Ireland, becoming years later a source of inspiration for Seamus Heaney, trapped in the Troubles. The second part of this paper examines novels by Iris Murdoch, Jennifer Johnson and Sebastian Barry who have considered an effort of recollection to tell fictional stories set in those ominous years in order to overcome the “collective amnesia” (Boyce 1993, 189) that tried to exorcise the deaths of so many Irishmen who fought during World War I wearing the “wrong” uniform.

Keywords: Amnesia and Recollection, Irish Literature, Loyalties, World War I

¹ This enlarges on and updates “L’Irlanda e la Grande Guerra: dai campi di Battaglia alla memoria”, published in *Variis Linguis. Studi offerti a Elio Mosele in occasione del suo settantesimo compleanno* (2004).

For seven years I taught at the University of Verona. At the time, I used to spend my weekends in Asiago, a town at the heart of one of Italy's World War I battlefields. Asiago was the first Italian town to be laid waste by Austrian bombs in 1916, while the Plains of Asiago and the rural area around Vicenza were evacuated during the so-called Austrian *Strafexpedition*² against the Italian army. The sad memory of all this is still very much alive among the population of that area. A treasure-trove of literature – both poetry and fiction – is based on those events. I have often asked myself, “What would we know now about that war if the poets and writers who experienced life in the trenches, even died in the mud there, had not voiced their despair in their verse, in their stories?” We would have been left with the works of the historians alone, but not with the cry, the pain, even the excitement before the battle of those who lived back then, between 1914 and 1918. Writers are well aware that they cannot change the world, so much so that Yeats invites the poet to remain disdainfully silent:

I think it better in times like these
 A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth
 We have no gift to set a statesman right; (Yeats 1967, 175)

but poets – including the elitist Yeats, as we shall see later – know that their words can give shape to another world, that of the imagination, to a world seeking to bestow some sense on life and on death, by denouncing the utter madness that war is, because poetry is ART-ful and HEART-ful: full of the art and the heart of men and women. The playwright Frank McGuinness expressed this concept in a play we shall discuss later:

Invention gives that slaughter shape. (Mc Guinness 1986, 9)

A hundred years after the ominous year of 1916, I decided to provide an outline of the literature produced in Ireland on the topic of World War I, because the Ireland of today, with its tensions and partitions, is due also in part to the thousands of Irish soldiers who fell in that war wearing a British uniform. We might say that it is the story of what it feels like to wear the wrong uniform, seeing that Ireland was England's first colony, and, at the time of the Great War, a country fighting for Home Rule.

² “*Strafexpedition* (Punitive expedition), was a counteroffensive launched by the Austro-Hungarians on the Italian Front on 15 May 1916, during World War I. It was an unexpected attack which took place near Asiago in the province of Vicenza, then on the Italian side of the border between the Kingdom of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the Fifth Battle of the Isonzo (March 1916). Commemorating this battle is the Asiago War Memorial” (*Wikipedia*).

It is a strange story of amnesia and recollection. As we go back over a hundred years of Irish poetry, theatre and fiction, we shall notice that there has always been a strong link between that particular period and the present in an Ireland where literary works concerning this topic continue to appear down over the years.

The apparently scanty amount of Irish literary works featuring the World War I, a catastrophe which tragically marked the beginning of the twentieth century, has often been explained by the fact that Ireland lay on the geographical margins of Europe, far removed from the battle fronts of the Great War. This answer is not satisfying, if we consider that, although the levy was not compulsory, the numbers of Irish soldiers in the British ranks are rather staggering. Some 210,000 Irishmen fought in Flanders, on the Somme in Picardy, on the shores of the Mediterranean and at Gallipoli on the Dardanelles. The fallen numbered 27,000. Although the impact could not have been inconsequential at that time for a country with a population of around 4 million, the experience of the Great War failed to acquire the epochal political and emotional value it did in Great Britain, in Commonwealth countries as distant as Australia. Only recently have the critics investigated more closely, and rightly so, what George Boyce called "collective amnesia" (1993, 189).

If a knowledge of historical setting is useful when deciphering most literary texts and seeking to identify their deeper motivations, a knowledge of history is essential when examining the literature produced in Ireland. It is no accident that Stephen Dedalus – James Joyce's alter ego "as a young man" – says that he wants to wake up "from the nightmare of Irish history" in order to forge "in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race". The history of Ireland is perceived as a nightmare, an obsession that not even "collective amnesia" can rid people of³.

How did "the imagination give shape to the slaughter of the war as well as to the British bloody retaliation to the 1916 Easter Rising"?

Some comments about the uprising of Easter 1916 made by two soldier writers are very poignant. Tom Kettle wrote bitterly: "These men will go down in history as heroes and martyrs, and I will go down – if I go down at all – as a bloody British officer" (Lyons 1983, 293). Kettle died on the front in September 1916.

Francis Ledwidge, whom we shall discuss in greater depth later, in June 1917, wrote:

I [...] am not without hope that a new Ireland will rise from her ashes in the ruins of Dublin, like the Phoenix, with one purpose, one aim, and one ambition. I tell you this in order that you may know what it is to me to be called a British soldier while my country has no place amongst the nations but the place of Cinderella. (Qtd. in Curtayne 1972, 180)

³ Cf. *Note on Historical Background* at the end of this essay.

Ledwidge died in Belgium in July 1917.

Provision of a historical excursus in the Notes at the end of this essay was deemed necessary as a background against which to read some works by Irish poets, playwrights and novelists who dealt with the theme of the Great War. Despite the above-mentioned scarcity of literature produced by Irish writers who were directly involved in the Great War or wrote about it afterwards, there exists a small though significant production regarding the Great War penned during the conflict and in the years immediately after it. The topic continues to be dealt with today. This more recent production is the fruit of reflection and of memory. It is interesting, in fact, to see how memory, narration and plot elaborated by artists, have manipulated history and chronological events, and, in doing so, have succeeded in influencing the present, without “changing history”, by enhancing awareness of what happened.

Let us begin with the aforementioned Francis Ledwidge, who died in 1917 at Ypres on the Belgian front and whose work may be justly considered war poetry, even if he treats war in demurely antiheroic tones:

There in the lull of midnight gentle arms
Lifted him slowly down the slopes of death,
Lest he should hear again the mad alarms
Of battle, dying moans and painful breath. (Ledwidge 2014)

A poor Northern Irish Catholic, Ledwidge was self-taught. Influenced by Gray, Goldsmith and Keats, initially he revealed a flimsy, decorative and conventional vein, so much so, that some of his works were included in the second volume of *Georgian Poetry*, a five-volume collection of poetry, edited by Edward Marsh and referring to verse composed between 1911 and 1922, that is, during the first half of the reign of King George V. His friendship with Lord Dunsany, which allowed Ledwidge to access the castle’s richly endowed library, permitted the young Francis to develop an authentic interest in the country’s local history, its ancient legends and folklore. As a result, he took part, though he remained very much in the background, in the *Celtic Revival* movement. Assuming an instinctively distant attitude towards the nebulous atmosphere of the *Revival*, Ledwidge created what might be defined as *poetry of place* – akin to the *dinnseanchas* or lore of place, characteristic of the old Gaelic culture, where even fields had their own names and traditions – anticipating Patrick Kavanagh and Seamus Heaney, something that was appreciated by Beckett who, in an essay entitled *Recent Irish Poetry*, 1934, frankly admitted that the poetry of Ledwidge had “what all modern nature poetry [...] has, a good smell of dung, most refreshing after all the attar of far off, most secret and inviolate rose” (Deane 1991, 246). Following a disappointed love relationship and on Lord Dunsany’s advice, the poet joined the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in 1914. The sudden death of the woman he loved and of friends like Thomas

MacDonagh and James Plunkett in the 1916 Easter Rising darkened his voice with morbid thoughts like those expressed in his "Lament for MacDonagh":

He shall not hear the bittern cry
 In the wild sky, where he is lain,
 Nor voices of the sweeter birds
 Above the wailing of the rain.

Nor shall he know when loud March blows
 Thro' slanting snows her fanfare shrill,
 Blowing to fame the golden cup
 Of many an upset daffodil.

But when the Dark Cow leaves the moor,
 And pastures poor with greedy weeds,
 Perhaps he'll hear her low at morn
 Lifting her horn in pleasant meads. (Ledwidge 1919, 206)

The ability of the dead to listen to the sounds of life is a dominant theme in war literature, as is remembrance linking the living and the dead.

Another very significant poem by Ledwidge is entitled simply "Ireland". With extreme gentleness, it touches on the issue of the relationship between those who chose to enlist and Ireland, as well as their loyalty towards their native land. Like James Joyce, this young Northern Irish poet, in "voluntary exile" and unknown to the intellectuals of his time, sang of ancient gods and heroes, while he was ready to die to save what he believed to be the more genuine soul of Ireland and find a way of his own to forge the "uncreated conscience of his race", at a time when he was unable to answer the call to arms of Easter 1916 because he found himself estranged and alienated on a far-off, foreign battle field:

I called you by sweet names by wood and linn,
 You answered not because my voice was new,
 And you were listening for the hounds of Finn
 And the long hosts of Lugh.

And so I came unto a windy height
 And cried my sorrow, but you heard no wind,
 For you were listening to small ships in flight,
 And the wails of hills behind.

And then I left you, wandering the war
 Armed with will, from distant goal to goal,
 To find you at last free as of yore,
 Or die to save your soul.

And then you called to us from far and near
To bring your crown from out the deeps of time,
It is my grief your voice I couldn't hear
In such a distant clime. (Ledwidge 1919, 243-244)

Aware of the intersecting games of memory that characterise Irish history, we are not surprised to discover that Seamus Heaney, a Northern Irish Catholic poet like Ledwidge, closes *Field Work* of 1979, the collection where he deals more directly with the theme of the conflict in Northern Ireland, with an elegy entitled “In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge” which starts with a description of one of the numerous monuments to the fallen of the Great War who were natives of the towns and villages of Unionist Ulster, the monument near the seaside promenade in Portstewart (figure 1) where he used to “dander” (Northern Irish English for “walk, stroll”) as a child with his aunt Mary:



Figure 1

I think of you in your Tommy's uniform,
 A haunted Catholic face, pallid and brave,
 Ghosting the trenches like a bloom of hawthorn
 Or silence cored from a Boyne passage-grave. (Heaney 1979, 60)

Memory and the conciliatory words of the fallen poet are accompanied by Heaney's recollection of his young aunt who grazed the cows, before reaching the crux of the matter, i.e. the political confrontation between the Irish and the British which is denounced, while Ledwidge is significantly referred to as "our dead enigma":

In you, our dead enigma, all the strains
 Criss-cross in useless equilibrium
 And as the wind tunes through this vigilant bronze
 I hear again the sure confusing drum

You followed from Boyne water to the Balkans
 But miss the twilit note your flute should sound.
 You were not keyed or pitched like these true-blue ones
 Though all of you consort now underground. (60)

For Heaney, sixty years after the events, it is important to recall and celebrate the fact that the contrast and the differences of belief and of political credo between Ledwidge and his unionist brothers-in-arms, "the true-blue ones", were reconciled after death.

For William Butler Yeats, the most important Irish poet of the beginning of the twentieth century, the world conflict does not seem to have any interest other than the fact that its cruel violence deprived Ireland of some of her best men, first and foremost Major Robert Gregory, the only son of his dear friend Lady Augusta Gregory.

Yeats's aloofness from the things of the world, so adamantly stressed in the lines quoted here, underline two characteristics of his personal philosophical, artistic and political evolution in the years during and immediately following the Great War which emerge from the collections of his poems from *In The Seven Woods* of 1904 to *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* of 1921. The first factor is the "de-Anglicization" of his work, his conscious detachment from the English literary tradition and his subsequent attempt, with the Abbey Theatre, to revive the Irish native culture; the second factor is the elevation of the subjectivity of artistic experience above the objectivity of the masses in society, which became real in his cyclical, symbolic system of human history, *A Vision*, begun in 1922 and published in its definitive version in 1937.

The death of Robert Gregory, shot down by mistake by friendly fire on the Italian-Austrian front and buried in the cemetery of Padua, deeply touched

Yeats in his private life. With the help of the kind director of Padua's foreign cemetery, I found Robert Gregory's grave (Figures 2 and 3).



Figures 2 and 3

The deprecating “bloody flippancy” – as Yeats defined war – snatched from his affection⁴ and from Ireland one of the country's most promising creative minds. Robert Gregory had already proven his worth as an artist and painter of theatrical scenery. Furthermore, for Yeats, he was the reincarnation of the perfect Renaissance man skilled “in the liberal arts and in the hunt”. When the young pilot's inconsolable mother, Lady Augusta, and his wife Margaret asked Yeats to write some verse to celebrate his memory, he tried to write something like what Spenser composed in honour of Sidney.

⁴ “There are several passages in Yeats's 1910 Diary which show that he envied Robert Gregory his lack of introspection. Gregory would neither ‘turn away to think’ nor ‘constantly analyse’ what he had done nor ‘have little life’ outside his work” (cf. Jeffares 1984 [1968], 252). “[Yeats's] relationship with Robert Gregory had never been easy. He had periodically expressed impatience at the younger man's casual and dilettante approach to projects such as sets for the Abbey, while Gregory's wife, Margaret, nourished a certain antipathy towards Coole's perpetual summer guest. In later years [Yeats] came to appreciate Robert's distinction as a landscape painter and to see in him something of his mother's qualities – but they never really had got on. There was also the difficulty concerning the manner in which Robert met his end. By early 1918 feeling in Ireland was setting hard against the endless war; this would be sharply exacerbated by the government's move towards imposing conscription in Ireland that autumn. Since the executions of 1916, opposition to the British war effort had spread widely even among political moderates, while the tone of nationalistic propaganda was vitriolic. These feelings were not shared by Robert Gregory; his views had long been anti-Sinn Féin and he seems to have fully supported the war effort, joining the Royal Flying Corps with alacrity early in the war” (cf. Foster 2003, 118).

The result, "The Shepherd and Goatherd", turned out to be one of his least successful compositions (Yeats 1967, 153)⁵.

To the sacrifice of his young friend Yeats was to dedicate three further elegies, all of which require, in-depth attention: "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory", "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" and later, going back to the theme from a new perspective, "Reprisals".

In the first poem mentioned here and dated 1918, the name of Gregory, present in the title, is practically eclipsed by the list of "friends that cannot sup with us". "All, all are in my thoughts to-night being dead". Only in the sixth strophe, still without specific reference to his name, the major is introduced and compared to Sidney, "our perfect man", "soldier, scholar, horseman". Nothing is said of how or where he died. The war he fought appears irrelevant with respect to his death. "A thought of that late death took all my heart for speech" (Yeats 1967, 148).

His conviction of the absolute value of subjectivity, of the unique and perfect individual, as opposed to the amorphous, brute masses, brings Yeats in "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" to give voice directly to the dead hero in a Futurist-like crescendo risking exaltation of the war machine and energy, in apparent contradiction with his conviction of the mindlessness of armed conflict, something which is rebalanced by emphasising the ambiguity of an Irish hero killed in a war which is neither his nor that of his fellow Irish men and women:

Those that I fight I do not hate,
 Those that I guard I do not love;
 My country is Kiltartan Cross,
 My countrymen Kiltartan's poor. (Yeats 1967, 152)

The political sense of Robert Gregory's death within the scenario of Irish history is presented in "Reprisals", 1920, a poem refused by *The Nation* because vetoed directly by Lady Gregory. It appeared posthumously in *Rann. An Ulster Quarterly of Poems*, as late as Autumn 1948. This poem is practically an anomaly for Yeats's *corpus* as the nerve of its assertion is so strong and unembellished. The theme of the poem is so controversial that it is of great significance:

⁵ "Gregory is pastoralized into a Virgilian landscape, his paintings becoming 'sorrowful, austere, sweet, lofty pipe tunes'. The fact that he was unprepared to take over Coole (though it was technically his possession since his twenty-first birthday) was put in a laboured way that cannot have been welcome to his wife (or his mother)" (*ibidem*, 119).

Some nineteen German planes, they say,
 You had brought down before you died.
 We called it a good death. Today
 Can ghost or man be satisfied?
 Although your last exciting year
 Outweighed all other years, you said,
 Though battle joy may be so dear
 A memory, even to the dead,
 It chases other thought away,
 Yet rise from your Italian tomb,
 Flit to Kiltartan Cross and stay
 Till certain second thoughts have come
 Upon the cause you served, that we
 Imagined such a fine affair:
 Half-drunk or whole-mad soldiery
 Are murdering your tenants there.
 Men that revere your father yet
 Are shot at on the open plain.
 Where may new-married women sit
 And suckle children now? Armed men
 May murder them in passing by⁶
 Nor law nor parliament take heed.
 Then close your ears with dust and lie
 Among the other cheated dead. (Qtd. in Jeffares 1984, 300-301)

The ideals and the hopes of the Irish enlisted in the British army had been wiped out by the violent, merciless reprisals of the Black and Tans which targeted defenceless civilians. Only in this case, in the last line of the poem, does Yeats place Major Gregory within a multitude, that of the “dead, cheated” by England.

Another episode, however, reveals Yeats’s inability to understand and accept war as a collective endeavour where the single subject is absorbed by the masses when the collective effort overrides individual inclinations. Yeats’s philosophy of life and art could not cope with O’Casey’s political approach either. A committed socialist, Sean O’Casey, born John Casey, was the first Irish playwright of note to write about the Dublin working classes.

When, in the summer of 1928, Sean O’Casey submitted his new play *The Silver Tassie*, a tragicomedy in four acts, to the directors of the Abbey Theatre, he was told by Yeats that his drama was pure propaganda full of the author’s

⁶ “On 26 October [1920] the news of [Terence] MacSwiney’s death came to Gort: Ten days later Ellen Quinn was shot dead outside her front door in Kiltartan, from a military lorry passing by, a baby in her arms. This horror struck deeply home. The murdered woman was the young wife of Malachi Quinn, one of a well-known Gort farming family [...]; the killing was utterly random. After a huge funeral and angry demonstrations, an official ‘inquiry’ applied some unconvincing whitewash” (*ibidem*, 181).

personal political ideas and the notions of a writer who had no direct experience of the Great War. Furthermore, O'Casey was told by Yeats, the play and the plot lacked a leading character. O'Casey's answer is worth reading:

Was Shakespeare at Actium or Philippi? [...] God forgive me, but it does sound as if you peeked and pined for a hero in the play. Now, is a dominating character more important than a play, or a play more important than a dominating character? In *The Silver Tassie* you have a unique work that dominates all the characters in the play. That work is the war it self. (Qtd. in Kilroy 1975, 116)

The first and last two acts of *The Silver Tassie* are set in the Dublin slums and centred around the character of Harry Heegan, a young proletarian football champion who with his team had won a silver cup, known as *the silver tassie*, before enlisting and going to war. When he returns from Flanders, paralysed and having lost Jessie's love, he destroys the silver cup in a moment of fury. The second act is set at the front. The body of an unnamed soldier is carried off stage using expressionistic techniques recollective of Brecht's epic theatre. In a further effort at depersonalization, in an attempt to create a theatrically choral experience, O'Casey indicates war songs to be sung by the best singers in the cast "irrespective of the numbers allotted to them as characters". Here are the stage directions:

The chants in the play are simple Plain Song. [...] There are three parts in each chant: the Intonation, the Meditation and the Ending. [...] The soldiers having the better voices should be selected to intone the chants, irrespective of the numbers allotted to them as characters in the book of the play. (O'Casey 1950, 3)

What really bothered Yeats was O'Casey's theory whereby the only fault attributable to private soldiers and NCO's, the sons of proletarians, was their failure to understand that the war they came to fight was that of the middle-classes, promoted by cowardly politicians like the "Visitor" who runs away from the trenches at the first burst of artillery fire. O'Casey's soldiers, because they belong to the lower classes, do not use RP but speak in sundry local varieties of English such as the *slang* of the Dublin slums, London *cockney* and Scoto-English. All and every notion of Nation is cancelled among the ordinary rank and file and replaced by the focal idea of belonging to the same proletarian class.

In 1986, almost sixty years after O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*, Frank McGuinness, a Northern Irish Roman Catholic, one of the most important Irish playwrights of the last generation, revisited the issue of the Great War from a point of view quite unlike O'Casey's. McGuinness too tried out new theatrical techniques in an attempt to stage the human tragedy generated by that conflict as far as the social texture of his country, Protestant Ulster, was concerned.

Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme is a complex and ambitious work. McGuinness, in a three-part play (“Initiation”, “Parings” “Bondings”) plus a prologue (“Remembrance”), describes the meeting on the western front of eight recruits belonging to the 36th division (Ulster). He portrays the development of bonds between four pairs united, two by two, on the basis of religion, sex, home area and common history, aspects which emerge clearly only on the eve of the morrow’s attack, when these bonds are about to be put to the test by death and projection towards eternity. Once again, the theme of memory is central here, since the play was written exactly seventy years after the battle of the Somme. The narration, based on the remembrance of the only survivor, now an old man, is featured in the prologue. Pyper, like some latter-day Ancient Mariner is obliged to reiterate his own story along with that of his comrades-in-arms because repetition is the only way he has to bestow expression and significant shape on their experience.

I do not understand your insistence on my remembrance. [...] I am not your military historian. [...] Invention gives that slaughter shape. (McGuinness 1986, 9)

McGuinness, like O’Casey, chooses to stage his view of the period in tragicomic, at times even farcical, tones recollective of Charlie Chaplin’s cinema. His characters’ gestures and lines are repeated mechanically until they lose all meaning. Outlandish versions of the two great events, which inspired the contrasting ideologies of Irish unionists and nationalists, alternate. These two events are the Easter Rising of 1916 on the one hand and the Battle of the Boyne on the other, which ominously anticipate the battle the characters are about to fight and lose⁷.

As in O’Casey’s play, which started with an excited suffragette announcing an immanent apocalypse, McGuinness’s drama begins with a prayer, a hymn invoking God, in keeping with the arrogant conviction of Calvinistic Presbyterians that they are the Lord’s Anointed, the repositories of truth. But that belief is put to the test, challenged, and questioned, to great dramatic effect, by Pyper’s doubt-ridden prayer, his last interrogative invocation to the “Protestant God” “to ponder” and look down upon his soldiers who are approaching sacrifice, and save them, but only “if he is just and merciful”:

God in heaven, if you hear the words of man, I speak to you this day. [...] If you are a just and merciful God, show your mercy this day. [...] Lord, look down on us. Spare us. – Observe the sons of Ulster marching towards the Somme. I love their lives. I love my own life. I love my home. I love my Ulster. (McGuinness 1986, 79-80)

⁷ See *Note on Historical Background* (*infra*, 254).

So far, I have dealt with poems and plays by Irish authors, which bring to light important differences between these two literary genres. While poets like Ledwidge, Yeats and Heaney addressed private, controversial feelings of personal loyalties, playwrights such as O'Casey and McGuinness staged plots and characters, well aware they would arouse the open political reactions of their audiences. They were fighting against general amnesia and trying to restore a more compassionate memory of the facts. Synge expressed a similar conception of the different genres as follows:

Lyrical art is the art of national adolescence [...] mature drama [is] dealing with the deeper truth of general life in a perfect form and with mature philosophy. (1962, 350)

Now I intend to take into account a series of novels set in or around 1916. Fiction is the art of telling stories. In our case, we are dealing with the narration of a long-gone past crafted by writers of more recent times who aim at deciphering, if not undoing, the knots of a chaotic present.

The novels we shall take into account often use the epistolary or diary form to give voice to living or dead characters, a device by which the workings of memory can be investigated.

In 1965, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, celebrated with great rhetorical emphasis in the Republic, Iris Murdoch published *The Red and the Green*.

In an essay on Murdoch written by me some time ago, I asked, "To what extent have writers of more recent generations been aware of the peculiar use of Irish materials Murdoch made in the mid-1960s? [...] I am convinced that in the case of writers of the 1970s and 1980s it was not a conscious influence, but reveals how anticipatory Murdoch's Irish novel was" (de Petris 2016, 269).

Born in Dublin in 1919, the daughter of a Belfastman, Iris Murdoch was always proud of the fact that she was the bearer of so many Irish traditions.

Significantly, in *The Red and the Green* Murdoch gave voice for the first time to the clash between the two nations, British and Irish, but in the fundamental last chapter of the novel, set in 1938 and centred on the issue of transmitting historical facts to future generations, Frances's tall son, who holds that "each country tells a selective story creditable to itself" (276), while echoing Yeats's "terrible beauty", ironically criticises the petty offspring of that "beauty" (202).

Notwithstanding what Jennifer Johnston has to say about Murdoch's Irishness (de Petris 2016, 267), I think that there are echoes of Murdoch's 1965 book in those of her own novels set in the same historical period.

In these novels Jennifer Johnston⁸, like many writers of her own and the younger generation, like William Trevor (1928-2016), John Banville, or Aidan

⁸ Jennifer Johnston, born in Dublin to Irish actress and director Shelah Richards and Irish playwright Denis Johnston, deals in many of her novels with the decline of the Protestant ascendancy.

Higgins, renews the theme of the Protestant ascendancy's Big House, so dear to prestigious writers like Elizabeth Bowen, allowing me to return to the issue:

For the many fans of her work, Johnston's skilfully constructed novels, with their elegant economic realism and tight storylines, constitute a distinctive and sophisticated voice in Irish literature. Writing about the impact that Johnston's debut novel *The Captain and the Kings*, had on him, Dermot Bolger recently described how he loved the book for "its sparse intensity and intimacy and how the simplicity of the writing belied the complexity of her characters". (Leavy 2017)

In this novel, published in 1972, the protagonist, Prendergast, lives in a run-down big house in present-day Ireland, obsessed by the memory of a brother, more gifted and brighter than himself, who died in the trenches.

But it is with *How Many Miles to Babylon?*, published in 1974 and recently translated into Italian for the Fazi publishing House, Rome, that the theme of the Great War becomes a metaphor of the present-day Northern-Irish tragedy. *The Times Literary Supplement*, in a review cited on the cover flap of the English edition, states that in this novel Johnston reveals "a special talent to distil and refine the whole tragic-comic experience of Ireland at war".

This book tells the story of the enlistment in the army of two boys, one, the heir to a large ascendancy estate, destined to be an officer, the other, a private soldier, a stable-lad, who wants to exploit his military experiences at the front in order to learn how to use weapons to serve the national cause, once he returns home. It is also the story of an impossible friendship, of a heart-breaking love relationship which binds both of them to their far-off mutual homeland. The diary which the book contains is that written by the Anglo-Irish officer, and which ends before he is shot for high treason and insubordination. In addition to the two young men, the portrait of the two aristocratic Anglo-Irish parents is memorable: the father, a country gentleman committed to improving his property, convinced, like Yeats, that war does not concern Ireland and the cruel mother who asks her son to enlist to defend the king and the kingdom, to gain that confirmation of virility she failed to obtain from her husband. The plot is as follows:

Johnston moves the setting of the novel from the initial background of a rural estate, to the battlefields of Flanders during the First World War. The possibility of communication across class or religious divisions is usually explored in Johnston's novels through two lonely individuals, and in this instance the protagonists are both male.

Alexander Moore, the only child of parents in a loveless marriage, grows up lonely and friendless on his family's estate in Co. Wicklow. When he befriends Jerry Crowe, a stable hand who works on the estate, his mother forbids all interaction with Jerry because he is socially inferior. When Jerry enlists in the British Army because his family needs the money, Alec impulsively enlists too.

Alec's action is prompted by his mother's revelation that his father is someone other than her husband. In the trenches the two friends are separated again by class

and now also by rank. They are commanded by Major Glendinning, a ruthless officer who shares Alec's mother's belief in the class system. When Jerry is tried and convicted as a deserter after leaving his unit to search for his father, Glendinning orders Alec to command the firing squad. In an act of mercy, Alec privately kills his friend and he in turn is arrested and condemned to die. (Leavy 2017)

It is interesting to see that in many of Johnston's novels the arms test is meant as an ordeal imposed on those with homosexual tendencies.

In her latest work, 2002, enigmatically entitled *This is Not a Novel*, Jennifer Johnston returns to the topic of the decadence of a rich Anglo-Irish family by relating its story from the World War I to the present. In this case too, Harry, the son of the Big House, by his death on the Belgium front pays for his homosexual inclinations. His niece Imogen, the narrator and keeper of her ancestors' memorabilia contained in some old trunks, discovers that her great-grandmother, before committing suicide, put three poems by Francis Ledwidge to music to honour her dead son Harry's memory.

The most interesting aspect of Johnston's work is the constant and obsessive reference to unavoidable memory, represented by the metaphor of the echo which recurs throughout the pages:

We echo and re-echo down the years. (Johnston 2002, 22)

'Echo: a repetition of sounds, due to the reflection of the sound waves by some obstacle'. A down-to-earth and rather boring statement in the OED about a charming and somewhat romantic phenomenon. (35)

The "not-a-novel" is a sort of impossible message which Imogen addresses to her brother Johnny, whose death, suicide maybe, during World War II, Imogen refuses to accept. Johnny is an "echo" generations later of his great-uncle with the same homosexual inclination, the same inability to handle competition or conflict. Both characters hold the value of heroism at bay.

Teresa Casal writes thus about this theme in a very perceptive article:

Personal relationships take precedence over public displays of heroism and conventional notions of masculinity are interrogated. (2017)

Imogen waits and hopes for the impossible return of her brother in a manner that echoes her great-grandmother's behaviour. Her feelings are echoed in Ledwidge's last poem, "Little Boy in the Morning", which Harry's mother set to music before she took her own life:

He will not come, and still I wait.
He whistles at another gate
Where angels listen. Ah, I know

He will not come, yet if I go
 How shall I know he did not pass
 Barefooted in the flowery grass? (Ledwidge 1919, 150)

In the novels by Johnston considered here, there is also constant attention to style and form. In *This is Not a Novel* the author seems to identify initially with the narrator:

This is not a novel. I want to make that perfectly clear. Normally when I set out to write a piece of fiction, I invent a setting, a landscape, a climate, a world, in fact, that has no reality outside the pages of the book, and into that world I insert my characters. (Johnston 2002, 1)

Obviously this is not true. We soon realise that the narrator is, in fact, in a nursing home and that what she writes is “a hopeful message sent out into the world, like a piece of paper in a bottle dropped into the sea; my hope being that my brother Johnny, somewhere in the world, I believe, may read it” (1). We find out later that Johnny cannot read his sister’s message because he is dead, having drowned himself in the sea. For Johnston, memory seems to be an antidote to the present, a hypothesis contradicted by fact. Johnston infuses a sense of inconsolable sorrow, akin to that in Ledwidge’s last lines, into all her work and into her interpretation of the history of Ireland.

Once again, the artist Johnston reiterates and rewrites the history of her country in an attempt to interpret the present. Speaking of the chances of reconciliation lost between the first post-war period and the present, as well as of the futility – or rather – the negativity, of heroism which, in war, is often nothing more than a trick of fate, the writer in a recent interview, stated:

The First World War was a pivotal moment in Ireland. All our history had come to a head and I really believe that if “Our Heroes” had held their hands, the island would be now a whole unit, peaceful and not all those thousands of dead. (Qtd. in de Petris 2004, 201)

Sebastian Barry follows a path quite different from that of Johnston. The history of his own family recurs in almost all his works. He does not try to exorcise it, but seems willing to re-live it in his works with a view to understanding it. This makes the audiences who attend performances of his plays or the readers of his novels feel they are directly involved in his stories.

Barry was born in Dublin in 1955, the son of architect Francis Barry and actress Joan O’Hara. He had a Catholic upbringing and belongs to a not so rare sector of Irish society: a Catholic loyalist family, which served the state both at home and in the colonies, only to find itself displaced in the Ireland which fought for Home Rule at the beginning of the 20th century, for independence in

the 1920's and struggled to find its autonomous national identity which soon degenerated into *republican* nationalism tinted with Catholic bigotry. The interwoven themes of divided loyalties and reassuring family bonds is at the core of two works that ought to be read *vis à vis*: the play *The Steward of Christendom* (1995) and the novel *A Long Long Way* (2005). The protagonist of the play is Thomas Dunne, inspired by James Dunne, Barry's maternal great-grandfather, who was the last Catholic chief superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police between 1913 and 1922. He oversaw the area surrounding Dublin Castle during the 1916 Easter Rising and up until the Irish Free State takeover in January 1922. His only son, Willie, the protagonist of the novel, is a very young Irish soldier, a private, who, in 1916, is entangled in a web comprising the battlefields of Belgium and the conflict raging at home between the loyalists and the nationalists.

The play opens in a psychiatric home in 1932, where Thomas Dunne is raving incoherently as he relives moments of his career and memories of family life with his three daughters⁹, Annie, Maud and Dolly. But his delirium is haunted in particular by the ghost of his only son, Willie, killed in World War I, who appears as a 13-year-old child wearing the uniform once donned by his 18-year-old self.

The following line anticipates the moment in the novel when Willie, unable to become a policeman because shorter than regulation height for the job, enlists in the army to please his demanding, though dearly beloved, father and reach "bloody manhood at last":

A soldier's doesn't always make a good policeman. There is too much – sorrow – in a soldier. (Barry 1995, 16)

To give this sorrow shape, Barry embarked on a novel, where the previous play is summed up as follows:

Willie's father's world passed away in the coming upheavals. In the upshot, he lost his wits and died a poor figure indeed in the County Home at Baltinglass. (291)

Dates are relevant here. After the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, in the relatively pacified Ireland of 2005 and approaching the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, Barry, until then mainly known as a playwright, pub-

⁹ *Annie Dunne* is the title of a novel written in 2002. The novel *On Canaan's Side* (2011), tells the story of past and present emigration. Lilly Dunne, one of the three Dunne girls, runs away to New York with her lover Tadhg Bere, an auxiliary police officer belonging to the reviled Black and Tans. In 1922 they flee to New York and then move to the "glittering Canaan" of Chicago, where Tadhg is murdered. The crucial event that spurs Lilly, now in her eighties, to write her diary is the loss she experiences when her grandson trapped in the Gulf war commits suicide.

lished the novel *A Long Long Way*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the Dublin International Impac Prize, was nominated Dublin's One City One Book choice for 2007 and, that same year, translated into Italian by the Instar Libri (2007). The novel was an immediate and extraordinary success and was even included in the "Great War Literature Educational Study Guides".

The fact that the novel was dedicated to "Roy Foster, in friendship" is important here. Foster's *Modern Ireland* published in 1988, had transformed Irish historical writing by giving an incredibly balanced reading of Irish history up to 1972, though it has been attacked as "revisionist". We might also define *A Long Long Way* a "revisionist" novel in that it contradicts a one-way interpretation of Irish history while it foregrounds its complexities.

The end of Part One of the novel is a crucial epiphany that explains the irreconcilable breach between Willie and his father. In fact, during a period of leave that Willie is granted during the Easter holidays, the young soldier helps a man roughly his own age who is dying having been shot by the Metropolitan Police under his father's command:

When it was time to get some kip, [...] Willie noticed that his uniform was badly stained with blood. It was the blood of that young man dying. Willie scrubbed his face at the basin provided and he tried a few scrubs at the cloth. There were instructions in his soldier's small-book for the cleaning of khaki. [...] But he had no yellow soap and he had no ammonia. He tried again in the morning but in the main he carried the young man's blood to Belgium on his uniform. (Barry 2005, 97)

As in the previous quote, the novel reaches an apex of elegy and epic availing itself of a highly performative and poetic language, blending elements of poetry and theatre into the narrative, so that the reader is brought to feel and understand what the World War I meant and what all war is: a terrible waste and no beauty.

There is a cinematic quality in Barry's writing. He uses a language fit for cinema being a gifted, poetic scriptwriter as well as a great artist. His experience as a playwright is important here. One should ask why his writing career ranges between poetry, theatre and fiction, while keeping in mind what we said previously about the differences existing between the literary genres. Laura Barber describes Barry's achievement in *The Long Long Way* as follows: "With disarming lyricism, Barry's novel leads the reader into a hellish no-man's land, where the true madness of war can only be felt and understood rather than said" (2005).

This is, perhaps, why his novel *The Secret Scripture* (2008) was brilliantly turned into the script of the beautiful film by the same name directed by Jim Sheridan in 2016 and featuring a stunning performance by Vanessa Redgrave. The same might be done with *A Long Long Way*.

But a writer's words weigh differently on the stage and on the page.

The novel, *A Long Long Way*, is an epic in the Greek sense: "a word embodying a nation's conception of its past history". In it, in fact, in years when a solution to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, which that had seen the "two nations" opposed to each other for over 30 years, seemed possible, Barry chose an omniscient narrator, whose distance from the facts, conveys a sense of objectivity and creates in the reader the impression of finally *being told the truth* about life in the trenches and of his/her own historical past.

The technique of contemporary cinema based on special effects, such as that employed to portray the mustard gas attacks, is extremely clever, evocative and shocking. What matters if the poisonous weapon was not being used as yet by the German army in 1916! "Was Shakespeare at Actium or Philippi?":

The gas boiled in like familiar ogre. With the same stately gracelessness it rolled to the edge of parapet in then like the heads of a many-headed creature it toppled gently forward and sank down to join the waiting men. These excellent gas masks instantly lost their excellence [...] The evil gas lay down in the trench like a bedspread, and as more gas came over, it filled the trench to the brim and passed on then in its ghostly hordes to the support lines and the reserve lines, ambitious for choice murders. (Barry 2005, 111)

On the other hand, the author writes an elegy, "a song of lamentation" for the ordinary folk who died in that inexcusable war.

Many critics have praised the skilful use of metaphors which abruptly interrupt the realistic narration of facts, like a sigh of relief offsetting the terrible conditions men experienced in the muddy trenches, facing fear and pain, facing sorrow due to the death of comrades, or like a punch to the reader making him/her feel the horror and degradation that may not be represented in any sanitised form. But there is also an anti-heroic vein of humour.

The technique here reminds us of that used by Mario Monicelli in *La Grande Guerra*, that 1959 masterpiece of Italian neo-realist cinema, where scenes of comic relief and even of coarse humour ignite and explain the unexpected camaraderie between the two protagonists, while, at the same time anticipating, by way of contrast, the end featuring the tragic and heroic deaths of the two anti-heroes, ordinary men of no importance.

An anonymous reader describes the death of Willie Dunne with the following words:

Our young protagonist was born in "the dying days" of an old century, mewling his way into a stormy night that was neither spectacular, nor noteworthy. In these words, Barry presages the manner in which our young man will find his way out of this life. (Online Source)

By way of conclusion, we need to spend a few words on the significant use of music throughout the novel. On several occasions Irish songs, tunes and jigs appear to provide relief and escape of some sort. In the end, however, music will be the indirect cause of Willie's death:

Then he heard singing from the German section. He found he knew the tune well, though the man was singing in German. Perhaps he was singing now in an ironical frame of mind, for the song was “Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht”. Silent night, holy night. [...] The voice was as simple as the river, it seemed to Willie. It came from the throat of a man who might have seen horrors, made horrors befall the opposing armies. There was something of the end of the world [...] The end of many worlds. [...] Could they not all be holy? Could God not reach down and touch their faces, explain to them [...] the purpose of their long sojourn, the journey out to a foreign land that became a sitting still among horrors? [...] There was no road back along the way they had taken. He had no country, he was an orphan, he was alone. So he lifted up his voice and sang back to his enemy, the strange enemy that lay unseen. They shared a tune. [...] A single shot marked its own note in the easy dark, hushing the busy owl. (Barry 2005, 289)

I shall end with the lyrics of the song of war and lost love that gives the title to the novel which deals with Paddy / Willie’s homesickness, Molly / Gretta’s betrayal and Willie’s letter of forgiveness to his father “returned with Willie’s uniform and other effects, his soldier’s small-book, a volume of Dostoevsky, and a small porcelain horse” (291):

“It’s a Long Way to Tipperary”¹⁰
(original version by John McCormack, 1914)

Up to mighty London
came an Irish lad one day,
All the streets were paved with gold,
So everyone was gay!
Singing songs of Piccadilly,
Strand, and Leicester Square,
'til Paddy got excited
and He shouted to them there:

It’s a long way to Tipperary,
It’s a long way to go.
It’s a long way to Tipperary
To the sweetest girl I know!
Goodbye Piccadilly,
Farewell Leicester Square!
It’s a long long way to Tipperary,
But my heart’s right there.

¹⁰ “‘It’s a Long Way to Tipperary’ is a British music-hall song written by Jack Judge and co-credited to Henry James ‘Harry’ Williams. It was allegedly written for a 5-shilling bet in Stalybridge on 30 January 1912 and performed the next night at the local music hall. Now commonly called ‘It’s a Long Way to Tipperary’, it became popular among soldiers in the First World War and is remembered as a song of that war” (*Wikipedia*).

Paddy wrote a letter
 To his Irish Molly O', Saying,
 "Should you not receive it,
 Write and let me know!
 If I make mistakes in "spelling",
 Molly dear", said he,
 "Remember it's the pen, that's bad,
 Don't lay the blame on me".

It's a long way to Tipperary,
 It's a long way to go.
 It's a long way to Tipperary
 To the sweetest girl I know!
 Goodbye Piccadilly,
 Farewell Leicester Square!
 It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
 But my heart's right there.

Molly wrote a neat reply
 To Irish Paddy O', Saying,
 "Mike Maloney wants To marry me,
 and so leave the Strand
 and Piccadilly, Or you'll be to blame,
 For love has fairly drove me silly,
 Hoping you're the same!"

It's a long way to Tipperary,
 It's a long way to go.
 It's a long way to Tipperary
 To the sweetest girl I know!
 Goodbye Piccadilly,
 Farewell Leicester Square!
 It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
 But my heart's right there.

Extra wartime verse

That's the wrong way
 to tickle Mary,
 That's the wrong way to kiss!
 Don't you know that over here, lad,
 They like it best like this!
 Hooray pour le Francais!
 Farewell, Angleterre!
 We didn't know the way to tickle Mary,
 But we learned how, over there!

Notes on Historical Background

To fully understand the above essay it is important to revise the background to the fatal years between 1914 and 1916 and recall some historical facts.

The Act of Union of 1800 and the dissolution of the Dublin Parliament brought about the complete political subjection of Ireland to London. The more or less foolhardy revolts that followed one another during the nineteenth century were abortive. Moreover, the nineteenth century was marked by a horrific famine (1845-1848) which reduced the population of the island by one third as the result of death due to starvation and disease or to emigration. The tragedy of the poor – the mass of Catholic peasants – was followed by the anxiety of the rich – the elite Ascendancy Protestant land owners of English origin. The latter did not feel properly represented by their MPs in Westminster while the movement for land reform – the so-called Land League – was growing stronger and stronger. Under Charles Stewart Parnell a party was born – the Irish Parliamentary Party – which tried to push a bill for Irish Home Rule – that is, political-administrative autonomy – through Parliament. Late Victorian efforts to pass the bill were rocambolesque. It suffices to recall that Parnell died of a broken heart.

In 1912, Parnell's successor, John Edmond Redmond, presented a revised Home Rule bill, which was violently contested by the Unionists of Ulster led by Sir Edward Carson and staunchly supported by Lord Randolph Churchill, the father of Sir Winston. The clash led to the creation of a loyalist paramilitary group called the Ulster Volunteer Force to which Redmond, in a last-ditch attempt to balance the forces in the field, opposed the Irish National Volunteers committed to the nationalist cause.

In September 1914, the Home Rule Bill was passed, but its implementation was suspended until the end of the war which had just started and which most people believed would be over by Christmas that year.

Redmond continued his battle for a constitutional resolution of the Irish question but his efforts were overridden and rendered redundant by the tragic events of 1916. On Easter Monday 1916, in fact, in the middle of the war, a revolt broke out in Dublin under the leadership of a group of poorly equipped and isolated intellectuals. But the violent English retaliation, the summary shooting of its leaders without a fair public trial, provoked the affirmation of more radical nationalist ideals. When the war ended in 1918 there was no further mention of Home Rule. The 1918 general elections were held in the United Kingdom on Saturday the 14th of December 1918, immediately after the armistice that put an end to World War I.

It was the first election in which women over the age of 30, and all men over the age of 21, could vote. Previously, all women and many poor men had been excluded from voting.

The election was also noted for the results in Ireland which showed clear disapproval of government policy. The Irish Parliamentary Party was almost completely obliterated by Sinn Féin republicans, who refused to take their seats in Westminster but set up instead the first Dail in College Green. This led to the Anglo-Irish War, notorious also for the special task force, the Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve popularly known as Black and Tans, the British government brought to Ireland to defeat the rebellious nationalists. About 7,000 Black and Tans served in Ireland between 1920 and 1922. More than one-third left the service before being disbanded, along with the rest of the RIC, in 1922 when the Irish Free State came into being. The nickname Black and Tans arose from the colours of the improvised uniforms they initially wore composed of mixed British Army khaki and RIC dark green uniform parts. As previously stated, the Black and Tans became infamous for their attacks on civilians and civilian property. They were sometimes confused with the Auxiliary Division, a unit of former British RIC officers, so that the term Black and Tans is frequently used to cover both of these groups.

In 1922, in fact, the Irish Free State was recognized as consisting of twenty-six counties, while six of Ulster's nine counties, chosen on numerical basis with a view to creating a Protestant majority in the area and following a farcical referendum, remained within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Partition angered not only nationalists but also unionists from Ulster's remaining three counties as well as those living in the rest of the island. The partial independence granted by the Treaty to the twenty-six counties of the Irish Free State was opposed by the radical republican Sinn Féin fringe and its armed wing, the IRA. In 1923, a kind of armed ceasefire was established by the leader of the IRA, Eamonn De Valera. From 1937 to 1949 the new state adopted the old Gaelic name of Eire and in 1949 it left the Commonwealth altogether to become a fully-fledged Republic. The bloody consequences of the partition of Ireland filled the daily news reels with reports of terrorist folly until rather recent times when, in 1998, the Good Friday Agreement, a kind of joint power-sharing venture between the Irish Republic and the UK, ushered a long period of peace into Northern Ireland and granted a degree of autonomy to the Northern Irish parliament which meets at Stormont Castle, Belfast.

In 1914, British army recruitment of Irish soldiers led to conflicting feelings of belonging and loyalty among members of the two groups competing for the island: the Unionists and the Nationalists. The fact that the recruitment drive was supported by the leaders of the two opposing groups is significant. John Redmond invited the Irish Nationalists to enlist to defend Belgium, attacked by a military power like Germany "for the defence of the sacred rights and liberties of small nations, and the respect and enlargement of the great principle of nation-

ality” (qtd. in Hennessey 1998, 82)¹¹, a principle of nationality which England would be no longer in a position to deny to the “Small Nation” Ireland after its citizens had been sacrificed while wearing a British uniform. On the other hand, the leader of the Unionist faction, Dublin-born Sir Edward Carson, famous also for having represented the Marquis of Queensbury in the famous trial against Oscar Wilde, encouraged Irish Unionists to fight to defend their place within the British Empire, to show their loyalty to the British Crown, repelling the very idea of Home Rule, which had just been ratified by the Westminster Parliament.

There was no conscription, therefore enlistment was voluntary. “In addition, there were already over 20, 000 Irishmen serving in the British regular army and they formed part of the British Expeditionary Force, which travelled to Belgium in August 1914, taking part in some of the earliest battles and the Christmas Truce” (Lawrance 2008, 65).

Knowing how things went after 1922, and having witnessed the effects of the civil war – the Troubles – which, resulted, over a period of thirty years, in 3,000 victims in a population of just over six million, we can agree with Winston Churchill who, in a famous speech after the Great War, said:

Great Empires have been overturned. The whole map of Europe has been changed [...] but as the deluge subsides and the waters fall short we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again. (Brearton 2000, 6)

This means that the Irish question after the Great War remained one of Great Britain’s unsolved issues.

In the English consciousness, the Great War meant an irreparable breach with the past, the destruction of every political, ethical and cultural institution of the pre-war period. For the Irish, on the other hand, the World War I is important because, notwithstanding its “planetary” significance, it also played a decisive role in redefining the problems which had existed before it broke out and which continue to exist on the agenda of the Irish political scene to the present, especially after the 2016 Brexit and the general election of June 2017 in the UK.

To have a clear understanding of how and why this can have happened, it is necessary to look once again at the facts of history, in particular 1916.

On 24 April, Easter Monday 1916, nearly one thousand volunteers who had broken away from Redmond’s Irish National Volunteers, occupied strategic buildings in Dublin and proclaimed the Republic from the steps of the General Post Office. Five days later having surrendered to the British forces

¹¹ It is interesting to see James Connolly’s view on Redmond’s political approach to the world, and more generally to a form of partition of Ireland in the chapter dedicated to the socialist leaders’ writings in Deane 1991, 718-733.

to protect the civilian population, the leaders of the rising were shot, following summary court martial.

Three months after the Easter Rising, on 1 July 1916, the 36th Division (Ulster), comprising almost entirely Ulster unionists, was annihilated. Two thousand dead and 3,000 injured, these were the Irish victims of that first day of what was called the Battle of the Somme, the "Caporetto" of the British army. There was hardly a family in Belfast or in villages all over Ulster which did not count a relative among those dead. Even today the annual July and August Orange parades commemorate those dead. They are remembered especially during the marches held to celebrate 12 (1 in the Julian calendar) July, the anniversary of the defeat of the Catholic Stuart King, James II, by his Protestant Dutch son-in-law William of Orange (William III of England) during the famous battle on the banks of the river Boyne in 1690.

Almost 94,000 Irishmen, enlisted in the 36th Division (Ulster), in the 16th Division (Irish) and in the 2nd Division (Irish), during the Easter week of 1916, found themselves fighting on the western front wearing the same uniform as that of the British troops engaged in Dublin in repressing the rebellion. It is easy to understand the contrasting feelings events in Dublin roused in their hearts: the realisation of the Nationalists was immediate and heart-breaking; the Unionists, on the contrary, spoke of treachery and sabotage, of a vile action against a country committed to a holy war.

The expression "the 1916 heroes" still conveys different values depending on whether to pronounce it is an Irish nationalist or a unionist. For the former the heroes are the dead of Easter 1916, for the latter those of the Somme.

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SIGNATORIES

First performed on 22 April 2016 and published by
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Commemorations are never easy to handle and especially difficult when what is honoured is a historical event with the magnitude of Easter 1916 and the birth of the modern Irish State. In theatre, commemorations are fraught with the further hazard of negotiating with an audience's expectations, particularly when the event to be memorialised has become mythologised over the passing of the intervening century. Myths can become prey to nostalgia, that softening influence of comforting pieties rendered ever blander by repetition. To challenge the pieties, as O'Casey and Denis Johnston did at a far closer remove from the events of 1916 than a century, is to risk outrage and critical denigration for daring to question what is thought to be established (and therefore untouchable) history. To conceive of *Signatories* with the intention of it being one of UCD's contributions to a year of memorialising was a brave endeavour (the performances were the brainchild of Éilis O'Brien, Head of Communications, and the playwright, Frank McGuinness): eight monologues were to be written by eight alumni of the university and staged as a promenade performance inside Kilmainham Goal, directed by Patrick Mason. Each dramatist was to take one of the seven signatories of the Declaration of Independence (Pearse, Connolly, Ceannt, Clarke, Mac Diarmada, MacDonagh, Plunkett) and compose a twelve-minute soliloquy where the focus would be the (imagined) final experience of each signatory awaiting execution at the hands of the British. What were presented were seven men of disparate beliefs, backgrounds, life-styles, whose elevation to the status of national hero lay in a future far beyond their own expectations, hopes or political vision. This immediately brought diversity of focus to the project, as did the inevitable multiplicity of imaginative approaches and dramaturgi-

¹ Dublin, Belfield, 2016, pp. xxvii + 137.

cal styles to be expected from the eight commissioned writers: Emma Donoghue, Thomas Kilroy, Hugo Hamilton, Frank McGuinness, Rachel Fehily, Eilís Ní Dhuibhne, Marina Carr and Joseph O'Connor.

The eighth, and perhaps unexpected, voice was that of Elizabeth O'Farrell, the young nurse attending the wounded in the General Post Office who was chosen by Pearse to carry his order of surrender to the Commandant of the British Forces in Ireland. It was a brilliant decision to start the whole play with her, reminiscing in older age about her momentous journey across Dublin, armed only with a white flag, to reach the British, only to be further deployed by them in taking news of Pearse's decision to the other Fenian battalions grouped around the city. O'Farrell was a carer, naïve perhaps but committed to the Nationalist cause through the various societies she had joined; and hers was in consequence a disheartening pilgrimage undertaken in a spirit of duty through all the wreckage and bloodshed. Decades later her recollection of that day is vivid and exact; horror and fear colour her consciousness rather than any sense of pride in her contribution to what over the intervening years has been accomplished in Ireland, politically and culturally. Her voice, as imagined by Emma Donoghue, is the ideal intermediary between a staged history and its contemporary audience: O'Farrell was detached, a concerned observer, by virtue of her profession till given a role (the lacklustre, feared role of the messenger of doom) the nature of which has shaped her future psyche; she is not jubilant or pious about the Rising but aware only of the pain and grief that she had kept fiercely disciplined throughout her ordeal, when she was alert only to the prevalence of loss. Her pilgrimage fittingly opened what was for the first audiences an evening journey around the cold, dank, waste interiors of Kilmainham, the setting that had in reality framed the Signatories' final confrontation, less with destiny in this showing than with their innermost selves.

It is in this last aspect of the dramas that *Signatories* may have departed from and consequently challenged expectation: there is no sensationalism or melodrama in the portrayals of the seven men and the nurse, no outbursts of patriotic rhetoric, no claiming a high moral ground or the status of victim or martyr. Spectators watch seven men awaiting certain death and observe their several strategies for coping with the passing of time. If they touch the heroic, it is in not becoming abject: despair may be present but it does not dominate any man's consciousness to the degree where it unmans him. If anything is celebrated in each of the monologues, it is the bare reality of the men's manhood. A quiet courage, experienced in myriad subtle manifestations, rather than an assertive heroism defines their individuality. In what is arguably the most daring of the plays, Frank McGuinness's soliloquy for Éamonn Ceannt, long silences are punctuated by Ceannt's meditations on the simple contents of his pockets: a mounting pile of coins, his watch and chain, rosary, and finally the worn latchkey to his home. They are the minor, routine but defining tokens of a life, disturbed at the moment when peace should come to

him, by the knowledge that he killed a man during the Rising. Exhausted by the tensions between his religious belief and his republican commitment and what it exacted from him, his mind finds relief only in the weight of the key in his hand, though it will no longer give him admission to his home and all it has represented. He recites the details (house number, road, suburb, city, country) as in a private litany, but it is a litany of profound loss.

What surprises with all the contributions, as with McGuinness's, is how the writers deploy the required compression of each performance to twelve minutes to achieve a remarkable incisiveness and intensity, intimating a far wider range of experience than can be contained directly within the one soliloquy. Effortlessly, the dramaturgy of each contribution encompasses naturalism (the urgency of the immediately time-bound), symbolism, and the emblematic. Thomas Kilroy, for example, presents a Pearse troubled less by being forced to surrender than memories of his overbearing and caustic father, of schoolboy bullying, and most recently, of his handling of a "boy" (22) thought to be a deserter, whom he helped to escape by a back route from the Post Office only to watch him being shot down by an enemy gun emplacement. The situation is ambiguous: was Pearse playing to his belief in a form of personal sacrifice, knowing the boy's chances were few, or genuinely trying to set the boy free from a future imprisonment and possible death? Is the memory framed by guilt or hopes that are quickly dashed? Delicately Kilroy intimates the latent homosexuality underlying Pearse's attitude to the boy while subtly respecting his deeply closeted nature. The monologue touches on a momentary experience but reaches out to the range of influences that determined Pearse's complexity. Sean Mac Diarmada does not speak for himself in Éilis Ní Dhuibhne's contribution, instead it is Min Ryan, his girlfriend, who recalls his endless chatter, laughter, songs, games and jokes about the Rising, which were clearly aimed at keeping up her and her sister's spirits as much as his own. His seeming fearlessness dominates her processes of recall, even at the expense of her new fiancé, Risteard; Mac Diarmada's ability to transform a condemned cell into a *craic* will continue to give her life meaning. Marina Carr follows Thomas MacDonagh from his cell to the firing squad, depicting a disciplined magnanimity throughout, in itself a subversive gesture against his guards' attempts to dehumanise their Irish prisoners, till one of them admits, "You're a prince, Mr MacDonagh" (101). His last, amused thought is of his father "waving his big strong hand in dismissal. 'Keep away from them Fenians [...] Great cry, little wool, like the goats of Connacht.'" (101). This degree of studied carelessness is celebrated repeatedly as the source of each man's heroism: his particular strategy to transcend his immediate predicament (with all the attendant temptations to despair) and find a depth of inner peace. But heroism is not once a part of their thinking: if spectators, listening to each of them in turn, are moved to define the men as heroes, that is a choice shaped by a century of political history.

Éilís O'Brien in her "Preface" to the published volume expresses the hope that the originality of the project will influence future experiments in Irish dramaturgy. The extended soliloquy or monologue form has an honoured place in Irish playwriting (Lady Gregory, Beckett, Friel, in particular). There is a gesture too in the preoccupation with *sprezzatura* (the hero in spite of himself) towards Yeats's plays and Denis Johnston's. Site-specific performance, devised within a theatre company, has a long and vibrant tradition in Ireland. The new creative departure here in *Signatories* is the coming together of a substantial group of dramatists willing both to write individually, honouring their several styles, and to work around a shared theme and to an agreed format. This is not a collaboration in the conventional sense in which the term is applied in theatrical contexts, because the uniqueness of each dramatist's voice is not subsumed within the created whole but allowed to stand with its individualising qualities and distinctive tones intact. The subject of this project was undeniably special: a group isolated in prison cells but sharing a common political ambition and a grim fate necessitated the form the project took and allowed for an appropriate and equal division of labour between the writers whose very diversity is key to the strength of the result. It is difficult to imagine how these contributing factors could easily be replicated. A genre of prison dramas would have decided limitations, though it might be possible to broaden out to cover other international contexts. This raises the further question of how successfully the play could be staged outside the Irish historical context and the centenary on which the plays draw for their poignant impact. It would be possible, but perhaps would require an informed audience if the full complexity of resonance (personal and political) were to be fully appreciated. Shed the specifics and one would be left with a series of monologues focusing on approaches to death, which would be powerful certainly but more generalised than the original appeal of the plays. Such ambitions for an afterlife apart, *Signatories* remains a remarkable achievement, far more challenging, subversive, ruthless and genuinely uplifting than writing celebrating a historical anniversary tends to be. MacDonagh speaks of the dehumanising effect of capitulation and imprisonment; but, by imagining the humanity of their several subjects, these eight playwrights have redeemed them from the levelling, equally dehumanising effects of history and myth.

“All hail the mob!”

William Wall

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I was ten years old in 1966, when Ireland celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising. The atmosphere of jubilation, the triumphalism, the cosy relationship between the church and the state created, what I'd call, a naive nationalist narrative, uncomplicated, for example, by the role of labour in the revolution, by James Connolly's communism or by any of the later revisionist critiques of Pearse and the other leaders. The commemoration was, in fact, a powerful martyrology that turned the head of a ten year old. In those days boys played Cowboys and Indians after school. But in 1966 we played Irish and English instead, and though we were all happy to die for Ireland numerous times we made sure that the other side died more often. One of my friends was an actual English boy, and even he resented the fact that we always wanted him to play the enemy. He wanted to be on the Irish side too. For some bizarre reason, despite defeat and the execution of the leaders, we saw the Irish as the victors – such was the atavism of the time.

I was selected from my class of eight pupils in our tiny primary school, to give the commemorative reading of the Proclamation Of The Republic on Easter Monday 1966. I learned it by heart, moved by the rhetoric which was, in effect, my first experience of political poetry, aside from the ballads and songs of rebellion that everyone knew in those days. I was a child, with no experience of literature: it carried me with it. I was ready, at ten, to fight for Ireland.

I delivered my reading before a crowd that included our much-loved family doctor who, during the War of Independence, had fought in a flying column and had taken part in the famous Kilmichael ambush. At parties he would sing the famous song:

Whilst we honour in song and in story
The memory of Pearse and McBride,
Whose names are illumined in glory
With martyrs who long since have died,
Forget not the Boys of Kilmichael,
Those brave lads so gallant and true,
Who fought 'neath the green flag of Erin
To conquer the red white and blue.

As it happens, Kilmichael is probably the most controversial engagement of the entire War of Independence with claims by some historians that

the commandant of the column executed wounded British prisoners. Subsequently, the British would burn Cork City in revenge.

The Proclamation that Pearse read from the steps of the General Post Office on Easter Monday 1916 declared “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies”. The text derives, of course, from an anti-colonialist narrative of “possession by the foreigner”, so “ownership of Ireland” is to be glossed simply as a proclamation against foreign control. But a young boy, the son of a man who owned a mere eleven acres of land (4.4 hectares), read it differently. To me and people like me it was a proclamation of equity if not equality. I read it together with the promise that the republic would guarantee “religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens [...] cherishing all of the children of the nation equally” (*Proclamation of the Republic*, 1916).

But what sort of a nation was, in fact, created by the rebellion and the famous victory over the forces of imperialism? In the immediate aftermath of the War of Independence and Civil War, the economy of the country was in a weak state with very high unemployment levels. This crisis was an opportunity for the new Irish government to distinguish itself from the British colonial administration – memories of the Great Famine of 1845-1852 still haunted the people. But ominously, the response was brutal austerity for the poor and tax breaks for big farmers and industrialists; the re-introduction of the seven day working week for agricultural labourers after the government had assisted the ranchers in breaking a labourer’s strike; and huge wage and pension reductions. Then the harvests of 1923 and 1924 collapsed. Between austerity and the failed harvests the result was something very close to famine¹. There was widespread malnutrition, particularly in the west, where at least 10 deaths from starvation were recorded. The responsibility of British government policy in Ireland in creating the conditions for the Great Famine was a major plank in the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the Free State, so this hunger was particularly shameful, and, unfortunately, an omen of things to come. Far from being governed on behalf of the people, it seemed the priority of the new state would be the protection of a new Catholic elite which had risen to replace the old Protestant one. It was a change of confession rather than of politics.

The new state had laid down its markers. In the struggle between labour and capital, the state would favour capital. In the struggle for survival there was always the boat to England or America and malnutrition and even starvation were still weapons of domination in the class war. Anyone examining the history of the years from 2008 to the present would note the striking similarities – austerity, wage and social welfare cuts, anti-labour legislation, tax reductions for big business, evictions and repossessions. There were no banks to be

¹ Cf. <<http://irishhistorypodcast.ie/1925-irelands-forgotten-famine/>> (05/2018).

bailed out in 1925, of course. But the trivial concept of an economy as a set of household accounts held sway then as now, and the government sought to balance the books and minimise debt. In addition, as Conor McCabe points out in his book *The Sins Of the Fathers* (2014 [2011]), the Irish economy was managed as an outlier of the British one, to the benefit of a class of middlemen (traditionally called *gombeen* men) who were extremely influential in the new political dispensation. McCabe calls this class the *compradors*, in a nod to the role of subaltern enablers of colonial exploitation in Latin America.

Connolly spelled it all out, more or less as it came to pass: "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle [...] England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualistic institutions she has planted in this country" (Connolly 1897). Certainly, the subaltern state of mind continued to rule, arguably to the present day, though with different masters.

Thus, in late '20s and '30s, four of my mother's five siblings were forced to leave Ireland to seek work. The fifth followed after the war in the same circumstances. The two sisters became nurses, a profession barred to them in Ireland as children of poor parents who had no connections in the church. The hospitals were all run by the Church, as were the schools, such social welfare services as existed, homes for abandoned women and girls, industrial schools, borstals. The police, judiciary and medical profession collaborated in keeping the Church supplied with suitable patients, prisoners and paupers for this paragon of disciplinary systems. It was hard to escape the Church if you were poor.

My mother's three brothers joined the Royal Navy by the simple expedient of walking into a recruiting office in the "Treaty Port"² of Cobh. Their ancestors before them had gone the same road, because Cork Harbour was a major naval port in the British Empire, and a significant waypoint in Britain's colonial trade especially to the West Indies. The country they left behind was a closed one, Catholic in character even if it was, by and large, tolerant of other religions as long as they kept their heads down; dominated by the Catholic hierarchy and the political parties that paid homage to them; poor, under-industrialised and inward-looking.

Most significantly it lacked a strong left – unlike other European countries that had militant trade unions and where socialist or communist parties had considerable influence and sometimes achieved power. The Irish Labour Party made the great mistake of stepping aside in 1918 until the national question was

² The ports of Berehaven, Cobh (formerly Queenstown) and Lough Swilly were retained by the British government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. As deepwater harbours they were regarded as central to the defence of Britain's North Atlantic trade and the Western Approaches.

resolved, and consequently the contribution of labour to the struggle was largely subsumed into the catholic nationalism of the Free State³. After the War of Independence the party remained small and the population most affected by post-colonial austerity was never properly politicised. Unionisation was partial, and Catholic “social teaching” (from the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891) was often the basis of the party’s policies⁴ – a compromised position from the outset.

In any event, the role of labour and the left in the struggle for independence was, unsurprisingly, never part of the history curriculum. We were not taught, for example, that one of the first general strikes in Europe occurred in Ireland in 1918, or that many of the Irish Volunteers (later the IRA) were themselves members of left-wing organisations and trade unions. Nor was the rebellion ever placed within the wider international context.

That context is remarkable and is worth recapitulating briefly. The post-war world was a ferment of ideologies. Just in 1919, for example, the year in which Dáil Eireann⁵ met for the first time, there was an anarchist uprising in Buenos Aires; the Freikorps carried out their first actions against the Spartacist uprising in Germany and murdered Rosa Luxembourg; Winston Churchill sent tanks to suppress a strike in Glasgow leading to Scotland’s “Black Friday”; a general strike in Seattle brought 65,000 workers out; the first Communist International took place; revolution broke out in Egypt; the Shanghai workers strike against colonialism won against the pro-Japanese government; Benito Mussolini founded the Fascist Party; the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic was established and suppressed; the American Communist party was founded; and Hitler gave his first public speech. That first Dáil was elected by a suffrage that for the first time included women, albeit those over 30. And, incidentally, Ho Ch Minh was drinking with the Sinn Féin delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. There is also a considerable record of “intercourse” between Sinn Féin and the Bolsheviks⁶.

In other words, the stated intention of the 1916 rebels to take advantage of the global historical crisis in imperialism represented by the Great War, was indeed far-sighted. There was exactly such a crisis: the world was in turmoil, anti-imperialism was on the rise, the left was emboldened by the success of the Bolsheviks, the presence on the streets of Europe of men who had fought in the trenches and women who had done their work in their absence made for a volatile atmosphere. Our little piece of anti-imperialist struggle was taking place in a vast global struggle against imperialism and capitalism but this context was entirely missing from the teaching of history in Ireland. In 1966,

³ <<https://www.labour.ie/centenary/story/foundations.html>> (05/2018).

⁴ <<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/05/irish-labour-party-social-democracy-welfare-state-church>> (05/2018).

⁵ Dáil Eireann translates as The Parliament of Ireland.

⁶ <<http://contentdm.warwick.ac.uk/cdm/ref/collection/russian/id/765>> (05/2018).

it simply did not come up. The narrative of the Easter Rising and War of Independence we were presented with was one of national struggle isolated from other forces, tiny Ireland struggling alone against the might of empire, occasionally assisted by "gallant allies in Europe" as the Proclamation had it – the Spanish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the French in the eighteenth and the Germans in the twentieth – all watched over by a benign and paternal pope who wished only the best for his faithful Irish flock. These interventions from abroad were always depicted as the result of assiduous diplomacy by Irish rebels, and never as an offshoot of whatever global conflict was taking place at the time. We were not encouraged to admire the French Revolution, for example, even though the revolutionaries twice sent expeditions to Ireland to assist the United Irishmen. The anti-clericalism of the revolution made it untouchable in our confessional state. Wolfe Tone, who was the United Irishman *par excellence* was an uncomfortable hero, not least because he was protestant.

In the years after 1966 when the Troubles in Northern Ireland broke out, the nationalist narrative underwent significant and necessary revisions, but for most of the population of Ireland the Rising and the war that followed it retain the aura of heroism. Nothing in the revisionist armoury has shaken the popular belief that whatever their personal failings, those who fought and those who lent them the assistance of safe houses etc were involved in a titanic struggle. Ordinary people will still point out places where fighting took place, or name their ancestors who took part. It is said that the state qua state harbours a sub-surface embarrassment at the memory of its violent birth best expressed in the recent re-evaluation of "peaceful constitutionalist" John Redmond (who nevertheless encouraged his supporters to volunteer to fight in the bloodbath that was World War I), but if so it is not reflected in the opinions of ordinary people, for whom Redmond is at best an irrelevance by contrast with people like Pearse or later Collins and de Valera.

The persistence of that sense of pride partly accounts for the valorisation by the Left of significant phrases from the declaration – such as the ones I've already quoted – and has given energy to the street protest movements that have sprung up in answer to austerity policies. In particular, in a return of the repressed, the ghost of James Connolly has begun to haunt Irish politics again.

I think I can safely say that the nationalist narrative was so effective that young people of my generation were surprised to discover that we had a socialist past. However, that late-won knowledge of a social history of the rebellion and war has been instrumentalised to good effect by the most recent generation of political activists. In particular, it has been used in polemics against the Irish Labour Party, which has always shunned class-politics and socialism and which, recently, in a rapprochement with the Right, formed coalition governments with both major parties, helping to prop up governments hell-bent on austerity, resetting wage gains, reducing pensions, limiting workers rights and privatising everything left in national ownership. Emigration returned on a huge scale after the

crash of 2008 – 80,000 people left each year for several years. My own two sons have taken the same road as my uncles and aunts to live and work in England.

Labour provided plenty of ammunition for its detractors. In opposition it was a fierce critic of austerity and fought the election by demonising the European Central Bank for having imposed it. But the election slogan “Labour’s Way or Frankfurt’s Way” would return to haunt them as junior partners in government to right-wing Fine Gael when it agreed to measure after measure that made people’s lives worse. It was soundly punished for its strategy. In May 2017, for example, it was languishing at around 5% in the polls and 3% among working class and unemployed people⁷, and this is in no small part due to the blending of socialist history with the national narrative. The Labour Party claims James Connolly as a founding member⁸, leaving itself open to the contrast between its perceived willingness to cooperate with the Right and Connolly’s militancy.

More importantly, Connolly’s radical socialism is mobilised against the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism with its argument that “there is no alternative” to brutal austerity and the destruction of the social state. The tens of thousands of people who march in the so-called “anti-water charge” protests, which are really anti-austerity protests, are called “a mob” and a “rabble” by every media outlet in the country. According to the establishment, these protests are haunted by a “sinister fringe”⁹ intent on overthrowing the state – Trotskyists¹⁰ and such like nightmarish monsters. The unstated implication is that a mob of peasants could never understand the great game that is politics; the peasant is better advised to leave such matters to the brilliant minds of his betters. On the other hand, the peasant rightly objects that his “betters” have bankrupted the country and driven his children to emigrate, meanwhile increasing their wealth during a recession¹¹.

Paul Murphy, of the Socialist Party and Anti-Austerity Alliance, recently paraphrased Connolly in justification of the mob. It was, he said, “the mob which had abolished religious persecution, established the value of human life, softened the horrors of war, compelled trial by jury, abolished the death penalty”¹². Connolly’s actual words were:

The mob has transformed and humanised the world. It has abolished religious persecution and imposed toleration upon the bigots of all creeds; it has established the value of human life, softened the horrors of war as a preliminary to abolishing it,

⁷ <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/poll>> (05/2018).

⁸ <<https://www.labour.ie/centenary/story/foundations.html>> (05/2018).

⁹ <<http://www.thejournal.ie/water-charges-protests-1765120-Nov2014/>> (05/2018).

¹⁰ <<https://cedarlounge.wordpress.com/2014/11/11/a-td-writes-on-trotskyists-water-charges-bin-charges-this-and-that/>> (05/2018).

¹¹ <<http://www.thejournal.ie/wealth-divide-rte-david-mcwilliams-2339907-Sep2015/>> (05/2018).

¹² <<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/water/irish-water-crisis/protest-gardai-under-protection-from-water-mob-30766307.html>> (05/2018).

compelled trial by jury, abolished the death penalty for all offences save one, and in some countries abolished it for all; and to-day it is fighting to keep the children from the factory and mine, and put them to school. The mob, "the most blind and ruthless tyrant of all", with one sweep of its grimy, toil-worn hand, swept the stocks, the thumbscrew, the wheel, the boots of burning oil, the torturer's vice and the stake into the oblivion of history, and they who to-day would seek to view those arguments of kings, nobles, and ecclesiastics must seek them in the lumber room of the museum [...] All hail, then, to the mob, the incarnation of progress! (1910)

But even as the state persists in treating the protests as the action of a mindless or chaotic mob, it prosecutes overzealous demonstrators, most notably a boy who was fourteen at the time of the alleged crime against whom the state has brought a charge of false imprisonment, equivalent to kidnapping. The case was something of a litmus test for how far the State is prepared to go to discipline protest. But the alleged "mindlessness" of the mob seems to stand in contradiction to the alleged determination of the accused protestors to falsely imprison a minister. If the mob is truly mindless it cannot have the necessary intent to plan such a crime – unless, of course, the unlawful detention was planned by the "sinister fringe" of Trotskyists.

In fact, the "false imprisonment" merely involved preventing the leader of the Labour Party and *Tánaiste* (or deputy First Minister) from leaving an event she had attended in a working class area. She was safely secured in a variety of police cars for a total of two hours. As it happens neither the boy nor the other demonstrators were armed whereas each of the police cars contained an armed detective. The gravity of the charges was made clear by the judge (in the non-jury Children's Court) who, in handing down the guilty verdict on the boy, noted in passing sentence that "Ms Burton was hit on her head with a balloon, while Ms O'Connell was struck on the back and they had to push through the crowd". He said their personal liberty was restricted by the action of the crowd and in his view both were victims of an assault¹³. So much for a Labour Party which likes to trace its lineage from Connolly and Larkin. Connolly (founder of the Citizen Army and executed by the British for his part in the 1916 rebellion and who is said to have advised his soldiers to "hold onto their rifles"¹⁴) could be expected to take a baneful view of the concept of water-balloons as weapons in political struggle.

¹³ <<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/courts/jobstown-teen-let-off-with-conditional-discharge-after-guilty-verdict-35150951.html>> (05/2018).

¹⁴ The remark comes as part of the following, possibly apocryphal, address to his fellow Citizen Army members: "The odds are a thousand to one against us, but in the event of victory, hold onto your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty. Hold on to your rifles". The quotation, however, has no reliable provenance, despite being cited in various forms in numerous biographies of Connolly, and may simply express a view widely held on the revolutionary left at the time, which was ill at ease among nationalists such as Patrick Pearse.

Convicting a teenager of assault with a balloon (even one filled with water) probably represents the nadir of Ireland's decline from state to joke. It is perhaps fortunate that no leprechauns attended the protest; they are a notoriously devious group¹⁵ and most probably their ranks have been infiltrated by anarchists and Trotskyites, who in the Irish political imagination, and in defiance of historical fact, cooperate comfortably in their nefarious activities.

In the meantime Paul Murphy TD¹⁶ and other activists have stood trial for the same protest and have been acquitted following a judge's charge to the jury that the police evidence was unreliable and they should rely on video evidence – which in fact showed that the charges were baseless and that the police were, in the judge's own words, victims of “the frailty of human memory”¹⁷. An accusation of police perjury was later made in the Dáil¹⁸ but no further action has ensued to date. It should be noted that Murphy and the other activists, all well-known members of various political parties and activist groups with no criminal record and no alleged tendency to violence (other than, perhaps, water balloons) were arrested in dawn raids; the usual procedure, especially in relation to Members of Parliament, is to ask the suspect to call to the police station for questioning. But, for example, a total of six policemen were despatched to arrest Paul Murphy arriving at his house at 6.55 am when the TD was still in bed¹⁹.

And this extraordinary extension of the state's disciplinary system happens in an international context by contrast with which assault by balloon seems not only trivial but positively whimsical – the Occupy movement, the suppression of the Arab Spring, the gutting of Syriza, the rise of Podemos, but also the new kind of fascism in Brexit, and the old kind in Ukraine, Hungary, Brazil, Marine le Pen in France, not to mention the bizarre phenomenon that is Donald Trump and the alt-Right (really old fashioned fascism if not Nazism) in the USA and elsewhere.

In conclusion, I suggest that the memory of 1916 has functioned in different ways at different times. The occlusion or even elision of the Connollyite tradition was of crucial importance to the Catholic rightwing state of my boyhood, and Connolly figured in 1966 as another martyr for old Ireland, rather than as a revolutionary socialist. However, the different discourses of 21st century politics require a different James Connolly to come forth from the tomb, a Lazarus only too happy to speak the truth. Martyrdom has a bad name nowadays whereas in 1966 the martyrology was central to the narrative of self-sacrifice *pro patria*. But

¹⁵ <<http://www.yourirish.com/folklore/legend-of-leprechauns>> (05/2018).

¹⁶ TD or Teachta Dála means member of Parliament.

¹⁷ <<https://www.rte.ie/news/courts/2017/0628/886201-jobstown/>> (05/2018).

¹⁸ <<https://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/paul-murphy-accuses-gardai-of-perjury-454092.html>> (05/2018).

¹⁹ <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/paul-murphy-arrest-designed-to-damage-water-charge-campaign-1.2096680>> (05/2018).

in 2016, what he had to say about the system of oppression that he struggled against is of much more pressing significance. Today he is mobilised as an activist, theorist and polemicist of the anti-capitalist movement. Thus the Easter Rebellion still resonates, and it will not be so easy for the patriarchy and the apparatus of state to modulate this new resonance – a fact tacitly acknowledged in the intense security and exclusion that surrounded the celebrations of 2016 in Ireland.

Six years ago I published a poem called "Ghost Estate" (Wall 2011), which summarised for me, in an oblique way, the history of the Irish state from its inception to the present. The "ghost estate" of the title is both the empty housing estates that littered the country after the 2008 collapse, and also a trope for the voiding of the nation state, with its rights and protections, in favour of capital. It ends on the line "first phase sold out": the "first phase" is the first republic, the one set up by the revolution, sold out to capitalism, ranchers, compradors and the subaltern enablers of corporate power. The poem has been anthologised, translated and (horror of horrors) set as an examination question in the Leaving Certificate for secondary school students, so I suppose in some sense it must reflect some scintilla of the *zeitgeist*.

"Ghost estate"

Women inherit
the ghost estate
their unborn children play
invisible games
of hide & seek
in the scaffold frames
if you lived here
you'd be home by now

they fear winter
& the missing lights
on the unmade road
& who they will get
for neighbours
if anyone comes anymore
if you lived here
you'd be home by now

the saurian cranes
& concrete mixers
the rain greying
into the hard-core
& the wind
in the empty windows
if you lived here
you'd be home by now

the heart is open plan
 wired for alarm
 but we never thought
 we'd end like this
 the whole country
 a builder's tip
if you lived here
you'd be home by now

it's all over now
 but to fill the holes
 nowhere to go
 & out on the edge
 where the boys drive
 too fast for the road
 that old sign says
 first phase sold out

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The History of My Family: W. B. Yeats's "Leda", Her Murder and Why He Abandoned His Son

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Abstract:

William Butler Yeats had an extra-marital lover, Lily O'Neill or Honor Bright, from 1918 to 1925. Garda Superintendent Leopold Dillon murdered her on orders from Kevin O'Higgins, Minister of Justice of the Irish Free State. George, Yeats's wife, reported falsely that Lily was a Republican spy. O'Higgins wanted to restore credence in the Free State, which would otherwise have been reclaimed by the British due to maladministration. Afterwards a bogus trial was concocted outside the court circuit by Chief Superintendent David Neligan, at which Lily was reinvented as a prostitute to conceal Yeats's affair and son and hide the involvement of Free State officials. On the strength of false evidence the jury unanimously acquitted the assassin after three minutes' deliberation.

Keywords: Early 20th Century, George Yeats, Honor Bright, Irish Free State, William Butler Yeats

Introduction

This essay clarifies controversial events in William Butler Yeats's life, such as sudden heart troubles and depression from June 1925, his notorious Divorce Bill speech, the riots over O'Casey's production of *The Plough and the Stars* and Yeats's obsession with Purgatory. His wife George was his amanuensis; this essay explains her motivation for altering details in his works and hoarding his papers after his death. She insisted that Yeats's alter egos and "masks" were psychic creations of a genius; this essay shows they were real disguises that George had to suppress in order to hide her own role in the murder of Yeats's extra-marital lover.

This essay also connects my own family history to these events. It explains why my grandmother was murdered, who was responsible, and how the truth was concealed. It explains why my father had a different name in childhood, and why the Garda Síochána strongly urged him to not enquire into his mother's life. It shows why my sisters and I could see from her photograph that she was not a prostitute, and why the jury at the trial of her alleged murderers had such a different point of view.

The first stanza of "Easter 1916" reveals that William Butler Yeats never outgrew his childhood identification with the working class; he was still meeting them "at the close of day", exchanging "polite meaningless words" on the same cultural level. A theatre manager, astrologist and poet, he often changed his voice and appearance and by 1900 had established several active alter egos. The evocative phrase "A terrible beauty is born" made him a respected authority on politics; he was invited to Westminster to describe Irish attitudes (Maddox 1999a, 6). Nevertheless he still inhabited an upper-class world, not that of the Catholic majority. To absorb popular opinion he therefore regularly disguised himself to wander city streets.

Simultaneously the death of his father was approaching. Yeats would have to support two unmarried sisters, and was the only member of his family able to provide an heir (30-31), so from 1915 his aim was marriage for money and a son. Aged fifty-two he married Bertha Georgie Hyde-Lees¹ aged 25, who was affluent, spoke three languages, shared Yeats's interests in astrology and literature, and was keen to move to Dublin. This "[...]" bound him into a tight and familiar circle "[...]" (43) with Georgie's family; none of his relatives were informed until after the wedding. Before the event Yeats had nightmares (59), was in "[...] wild misery [...]" and "[...] ill and feverish [...]" (62). The marriage provoked "[...] disdain and back-hand laughter [...]" (64-65). Shortly after the wedding, George² began "automatic writing" led by spiritual "voices" emanating solely from herself towards her husband, which gave her control over the marriage and procreation (74) and cut him off from other occult people (76).

Yeats would often retire to the United Arts Club (6) and disguise himself with Abbey Theatre resources to walk around town³. At a dance club⁴ in March or April 1918 he fell in love; poems about a dancer appeared. Suddenly in late 1918 George wanted to move to Oxford.

¹ At Harrow Road Register Office in London on 20th October 1917.

² She had made her name masculine.

³ As he reveals in the first stanza of "Easter 1916".

⁴ It would have been teetotal and supervised.

In 1919 George published *The Wild Swans at Coole* but did not order poems chronologically. Those of 1916-1917 are Yeats contemplating his demise (see Yeats 1994 [1990]). In "Lines Written in Dejection" he writes:

I have nothing but the embittered sun;
[...] And now that I have come to fifty years
I must endure the timid sun. (195)

The tone changes in 1918 with "Men Improve with the Years":

I am worn out with dreams [...]
[...] all day long I look
Upon this lady's beauty [...]
Is this my dream or the truth?
O would that we had met
When I had my burning youth! (185)

He explains in "The Collar-Bone of a Hare":

[...] the best thing is
To change my loves while dancing
And pay but a kiss for a kiss. (185-186)

He wishes to "change his loves" because he has fallen in love with someone other than his wife. He writes in amorous mode "To A Young Beauty":

Dear fellow-artist, why so free
With every sort of company,
With every Jack and Jill?
Choose your companions from the best;
Who draws a bucket with the rest
Soon topples down the hill.
[...] You may, that mirrors for a school,
Be passionate, not bountiful,
As common beauties may [...]
I know what wages beauty gives,
How hard a life her servant lives [...] (189)

George would not have been "free with every sort of company", being used to exclusive social circles. She always chose "[...] companions from the best", and would never "topple down the hill" of society. These warnings were for a dancer, a "fellow-artist" who "mirror[s] for a school", living on "what wages beauty gives" (189). To Yeats, George represented "all things known, all things unknown" (220), while the dancer represented "all things loved, all things unloved". Six months after marriage he was tired of "[...] the old bitter world where they marry in churches [...]" (186).

My father was born in Coombe Maternity Hospital in the Liberties, Dublin on 9 November 1920. In 1942 at twenty-one he enlisted in the British Army. As an Irish Volunteer he had to prove his age with his birth certificate; so he learnt that he was not Kevin McGill, and Margaret McGill was not his mother. He was Kevin Barry O'Neill. His mother was Lizzie O'Neill, also known as Lily O'Neill or Honor Bright, renowned as a prostitute in Dublin; she had been murdered when Kevin was four. No father was named. Mrs McGill admitted that she was his unpaid foster mother. Kevin planned to find out about his real mother after his army service, but instead he got married and had too many responsibilities with no money.

In 1953 Kevin met a Dublin GP, Dr Sexton⁵, who knew his history. My father began reading Yeats's poetry to me, and often showed me a newspaper photograph of Yeats. I did see the resemblance, but thought all Irish people were similar, as I'd never consciously met any apart from my father. He used to avoid meeting Irish people because of his illegitimacy and his mother's disrepute.

In 1961 Kevin returned to Dublin to ask Mrs McGill about his mother, but she had died. The area where he had lived had been pulled down and the people scattered. He made enquiries at Dublin Castle and the Garda showed him evidence associated with the court case. Kevin returned home with police photographs of his dead mother, the bullet that had killed her and a newspaper article about the inquest. On return he spent three days weeping, then showed us what he had found. From then on he made no further enquiries about his mother in case it injured his wife and daughters, as advised by the Garda. He intended to return to it when we had grown up, but died of a heart attack in 1980. Before dying he said he had always intended to write a book about his parentage. Afterwards I tried to research his mother, but had no idea of her real name or when or where she was born, so the project was shelved. Then in 2006 as an adult I saw a picture of Yeats.

⁵ From a medical family in Kilkenny, he was working as a locum in Britain in the early 1950s. He was called to deliver my sister, after which my father gave him breakfast. As he was on duty he could not stay to talk. He promised to return but died of a stroke that day. Kilkenny colleague confirmed that he had recognized my father.



Fig. 1 – Kevin Barry O'Neill in 1943



Fig. 2 – William Butler Yeats in 1923

Ezra Pound, with whom Yeats studied Imagism from 1913, defined an image as presenting “[...] an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (Pound 1916, 83). With this in mind I read Yeats’s poetry systematically for references to his relationship with Lily and their son, my father, brought up by Margaret McGill as her own child. Daniel Albright’s edition showed when he believed poems were written and published, explaining that revisions were made even after publication, making dates of authorship debatable (lxv-lxvi).

A mystery girl appears in “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” (in *The Wild Swans at Coole*, written in March-April 1918, published 1919). Yeats dreamt of her dancing between “a Buddha, hand at rest, / Hand lifted up that blest [...]” and “A Sphinx with woman breast and lion paw”. Yeats is a live icon blessing multitudes, while George is a cold stone clairvoyant speaking riddles, and ferocious annihilator. He cannot forget “That girl my unremembering nights hold fast” and feels “A crazy juice that makes the pulses beat” that brings him to “the point of folly”; he compares her to the unseen “dark moon”. George is “the old moon”, who “lashed her tail [...] In triumph of intellect”, aware of “[...] all things known, all things unknown [...]”. Meanwhile the dancer’s “moonlit eyeballs never moved, / Being fixed on all things loved, all things unloved [...]” (220). George is sharp and vigilant, while the dancer is innocent and passionate.

Mary Kate Neill⁶, born 11 June 1900 in Graiguenaspiddoge⁷, County Carlow, was the sixth child of Michael Neill, a blacksmith. Having mother Kate and sister Mary, she was always called Lily⁸. Her father died in 1903⁹ and her mother in 1908¹⁰. Ireland offered no work without training, and no further education without fees; the best option was emigration. Their brother Edward was sponsor after emigrating to America in 1905 aged 20. Mary emigrated in 1907, followed by Patrick in 1917¹¹.

In 1918 she moved to Dublin¹², reputedly as sales assistant and model¹³, with tied board, lodging and clothes, meaning low wages. She was attractive and full of energy, and found evening work as a dancer in a club, probably to save for emigration. Her partners each paid for one dance, but she ignored them and “outdanced thought” (“The Double Vision of Michael Robartes”, Yeats 1994, 220).

“Michael Robartes and the Dancer”, also written in 1918, is an intimate conversation between the two eponymous characters. Robartes becomes a knight attacking a dragon to rescue Lily, who prefers the dragon; he is protecting her from her desires. He urges her to see her beauty in the mirror, but she is dismissive, preferring college; however to him her beauty excels books. There is a sexual undercurrent; they are speaking alone together. Michael Robartes’ lover was a beautiful dancer who wanted to emigrate, since in Ireland there was no hope of college for women¹⁴.

Yeats’s lover could not have been Maud Gonne MacBride¹⁵. Widely reputed to have been Yeats’s eternal love by most academics, by 1920 she was aged fifty-four with grown-up children and had made a career of supporting Sinn Fein. Yeats disapproved of her politics; her mind was “a bitter, an ab-

⁶ Lily O’Neill was the name she grew up with; in census returns she was called Mary Kate or Catherine; when pregnant she changed her name to Lizzie; in 1922 she (or Yeats?) changed her name to Honor Bright.

⁷ According to Inspector Patrick McGee of the Police Archives in Dublin Castle early in 2006. Confirmed by 1901 census and birth certificate.

⁸ 1901 census entry provided by Co. Carlow genealogist Ned Byrne (to whom my eternal gratitude) who recognized her name.

⁹ Death certificate.

¹⁰ Death certificate.

¹¹ Ellis Island records.

¹² According to Madge Hopkins’s Witness Deposition.

¹³ At Pimm’s ladies’ outfitters in Kildare Street or Switzers in Grafton Street depending on whose account you prefer. No evidence is given for either.

¹⁴ Subsidized Irish further education was provided for clergy and teachers only.

¹⁵ Maud Gonne was Yeats’s first unrequited love from the late 19th century. She married John MacBride who died in the Easter Uprising in 1916. Students are taught that she was the only woman Yeats was really in love with.

stract thing” full of “enmity”¹⁶. Nor was it her daughter Iseult, who was never known as a dancer and did not contemplate emigration or college. Between 1918 and 1922 Yeats and George were living in Oxford, while in 1918 Iseult was living in London, completing one year at art school at her mother’s insistence¹⁷ and starting an affair with Ezra Pound.

George was not a dancer either. In “Solomon and the Witch” (written in 1918) Yeats says:

[...] Maybe the bride-bed brings despair
For each an imagined image brings
And finds a real image there. (225)

Their sexual life was unsatisfactory¹⁸. Nevertheless “Under Saturn”, written in Oxford in November 1919, shows him very loyal to George:

[...] Do not...
Imagine that lost love [...] can make me pine;
For how should I forget the wisdom that you brought,
The comfort that you made? (227)

His recent “lost love” was Lily, whom George obviously knew about.

In “Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”, written in the same year, Yeats compared “Some moralist or mythological poet [...]”, i.e. himself, “[...] the solitary soul to a swan [...]” declaring “[...] I am satisfied with that [...]” (252). “Leda and the Swan”¹⁹ portrays rape between an older, powerful, experienced man and a young virgin²⁰. Being sexual it is not about George, to whom he had no physical attraction, despite their children²¹. His lover is Leda; their sexual relationship has commenced. Leda and Lily seem to be the same person, but the date of publication is 1923; Lily gave birth to Kevin in 1920. George probably withheld publication to hide his affair.

¹⁶ “On a Political Prisoner” written 10-29 January 1919. Cf. Maddox 1999a, 215.

¹⁷ Open University Making Britain Database: Iseult Gonne, <<http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/iseult-gonne>> (05/2018).

¹⁸ Shortly after marriage she wrote “*Perché noi siamo infelice?*” (Why are we unhappy? in bad Italian) (Saddlemyer 2002, 101).

¹⁹ The given date is 1923; perhaps it was written earlier but not published, or in memoriam?

²⁰ The rape may be real or consensual.

²¹ As shown by his poetry about George, which is affectionate and loyal but never sexual.

Conceivably in late 1918²² Yeats wrote “Ego Dominus Tuus” (I am your Master) in Latin, the language of Catholicism, assuming two personalities, Hic (Latin: me), his public mask of “the unconquerable delusion, Magical shapes”, and Ille (Latin: the other) called Michael Robartes, a “spectral image” familiar with the straw beds or “[...] coarse grass [...]” and horses’ excreta or “[...] camel-dung [...]” of ordinary people. Ille says despite being “mocked [...] for his lecherous life” he has found “The most exalted lady loved by a man”, stating “I seek an image, not a book”, beauty and flesh, not intellect. The title tells us his “most exalted lady” is Catholic and their love is consummated, while Ille proclaims he is not referring to his wife. Ille has left an “open book”; his affair continues (210).

On 13 January 1920 Yeats and George embarked on the SS *Carmania* for a twelve-week promotion tour of America (Saddlemyer 2002, 238). On arrival in New York they met Yeats’s agent, John Quinn. Quinn asked his²³ new lover to hide in a cupboard and jump out before the guests; but while hidden she overheard them quarrelling. George was insisting on trying for a son; Yeats was dismissive (Maddox 1999a, 10). Soon after, George was requested by both men to remain in New York to visit Yeats’s father during his tour (*ibidem*, 28).

In the modern world Kevin would have been conceived around February 3, 40 weeks before his birth date; but 1920s timing of delivery was inexact²⁴. Kevin was credibly conceived on 7-13 January, when Yeats spent a week at Liverpool docks while George was in London (*ibidem*, 30). There is no mention of Lily in his 1920 tour itinerary²⁵ and she was not listed on their liner, but could have been a stowaway. There is no evidence to support or eliminate any possibilities.

The couple returned to Oxford late May 1920. In late July Yeats received an unexpected letter from Maud living in his house in Dublin, to tell him that her daughter Iseult was pregnant and her husband had maltreated her (Maud Gonne to W.B. Yeats, 29 July 1920; cf. Yeats, Gonne 1994, 405-407). Yeats had hardly seen Maud and Iseult since 1918; though Iseult undoubtedly needed emergency intervention, Maud, now a Sinn Féin judge, wrote that he was not required²⁶ (*ibidem*). Nevertheless, on the day the letter ar-

²² Yeats began writing to his soul or alter ego Leo Africanus (Hic/Ille) in 1915, but this poem was written later. The date given by Albright is 1917, although Yeats did not meet Lily until 1918; they were sleeping together by late 1918, according to his poetry.

²³ Quinn’s new lover. Lily was definitely not present.

²⁴ In the 1970s my own first pregnancy was three weeks longer than the estimated date of arrival.

²⁵ Nor was there any mention of women accompanying the Rolling Stones on their 1960s tours of America.

²⁶ Could Yeats and Maud have established a secret code or keyword that George was not aware of?

rived he rushed to Dublin to consult Bethel Solomons, a leading obstetrician (Saddlemeyer 2002, 258). But Solomons did not treat Iseult; after two days in hospital she recuperated at Maud's house in Glenmalure, Co. Wicklow (257). Yeats visited her briefly but remained in Dublin (258).

However, the date of Yeats's return to Dublin and visit to an obstetrician coincided with the fifth month of Lily's pregnancy²⁷. As an unmarried mother she was a criminal, without friends, employment, board, lodging or income (Rattigan 2012, 39). In tiny Dublin, Lily must have known Yeats's address, and that Mme. MacBride, known in Co. Carlow and Dublin to support the welfare of poor women²⁸, resided there; this Catholic judge and social worker could arrange board and lodging and also inform Yeats about her condition.

In the early 1920s "[...] loss of virginity was an economic disaster" (Maddox 1999a, 226). An unmarried mother would enter the workhouse²⁹. At the time of Yeats's arrival impecunious Lily, renamed Lizzie, moved into a tenement room³⁰ at 2 Catherine Street³¹, the same address as Kevin's birth certificate.

Yeats was a close friend of Oliver St John Gogarty, an Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon who provided voluntary surgery at the Coombe Maternity Hospital, near Lily's address. Gogarty (2001, 654)³² was well known for bawdy poetry and private help with pregnancies. The Irish land registry has no idea who possessed 2, Catherine Street, and suggests the original 17th century family still owned it³³. Gogarty's family was affluent and had property throughout Ireland³⁴. In the cellar of 2 Catherine Street lived Margaret McGill, who had nursing or maternity expertise³⁵ and later became Kevin's foster mother. Whoever helped Yeats find accommodation and facilities nearby at short notice was professionally familiar with the locality.

After marriage, George gradually became alcoholic, like her family's four previous generations (Saddlemeyer 2002, 24-25). She was over-cautious, hated routines or being observed, and camouflaged inner fears with external

²⁷ Counting backwards from the date of partition.

²⁸ Through her Sinn Féin establishment of "The Daughters of Ireland", *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*.

²⁹ According to archivists at the National Archives of Ireland.

³⁰ Each tenement room usually housed a complete family. Cf. Kearns 1994, 7.

³¹ Not the current Catherine Street in Dublin.

³² In 1903 he studied gynecology and midwifery at the National Maternity Hospital.

³³ According to the Property Registration Authority, Dublin.

³⁴ Gogarty's father, son of a medical doctor, owned two fashionable homes in Dublin, which set the Gogarty's apart from other Catholic families and gave them access to the same social circles as Protestants. Gogarty's family house, Renvyle, was on the West coast. Cf. O'Connor 1989, 12-13.

³⁵ She taught my father how to mend broken bones and bandage wounds.

joviality (22). Saddlemyer describes her as “solitary”, “cunning” and “wily” (22). She had a flushed face, suffered nightmares and walked in her sleep (25). Promiscuous female relatives, an alcoholic father and constant changes of home and school had made her desperate for stability.

“In October [1920] Yeats wrote on one of his filing cards: ‘Black Eagle = Heir = 4th Daimon’” (Maddox 1999a, 173). The following January George claimed to have had a vision of a black eagle (168) when she told Yeats about her new pregnancy; at that stage the gender would have been unknown. However, Yeats was writing about a real son or “heir”. His illegitimate son Kevin’s hair was black and his hairline was a beak-like V, whereas George’s son Michael had blond hair and a relatively straight hairline.

Whilst in America Yeats had been advised to have a tonsillectomy. One would have expected him to find an ENT surgeon in Oxford; instead, he asked Gogarty in mid-October to operate in Dublin and remained there a month³⁶. Gogarty told George “I have been too thorough”, despite exemplary qualifications and experience (169). Kevin was born in Dublin on 9 November.

“On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac” (written in September 1920) is about Lily’s pregnancy. A centaur is a symbol of wanton male sexuality whose blackness denotes immorality. Yeats says: “Your hooves have stamped at the black margins of the wood”; the centaur has dabbled in adultery. He admits “I knew that horse-play [...]”³⁷ although he “ought to have stayed with [...] what wholesome sun has ripened [...]” (261), his wife.

The “horrible green parrots” were nationalists wearing green, parroting political demands. Thus, when he says he is “[...] being driven half insane / Because of some green wing...”, he means Lily from nationalist Co. Carlow. Nevertheless he has “gathered old mummy wheat [...]” (261). Grain from Egyptian tombs would sprout centuries later if removed from darkness and brought into light; Yeats’s meant his semen had sprung to life. This “[...] mummy wheat [...]” was exposed to light that “[...] baked it [...]” creating the “[...] full-flavoured wine [...]” of new life (261).

Yeats says, “[...] there is none so fit to keep a watch and keep / Unwearing eyes upon those horrible green birds” (261), Lily was informing him about popular opinion. He writes, “I have loved you better than my soul for all my words [...]” (261). Despite morality and conscience his love for her has conquered his soul; this and its intensity show it is not written for George. The given date was September 1920, just before Yeats had his tonsillectomy.

³⁶ In 1956 tonsillectomy was usually carried out on a kitchen table and recovery lasted a week.

³⁷ Adultery.

In 1922, when the civil war was over, Yeats and his family returned to Dublin. When he and George bought 83 Merrion Square, Lily moved to 48 Newmarket³⁸, changing her name from “Lizzie O’Neill” to “Honor Bright”, while Kevin remained at 2 Catherine Street using his foster-mother’s surname, McGill³⁹.

48 Newmarket, which Charles Lynch managed for his mother, was not a den of prostitution; by definition a prostitute has sex with anyone who pays. After the First World War young men disappeared, leaving young women and older men; extra-marital love was comparatively common. In Lynch’s house only two of the six lodgers had a lover⁴⁰; Madge and Lily were both long-term mistresses of affluent married men, one a Doctor and Peace Commissioner, the other a renowned Senator.

In “Meditations in Time of Civil War” (written in 1921) Yeats talks of his property: the titles of the first four sections are “Ancestral Houses”, “My House”, “My Table” and “My Descendants”. His “fountain” signifies legitimate offspring from a planned source, while the “empty sea-shell flung out of the obscure dark of the rich streams” (246) is an unexpected, fortuitous advent. Yeats was deciding which descendants to support: George with Anne and Michael, or Lily with Kevin. His vocabulary, pitch and metre reveal more elation at the second option.

In 1923 Gogarty, now a Senator in the new Irish Free State⁴¹, nominated Yeats for the same position; he immediately accepted because it was regularly paid, unlike his other occupations. Yeats was always short of money around this time (Saddlemeyer 2002, 312). Kevin was two years old. George befriended many of his colleagues in the Oireachtas⁴², admiring in particular Kevin O’Higgins. She invited him and his wife to dinner frequently so that he and Yeats became well acquainted (351).

O’Higgins was more interested in power than politics. Once opposed to the British Empire⁴³, he now supported it. In 1922 he established the new Irish police force, Garda Síochána. Eoin O’Duffy, another fascist militarist, was appointed Commissioner of Police in September 1922. The same year O’Higgins rose to be Vice-President of the Free State’s Executive Council, retaining his post as Minister of Justice.

³⁸ In his witness deposition in 1925 Charles Lynch said that Honor Bright had lived at 48 Newmarket for three years, two streets away from 2 Catherine Street.

³⁹ Kevin was then two; later the only surname he knew was McGill.

⁴⁰ According to witness depositions.

⁴¹ The Free State was a self-governing part of the British Empire, not independent. It had been controversially established in 1922 following the 1916 Uprising. If badly governed, Britain would abolish it and reclaim control.

⁴² Irish Government.

⁴³ He swapped sides to become Minister for Home Affairs in the Free State despite being an Irish Republican Army politician during the Civil war.

In March 1924 O'Higgins was nominated de facto head of government and by June was promoted to Minister of Justice and External Affairs⁴⁴. He appointed Colonel David Neligan (Michael Collin's famous right-hand man) as Chief Superintendent of his detective squad, the feared G-Force; Neligan was answerable directly to O'Higgins.

Between 1922 and 1924 George confided in him about Lily⁴⁵: Yeats might be passing state secrets that Lily could transmit to the IRA⁴⁶. Lily could blackmail him about Kevin⁴⁷. Since 1920 George had been threatening to kill Kevin⁴⁸.

Someone using Michael Collin's strategy observed Lily's habits and routines. Whoever surveyed 48 Newmarket discovered Lily's friend Madge Hopkins nicknamed Bridie, and her relationship with Peace Commissioner⁴⁹ Dr Patrick Purcell, who worked alongside O'Higgins drinking partner, Garda Superintendent Dillon⁵⁰.

Dr. Patrick Purcell, aged 30, had a practice in Blessington. Married with two children, he was having a long-term extra-marital affair with Bridie/Madge. Madge and "Lizzie" met when Lily gave birth, so Madge was also an unmarried mother in 1920⁵¹. Madge knew Margaret McGill, Kevin and Yeats because she knew "Lizzie" during her five years residence in Catherine Street and Newmarket. In "The Secrets of the Old"⁵², published in 1927, Yeats says of himself, Madge (Margery) and Margaret (Madge) that "[...] We three make up a solitude". George was the only person who could alter names in the poem, and also perhaps the first two lines of the third stanza, "[...] How such a man pleased women most / Of all that are gone [...]" (272)⁵³.

⁴⁴ The biography of O'Higgins is from Wikipedia. See Sources.

⁴⁵ A deduction made for reasons explained at the end of this essay.

⁴⁶ Kilmainham Gaol Museum states that Lily was never involved with politics during her lifetime.

⁴⁷ Whether or not she did. Lily is still regarded as a spy by Dubliners, e.g. Zanzibar Films "Honor Bright" (2006), which was never produced.

⁴⁸ "When George fell asleep abruptly, Yeats was informed (by a new communicator [...] speaking through George's mouth) that a Frustrator wanted to kill the Fourth Daimon" (Maddox 1999a, 169).

⁴⁹ Magistrate.

⁵⁰ "[...] he was regularly seen at [...] Fanny O'Grady's [public house in Cork] [...] which [...] was also frequented by [...] Kevin O'Higgins" (Irish Bureau of Military History 1913-1921, <<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1401.pdf#page=4>>). Mrs O'Grady was stating details about her lodger, Leopold Dillon, being involved in a bank robbery.

⁵¹ After Lily's death, Madge's witness deposition stated that she had known *Lizzie* for five years, i.e. from late 1920, the first time Lily changed her name.

⁵² No date given for time of writing.

⁵³ "How such a man pleased Lily most / Before she was gone [...]" would be more euphonious. Further research of Yeats's pre-publication poetic essays would be desirable.

Yeats introduced “Unity of Being” to encourage fusion of discordant elements of Irish society on becoming Senator in June 1924, when his Catholic son was three years old. That year Cosgrave’s government was attempting to prevent divorce. The Divorce Bill was outside Yeats’s usual remit, culture, but he uncharacteristically opposed Cosgrave. Ostensibly he wanted to marry Kevin’s mother, in which case an Irish civil divorce would allow him to marry a Catholic⁵⁴. Remarriage was doubtful under Roman Catholic Canon Law because of his occult activities, children and property. Moreover, an affluent Protestant Senator marrying a poor young nationalist Catholic woman with his illegitimate son overstepped boundaries of religion, age, money, politics and morality.

George would watch Yeats leaving for the Hibernian Club⁵⁵, between Merrion Square and Lily’s lodging. Only George and Yeats knew Lily’s address: Yeats visited, and George observed him.

Leopold F. Dillon was born in Cork in 1900; his prosperous Protestant family lived in Wales. He enlisted in the Artist’s Rifles Brigade for officers in 1919; however, the unit disbanded the same year, so he remained a Private⁵⁶. In Cork he was a regular visitor of the same public house frequented by O’Higgins⁵⁷. In 1924 he joined Garda Síochána⁵⁸ and after six weeks was promoted to Superintendent of three large police districts in Kildare, Carlow and Wicklow, including Blessington⁵⁹.

In early June 1925 O’Higgins requested Supt. Dillon⁶⁰ to eliminate her; the murder happened on 9 June 1925 between midnight and 3.30 am, in “wine-dark midnight”. The evening before Dillon had confirmed his order at O’Higgins address in Booterstown⁶¹.

⁵⁴ If the Free State did not rule in favour of divorce, Roman Catholic Canon Law would prevail: “If you receive a civil divorce, but no annulment, then you are still married to the other person in the eyes of the Church and would be committing adultery if you married another”. Also Matrimonial Causes and Marriage Law (Ireland) Amendment Act 1870: Protestant / RC marriage must be agreed by law.

⁵⁵ Now that he was a Senator.

⁵⁶ Information gratefully received from Mike Powell, historian of the Artists Rifles Brigade.

⁵⁷ Irish Bureau of Military History 1913-1921 (<<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1401.pdf#page=1>>): covering statement by Mrs Alice O’Grady, in relation to certain incidents in 1921. “[Dillon] was regularly seen [...] drinking at [...] Cork public house [...] Fanny O’Grady’s [...] which [...] was frequented by [...] Kevin O’Higgins”.

⁵⁸ Dublin Military Police General Register (1835-1925) and Civic Guard Temporary Register (1922-1924). From Garda Museum, Dublin Castle.

⁵⁹ Thom’s Directory 1924.

⁶⁰ Both were involved directly in the murder; O’Duffy was only involved afterwards.

⁶¹ In his defence statement Dillon reported that he had visited the street in which O’Higgins lived and spent an hour there in the evening before the murder. He was not asked about this in court.



Fig. 3 – Photograph of Lily O’Neill (Honor Bright) taken on 9th June 1925 by Garda Sgt. A. Gordon

Superintendent John Reynolds⁶² arrived next morning at the scene of the crime and requested photographs; one shows a crowd gathering. For months every newspaper carried a daily front-page headline about the murder. The public did not view it as the murder of a back-street prostitute, but as a major political event.

Reporters described the woman as mid-twenties, medium height with brown hair, wearing modest clothing; her left shoe was off her foot. In her pockets were cigarettes, matches, a powder compact and puff, coins and a rosary. She carried no identification, just an old scar on the left side of her nose. She had not struggled or been assaulted; her clothes were not ripped or interfered with. There was a trickle of blood at the side of her mouth and a bullet-hole in her chest (*Dublin Evening Mail [DEM]*, 10 June 1925).

The labourer alerted the local pub; the police were called. Afterwards the body was carried to the pub’s outhouse to await the Coroner, Dr J.P.Brennan (*DEM*, 10 June 1925). His first act on opening the inquest next morning was to lambaste the jurists who had not materialised (*ibidem*). He described Lily as a “decent, innocent victim of a heinous crime” and intended to find the “unspeakable reprobate” who harmed her (*ibidem*). Dr Brennan called residents from

⁶² Tom Carew informed me that John Henry Reynolds joined RIC before 1910, then Gardaí 1922, retiring as Superintendent in Kilkenny in 1954. “He was a very admired Officer of integrity, a neighbour whom my late father knew very well and deeply respected”.

48 Newmarket as witnesses, and most identified Honor Bright, except Madge Hopkins who called her Lizzie O'Neill. Charles Lynch said she had lived there for three years⁶³.

At 2.30 pm Dr Brennan suddenly announced that he was adjourning the inquest for two weeks "at the request of the police authorities" (*ibidem*). Commissioner O'Duffy, the highest-ranking policeman of the Free State, had unexpectedly arrived, stopped the inquest and taken over the case⁶⁴. Nevertheless, Dr Brennan angrily reaffirmed the "perpetrator or perpetrators of this atrocity" would be "brought to justice", and that "It is inconceivable that a monster of that nature, who is certainly responsible for the death of this unfortunate girl, should be at large [...]" (*ibidem*).

Yeats had been preparing his pro-Divorce Bill speech for months. Having caused controversy it could not be dropped, though Lily's murder had disintegrated his motive. It was debated on 11 June, two days after the event, on her twenty-fifth birthday, two days before Yeats's sixtieth on 13 June. He addressed a jeering, derisive House who obviously understood the circumstances⁶⁵ (Yeats 2001 [1960], 90-92), defended recent extra-marital affairs of famous Irish politicians, and apologised for his love-life: "[...] Genius has its virtue, and it is only a small blot on its escutcheon if it is sexually irregular" (92).

Chief Supt. Neligan took command of the case. No explanation was given for the involvement of Ireland's highest-ranking detective. On 11 June Supt. Dillon confessed. Chief Supt. Neligan arrested Dillon's collaborator⁶⁶ Dr Patrick Purcell two days later (*Evening Herald*, 13 June 1925).

Neligan's assignment was to exonerate the Justice Ministry by suppressing involvement of O'Higgins, Yeats and George, which meant publicly disassociating Lily and Kevin from Yeats. In addition he was to exonerate Garda Síochana by acquitting Dillon and Purcell, while suppressing the outraged public to avoid British review. To achieve his aims he kept Dillon and Purcell in custody, out of public view at Dublin Castle for seven months whilst manipulating evidence. A mendacious narrative emerged: Honor Bright was a prostitute⁶⁷; her son could be anybody's.

The bogus trial of the alleged murderers 1-4 February 1926, outside the official court circuit, was held in order to restrain public opinion. "An unusual amount of public interest was centred in the proceedings. From an early hour [...] a large crowd collected outside the Courthouse, and when the doors were open many sought admission [which] was [...] confined to jurors, witnesses and

⁶³ Charles Lynch's witness deposition.

⁶⁴ On Christmas Day 2006 I had a phone call from the second son of Superintendent Reynolds, the first police officer at the scene of my grandmother's murder. He told me of his father's great anger at being removed from the case, along with Coroner Brennan, by Commissioner O'Duffy. He remembered his father saying "Nothing good will come of this".

⁶⁵ Judging by the tone of the debate and the words uttered.

⁶⁶ Whose car had been used for both accused.

⁶⁷ Prostitution, regarded as a result of British occupation, was condemned in the Free State.

others whose attendance was required. A crowded court witnessed the opening stage of the trial, the attendees including several ladies⁶⁸ (*DEM*, 1 February 1926). The prosecuting counsel was William Carrigan K.C., a close colleague of Kevin O'Higgins.

In 2006 the National Archives of Ireland sent me copies of the witness depositions for the trial. The victim was never referred to, except for her name, age, address and location on the night of 8-9 June. Her son was absent; Mrs McGill was not called to depose. No witnesses were shown police photographs. No evidence was included about Lily's daily routines, friends, relatives or work, or describing her emotions and conversations.

On the first day in court, Carrigan established the sinfulness of the victim in contrast to the youthful, innocent defendants. "The woman was one of those unhappy creatures who, not through choice, but through some cursed necessity, was compelled to seek her living on the streets at night" (*DEM*, 1 February 1926). No character witnesses were called. All evidence concerning Lily/Honor was proscribed as "detrimental to Dillon's defence" (*DEM*, 18 August 1925).

Forensic evidence showed the bullet was fired six to ten feet away in the dark; Lily was smoking (*DEM*, 13 June 1925). The motive was never alluded to. The Belgian Army issue revolver was never mentioned, or that Dillon had served in Belgium.

Most of Dr. O'Mahoney's⁶⁹ testimony about the victim was false or deliberately misleading. She was well nourished and there were no marks of violence; she was not pregnant. The bullet had entered the left breast, penetrated the left ventricle causing blood to ooze from her mouth, and lodged under the left shoulder blade. The death could not have been self-inflicted (*DEM*, 1 February 1926). The doctor called her Lizzie O'Neill, the name on Kevin's birth certificate, but omitted to state that she had given birth (*ibidem*). He added that the handkerchief in her right hand held traces of semen, and that her vagina contained a "whitish" fluid, which would lead the all-male jury to assume she had just had sex, in direct contradiction to the Coroner's evidence⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ The "ladies" included Kathleen Barry and Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington from Maud Gonne MacBride's *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*. In 1927 as Yeats was leaving Ireland she wrote to him: "[...] pray to God to send men who understand what love of Ireland and of their fellows means to undo this mischief you – unwillingly perhaps have helped to do. For your poetry you will be forgiven but sin no more" (Yeats, Gonne 1994, 443).

⁶⁹ Who lived in Booterstown, as did Neligan.

⁷⁰ Coroner Brennan stated "two of the 'butts' of cigarettes were in deceased handkerchief on her costume"; he recorded no fluids. He stated that her clothes were undisturbed. From Brennan's witness deposition, later forged.

The witness deposition by the Coroner Dr J. P. Brennan had been written on 14 June, just after Commissioner O'Duffy had taken over on the 10 June, but it was later forged. Brennan's name was crossed off the first page (see fig. 4); "Superintendent John H. Reynolds, Garda Siochana" was substituted in Neligan's handwriting.

On page two the Coroner wrote: "Photos A, B, C D produced" but "Photos" was deleted and "Exhibit" substituted; "B, C and D" were also deleted (see fig. 5).

On page three the Coroner wrote "I searched the pockets. I found [...] A face cream. Photo Exhibit A. Other articles [...]". However, these items were crossed out, so that "a Box containing Amalthusian Sheath were was also in Pocket" (sic) could be substituted⁷¹; a condom replaced the face cream (see fig. 6). Neither Brennan nor Reynolds knew of this transgression⁷².

In his final speech the judge explained that the jury was to ascertain the cause of death and nothing more, must pay great attention to the movements of the two accused and Bridie that night, and ignore "any opinion they might have formed from what they had heard", focussing only on "the facts placed before them"⁷³. The jury unanimously acquitted the accused after less than three minutes deliberation (*DEM*, 4 February 1926). After the verdict no further newspaper reports were made about the murder, the victim or the trial.

Yeats wrote "The Three Monuments" just after Lily's murder (in 1925).

They hold their public meetings where
 Our most renowned patriots stand,
 One among the birds of the air,
 A stumpier on either hand;
 And all the popular statesmen say
 That purity built up the State
 And after kept it from decay;
 Admonish us to cling to that
 And let all base ambition be,
 For intellect would make us proud
 And pride bring in impurity:
 The three old rascals laugh aloud. (274)

Despite moral diatribes, the plodding metre and last line reveal Yeats's contempt.

⁷¹ "He should have written [...] *A Malthusian Sheath* [...] but could not spell" (see fig. 6).

⁷² They had been removed from the investigation and had no access to Dublin Castle, where the depositions were written and stored.

⁷³ The Judge's summing up speech on the last day of the trial.

Yeats's withdrawal from the public began on the day after Lily's murder and lasted until the Monday after the accused were acquitted, from 10 June 1925 to 8 Monday, February 1926. Yeats had "heart trouble" but no medical intervention was noted. He gave his pre-planned Divorce Bill speech two days later.

In September 1925 he resumed management of the Abbey Theatre, but did not reappear in public until the first performance of *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) by Sean O'Casey. The playwright had recently added a new second Act involving a prostitute; unlike other characters from all levels of society, she was not a hypocrite. Joseph Holloway, a long-term supporter of the Abbey Theatre, wrote in his diary (O'Connor 1989, 195) about the furious riots during O'Casey's play: "A great big voice called 'O'Casey out!' on 'Rosie Redmond' appearing in Act II. Shouts of 'Honor Bright' were heard" (Holloway 1967, 255).

"Friday, February 12 A detective-lined theatre presented itself at the beginning of the play tonight at the Abbey and there was no disturbance [...] None was allowed to stand in the passages to make way for the 'G' men, a body of men of evil fame in Ireland" (*ibidem*).

The play and the public riot were directly concerned with Lily's murder, Yeats's abandonment of Kevin and his impoverishment of Mrs McGill. The decrepit house in the scenery closely resembled 2 Catherine Street according to my father. O'Casey was proclaiming distrust in the Free State while the audience⁷⁴ was protesting personally to Senator Yeats at Honor Bright's pointless death and his mendacious hypocrisy.

In 1961 W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman published an opera entitled *Elegy For Young Lovers* portraying "[...] the artist-genius of the nineteenth and early twentieth century". The theme was "[...] summed up in two lines by Yeats: The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life or of the work" (1961, 62). Auden explains "[...] the artist-genius is morally bound [...] to exploit others whenever such exploitation will benefit his work, and to sacrifice them whenever their existence is a hindrance to his production. [...] Our hero [...] is a great poet. Throughout the opera he has been working on a poem; in order to complete it successfully, he [...] murders two people and breaks the spirit of a third. [...]" (63).

But Yeats did not murder Lily; he had attempted to protect her from threats of harm⁷⁵. His fault lay in not leaving George, which would have obviated her fierce anger and revenge. Although such a move would have been extremely controversial he would have kept his integrity, public respect and political support for "Unity of Being" (Maddox 1999a, 233).

⁷⁴ With representatives of Carlow-based Inghinidhe na hÉireann, including Mrs Sheehy and Kathleen Barry, according to Holloway.

⁷⁵ E.g. "The Death of the Hare".

Yeats finished writing “The Tower” on 7 October 1925, four months after Lily’s murder, when his illegitimate son was four. His home in Galway was Ballylee Tower; to *Demon est Deus Inversus*⁷⁶ the Tower in the Tarot signifies collapse, disaster and ruin; the poet used both allusions. The poems in this series provide an autobiography between 1925 and 1927⁷⁷. George changed their chronological arrangement, names and other incriminating features.

Despite recent successes⁷⁸, Yeats suddenly feels acutely depressed and old. He talks of his body “this absurdity” and his “troubled heart”; saying that he “must bid the Muse go pack” because he cannot deal “in abstract things” and will “[...] be derided by / A sort of battered kettle at the heel” (“The Tower”). He is a laughing stock. The second stanza restates social “ruin” and crumbling “foundations” with the “[...] tree, like a sooty finger [...]” accusing him “under the day’s declining beam”; he feels dirtied, blackened and responsible (240).

Yeats mentions Mrs French, whose servant carried out cruelty on her behalf without her permission, knowing she would condone it. Mrs French never complains or condemns it (241-243). Here Yeats reflects George, who indicated to O’Higgins that Lily and her son were expendable⁷⁹, although she did not commit the crime.

Yeats summons all the Tower’s ghosts before deciding that only Hanrahan is necessary, “For I need all his mighty memories”. Yeats says, “I myself created Hanrahan”, a passionate schoolteacher blighted by a fairy queen who robs him of rest for eternity (243).

Both Yeats and Hanrahan are a “half-mad rhapsodic poet, a failed seducer of real women and a great curser of old age” chased by “hounds”, a “man drowned in a bog’s mire / When mocking Muses chose the country wench” (*ibidem*)⁸⁰.

Like Hanrahan, the “ancient bankrupt master of this house” has become “A lecher with a love on every wind” who has “reckoned up every unforeknown, unseeing / Plunge [...] / Into the labyrinth of another’s being”. Hanrahan knows about love affairs that Yeats needs advice for. His question is “Does the imagination dwell the most / On a woman won or a woman lost?” (*ibidem*).

⁷⁶ Yeats’s alter ego as master of the occult in the *Golden Dawn* and *Stella Matutina*.

⁷⁷ Though poems from Kevin’s birth in 1920 and his second reunion with his wife in 1923 are included.

⁷⁸ E.g. the Nobel Prize for Literature, honorary PhDs.

⁷⁹ Yeats identifies them by default in “A Prayer to My Son” by stating that threats to Lily and Kevin were made to him privately.

⁸⁰ George was a Londoner, while Maud and Iseult lived in Paris and Dublin; so he means Lily from County Carlow.

The date of "The Tower"⁸¹ indicates that the "woman lost" was Lily. "If on the last", continues Yeats, "admit you turned aside / From a great labyrinth out of pride, / Cowardice [...]", "And if that memory recur, the sun's / Under eclipse and the day's blotted out [...]". He blames himself for not entering Lily's "labyrinth", for not sharing his life with her (*ibidem*).

In "A Man Young and Old", his grief is expressed as contrite hindsight into what occurred. It is another series relating a history. "First Love", written on 25 May 1926, according to the given date, talks of a beautiful dead woman who "[...] blushed awhile [...]" and was as beautiful as "[...] the sailing moon [...]", "[...] In beauty's murderous brood [...]" meaning beauty had caused her downfall⁸². Yeats describes himself "[...] like a bit of stone [...]" Under a broken tree "[...]" longing to shout his grief aloud, "[...] but I am dumb / From human dignity" ("A Man Young and Old", poem III, "Human Dignity", 267-268).

"The yelling pack" in "The Death of the Hare" (poem IV, written in January 1926) are like the "polyyps" above. Lily is a vulnerable, hunted creature; the hunters find their quarry. He had alerted the hare / Lily to the pack and to the safety of the wood ("A Man Young and Old") – anonymity – but remembers "her distracted air" (269). Now he is "swept from there", out of contact with her, "set down standing in the wood", "At the death of the hare" (*ibidem*).

"The Empty Cup" (poem V, written in December 1926) talks of water, i.e. love or emotion, which kept him fresh and young until "his beating heart would burst". He found it "When all but dead of thirst" despite his marriage. Now he feels "moon-accursed" since "October last" ("A Man Young and Old")⁸³ because it is now "dry as bone", leaving him "crazed" (*ibidem*).

In the first verse of poem six, "His Memories" (poem VI, written in 1926), he refers to himself and George as public symbols, "holy shows", "[...] bodies broken like a thorn / Whereon the bleak north [wind] blows" (270). They are "buried Hector" of Greek mythology: once heroic, both are publicly reviled, dragged around the enemy's tomb on chariot wheels. Nevertheless their shame is private: "[...] none living knows" (poem VI). Lily, as Helen, "[...] the first of all the tribe lay there [...]" in his arms, before "She [...] brought great Hector down / And put all Troy to wreck [...]" (*ibidem*). In "His Wilderness", Yeats refers to himself as "Paris", an adulterer (273).

⁸¹ Most poems were written just after Lily's death in June 1925.

⁸² Written in 1926-1927, after the upheaval of Lily's murder and the trial. All poems in *The Tower* refer to his grief for Lily and Kevin, but this essay is too short to encompass all. Beauty, as Gogarty knew well, was the cause of rape, unwanted pregnancy and worse events in the life of a beautiful woman.

⁸³ George has altered the date; it may have originally been "summer past".

In poem VII, “The Friends of his Youth”, written on 2 July 1925, three weeks after Lily’s death, the “laughter” in the first four lines is not mirth but the uncontrolled humourless cachinnation of extreme grief. He “[...] gets a laughing fit”, “when the moon’s pot-bellied”, remembering Lily pregnant in extremity. In poem VII, Margaret McGill, a childless widow born 1878⁸⁴, was “[...] barren as a breaking wave [...]” (271). In this poem Yeats sees “[...] that old Madge⁸⁵ come down the lane, / A stone upon her breast, / And a cloak wrapped about the stone [...]” She “[...] thinks the stone’s a child [...]” and “Old Madge [...] can get no rest / with singing hush and hush-a-bye [...]” (*ibidem*)⁸⁶. Yeats refers to Chronos, the time Titan, who had many children but murdered them at birth, believing they would overthrow him later. When his wife Rhea pretended Zeus was a stone under her shawl Chronos laughed hysterically; but Zeus survived and superseded his father.

“Summer and Spring” (poem VIII, written in 1926) describes Yeats falling in love. The seasons are never mentioned, so the title refers to disparity in age⁸⁷. He says they “[...] knew we’d halved a soul / And fell the one in t’other’s arms / That we might make it whole [...]” (271)⁸⁸.

“The Secrets of the Old”⁸⁹ (poem IX, written in 1926 or 1927, probably the former), mentions Madge and Margery. George has again altered the names⁹⁰: “Madge” is Margaret McGill, and “Margery” is Madge Hopkins. Margaret, as his employee for five years, knew Yeats well⁹¹. Madge, Lily’s best friend, knew both Yeats and Margaret (“A Man Young and Old”). Yeats begins by saying he has “old women’s secrets now, / That had them of the young”; Lily, who had no other close family, must have treated the middle-aged foster-mother as ersatz mother, so Margaret spoke her mind to Yeats about “[...] what I dared not think / When my blood was strong [...]” (272), perhaps that extra-marital love can fade and children become superfluous. Margaret also had an accusing look for Madge, who may have contributed to Lily’s death by leading her to her assassin. Furthermore, when called to the witness box⁹² Madge had not given relevant evidence; what she endured in Dublin Castle during her interview was never broadcast, but her evidence

⁸⁴ Shown by her birth certificate.

⁸⁵ Yeats calls Margaret McGill “Madge” here, and the name fits the metre and intonation of the poem, so it seems original.

⁸⁶ She is looking after a small child, singing lullabies.

⁸⁷ Yeats was born in 1865 and Lily in 1900.

⁸⁸ Referring to the start of their affair.

⁸⁹ This poem proved to me beyond doubt that Yeats is my grandfather because here he names all adults and situations in Lily’s life.

⁹⁰ No one else had the opportunity to do so.

⁹¹ According to this poem: “We three [...]” (“The Secrets of the Old”).

⁹² At the trial of the alleged murderers.

was very curtailed⁹³. Hence “[...] Margery is stricken dumb / If thrown in Madge’s way [...]”. Yeats makes it clear that all three of them share a secret about a love affair between people of different social classes, “[...] the bed of straw [...]” and the “[...] bed of down”⁹⁴; “[...] We three make up a solitude: / For none alive today / Can know the stories that we know / Or say the things we say” (272).

“His Wildness” (poem X, written in 1926) reveals Yeats’s wish to die, to be reborn as “Paris”⁹⁵ in heaven alongside “Peg and Meg” (diminutives of Margaret and Madge), who “had so straight a back”, i.e. were honest and trustworthy, but who “Are gone away” or “have changed their silk to sack”. Margaret McGill’s income as foster mother ceased months after Lily’s death. Nothing is known of Madge (273).

My father remembered an unusual event⁹⁶. After being washed in a tin bath, his [foster] mother dressed him in brand-new clothes, including shoes and socks that he was not used to wearing. Then he and “his [foster] mother” walked to a big house and went into a high, imposing room full of men in “grand” clothes. A smiling man asked him questions. Then they went home, he changed his clothes and went to bed. My deduction, given my father’s infantile comprehension and the circumstances prevailing, is that Mrs McGill was summoned to bring four-year-old Kevin to a pre-trial interview. If asked to identify his mother he would have indicated Mrs McGill⁹⁷. Therefore Mrs McGill was re-classified as his mother; her wages were discontinued.

“From ‘Oedipus at Colonus’” (poem XI, written on 13 March 1927) is Yeats’s final poem in this series⁹⁸. He begins by articulating his intent: “Endure what life God gives and ask no longer span [...]”. As a “travel-wearied aged man” he desires no “delights”; they bring “death-longing”. In his experience pleasure and happiness, such as Oedipus experienced or he experienced with Lily, brings only “death, despair, division of families, all entanglements of mankind [...]”, well known to “[...] that old wandering beggar and these God-hated children [...]” i.e. George, Anne and Michael. The despairing poet

⁹³ The evidence she gave in court matched her witness deposition exactly: she did not say anything about Lily apart from what she had been told to say at Dublin Castle.

⁹⁴ An allusion to people from different classes of society, e.g. one rich, older and Protestant, one younger, poor and Catholic.

⁹⁵ Paris was the instigator of the Trojan War because he eloped with Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. However “Paris” does not fit the metre, assonance or alliteration in this line. In my opinion Yeats wrote “Lily’s” rather than “Paris’s” love.

⁹⁶ My sisters and I remember him relating this. To have memory to recall this he must have been past babyhood. When Lily was murdered he was four years and seven months old.

⁹⁷ Cf. “A Prayer for My Son” (Yeats 1994 [1990], 258).

⁹⁸ Most of the poetry written by Yeats after June 1925 concerns Lily or Kevin; there is simply not enough space in this essay to reveal all. Those included here are the most obvious ones.

watches youth enjoying life whilst anticipating only “the silent kiss” of death. He might achieve the “second best” option of suicide: “[...] a gay goodnight and quickly turn away” (273).

In “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”, written in July-December 1927 (from Yeats’s next collection of poems, *The Winding Stair*), he contrasts “My Soul” or conscience with “My Self” or character. His soul summons him to “[...] the steep ascent [...]” towards the “[...] broken, crumbling battlement[...]” of “[...]the tower, / Emblematical of the night [...]”, for “Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?”. Only “[...] night [...] can [...] / Deliver from the crime of death and birth”. He accuses his Self of being confused about what “Is” done and what “Ought” to be done and admits to guilt, for “Only the dead can be forgiven” (285). However, Yeats’s Self holds up the sword with its embroidered scabbard of “heart’s purple” as a symbol of love and honour. He would “[...] claim as by a soldier’s right / A charter to commit the crime”⁹⁹ once more” (*ibidem*, Part I). He admits, “A living man is blind and drinks his drop. / What matter if the ditches are impure?”. He clarifies this in the third stanza, “[...] that most fecund ditch of all, / [...] if he woos / A proud woman not kindred of his soul”¹⁰⁰, referring to “The folly [...]” of having an affair with Lily (286, Part II).

In “At Algeciras – A Meditation upon Death”, written in November 1928 (also from *The Winding Stair*), he compares his life to nightfall: “Greater glory in the sun [...]” is fame and success, whilst “An evening chill upon the air [...]” is his later life. Both of these “Bid imagination run / Much on the Great Questioner; / What He can question, what if questioned I / Can with a fitting confidence reply” (296).

In “The Choice”, written in February 1931 or possibly earlier (also from *The Winding Stair*), he answers by saying “The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life or of the work [...]”. He has chosen “[...] the day’s vanity [...]” leading to “[...] the night’s remorse” (297).

Recent new biographies of Yeats’s wife George have appeared. Since she read Yeats’s works, George knew from the outset about Lily because his poetry is explicit. George ruled his life (Saddlemeyer 2002, 321-322); she knew everyone that Yeats was associated with, including Kevin O’Higgins (318), with whom she regularly conversed in 1922-1925. Furthermore George belonged to every group or company that Yeats belonged to, including the Abbey Theatre, where she had charge of the wardrobe (362). Only George would know when Yeats visited Lily, so only she could follow him; if he was disguised by Abbey Theatre properties only she would recognise him and

⁹⁹ Having a child outside wedlock was a crime, cf. Rattigan 2012, 16.

¹⁰⁰ As previously stated, Yeats and Lily’s relationship opposed the cultural norms of religion, politics, age, wealth and morality.

have facilities to disguise herself. So George had every opportunity to discover Lily's address and give it to O'Higgins, and also every opportunity to convince O'Higgins that Lily was an espionage risk.

Moreover, George had good motives: rivalry, jealousy, fear of divorce, fear for her children's future, fear of loss of social position, property, inheritance and income.

Apart from opportunity and motives, is there evidence that she would do such a thing? Yeats provides it in "A Prayer for My Son"¹⁰¹: "[...] Some there are [...] Who have planned his murder [...]" because of "[...] a most haughty deed or thought / That waits upon his future days [...]" (258). Michael, the named son, was born on 22 August 1921 in Oxford, was less than a year when the poem was written and had never been to Dublin or under threat. However Yeats writes that his son was born in Dublin during the Civil War, as was Kevin. Yeats indicates concealed threats; those he spoke with privately were George and O'Higgins. In the last stanza Yeats speaks of Mary and Joseph journeying to Nazareth¹⁰²: "[...] when through all the town there ran / The servants of Your enemy" (258): Herod's soldiers were to kill a first-born son. The woman and the man whom he describes "Protecting till the danger past with human love" (*ibidem*) were Margaret Magill and her partner¹⁰³, fostering Kevin in the Liberties. Kevin and Michael both have two syllables with stress on the first, so George substituted one name for another and changed the date from 1920 to 1921; no one else had access before publication. Added to Yeats's allusion to Mrs French in "The Tower" and George's threats voiced as "The Frustrator", her guilt is clearly indicated. Her constant alterations to his poetry and hoarding of his works after his death provide further evidence of her culpability and manipulation.

Lily moved from Graignaspiddoge in 1918. "Robartes" and Lily met in a dance club in Dublin the same year, where Lily was earning her passage to America. Their ardent affair, which overrode divisions of religion, politics, age, social status and wealth, began in late 1918 or early 1919. In "A Man Young and Old" (267), Yeats admitted that he and Lily disagreed over politics, although she was not politically active. George edited his writing, knew about his affair from the start and systematically suppressed references to Lily and Kevin. George developed a plan of murder with Kevin O'Higgins, Vice-President and Minister of Justice and External Affairs, who was anxious to avoid political embarrassment and prevent the British reclaiming the Free

¹⁰¹ This poem from *The Tower* was supposedly written in December 1921.

¹⁰² A reference to Luke, II, 1-7.

¹⁰³ James White, whom my father regarded as "the kindest man in the whole world". Little is known about him except that he served in the British Army during World War I and died of sclerosis of the liver in 1929-1930 despite being teetotal.

State. George possessed motives to eliminate Lily and had many opportunities to persuade O'Higgins that she was a spy. On her behalf O'Higgins ordered his personal friend Leopold Dillon to interrogate and dispose of Lily.

When informed of her death Yeats was heart-broken, and finished his pre-planned Divorce Bill speech two days later, apologising for his sexual conduct. In his poetry of mourning Yeats indicates George's guilt, for example in "A Prayer for My Son", and "His Memories" in "The Tower". As a Senator, at O'Higgins request, he ensured the continuance of the Free State by concealing his adultery, protecting the Irish Free State government and its officials and suppressing their crimes, but became more involved with public education. By transforming Kevin into an anonymous impoverished orphan, Yeats warded off his murder. Hence his bitterness towards his wife and her children; thereafter, he treated her as a personal assistant and they were sent to a Swiss boarding school.

After the trial newspapers were silent. Fifty years later journalist Kevin O'Connor (1995) concocted articles by elderly ex-prostitutes claiming to have known Honor Bright. In 1995 John Finegan associated Honor Bright with the Monto, Dublin's red-light district. Both are unresearched, perfidious erotic fantasy¹⁰⁴.

Over ninety years later the Ministry of Justice and Garda Síochána are still refusing to open David Neligan's files on this case. Garda Detective Inspector Jodie Crowe insisted that I would "NEVER [*never*] be allowed any access to any of the documentation and artefacts pertaining to my grandmother's murder"¹⁰⁵, which suggests that they do exist. Yeats's descendants have never replied to requests for DNA samples to clarify paternity. A list of solicitors with experience of Irish criminal law has been requested from the Free Legal Advice Centre in Dublin.

Biographers seek the truth about conflict in Yeats's life, as does my family. Further research into the murder of Honor Bright would provide much-needed insight into disunity, suspicion and oppression within the history and politics of the Irish Free State.

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¹⁰⁴ Terry Fagan, who grew up in the Monto and has become its historian, confirms she was never associated with that area.

¹⁰⁵ Interview at Novotel Hotel, Birmingham Airport in June 2010.

draig Yeates, John Smith, Johnny Golding, Heather Haslett, Martin Haslett, Jim Herlihy. Apologies to any that I've missed.

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Memory of the Rising and Futurology in the Same-Sex Marriage Referendum Debate

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Abstract:

According to the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, the ideals of many of the rebels who fought in the 1916 Easter Rising to free the country from a foreign power have not yet been attained by today's Republic: among these ideals Higgins listed wealth redistribution, eradication of inequalities and progressive positions on women's rights. The idea that the task taken on by the 1916 Rising is yet to be accomplished is widespread in Ireland and has often turned into a rhetorical strategy in texts addressing very different topics within different discourses. This paper aims to investigate how the futurology inherent in today's collective memory of 1916 was revisited by Yes and No campaigners in the mainstream debate prior to the same-sex marriage referendum in 2015. Accordingly, the tools of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Studies are employed to analyse how the potential outcomes of the referendum were framed by both Yes and No sides as (contrasting) accomplishments of a nationalist and supposedly republican agenda.

Keywords: Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Studies, Memory, Same-Sex Marriage Referendum, 1916 Rising

1. Introduction

During a state ceremonial event of 2016 Easter weekend and following a tribute to James Connolly's statue on Beresford Place in Dublin, the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, claimed that many of the ideals of the heroes who fought in the 1916 Easter Rising in order to free the country from a foreign power had not yet been attained by today's Republic. In a rousing and impassioned speech, Higgins made it clear what ideals he was referring to: wealth redistribution, eradication of inequalities and progressive positions on women's

rights as the basis for the country's social, economic and cultural transformation (Linehan 2016). It was not the ceremonial splendour to inspire Higgins's talk and evidence of that can be found in the preface to his recent *When Ideas Matter. Speeches for an Ethical Republic*, where he unequivocally restates his position: "So much has been achieved in modern Ireland but our fully inclusive, equal version of a republic is very much an unfinished task" (2017, VIII-IX).

The conviction that the task taken on by the 1916 Rising has yet to be accomplished is widespread in Ireland and, as such, it is often turned into a premise and a rhetorical strategy in argumentative texts addressing very different topics. This is especially the case when features of a typically nationalist discourse are being exploited and re-semiotised in order to tackle a range of social issues. In particular, the study reported in this paper aims to investigate how the futurology inherent in today's collective memory of 1916 was revisited by Yes and No campaigners in the mainstream debate regarding the same-sex marriage referendum¹. Accordingly, the tools of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis were employed to focus on newspaper articles, Letters to the Editors and transcripts from videos published on social media and websites in early 2015 and to accordingly analyse how the potential outcome of the referendum had been framed by Yes and No supporters as different, often opposite, ideal accomplishments of the nationalist and republican agenda.

2. Context

On 23 May 2015, Ireland made history – as recorded by a Twitter hashtag (#wemadehistory) trending worldwide on that and the following days – and became the first country in the world to introduce the right to same-sex marriage by popular referendum. On the previous day, its citizens had been called to the polls to either approve or reject the Thirty-fourth amendment to the Constitution granting that "marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex" (*Bunreacht Na hÉireann*). With an unusually high turnout, and 60% of the registered voters casting their ballots, more than 62% of them passed the referendum and ratified the amendment which, according to former President Mary McAleese, "was an impressive step by the Irish people to insert true equality into our Constitution" (2016, xi). Despite the No campaigners' attempts to address the issue in the terms of a dramatic, dangerous step away from the God-ordained, traditionally gender-balanced marriage, the choice was actually felt by Yes voters

¹ In *Deconstructing Ireland* Colin Graham famously argued that, as is the case in several other postcolonial societies, the Irish culture is obsessed with authenticity and this self-questioning attitude ushers in a state of suspension, a sort of futurology whereby "Ireland is underwritten by a utopian trope which propels its completion always into the future" (2001, x).

– and therefore by most Irish people – to be about an extension of rights, the end of a blatant discrimination of fellow citizens and a major step towards a more inclusive society. Fundamental democratic values, such as freedom, fairness and equality were argued to be at stake and quite a number of observers drew a connection between the referendum and the commitment to the ideals of Irish as well as universal Republicanism. As journalist, broadcaster and Yes campaigner, Una Mullally wrote just a few days before the vote:

There has been a lot of talk about how this referendum relates to the aspirations we have as a republic and how a Yes vote will in many ways complete a journey set out in the 1916 proclamation of the Irish Republic. But 1916 did not invent those aspirations; it was just one big step along the way. (Mullally 2015)

As soon as the results of the referendum were announced at Dublin Castle, with a fitting rainbow showing its support to the celebrations and carnivals which immediately spread throughout Dublin, Cork and the rest of the country, the Irish Yes hit the headlines of media organizations all over the world and commentators, everywhere, immediately tried to question its historical significance. Una Mullally's argument has ever since resonated with several interpretations of the vote. For instance, in *The Irish Independent*, Sydney-based Eoin Hahessy immediately claimed that the “earsplitting Yes” and the subsequent “collective jaw drop to Ireland's historic decision” were inevitably going to bury old, widespread clichés of Irishness and to prompt a “global rebrand” of it, an achievement only comparable to that of the 1916 Rising:

In just a year, Ireland will mark 100 years since the embers of its nation flickered. The 1916 Rising would occupy the front page of the ‘New York Times’ for 14 days in a row. Just shy of this centenary, Ireland has etched out a new global identity. (Hahessy 2015)

This novel and composite identity, endowed with a newly global outlook but still pretty much rooted in Irish social history, is discussed extensively in *Ireland Says Yes. The Inside Story of How the Vote for Marriage Equality Was Won*, written by Yes campaign leaders Gráinne Healy, Brian Sheehan and Noel Whelan. At the end of a chapter significantly entitled “Truly a Nation of Equals”, the authors relate the Referendum vote to the Irish national character and eloquently establish a link between this and the content of the Proclamation read by Pádraig Pearse in front of the General Post Office on 1916 Easter Monday, a public reading and a political rite which established the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic and has symbolically represented the Rising ever since:

The Irish people have shown their compassion. They have shown profound and touching generosity, humanity and wisdom. [...] This movement saw a group of ordinary citizens undertake an extraordinary venture. With their might and grace these

people have given their hearts and souls to make marriage inclusive for all citizens. We are so proud of these people and of what they have helped to achieve. Their achievement is no less than this: that today, we are true to the words of the Proclamation: 'The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens [...] cheering all the children of the nation equally [...]'. (Healy, Sheehan, Whelan 2016, 178)

Conceptualizing the legalization of same-sex marriage as *the* true and not only *a* formal accomplishment of the journey started by the 1916 rebels was timeserving and not so troublesome in the contagious enthusiasm following the overwhelming Yes recorded in May 2015. On the other hand, one may wonder whether this inherently political connection was so explicit also in the tense debate and bitter controversies which characterized the constitutional referendum campaigns. And, if so, how did the No side react to such a usage of 1916 by Yes campaigners? Then, regarding Yes supporters, were they all fully confident that treasuring the 1916 heritage for this specific purpose would prove effective? In brief, by answering these questions this study intends to explore what kind of narration the year 1916 had turned into in the year 2015: was it still a repository of shared beliefs to be found at the heart of the Irish identity and genuinely encapsulating progressive and egalitarian values? Or was it just lip service meant to gain institutional legitimacy, a rhetorical tool too frequently – and even routinely – employed in the political arena, regardless of the actual arguments and goals?

The core issues the debate was revolving around, the arguments advanced by each side and, broadly speaking, the very language the referendum debate was couched in held up a mirror to the Irish people and shed new light on many of the developments recently experienced by the Irish society, also insofar as the memory and role of 1916 are concerned. The bewildering speed of such developments certainly adds up to an anthropological revolution, one which is ostensibly being fuelled by an unprecedented wave of secularism. With respect to the rapidity of this radical transformation, suffice it to remember that divorce was illegal in Ireland until 1996, abortion is still illegal unless the mother's life is in danger, and homosexual intercourse between men was a criminal offence until 1993; even more emblematically, at the same time sexual intercourse between women was not even taken into consideration by the Irish law-system (Conrad 2004). In fact, the parallelism with today's Ireland becomes even more striking when one considers the prominent role played by lesbian and transsexual activists in the successful Yes campaign.

3. *Tools and Methodology*

The assumption underlying this paper is that a linguistic analysis of the relevant material from the mainstream media coverage of the debate prior to

such an epochal event as the same-sex marriage referendum speaks volumes about the on-going social changes in a formerly staunch Catholic country such as Ireland. In actual fact, to offer insights into the manipulation of language-in-use in crucial areas of communication dealing with topics of pressing concern in communities and societies is exactly what Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims at (Fairclough 2003; Bhatia *et al.* 2008). Within this framework, to disclose evidence of how these topics are linguistically shaped and represented is the goal of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Studies, a field which combines the exposure of ideological stances typical of CDA with the tools of Corpus Linguistics (CL), thus performing collocation and concordance analyses on large amounts of authentic, electronically stored texts (Baker 2006; McEnery, Baker 2015).

Accordingly, for the purpose of this study a corpus was compiled by means of the tools offered by the online platform Sketch Engine (Kilgariff 2014). The Same-Sex Marriage Referendum Corpus (SSMRC) is composed of 276,479 tokens and 236,609 types or words, and covers the period from 1 March 2015 to the day of the referendum, 22 May of the same year. It includes a collection of 245 articles, the majority of which were published by either the print or the online edition of the two most read daily newspapers in Ireland: *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent*. Only a tiny portion of the total of 245 articles were published by local newspapers such as *The Wexford People*, *The Sligo Champion*, *The Wicklow People*, *The Gorey Guardian* and others, and were included in the corpus on the grounds that they gained resonance upon being published and made the headlines of some national newspaper websites. In order to be selected, articles obviously had either to deal directly with the same-sex marriage referendum or to address some of the crucial issues tackled and debated in the run-up to the referendum. Examples of the latter type are Carl O'Brien and Kathie Sheridan's articles commenting on "Family Values Opinion Polls" and exploring the "changing Irish family" (*Irish Times*, 21 March 2015; 23 March 2015). The corpus also comprises approximately 200 Letters to the Editor published by *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent*. As these letters were expected to reflect the voice of the people, the only criterion for their selection was a temporal one: for each of the 12 weeks of the study period, all the Letters to the Editor published on any three days randomly chosen were included in the corpus. Finally, the corpus also contains 12 scripts of as many videos which circulated widely during the campaign, particularly through social media sharing, and were therefore regarded as influential: this qualitative feature, i.e., their capacity to partake in and possibly affect the debate, was assessed according to a quantitative one, i.e., on the basis of the number of views they received on YouTube. Obviously, articles and other texts in the Irish language were excluded, though with much regret, as the corpus software is obviously tailored for the analysis of texts in one language only at a time.

For purposes of comparison, texts were further grouped into 3 sub-corpora: a) those focused on the reasons for the YES; b) those focused on the reasons for the NO; c) those reporting on both from a standard journalistic viewpoint: these last texts were classified as Objective. With respect to the relative visibility and salience of the different positions, it should be pointed out that the Catholic establishment and No campaigners often condemned how television, press and mainstream media seemed in all ways supportive of the Yes cause (*Irish Times*, 11 March 2015; *Irish Independent*, 24 April 2015; 6 May 2015). No supporters complained that, in favouring the Yes cause in their selection of news, media organizations proved to be subordinate to the government, whose credibility had come to depend more and more on the outcome of the referendum. When confronted on this topic, media managers such as Raidió Teilifís Éireann deputy director general, Kevin Bakhurst (*Irish Times*, 25 March 2015), denied any political bias and asserted that such selection was consistent with the social atmosphere, as also confirmed by the opinion polls. Besides, it was explained how difficult it was to find people willing to defend the No vote publicly. Regarding radio and television, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland finally dismissed these complaints in their Annual report.

As for the SSMRC design, one last methodological issue should be addressed regarding the typology of texts selected. In gathering the texts and assembling the corpus, the attempt was to create one, long, machine-readable and heterogeneous text whose language could be regarded as representative (on representativeness in CL see Biber 1993; McEnery *et al.* 2006, 13-21), i.e., illustrative of all the varieties of language broadly employed by those involved in the mainstream debate in Ireland: in other terms, observations on the features and properties of the language in the corpus can be extended to the language of the debate. In this respect, one may object that it is no longer through the press that arguments and opinions are formulated, shared and spread. And it is undoubtedly true that nowadays television and social media have replaced newspapers as far as the social function of opinion-making is concerned. That is exactly why the corpus was designed so as to include also the transcripts of a number of videos deploying the very terms which were popular and typical features of the social media campaigns. However, one should also consider that today's newspapers consistently cover what happens on social media, extensively and in detail, unfailingly reporting on language and arguments of ongoing debates. As a consequence, this recent trend prompted a shift in the newspapers' function, turning them from a secondary into a tertiary source of information, but still one which is representative of the language of social discourses and, therefore, a legitimate component of corpora.

4. Linguistic Analysis

Given the topic and context of the analysis, some of the content words ranking high in the word list provided by Sketch Engine would not surprise anyone (e.g., “marriage”, 2,016 tokens; “people”, 1,252; “referendum”, 1,202; “vote”, 1,079; “gay”, 835; “same-sex”, 716), while some others are certainly more noteworthy. This is definitely the case of “children”, with no fewer than 702 occurrences, a number of which were likely due to the No siders’ endeavour to derail the debate towards collateral issues, such as parenting, adoption and even “surrogacy” (198 tokens) which were actually not at stake. Indeed, these topics were eventually brushed aside as red herring fallacies by impartial commentators, including the Referendum Commission chairman and High Court Judge, Kevin Cross:

This referendum is about marriage – who may marry, who may not marry. [...] Surrogacy is not regulated by the Constitution at all. There is no proposal that it shall be regulated by the Constitution. Surrogacy at the moment is not regulated by law. It is intended to regulate it by law. That regulation will apply irrespective of whether the referendum is passed or not. Adoption is regulated by law. At the moment, adoption is available to married persons, to single people and now, as of recently, to same-sex couples. There will be no change in that if the referendum is passed. (*Irish Times*, 14 May 2015)

Another term with remarkably high frequency in the corpus is “equality”, with 462 tokens, a strategic theme upon which the Yes side invested much: small wonder that 60% of its total occurrences are to be found in the Yes sub-corpus. Also of interest is the high frequency of “family”, counting 428 tokens, whose nature of argumentative *tòpos* is confirmed by its distribution, being concentrated, as it is, in the Yes and No sub-corpora, and almost absent from the Objective one. Other terms emblematic of the SSMRC are “love”, which scores 295 tokens (369 considering all its forms, like “loves”, “loving”, etc.) and whose frequency predictably reaches its peak in the Yes sub-corpus, and “change”, with 296 tokens (477 considering all its noun and verb forms). Interestingly, by running the Word Sketch function of “change” used as a verb, one learns that it primarily collocates with the following direct objects: “constitution”, “mind”, “meaning”, “definition” and “law”. Whereas one may have expected “constitution”, “mind” and “law” to collocate with “change” within this specific context, the other two collocates, “meaning” and “definition”, deserve further remarks which have to be postponed for the time being and to which this essay will return later.

As far as the main hypothesis of this study is concerned, references to 1916 were found to be abundant in the corpus, with 11 occurrences of “1916”, 10 of “Rising” (2 of which in the collocation “Easter Rising”), 17 of “Proclamation”, 12 of “independence” (7 of which referring to the Irish in-

dependence, 2 collocating with “Proclamation of”, and 2 more with “War of”), and, above all, 49 occurrences of “republic”, 3 of “republican” and 2 of “republicanism”. In particular, what comes to the fore is that 9 out of 10 occurrences of “1916” feature in the Yes sub-corpus, that is, in texts conveying or even explicitly supporting the Yes. And it is worth mentioning that the only occurrence of “1916” in the No sub-corpus is to be found in a Letter to the Editor dated 16 April, where, in stark contrast to the other 9 tokens and, most probably, in allergic response to the political usage of 1916 by Yes campaigners, the author argued against any parallelism between them and (his idea of) those who fought in the Rising, allegedly on account of the former’s lack of respect for “conscientious objections in areas such as same-sex marriage”, their “aim of silencing all dissenting opinions”, and their hostility to Christian morality. The letter bitterly concluded that:

It would be supremely ironic, if on the eve of the centenary of 1916, we as a nation endorse the aspirations of those who evidently have little or no respect for conscience and whose aim is to curtail the expression of basic Christian morality and sexual ethics, ushering in a new era of penal law. (Letter to the editor, *Irish Times*, 16 April 2015)

Representing the traditionally bullied – the homosexual community – as the new bullies, because of whom “[t]he unwillingness to endorse same-sex relationships is now routinely and uncritically (and wrongly) equated with racism”, was actually quite pervasive an attitude and a rhetorical strategy among Catholic No supporters. This became even more palpable following the “gay-cake row”, involving a family-run Belfast bakery which refused to provide a cake topping with a pro-gay marriage slogan and its born-again Christian owners who were then sued by the customer and eventually found guilty of discrimination by the Belfast County Court. Needless to say, No siders were outraged at this judgment. Along similar lines, No campaigners and supporters often resented being stereotyped, discriminated and silenced by Yes supporters, and this complaint was formulated in several forms through newspaper articles – the point was repeatedly made by members of the Iona Institute, Vincent Twomey (*Irish Times*, 1 May 2015), John Waters and others –, Letters to the Editors by several citizens and even in a famous video which circulated widely and where a well-known gay man committed to voting No claimed that “there are too many people bullied into silence”. And after arguing against gay marriage – and not against marriage equality, because “for me this referendum is not about equality” – the man in the video explained:

There are many people who feel the same way as I do, but they’re afraid to speak out, because of the extraordinary bullying that’s coming from the Yes campaign. We

shouldn't bow to that intimidation, we shouldn't be scared of the people who are tearing down the No posters. This is not the way a campaign should be run. Family businesses are being closed. Professional careers threatened.

Indeed, words related to the semantic fields of “fear”, “intimidation”, “threaten”, “bully” and even “sue” occur much more frequently in the texts of the No sub-corpus, as long-established patterns were disrupted and overturned, with Yes campaigners and the LGBT community unconvincingly characterized as a lobby of arrogant bullies aiming to curtail the freedom of speech and conscience of believers.

In actual fact, Christian values and teachings were popular topics in public statements and interviews by No campaigners and this triggered emotional and apparently knee-jerk reactions by Yes supporters who, in turn, advocated Christian morality as an essential part of their background and prospects too. By all odds, religious topics were vital to the determination of the referendum outcome, as should be expected in a country like Ireland, and this aspect calls for further considerations which will be relevant to the conclusion of this paper.

Going back to the references to the Rising, “Proclamation” scores the highest logDice – a statistical measure based on the frequency of a collocation, X and Y, regardless of the size of the corpus – among the collocates of “1916”, while among the collocates of “Republic”, “equal” and “equals” (as in “Republic of equals”) score a total of 9 occurrences each and, once again, highlight equality as a pivotal argument of Yes campaigners. A group of adjectives from the same semantic area should also be noticed, as they offer an interesting perspective on this key event of Irish history: “true”, “real” and “genuine”. As the journalist, Carol Coutler, pointed out to me during a private conversation in Dublin, the whole debate revolved around an attempt at defining, or better re-defining, children and family relationships: their true meaning, their real value. This was deemed necessary especially by young open-minded people, including the emigrants of the diaspora, who mobilized in great numbers and decided to go back home just for the vote. By analyzing the SSMRC further, Coutler's opinion was confirmed, in that the corpus was found to feature an unusual amount of occurrences of “true” (52, including its comparative form, “truer”), of “real” (82), and of “genuine” (10). Among the top collocates of “true” there are “meaning”, “marriage”, and, again, “equality”, while “real” often collocates with “lives”, “person/s”, “people”, “faces”, and “names”, suggesting the steady use of a communicative strategy of personalization. Clearly enough, both sides of the argument contended that their ideas and positions were more real and authentic than those of their counterparts, in the respective attempts to “define”, constitutionally as well as morally, ideas of marriage, of family and even of fairness, and to provide all these re-definitions with the legitimacy derived from an honest and comprehensive appraisal of the question. Moreover, in the

Yes sub-corpus only, this appraisal seemed to occur within a “true”, “real” and “genuine” republic (5 occurrences in total).

In this respect, also the collocations of “re-/definition” and “re-/define” are of great interest. In particular, the verb “to define” in all its forms, scores no fewer than 67 tokens and, among its top collocates, there is “Constitution” (the Constitution of Ireland being redefined by the 34th Amendment), “institution” (almost always referring to the civil institution of marriage), “marriage” itself, “state” (generally pertaining the legal frame of the question) and, to a much lower degree, “sexuality” which did not seem to be so much under scrutiny as one would have expected if similar circumstances had arisen in other cultures, possibly including the Italian one. The verb “to redefine” and its forms score 54 tokens and collocates with most of the above words, as well as with “family” (9 times, always as a direct object) and, only in the No sub-corpus, with “undermine”, whereby such process of re-definition was felt to jeopardize the *status quo*. The nominal forms, “definition” and “redefinition”, also score high, with 87 and 19 occurrences, respectively, and they can be found in a range of collocations substantially similar to those of the respective verbs.

As already revealed, religious references are ubiquitous in the corpus: “religion” (with 55 tokens), “religious” (175), “God” (113), “Catholic” (270, plus 4 “Catholicism”), and “Christian” (134, plus 20 “Christianity”) all have high frequencies, thus confirming their pervasiveness in Irish culture and society. What may surprise is that their frequency in the referendum discourse is comparable in the three sub-corpora. Cleverly enough, Yes supporters did not question the religious strain of the debate any less than No supporters. However, when they did, they mostly focused on quite different aspects of it. This can be seen when one considers the bigrams including religious key words. In the No sub-corpus one finds “Catholic position” (logDice: 10.237), “Catholic teaching” and “Catholic schools”, signalling a conservative effort to treasure the “tradition” *per se*. On the other hand, in the Yes sub-corpus “Catholic” collocates with “ethics” and “understanding”, in all probability on account of the Yes supporters’ intent to advocate the tolerance and universalism theologically embedded in Catholicism within the framework of a modern and liberal understanding. “Liberal” is another emblematic example of how views diverged on this point. In actual fact, the term “liberal” was used by both sides, though with opposite semantic prosodies (Stewart 2010): typically negative in No texts (e.g., “liberal elite”; “another yabbering, predictable, old liberal”; “liberal ideological orthodoxy”) and typically positive in Yes texts (e.g., “two educated, decent and liberal people”; “I consider myself liberal rather than religious”). The same irony and negative semantic prosody was also associated to the use of terms from the same, “progressive”, political area in other No texts:

There is too much at stake here for us to think in isolation about the idea of legitimising same-sex marriage, convincing ourselves that we can simply engage in a “pro-

gressive”, “enlightened” and “compassionate” measure without consequences in other contexts. (*Irish Independent*, 29 March 2015)

This antithetical semiotization of the concepts of liberality and progress vividly exemplifies cultural theorist and anthropologist Jan Assmann’s seminal distinction between an approach to cultural memory based on imitation, social conservation and mindless repetition of rites and liturgies, and an approach rather based on hermeneutics, social dynamism and renovation of cultural practices according to interpretive efforts (1997, XII-XIV). Arguably, the ideological polarization described by Assmann portrays the two Irelands facing each other on the day of the referendum better than any other sociological survey.

Another fundamental and marked distinction between the Yes and the No campaigns is reflected in the different collocational behaviour of the class of adjectives referring to ideas of truthfulness and genuineness. The examples of “real” collocating with “lives”, “people”, “person/s” and even “faces” in texts falling into the Yes sub-corpus is clearly symptomatic of the discursive strategy of personalization which has been already hinted at. This very profitable strategy was implemented by campaigners to move as many people as possible, to make them feel the importance of the issue, to make them feel responsible for the impending decision, and to finally get them ready to vote. As Ursula Hannigan cleverly argued at the book launch of the already quoted *Ireland Says Yes*:

The genius of the Yes campaign was to turn the referendum into a national heart-to-heart conversation and replace abstract arguments with real human beings on both sides of the argument. It softened hearts, it melted the hard-hearted. Suddenly, THEM became US, OTHERS became OURSELVES (*Yes book launch*).

Ursula Hannigan, a very well-known journalist and prize-winning political editor for TV3, marked a milestone in the referendum debate when, just a week short of the vote, she came out publicly with a touching article published by *The Irish Times* and immediately shared by thousands of social media users. At the beginning of her piece, she painfully recollects:

I was a good Catholic girl, growing up in 1970s Ireland where homosexuality was an evil perversion. It was never openly talked about but I knew it was the worst thing on the face of the earth. So when I fell in love with a girl in my class in school, I was terrified. (Hannigan 2015)

Then she quotes from her heart-breaking diary kept as a seventeen-year-old girl:

I have been so depressed, so sad and so confused. There seems to be no one I can turn to, not even God. I’ve poured out my emotions, my innermost thoughts

to him and get no relief or so-called spiritual grace. At times I feel I am talking to nothing, that no God exists. I've never felt like this before, so empty, so meaningless, so utterly, utterly miserable. (*Ibidem*)

As Hannigan subsequently ponders in her article, at the time when she discovered her sexual orientation she felt that within the context of her childhood she was not left any option other than to force herself into a state of self-denial, a condition which was to be experienced while always lingering on the verge of a nervous breakdown:

Because of my upbringing, I was revolted at the thought that I was in love with a member of my own sex. This contradiction within me nearly drove me crazy... My mind was constantly plagued with the fear that I was a lesbian. I hated myself. I felt useless and worthless and very small and stupid. I had one option, and only one option. I would be "normal", and that meant locking myself in the closet and throwing away the key. (*Ibidem*)

Hannigan was just one of several famous people who came out during the campaign, told their compelling stories of loneliness and isolation, and voiced their full support for marriage equality. This is the case of former minister Pat Carey, the current Prime Minister and former Health Minister Leo Varadkar, and former president Mary McAleese who spoke out for her gay son, Justin. These high-profile interventions were disruptive and powerful in shaping the referendum. Their strategy of making it real and personal, as in a typical semiotic *embrayage* (Greimas, Courtes 1979), was also employed in Noel Whelan's call to the vote significantly entitled "Remember real people when you vote in marriage referendum":

Remember that those impacted by this referendum are real people whose real lives cannot be dismissed by false slogans. They are our brothers, sisters, daughters and sons, our family, our friends. They include some of our teachers, our shopkeepers, our nurses and our tradesmen. We meet them every day on our streets, in our work place, and everywhere we gather in our communities. Remember they are the people with whom we share this country. They are of us. They and their families have a real and very human need to be recognised as equal. Remember, they have real faces and real names. And then remember that you have the awesome power to give them real constitutional equality with a Yes vote next Friday. (Whelan 2015)

Interestingly, a similar enunciative strategy was present in texts which did not feature "real people" and yet insisted on first and second person pronouns and possessive adjectives (such as "I", "me", "myself", "my", "mine", "we", "us", "ourselves", "ours", "our", "you", "yourself", "your", "yours", etc.) in order to establish a dialogue, as in the slogan "Ask *your* family to come on this journey with *us!*" A comparison among the frequency of first and sec-

ond personal pronouns and adjectives in each of the three sub-corpora shows it to be higher in the Yes sub-corpus than in the Objective sub-corpus, and lowest in the No sub-corpus. In contrast, the distribution of third personal pronouns and adjectives across the three sub-corpora is balanced. This stylistic feature surely made sense as part of a broader attempt to attain a level of closeness, intimacy, and to address the targeted readership and audience as in a face-to-face conversation. As a consequence, the effect of Yes texts on readers and listeners was supposedly perceived to be one of greater engagement, whereas No texts using impersonal viewpoints seemed to take a distance from the very individuals whose marriage they did not want to allow. And such a stiff posture on the interpersonal level (Halliday 1975) seemingly proved counterproductive and was in many ways doomed to fail.

Another brilliant rhetorical ploy and point of strength of the Yes campaign was to rely not so much on terms drawn from the law as “allowing” or “permitting” – with the intended reference to allowing or permitting homosexual people to marry – as on questioning the ultimate legitimacy of this legal *concession*. This, in fact, could be better expressed by means of emotionally charged litotes and similar patterns, as occurred in a letter which asked: “How can we deny two people their chance of happiness” (Letter to the Editor, *Irish Times*, 6 March 2015). A critical shift from *allowing* to *not denying* was also implicit in a compelling public service TV commercial actually made in 2009 by Marriage Equality but broadcast regularly in early 2015. The video showed a young, hesitant man walking a long distance through utterly diverse landscapes, urban as well as rural, and calling at several doors in order to anxiously ask the same question (also in Irish) over and over: “I would like to ask for Sinead’s hand in marriage”. As the advertisement finishes, the viewer is asked: “How would you feel if you had to ask 4 million people for permission to get married?”. The striking rationale of this very persuasive advertisement was that, by voting Yes, people could bring to an end the absurdity of entirely unknown people exerting the right, or better, the unjust privilege, to either allow or deny the marriage between other people in love (*Sinead’s Hand*). This litotic rationale – say no to no – was often reformulated in Yes texts, many of which were common citizens’ letters to the newspapers’ editors. These mails insisted that there is “no rational basis to deny gay couples right to marry”; that a “No vote will still deny people equal rights”; that “no one should be denied their right to it”. As regards the collocational behaviour of “deny” (which, by the way, counts 74 tokens), “right” is shown to be its top direct object collocate, with 20 co-occurrences and logDice 10.266. In turn, No campaigners reacted to this rhetorical strategy by claiming that a Yes vote would deny the rights and needs of “child/children” (9 co-occurrences, 5 of “children” and 4 of “child”) to a father and a mother, despite the fact that, as already asserted, this was not what the referendum was about in the first place.

What also comes to the fore in the language of the No campaign is their focus on the “consequences” (40 out of 62 tokens occur in the No sub-corpus), and particularly on those which “people have not thought about” (Letter to the Editor, *Irish Times*, 18 May 2015). This recurring pattern is made evident by the unusual amount of such modifiers as “unintended” (7 tokens modifying “consequences” and “outcomes”), “unforeseen” (3 tokens, all of which modifying “consequences”), “undisputed” (2 tokens in total, one of which modifies “consequences”), and “hidden” (11 tokens, one of which collocates with “consequences”). When more explicitly stated, the message by No supporters was that a yes Vote would have cast a “shadow of uncertainty” (*Irish Times*, 12 May 2015).

Again, arguments based on suggestive innuendoes and oblique allusions to some hidden danger rather than on any logical reasoning on explicit facts may be argued to be typical of a reactionary, “*ipse dixit*” stance, one which takes some deeply rooted limitations for granted and does not even dare to question their scope and validity. Accordingly, in the conservative sectors of the Irish society, the traditional idea of sex-balanced marriage seemed to become something of a stronghold, a symbolic barrier against the very idea of change, or just development, no matter what its concrete direction was and regardless of possible and rational outcomes. And this anxious and potentially detrimental relationship with the unpredictability of the future was epitomised by a 3-gram, “the next step”, which has 4 occurrences, all in the No sub-corpus, as well as by colloquial idioms and other figurative expressions: “Where will it end?” asked a reader of *The Irish Times*; “I think it’s time to draw the line”, argued another. And a reader of the *Irish Independent* wonders “whether it is safe to usher in the new”. Likewise, the No sub-corpus also shows more references to a not better explained “common sense” (10 occurrences) and to the “ridiculous” (9 tokens) quality of the opponents’ arguments. Dismissing the Yes positions as nonsensical matches the provocative illogicality of certain ironies by No supporters, mostly conveyed through a deliberately plain, almost rude style and only sometimes by the odd flash of rhetorical genius. This approach may be effective with those who are already confident with their choice and happy enough with a superficial, instinctive and colourful presentation of the problem, while it is more likely to disappoint those who are really trying to understand. An instance of superficial, ironical – and in this case hyperbolic – approach to the referendum issue can be read in a brilliant and effective Letter to the Editor written by Brendan O’Regan and published by *Irish Times*, 16 April 2015:

Why marriage is being confined to two people? All of the arguments used to advocate same sex marriage could equally be used (and probably will) to defend polygamy, polyamory, etc. I fear this will be the next step on the liberal agenda which will ultimately balk at monogamy. After all, if more than two people want to get together and marry, surely it would be an offence against equality to deny them?

Sure, we're frequently redefining marriage so why not go the next step? And as for parenting concerns, surely the more parent figures the better? Why stop at two?

When looking closely at the SSMRC, one eventually realizes that, while revolving around the core issue of same-sex marriage, the referendum debate also tested and updated the Irish people's identity, their urge to overcome long-standing taboos and their evolving relationship with the very concept of "limit", one which is no longer embraced within a religious framework only and is increasingly questioned within a political and inherently republican domain.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study confirms that remembrance of the rebel gestures of 1916 is still intense in Irish politics and affects the Irish people's self-representation in ways which are narrative as well as normative. In the months leading up to the referendum, the cluster of values around 1916 especially inspired the Yes side, that is, the large majority of the Irish people, who genuinely meant to update such heritage and to revisit it according to contemporary ideas of solidarity.

In *Deconstructing Ireland* Colin Graham notoriously theorized the Futurology of Irish culture as a response to a permanent condition of abnormality, a never-ending tension towards something always as yet to be achieved. Over the centuries, such tension has typically turned into a reactionary immobility, as shown by Beckett's glorious parody of it in *Waiting for Godot* (1956), but sometimes it has also turned into a progressive call to embark upon a daring journey towards equality and direct democracy. In this case, the Republican ideals of 1916 would be no longer felt like the object of passive remembrance, but as history which helps a people make more history, a powerful source of inspiration whose meaning can and should be persistently re-defined in order to shape a more inclusive grammar of the Irish identity.

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THREE ICONS: A Door; a Book; a Tomb *(new approaches to Wilde's work and life fostered by two recent exhibitions)*

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First Icon: A Door. It was utterly incongruous in its position at the centre of a wall of paintings: its starkness; the rotting, yellowing white wood; the metal rimmed spy-hole; and, lower, a rectangular covered opening to admit food. This was clearly no modernist “found object”, shockingly out-of-place on a wall amidst a collection of Victorian paintings. The label read: “Prison door from Reading Gaol, believed to be from Oscar Wilde’s cell”. For Wilde it had been a doorway to pain and humiliation, of loss and abjection; but also an entry to new modes of creative self-analysis and to the private confessionals that resulted in *De Profundis*. The resonances were profound and, in the wider context of the exhibition where it was displayed, profoundly far-reaching. *Queer British Art 1861-1967* was mounted by Tate Britain, London (5 April – 1 October, 2017), to celebrate fifty years since the decriminalising of consensual sex between gay men by Act of Parliament. It was London’s first openly gay (and bisexual) celebration of the arts of painting, sculpture, performance and photography as genres distinct in themselves in being shaped by the sensibilities and sensitivities of a distinctive minority culture. Within that larger conspectus, the door marked both a turning point and a dividing of the ways. The works on display by the likes of Frederic Leighton, Evelyn Pickering De Morgan, William Blake Richmond or Walter Crane that preceded the group of items relating to Wilde’s social disgrace exploited the artist’s conventional permission frankly to paint the nude while clearly relishing and making a specific feature of curvaceous or muscular flesh. The rendering of the body in their art is precise, celebratory, fearless. After Wilde’s departure for Reading Gaol, gay male art became more subtly an expression of what the catalogue termed “coded desires” (such as Edmund Dulac’s double-portrait of the life-long companions, Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, portrayed as sainted Cistercian friars in an Arcadian landscape) or a vision of excess as in the portrait photography of Cecil Beaton, the beginnings (alongside much of the theatrical design work of Oliver Messel) of a decidedly British form of kitsch. Music Hall offered a cover for gender-swapping and female imper-

sonation from the occasionally crude to the generally quite sophisticated, while Bloomsbury painters made the dangerous permissible by reducing grappling bodies to all-but abstract designs with colour and form. Lesbian art by contrast seemingly had no need, despite the trials for public indecency brought against Radclyffe Hall, the novelist, or Maud Allan, the dancer, to pursue such covert agendas as a spur to invention. Ethel Walker, Gluck, Dora Carrington, Dorothy Johnstone and especially Laura Knight pushed beyond tradition to express not just their sensual appreciation but more importantly their emotional response to the female body. There is nothing coded about Carrington's nude seen arching into ecstasy (*Female Figure Lying on her Back* of 1912) or Knight's *Self Portrait* (1913) showing her with confident stance in the act of painting the naked Ella Naper. Both are radical and defiantly open, where the work of their male gay contemporaries is careful, always mindful of risk in its strategies of subversion. What a world of private pain separates Francis Bacon's fractured and contorted nudes, which ended the exhibition, from the exuberant joy of Carrington's or Knight's canvases, while David Hockney, later to be a master colourist, struggles to hide the word, Queen (or is the word maybe Queer) in *Going to be a Queen for Tonight* (1960) beneath a welter of darkly drab and messily tinted shapes, an image caught between defiance and fear. Here were disturbing intimations of the mindscapes that could lie behind that closed door. Moving around the exhibition brought ever-deepening significance to that early confrontation with the cell-door. By turns an emblem of cruelty but also of endurance, defiance and release into creativity, it came to determine the shape of the curator, Clare Barlow's vision and to epitomise the wide-ranging impact that Wilde's imprisonment had on cultural history for over seventy years.

Second Icon: The Book. One's first impression and lasting memory of the Wilde exhibition at the Petit Palais in Paris, *Oscar Wilde: l'impertinent absolu*, wittily translated into English as "Insolence Incarnate", was of the book that formed the catalogue (© Paris Musées, printed by l'imprimerie Geers, Ghent 2016, pp. 256). It was handsomely bound and sensuous to hold: printed with varying but always exquisite fonts. Interleaving photographs and extensive, richly pertinent notes on the exhibits with scholarly essays, it gave unparalleled insights into Wilde's life, thought and career while being always a thing of beauty. It tangibly and visually embodied the dominant theme of the exhibition: Wilde's quest for aesthetic beauty. The appearance of his own publications was calculatedly radical, when (thanks usually to the designs of Charles Ricketts) the bindings offered an enticing intimation, usually stamped in gold, of the contents within. Displayed here often to show both cover and a representative page, their beauty is distinctive, suggesting that reading would offer more than intellectual stimulus but rather encompass an all-embracing joy of mind and senses. Set within the larger context of the exhibition, here was a palpable embodiment of Wilde's evolving aesthetic and cult of beauty.

Research and careful enquiries into loans enabled the curator, Dominique Morel, assisted by Merlin Holland and Ömer Koç, to assemble a remarkably full collection of artefacts to give body to Wilde's thinking, by illustrating the precise influences on it and the literary outcomes deriving from it; the intellectual, artistic, theatrical and social milieux in which Wilde moved were particularly well represented and defined. One could in consequence read writing on or to the actresses Ellen Terry, Lily Langtry and Sarah Bernhardt beside full-scale portraits of them, which offered notable discriminations between them, showing that Wilde did not pursue a *type* of beauty. If Shakespeare was right to image the human face as a revelatory book, then in each actress's case physical beauty was ably supported by a considerable depth of character that made for a unique sensibility.

Though it is possible to read Wilde's art criticism, it deepens one's experience to view the range of actual paintings he criticised. On loan from galleries around the world, Dominique Morel gathered together the canvases that featured in the Grosvenor Gallery shows that he reviewed. Relying no longer on just Wilde's printed words or small-scale, monochrome reproductions of the kind to be found in monographs or art journals, one's whole perspective on his criticism shifted. Comments on a distant prospect of landscape in a painting or the flowers seen as foreground, the particular opaline colour of a sky or the backward curve of a fainting body could easily be *read* as somewhat effete dilettantism. Confronted by paintings of some size and scope, however, one's value-judgements were challenged. Most of the canvases in the Grosvenor Gallery shows fall into the narrative genre; but Wilde's remarks draw a viewer's attention to painterly detail. Beauty comes to rely less in a comforting recognition of a specific narrative climax (in William Blake Richmond's depiction of Electra mourning with her slaves over the tomb of Agamemnon; or George Frederick Watts' of Eurydice at the moment of her vanishing away into the darkness of Hades) than on the technical accomplishments that work together to make the narrative interpretation possible and immediate: depth of perspective, the colour palette selectively deployed to a purpose, the play of light over textured surfaces, the patterning of shapes that gives significance to form. Wilde is teaching the viewer to read painting with a complex, layered response, noting how detail is subsumed within a total concept. In so doing, he is encouraging the viewer to honour fully the artist's technical virtuosity but also, as with reading a book of poetry, to relish nuance, suggestion, the enigmatic and symbolic.

When Wilde married Constance Lloyd and they moved into a house in Tite Street, he had the opportunity to realise the creating of his own House of Beauty, based on his studies in the writings and practice of Ruskin, Morris, Godwin and the exemplars of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Tite Street itself was an address that required living up to, since Whistler had made it a Mecca amongst bohemian artistic circles. Being comprised largely of Eng-

lish and American rather than French artists, this is one feature of Wilde's life that is not given due weight of representation by Dominique Morel. This is unfortunate, since in devising his home as a Temple of Beauty, Wilde clearly put his reading in French literature (Huysmans) and viewing of French painting (Moreau) to as good a use as the English influences on his choices of décor and spatial arrangements. Books, conversations and images shaped his decisions, but Wilde's home never quite rivalled the drawing power of Whistler's White House in its heyday. This was partly because of his increasing involvement with matters theatrical, with Bosie and the shady side of London's underworld. It was out of this strange juxtaposition of the House Beautiful and the Underworld that Wilde shaped the narrative of his masterpiece, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. For Ward Lock's edition of 1891, Ricketts again devised the cover, but one that strangely lacks the clarity of his earlier work, being a kind of inverted cone made by a repeated design taking the form of minute semi-circles of six or seven downward-facing pen strokes. It intimates a decline but is too vague to engage the imagination in the way of his previous covers.

A book (maybe a copy of *Dorian Gray*, maybe Huysmans' *A Rebours*) was to be submitted as evidence in the case against Wilde: a book with a beautiful cover, exquisite prose, but lethally subversive content, which was in part to effect Wilde's undoing. The House Beautiful had been too escapist, a dangerous sanctum; but now the dark side of its exclusiveness gained a steady momentum in the process (ironically but aptly the French word for "trial") of Wilde's undoing. The exhibition realised this turning point with a disturbing leap of the imagination. A screen showed excerpts from two films of *Dorian Gray*: that directed by Albert Lewin in 1945 and that by Massimo Dellamano in 1970. What was featured were the two realisations on film of the moment when Dorian destroys the portrait and dies a hideous corpse: on a loop the two versions faded in and out like an obsessive nightmare. Simultaneously, on the floor of the same room filmed excerpts of Salomé's dance before Herod were projected in a similarly endless cycle (Rita Hayworth performing for Charles Laughton in William Dieterle's version of 1953 and Jessica Chastain with Al Pacino in Pacino's *Wilde Salomé* of 2011). Within the orderly confines of the exhibition hall, one suddenly found oneself immersed inside an enveloping antinomian world. Something of the shock-value of these two works for Victorian readers or theatregoers was brilliantly evoked in preparation for the final room where the elegance of those aesthetic interiors with their meticulously matched colour-schemes had given way to the harsh monochrome images of Wilde's cell in Reading Gaol, to cartoon imaginings of Wilde on the treadmill from *Le Quotidien Illustré* of 7 June, 1895, to photographs of the Parisian hotel room in which he died (spartan in its functionalism, but for the hideously patterned wallpaper made infamous by Wilde's last words). After the grandly self-presentational poses of the ear-

lier portraits, it was saddening to view the bloated figure captured in lithograph or crayon-sketch by Lautrec and Ricard Opisso i Sala respectively, or the wistful figure with haunted eyes in what is presumed to be Sickert's rapid crayon-sketch of a lonely Wilde travelling incognito in Dieppe.

Books had accompanied Wilde's rise to fame and social distinction and made possible his possession of the House Beautiful. Ironically it was a book, chosen by Edward Carson, that was cunningly deployed in part to engineer his undoing and his loss of a vision of Beauty. Determining the centrality of the art of the book to an interpretation of Wilde's career was the significant achievement of the exhibition at the Petit Palais. Dominique Morel's catalogue, perceptively researched and fittingly printed in a fashion that demonstrates the degree to which at its best publishing is itself an art, should become a collector's item and a goal of Wildean scholars.

Third Icon: A Tomb. The French exhibition did not end on a tragic note. Wilde's reputation has after all undergone a transformation and recovery: his plays are continuously in production (there are productions of groups of comedies with *Salome* and readings of *De Profundis* currently being staged throughout 2018 in London and Milan); there has been a magisterial collected edition of his works published by Oxford University Press; and his writings are continually reissued, while changing social attitudes to sexuality and gender-definition have undergone manifest changes such that "queer" is an accepted epithet and no longer a term of abuse. The exhibition chose to reflect this by devising a final room, fully illustrated in the catalogue, which examined the creation of Wilde's tomb for Père Lachaise cemetery. Here were Epstein's preliminary sketches, showing him exploring how to get the right balance of width and length and the most graphic form for the central features of face and wings. Interestingly a scheme for an attendant group of mourning Greek youths was abandoned so the focus remains entirely on the image of the Sphinx, so appropriate a choice to emblemise Wilde's life and thought: subtle, challenging, teasing, enigmatic, exotic, dangerous (as most of his writings are). Aptly the sphinx was one of Wilde's favourite images, deriving from myth but containing the potential for modern application and resonance. In terms of conventions in funeral gravestones, it is neither wholly Christian nor Classical; the wings are folded not spread; the sleeping eyes indicate a being at rest ("brooding on silence", to use Yeats's words) rather than watchful like the guardian angel of tradition; yet the sheer power in the conception suggests a latent, soon-to-be-unleashed, awesome strength, which the sheer size of the statue augments. There were period photographs of the statue under construction in Epstein's studio and veiled in the cemetery in October, 1912, awaiting inauguration. However, the final dominant image was of the Sphinx before its recent cleaning, where it is seen covered in lipstick tinted kisses; myriads of them, fresh ones overlaying those that are rap-

idly fading. All are anonymous. Those kisses elevate the tomb to a shrine, visited by those who admire Wilde's work, who have been influenced by his flamboyantly presentational skills in their own modes of self-expression, or simply by those whose lives, whatever their gender and sexual preferences, have been touched by his cultural presence. It is fitting that in the catalogue the last words are left to Wilde's grandson in an essay entitled, "Posterity". The tomb is not a dead thing; rather with all its kisses it is an image of resurgence, renewal, endurance and hope.

Miscellanea

“No idle sightseers”: The Ulster Women’s Unionist Council and the Ulster Crisis (1912-1914)

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Abstract:

This paper examines the role of the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council (UWUC) during the Ulster Crisis. When the UWUC was founded in 1911 dominant gender norms constituted the organization as an auxiliary of the male-dominated Ulster Unionist Council. However, within a year of its establishment the UWUC was the largest women’s political organization in Ireland. Yet the literature related to Ulster unionism and twentieth-century Irish politics and history has constituted the UWUC as a marginal Ulster unionist organization. This paper seeks to contribute to redressing this. It argues that the UWUC was not an “idle sightseer”, or passive observer, of the Ulster Crisis; rather it played a significant role during the Ulster Crisis and in constituting Ulster as a distinct and united polity.

Keywords: Gender, Ulster, Ulster Crisis, Ulster Unionism, Ulster Women’s Unionist Council

1. The Rise of Ulster Unionism

In the 1890s a distinct and institutionalized Ulster unionism began to emerge¹. The Ulster Unionist Convention of 1892, a mass gathering of un-

¹ Here Unionist (capitalized) is used in reference to those who were formally affiliated with the Conservative/Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) (established in 1905), and the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council (UWUC); unionist (lowercase) is used in reference to the broader community in Ireland (but in the region that would become Northern Ireland in particular) who wished to maintain the political and economic union between

ionist men from across Ulster², was held to demonstrate the scope and unity of the resistance of unionists in Ulster to Home Rule, or self-government for Ireland over domestic issues. It was not until the early 1900s, however, that Ulster unionism materialized as a more fully institutionalized and distinctive political and ideological force (Jackson 1989, 7). Unionists from Ulster were increasingly isolated within the Conservative and Unionist Party caucus at Westminster which was split over the issues of tariff reform and free trade.

Beginning in 1903, Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary in the Conservative government, opposed the government's existing free trade policies. He endorsed the protection of British industry and the application of tariffs on goods produced outside of the empire. Others within the party continued to support free trade. Chamberlain resigned his cabinet post in September 1903 and thereafter campaigned against free trade. Others followed him in leaving the party. This schism within the party meant that the focus of many politicians in Great Britain shifted from Home Rule to economic issues. Although unionists in Ireland attempted to build and maintain alliances across the UK, they now felt increasingly dependent on local rather than pan-British resources and support. In the previous Home Rule debates of 1886 and 1893 the bonds between Unionists and Conservatives in Ireland and Great Britain based on opposition to Home Rule, were stronger, but those bonds had been weakened in the intervening decades as the question of Home Rule was perceived by many British politicians more and more as an "Irish issue". The stakes were much higher in terms of the perceived threat of Home Rule between 1905 and 1910 (Jackson 1989, 301). This increased investment by Ulster politicians in the local politics of Ulster resulted in the establishment of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) in 1905 as an umbrella institution of various Ulster-based unionist organizations which linked local activists with a caucus of approximately twenty Irish Unionist MPs in the House of Commons at Westminster, most of whom represented constituencies in Ulster (Stewart 1967, 32; Jackson 1994, 42-43; Powell 2002, 134; Fitzpatrick 2006, 9).

The Conservative Party lost the 1906 national election to the Liberal Party due to the rift discussed above. In 1909, the Liberal government's "People's Budget" was vetoed by House of Lords sparking a constitutional crisis and another national election in January 1910 which resulted in a mi-

Ireland and Great Britain. Some in Northern Ireland also often use the term *Loyalist* interchangeably with *unionist*, reflecting a particular community's loyalty to the British Crown and/or Northern Ireland's political, economic, and (some argue) cultural ties with the UK.

² The author is aware that Ulster is a contested term in the context of Northern Ireland. It is used here because it was the term commonly used by unionists during the early twentieth century and was the concept of an entity and people constituted as distinct from the rest of Ireland through unionist discourse, traditions, rituals, rules, and symbols explored in this article.

nority Liberal government. The defeat of the first two Home Rule bills and the perceived dependence of this minority government on the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), an Irish nationalist political party in the Westminster Parliament, made it seem to ever more people that Home Rule for Ireland might be achieved. The veto power of the House of Lords at Westminster, which had been used to defeat the second Home Rule bill in 1893, was removed by Asquith's government in 1911. This raised the concern of unionists in Ulster that the third Home Rule bill, introduced in April of 1912, would be passed by Parliament (Foster 1989, 462, 599-619; Stubbs 1990, 876; Kee 2000, 414, 421-422, 463; Powell 2002, 128; Walsh 2002, 17-18, 28; Jackson 2003, 107, 361-378; Walker 2004, 14, 27; Bardon 2007, 411-413, 431, 436). Given the demographics of Ireland in the early 1900s – roughly seventy-five percent Catholic and twenty-five percent Protestant, with most Protestants concentrated in the province of Ulster – unionists and Protestants, especially in Ulster, feared that if Home Rule was granted to Ireland they would be a minority in a Catholic – and Irish nationalist-dominated Irish Parliament (Megahey 2001, 160-161).

This growing Ulsterization of unionism coupled with increasing support for the Irish nationalist demand for Home Rule in Ireland, set in place the dynamics out of which the Ulster Crisis arose. Ireland was divided on the question of Home Rule. The most concentrated, institutionalized, and well-mobilized opposition to Home Rule was located in the nine counties of Ulster. This placed those counties squarely in the centre of the Home Rule debate during the early 1910s. Unionists argued that civil and religious liberties – values and rights constituted as integral to Ulster – would be threatened if Home Rule was granted to Ireland. Sir Edward Carson³, the leader of Irish Unionist MPs in Westminster, declared: "There was no sacrifice which Ulster loyalists are not prepared to make in order to defeat the most degrading and humiliating conspiracy which now aims at the destruction of their civil and religious liberties" (*Minute Book of UWUC Executive Committee [ECM]*, 1911-1913. 16 January 1913). This reflected a widely shared sense amongst unionists in Ulster that Home Rule posed a threat and danger to Ulster.

The women's suffrage movement and its organizations, such as the Irish Women's Franchise League, Irish Women's Suffrage Society, Women's Social and Political Union, and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies also emerged and grew during these decades. The suffrage movement in Ireland, and the institutions associated with it, added further complexity to the contested nature of citizenship and the constitution of the nation in these years.

³ Carson was leader of the Irish Unionist MPs at Westminster from 1910 to 1921 and leader of the anti-Home Rule campaign during the Ulster Crisis ("Sir Edward Carson", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <www.oxforddnb.com> (05/2018).

The Irish suffrage movement was split over the issues of whether gender and national liberation could/should be addressed simultaneously or separately and the use of violence within the movement. Many suffragists argued that questions related to the political and economic independence of Ireland could not be divorced from the political liberation – the enfranchisement – of women. Others chose to concentrate on the cause of suffrage. They claimed that the nation could not be liberated if women in Ireland remained disenfranchised. These suffragists were criticized by many within the Irish nationalist and Ulster unionist movements and labelled “traitors” to their nation for focusing on women’s suffrage to the alleged detriment of Ireland’s political and economic liberation (Owens 1984; Murphy 1989; Ward 1993; Ryan 1995; Ward 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). In September 1912 the UUC approved plans for a provisional “Government of Ulster”. It would assume control of Ulster in the event Home Rule became law and hold “Ulster in trust for the King, pending the Repeal [sic] of Home Rule” (McNeill 1922, 145). Initially these plans involved a commitment to include women in this government, but this pledge was later withdrawn to the consternation of many (Buckland 1973a, 207; Urquhart 2001, 81; Pasetta 2013, 141). Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, an Irish Republican, suffragist, and critic of the UWUC noted to fellow Irish Republicans and feminists that Cumann na mBan (the Irish Women’s Council), a militant Irish nationalist women’s organization, had not received a similar guarantee from the Irish Republican movement (Ward 2017, 102-104).

2. The Emergence of the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council and the Gendering of Ulster

The establishment of a distinct unionist movement in Ulster and its political and economic power in Northern Ireland has been well documented. Much of this literature, however, has focused on the male-only or male-dominated institutions (see: Stewart 1967; Edwards 1970; Buckland 1973a, 1973b; Gibbon 1975; Jackson 1989, 1990; Akenson 1991; Jackson 1992; Collins 1994; Jackson 1994; Bew *et al.*, 1996; Shirlow, McGovern, eds, 1997; Loughlin 1999; Edwards 2000; Boyce & O’Day, eds, 2001; Jackson 2001, 2003; Boyce & O’Day, eds, 2004; Walker 2004; Loughlin 2007; Miller, 2007; Prince, 2007). Male-dominated political parties (see: Aughey 1989; Aughey, Morrow 1996; Ruane, Todd 2000; Walker 2004; Aughey 2005; Prince 2007) and the emergence and activities of Protestant paramilitaries have also been extensively researched (see: Bowman, 2007; McGaughey, 2012) – as have the Troubles (see: Edwards 1970; Farrell 1980; Aughey 1989; McGarry, O’Leary 1995; Aughey, Morrow 1996; Bew *et al.*, 1996; Ruane, Todd 2000; Aughey 2005; Tonge 2006; Prince 2007).

Significant contributions have also been made in terms of exploring questions related to gender and highlighting the contributions of women within unionist communities and the unionist movement. Fidelma Ashe (2012) and

Jane McGaughey (2012) have explored militarized masculinities during the Troubles in Northern Ireland and at the turn of the last century in Ulster respectively. McGaughey has argued that the normative ideals of masculinities in Ulster divided men based on class identities. Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See have addressed the gendered nature of unionist parades in Northern Ireland (2000b) and the gendered processes of nation-building (2000a), asserting that such parades and nation-building processes are fundamentally gendered and have resulted in the marginalization of women within unionist communities and the nation-state. Rosemary Sales and Rachel Ward have examined the roles of women within unionist, Loyalist, and Protestant communities during the Troubles and throughout the peace process in Northern Ireland. Ward (2006) has claimed that women have contributed significantly to the work within those communities in spite of the normative ideals of femininity which have ascribed women an auxiliary role within such communities. According to Sales (1997a, 1997b), women have been subordinated within Northern Irish society as a result of religious and political sectarianism. Diane Urquhart has furthered the understanding of the role of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council (UWUC or the Council) in the unionist movement during the 1910s and 1920s. The edited collection of the minutes of the UWUC, which Urquhart edited (2001), has made important primary sources related to that organization much more accessible to scholars and the general public alike. Additionally, she has detailed the work of members of the UWUC during the 1910s and 1920s, and has posited that members of the UWUC and other women's organizations, such as Association of Loyal Orange Women, did not challenge, but maintained and/or reinforced existing perceptions of gender differences within the unionist movement during the early twentieth century (Urquhart 2016, 2000, 1996, 1994).

This paper contributes to an understanding of the mutually constituted gender and unionist identities in Northern Ireland and to the critical literature which challenges the stereotypes of unionist women as apolitical and passive. It also expands the range of theoretical frameworks in this field of research. It reconfigures how feminist historical analysis and approaches have understood the role of unionist women in the ethno-nationalist politics of Ireland. Moreover, this paper concentrates on tracing and understanding unionist women's political agency through a case study of the UWUC and its role in the Ulster unionist movement and in the constitution of Ulster as distinct from the rest of Ireland during the Ulster Crisis (1912-1914), a period of male hegemony and significant political conflict. As such this paper offers new insights related to the involvement of unionist women in the constitution of the nation and in the defence of the nation and the national people. Furthermore, it opens up new angles of analyses through the development of Rogers Brubaker's (1996) concepts of nation, nationhood, nationness, and the original concept of nation-work. I argue that the nation, nationhood,

nationness, and nation-work of Ulster were established through unionist discourses, norms, symbols, rituals, and traditions.

According to Rogers Brubaker, the nation is a practical category, nationhood is the constitution of nation as institutionalized form, and nationness is the foundation of the nation through contingent moments and events. These are the mechanisms through which institutions such as political parties, state bureaucracies, and social movements constitute the nation as a real polity and entity based on particular categories of analysis such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, and – I contend – gender. Nation as practical category relates to a particular “category of social vision and division” which constitutes the nation, as conveyed through nationalist ideology (Brubaker 1996, 21). Understanding nation as practical category enables one to grasp how a “people” are constituted as a collective entity experienced as real and united through categories of classification (Brubaker 1996, 14-15, 21). Brubaker additionally posits that practical categories of nation become institutionalized through state-related organizational structures and practices including political organizations, such as the UUC and the UWUC, as well as organized nationalist, labour, and civil rights movements (for example) (Brubaker 1996, 18-21).

Nationhood, or nation as institutionalized form, elaborates fundamental forms of political identity (i.e., national, ethnic, gender, class, and religious) and provides the elementary forms of political understanding and action through institutionalized norms, traditions, rituals, symbols, and practices. In this way, the institutionalized discourse of nation constitutes classifications which are fundamental to “political understanding, rhetoric, interests, identity, and action” and provides the central parameters of political rhetoric and particular political interests (Brubaker 1996, 21-22, 24). Therefore, when analyzing nation it is important to understand not only how “the political fiction of the nation” (including its gendered constitution, I argue) shapes perceptions, ideas, and experiences, but also how it informs the discourses and actions of nationalist institutions and movements (Brubaker 1996, 7, 16). Nationhood affords a comprehension of how Ulster was institutionalized through the rules, norms, rituals, and traditions of the institutions of Ulster unionism. Institutionalized rituals, symbols, and traditions are significant ways through which the nation is embodied and institutionalized. They mark the significant events of a collectivity, provide a sense of unity, signify membership or belonging, and define the terms of membership through particular norms of participation. Finally, nationness, that is “[a] contingent, conjuncturally fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action” (Brubaker 1996, 19), provides an understanding of how a polity is constituted through perceived but “precarious” common aims and experiences, and mass mobilization related to unforeseen events. As the article will make evident, in the case of Ulster unionism and the UWUC, the Ulster Crisis can be understood as contingent events through which Ulster and the Ulster people were constituted.

Nation-work encompasses not only discursive and symbolic work, but also physical work that includes actions undertaken by individuals *within* and *through* institutions on behalf of the nation. Nation-work constitutes the nation and institutionalizes it through representative practices that not only instantiate the nation, but also delineate and defend its membership, boundaries, and norms, and recompose the nation in response to changing political, social, and economic circumstances. The UWUC's opposition to Home Rule; its work during elections to secure parliamentary seats for Unionists; and its education, and lobbying efforts are examples of the nation-work of the UWUC during the Ulster Crisis. The UWUC's claims of nation established particular political activities of the UWUC undertaken in the name of Ulster. However, as will be demonstrated below, such nation-work was gendered. Dominant norms of femininity and masculinity constituted particular roles and activities for unionist women and others for unionist men in Ulster.

In this paper I draw on primary sources such as the minutes of meetings and correspondence of the UWUC⁴ and newspapers such as the *Belfast News-Letter* and the *Northern Whig*, as well as secondary sources related to Ulster unionism in order to examine the UWUC. Since the focus of this paper is the unionist constitution of Ulster and gendered Ulster identities, it is beyond its scope to examine unionism in other parts of Ireland.

An understanding of the UWUC's involvement in the Ulster unionist movement and its constitution of Ulster expands analyses of Ulster unionism and the constitution of Ulster. As many scholars have illustrated, gender is central to the ways in which power operates within nationalist movements through nationalist discourses, norms, practices, and traditions (see: Enloe 1989; Yuval-Davis, Anthias 1989; Walby 1992; Enloe 1995; Peterson 1995; Allen 1997; Benton 1997; Yuval-Davis 1997; Enloe 1998; Peterson 1998; Yuval-Davis 1998, 2001; Walby 2002; Yuval-Davis 2004; Vickers 2006; Walby 2006; Ashe 2012). It is important, therefore, to understand the gendered constitution of nation and nationalist movements.

The Ulster Crisis was a moment of nationness central to the unionist constitution of Ulster and the Ulster people – the first modern and popular mobilization of unionists in Ulster. The increasing constitution of Ulster as a place apart from the rest of Ireland set the stage for the eventual acceptance by most Ulster unionists of partition as a way out of the volatile political situation during the early 1900s (Loughlin 2007, 160). Ulster unionist discourse established male unionists and Protestants as the rightful holders of political and economic power in Ulster. The Ulsterman was constituted

⁴ The minutes of meetings are part of the records of the UWUC held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) in Belfast and were reproduced as a collection edited by Diane Urquhart which was published in 2001.

as the embodiment of Ulster. He was loyal, tough, authoritative, independent-minded, rational, honest, determined, pious, business-oriented, modern yet tradition bound, and urban; a Protestant man of honour who had the common touch, and a steadfast unionist who would not shirk his duty to defend Ulster through the use of arms if necessary (Loughlin 2007, 160; McGaughey 2012, 55, 57, 70). This was personified in the emergence of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in January 1913. The UVF was a Protestant paramilitary force whose male members were sworn to defend Ulster against its “enemies” (Bowman 2007, 46-47, 64-65). Ulster was often symbolically depicted as a woman in need of protection or rallying her men to her armed defence. Ulster’s defenders were always male, and depicted as the Apprentice Boys⁵, William III⁶, or Edward Carson – a “modern-day Moses” and “galant statesman” (Jackson 1992, 164; Foy 1996, 50).

Leadership, authority, determination, steadfastness, physical strength, courage, and an independent spirit were constituted as masculine and Protestant traits personified in the ideal of the Ulsterman, and vital to the work of public administration. They were valorised as integral characteristics of Ulster which distinguished it from the rest of Ireland (Jackson 1989, 15; Loughlin 1999, 110-113; Jackson 1992, 18, 179-183; Foy 1996, 53; Walker 2004, 36-37; Miller 2007, 99, 115; McGaughey 2012, 55, 57, 70). According to such normative ideals of masculinity, male unionists and Protestants were constituted as the rightful holders of political and economic power in Ulster (Jackson 1992, 184; Sales 1997a, 144; McGaughey 2012, 159-161). Conversely the qualities

⁵ Founded in 1823 the Apprentice Boys Society is an organization similar to the Orange Order. It was named after thirteen Protestant men – apprentices in guilds in Londonderry – who locked the gates of the city from King James II’s forces during the Siege of Derry (1689), thereby protecting the city’s Protestant inhabitants from the danger of attack by James’ forces. The membership of the Apprentice Boys and the Orange Order has frequently overlapped indicating the ideological commonalities between the two organizations (Farrell 1980, 350; Edwards 2000, 113, 193).

⁶ William of Orange (later William III) was a member of the Protestant royal house of the Netherlands. He married Princess Mary (a Protestant), the eldest daughter of James II of England (a Catholic). The Westminster Parliament was concerned about moves made by James II that curbed Protestant power and privilege (he attempted to reduce Parliament’s powers; he altered the charters of municipal corporations – with the exception of Belfast – to provide majorities to Catholics; he granted the majority of judicial, privy council and county sheriff offices to Catholics; and he stripped Protestants of officer positions in the army). In 1688 Parliament declared William and Mary to be joint sovereigns of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. James II landed in Ireland in late 1688 and attempted to reclaim his throne. William III followed in the summer of 1689. Several battles ensued. The Siege of Derry (1689) and Battle of the Boyne in 1690 – at which William III’s forces defeated those of James II – have gone down in Ulster unionist history as the triumph of Protestant over Catholic and the reassertion of Protestant political and economic power in Ireland (Bardon 2007, 140-143, 150-165).

of nurturing and caring were constituted as inherently feminine traits making women ideally suited to the spheres of home and family, and the work of mothering and childrearing. The primary role for a woman, according to Ulster unionism, was that of wife and mother, supporting men active in unionist and Protestant struggles, and inculcating children with unionist and Protestant values and norms. Men were constituted as the active, public agents of Ulster unionism; women as passive subjects and auxiliary agents to be called upon in times of need, but otherwise positioned in the private sphere of home and family – sidelined from any formal representation or work in the public sphere (Racioppi, O'Sullivan See 2000b, 3, 13; Ward 2006, 1-3, 7). Such normative gender ideals and gender-segregated spheres gave rise to gender-segregated unionist institutions, such as the UWUC, the UUC, and the UVF.

Many women asserted that their role as a mother and wife legitimated their involvement in the unionist cause during this time of threat and danger. One commentator observed: "The gravity of the crisis has [...] made it necessary to call upon women for their aid in defending the union" (*Northern Whig*, 24 January 1911). Numerous members of the UWUC argued that, as wives and mothers, women had an even greater obligation to protect the Union than men. "To uphold civil and religious liberty, to testify on behalf of justice and honour and righteousness in public as well as in private life, to protest undivided loyalty to the Throne, and to withstand the forces that make for corruption and tyranny – these are the duties which every good woman is ready to fulfil" (*Northern Whig*, 24 January 1911). Thus, as a moment of nationness the Ulster Crisis opened up space within which members of the UWUC could work to oppose Home Rule. This allowed women to do work in the public domain in a way that did not explicitly challenge or transgress those normative gender ideals, but did afford a broadening of roles for women in the public sphere. By extolling these normative ideals of femininity, the UWUC extended caring/nurturing of women in their individual families to the wider unionist polity of Ulster. Although unionist normative ideals of femininity cast Ulster unionist women as "teamakers" (Ward 2006, 1-3, 7) and supporters of "their men," members of the UWUC were not "idle sightseers" (McNeill 1922, 113) – passive observers or merely behind-the-scenes supporters – during the Ulster Crisis. They played a significant part in the Ulster unionist opposition to Home Rule and its constitution of Ulster as a distinct and unified, but gendered, polity. I call such work nation-work. Nation-work constitutes the nation and institutionalizes it through representative practices that not only instantiate the nation, but also delineate and defend its membership, boundaries, and norms, and re-compose the nation in response to changing political, social, and economic circumstances. Nation-work encompasses not only discursive and symbolic work, but also physical work that includes actions undertaken by individuals *within* and *through* institutions on behalf of the nation.

The UWUC was established on 23 January 1911 in the midst of the emerging Ulster Crisis. Although the founding of the UWUC was not the beginning of women's involvement in the unionist cause, it was significant. It afforded women the ability to work together "in a more systematic and coordinated political campaign" for Ulster unionism (Fitzpatrick 1998, 19; Urquhart 2001, xii). Women had actively opposed the first two Home Rule Bills in 1886 and 1893 (Jackson 1990, 842, 852; Urquhart 2001, xi). A petition contesting the second Home Rule Bill was signed by 20,000 women and presented to the Westminster Parliament in April 1893. In June of 1893 a mass demonstration of women in Armagh was dubbed the "shrieking sisters" of unionism by local Irish nationalists (Jackson 1990, 852). Additionally, approximately 1000 women in Strabane, 1700 in Omagh, and 500 in Raphoe demonstrated against the second Home Rule Bill (Urquhart 2000, 48). Nevertheless, the subsidiary status ascribed by gender norms of the day to women and women's organizations constituted the UWUC as an auxiliary unionist organization. It was the only one excluded from the ranks of the UUC until the partial enfranchisement of women in the UK in 1918. The heightened organization of unionist women fits a broader trend in Irish and UK politics during the late 1800s and early 1900s. These decades saw a growth in the number of political associations, particularly women-only ones, such as the Association of Loyal Orange Women, the Order of the Daughters of the Empire, the Primrose League, and the Victoria League (Graves 1994, 5-15, 22, 25, 28-33, 35-36, 93, 110-114; Gleadle, Richardson 2000, 12-14, 60-65, 115-133, 143-146; Urquhart 2016, 1), as well as the suffrage movement discussed above.

Like their male counterparts, members of the UWUC objected to Home Rule on religious, economic, imperial, and constitutional grounds – thus constituting Ulster as nation, or practical category. Members of the UWUC feared that a Dublin Parliament would be dominated by Catholics and Irish nationalists, and hence be detrimental to the rights and freedoms of Ireland's Protestant and unionist minorities – most particularly to Ulster, the region in which the largest percentage of those minorities were concentrated. Cecil Craig, future President of the UWUC, declared: "If [Irish] Nationalists were in any way given control of the loyal minority dreadful things would come to pass [...] and that] their [Irish nationalists'] desire for self-government was based on the wish to have control of Ulster, but Ulster would never submit" (*Belfast News-Letter*, 24 January 1911). Members of the UWUC further claimed that Home Rule would not only be disastrous for Ulster's, and Ireland's, industrial and commercial interests, but would harm the integrity of the Empire and lead to its disintegration. Moreover, they asserted that it was unconstitutional to impose Home Rule on Ulster against the will of its people (Urquhart 2001, xv).

The motion that founded the UWUC drew on this unionist sense of impending danger and the metaphor of family. It invoked the "sympathy and help

of our sisters in England and Scotland" at this "serious crisis in our Nation's history", and imbued the unionist discourse of "our Nation" with a sense of naturalness through a perceived shared kinship amongst "the people" of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England (*Northern Whig*, 24 January 1911). Furthermore, it illustrated the connection between the every-day/private spheres and the public/electoral spheres, pledging its members to work in their "neighbourhoods" – the every-day/private spheres – so that every constituency, or the public/electoral spheres, in Ulster would have a group of committed people working on behalf of the unionist cause. This was distinct from the self-declared domain of formal political constituencies, which the male-only UUC, as the "medium of [...]Ulster Unionist opinion", considered to be its sphere (*Irish Times*, 3 December 1904, cited in Buckland 1973b, 20-21; McNeill 1922, 36).

The UWUC strove to be representative of every constituency, region, and class from "peeress to peasant"⁷. Within the first month of the Council's existence over 4000 women had joined the West Belfast Branch believed to be comprised primarily of working-class women⁸. By the end of 1911 the UWUC had a membership of approximately 40,000 to 50,000. By 1913 its membership was estimated at between 115,000 and 200,000; and it had 32 associations in every constituency in all nine counties of Ulster, making it the largest women's political association at the time in Ireland (Kinghan 1975, 14; Urquhart 1994, 97; 1996, 32). In comparison, Cumann na mBan had approximately 1,700 members in late 1915, one year after it was founded; and an estimated 3,500 women were involved in the Irish suffrage movement (Urquhart 1996, 32; Paseta 2013, 235). The scale of the UWUC's membership and the fact that its membership spanned all nine counties of Ulster highlighted the fact that the discourse of Ulster advanced by the Council spoke to a large number of women and not only to a particular class or region. Through such a range of membership the UWUC constituted Ulster as nationhood, or institutionalized form, by claiming to speak for "the women of Ulster".

The motion that founded the UWUC, its Constitution, and the women's Declaration, discussed below, established Ulster as nation through a triad of Ulster unionist identity: Ulster was British, but also part of Ireland; loyal to the British Crown; and Protestant. This made Ulster distinct from the Irish na-

⁷ At the inaugural meeting of the UWUC held on 23 January 1911, Edith Mercier Clements, Assistant Honorary Treasurer of the UWUC from 1911 to 1920, declared that both "peeress and the peasant would be represented" within the Council, and that its work would include the "education of the working class" (*Belfast News-Letter*, 24 January 1911).

⁸ In his account of the events which gave rise to what he called the "the Ulster Movement", Ronald McNeill, a member of the Standing Committee of the UUC and a Unionist MP, claimed that one West Belfast branch of the UWUC was comprised of approximately eighty percent "mill workers and shop girls"; he further asserted that "no women were so vehement in their support of the Loyalist cause as the factory workers" (McNeill 1922, 37, 113).

tionalist constituted Catholic, Celtic Ireland (Fitzpatrick 1998, 24; Stanbridge 2005, 25). The UWUC's membership rules, practices, and rituals catalyzed this identity still further. Its meetings began with the popular Protestant hymn, *O God Our Help in Ages Past*, reflecting a sense that a Protestant Ulster had a covenant with God, and closed with the singing of *God Save the King*, which constituted Ulster as British and loyal. Such work can be understood as establishing Ulster as both practical category and institutionalized form.

According to Ulster unionist discourse, this British, Protestant, loyal Ulster identity was best protected by the Protestant British Crown and a predominantly Protestant, British Parliament not a majority Catholic-dominated independent Irish Parliament. Thus, preserving the political and economic union of Great Britain and Ireland was the basis of unity among Ulster unionists and the singular purpose of the UWUC, the formal institutional vehicle through which unionist women could dedicate themselves to that singular goal. As Theresa, the 6th Marchioness of Londonderry⁹ and President of UWUC from 1913 to 1919 recalled, the Council had been established: "to express the feelings of the people of Ulster who have fought with every means in their power to remain associated with England [...] We banded ourselves together to see how we might best organise ourselves to impress upon our fellow countrymen in England with the fact that Ulster will not consent to the tearing asunder of this country [...] since the union she [Ireland] has prospered commercially in every way" (*UWUC Council Minutes 1912-40*, 28 January 1919, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 192-193). According to this perspective, Home Rule not only threatened the British, Protestant, and loyal identity of Ulster and its people; it also endangered the economic strength of Ulster and Ireland as a whole.

The rules, norms, rituals, and aims of the UWUC instilled in its members a sense of unity based on a perception of common purpose and a shared Ulster identity. This Ulster nationhood constituted Ulster in opposition to a Catholic, Celtic Ireland, which afforded Ulster, and unionist institutions such as the UWUC, an internal coherence that they did not have in reality. The fact that this unity was expressly stated in the motion that founded the Council, as well as its Constitution and its motto – "United we stand divided we fall" (Kingham 1975, 89) – was indicative of the primacy of the

⁹ Theresa, the 6th Marchioness Londonderry, married into one of the most prominent families in Ireland when she wed Charles Vane-Tempest-Stewart, the son of the 5th Marquess and Marchioness of Londonderry in 1875. She was Vicereine of Ireland from 1886 to 1889 and counted several Prime Ministers and Cabinet Ministers, as well as Walter Long (Chief Secretary of Ireland), Edward Carson, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and King George V and Queen Mary as friends. As a friend of such prominent politicians and society figures, and one of the preeminent political hostesses of her time, Theresa exerted significant political influence in her own right (Urquhart 2007, 76-79, 83-90).

unionist discourse of Ulster within the UWUC. Moreover, it highlights the UWUC's recognition that on other issues, such as the enfranchisement of women, its members were potentially divided; hence the leadership of the Council deemed it best to avoid such potentially divisive issues altogether. Consequently, members of the UWUC were forbidden to discuss suffrage or any issue other than Home Rule.

This unity of purpose and singular focus was catalysed through the practices of members of the UWUC. Every meeting of the Council included the recitation of a pledge to only discuss the issue of Home Rule. It was further institutionalized through the 1911 Constitution of the UWUC which proclaimed that: "the sole object of the Council shall be to secure the maintenance in its integrity of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, and [...] to resist all proposals [...] which have for their object the establishment of any form of an Irish Parliament [...] all other questions [...] shall be subordinated to the single issue of the maintenance of the Legislative Union" (*Draft Constitution of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council*, January 1911, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 215). Differences amongst members of the UWUC were to be subsumed in the interests of this singular cause, around which all members were united – so the Council claimed. Consequently, Home Rule was *the* central and tangible issue around which the UWUC quickly galvanized members and organized.

The leadership of the UWUC took the institutionalization of this singular focus still further. It wrote to other organizations to inform them of this limitation on their members, which apparently went beyond the Council's meetings. The UWUC's Executive Committee accepted the request of the Women's Amalgamated Unionist and Tariff Reform Association (WAUTRA) that the Council send some of its members to speak on Home Rule because they were only asked to speak on that topic. However, the Executive Committee asked that when advertising these talks by members of the UWUC, WAUTRA "make it quite clear that they [members of the UWUC] are concerned solely with the question of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland [...] as [...] under our Constitution we are precluded from touching any other subject" (*UWUC ECM 1911-13*, 21 April 1921, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 16). According to the executive of the UWUC, it was necessary to discipline Ulster, meaning to constitute and reinscribe its boundaries and to tame threats against it both from within and without, not only by imposing limitations on what its members could and could not discuss, but also by making other organizations aware of such constraints. Asserting a unified polity, and thereby minimizing the potential threat of social and economic cleavages within that polity, was one way to do this. Moreover, this rule highlights the contested and unstable nature of Ulster and the disciplining role that institutions such as the UWUC played in relation to the constitution Ulster through the deployment of unionist discourse, symbols,

and rituals. As Myrtle Hill has noted, during the early 1900s unity within the women's movement in the north of Ireland was precarious due to "multiple, intersecting, and frequently opposing identities" related to gender, class, and national interests (Hill 2007, 225). Unity within the Ulster unionist movement was similarly tenuous; hence the perceived need to discipline Ulster through concentrating on one issue around which unionists could agree and avoiding potentially divisive issues such as class, faith denomination, or women's suffrage.

3. *"For the Cause of Ulster" (UWUC ECM 1913-40, 2 March 1923, Letter from A.W. Hungerford to the UWUC, Reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 137)*

A unionist woman's role as wife and mother was used by many members of the UWUC to assert public and active roles for themselves within the unionist movement and resistance to Home Rule. This allowed members of the Council to challenge such ideals in socially acceptable ways. According to Ulster unionist normative gender ideals a woman's role as wife, mother, daughter, or sister was constituted as one of support and helpmate, and as her primary role. The private spheres of home and family were thus catalysed as the cardinal domains of women – and the basis of the anti-Home Rule work undertaken by members of the UWUC. Given the perceived dangers that Home Rule posed to Ulster and its people, and the gender norms which constituted family and home as a woman's primary spheres of interest, women in Ulster were called to "do their part" to protect not only their individual families and homes, but the collective Ulster family and home. Members of the Council asserted that women, as wives, mothers, and promoters of the Union and the Empire within the home, had a responsibility to protect the "civic and religious liberties" – a cornerstone of the Ulster Protestant identity (Jackson 1990, 853).

The Lurgan Women's Unionist Association established this womanly duty proclaiming:

If our homes are not sacred from the priest under the existing laws, what can we expect from a priest-governed Ireland [...] let each woman in Ulster do a woman's part to stem the tide of Home Rule [...] the Union [...] meant everything to them – their civil and religious liberty, their homes and children [...] once the Union was severed there could be no outlook in Ulster but strife and bitterness [...] Home was a woman's first consideration [...] in the event of Home Rule being granted, the sanctity and happiness of home life in Ulster would be permanently destroyed. (*Minute Book of the Lurgan Women's Unionist Association*, 13 May 1911, cited in Urquhart 2001, xv)

Echoing this sense of womanly duty and constituting a common unionist British identity the Executive Committee of the UWUC declared: "We are

now on the eve of a [...] critical struggle. It is [...] essential that Unionists [...] should [...] join together to defeat the destructive policy of the Government [...] The civil and religious liberty of the women of Ireland and the security of their homes can only be guaranteed under the Legislative and Administrative Union of Great Britain and Ireland; we are deeply conscious of our responsibilities and are determined to take our full share in the conflict that lies before us" (*UWUC ECM 1911-13*, 8 September 1911, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 28-29). Women were the guardians of their individual family homes. The perceived threat that Home Rule posed to their collective home of Ulster broadened this guardianship role and the scope of nation-work undertaken by Unionist women. Thus members of the UWUC actively campaigned against Home Rule. As is discussed below, they spoke against Home Rule at meetings, disseminated propaganda, organized demonstrations, maintained electoral registers, lobbied politicians, and organized events on Ulster Day.

The UWUC trained members in public speaking, educated them about the unionist position related to Home Rule, and sent these women on "missions" across the UK speaking against Home Rule. This work expanded rapidly from twenty missionaries speaking in six constituencies in 1911, to ninety missionaries speaking in ninety-three constituencies, addressing 230 meetings and an estimated 100,000 voters in 1913 (Kinghan 1975, 14-15). The minutes of the Executive Committee of the UWUC for 19 March 1912 record that "Mrs Smith from Banbridge had addressed a meeting of 2000 people in Macclesfield and was speaking at other places during her visit to England" (*UWUC ECM 1911-13*, 19 March 1912, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 50). Records of the speeches made during these missions are difficult to find since they were often held in private homes or were open only to members of particular groups. However, the meeting minutes of the Council and its Executive, as well as the notices related to some of these talks which are found in the Records of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council, indicate that numerous women undertook such work speaking to various issues related to Home Rule in many parts of Great Britain (see "A Book of Sample Badges, Tickets, Notices, Menus of the UWUC, 1912-1928").

The UWUC gave this nation-work a religious connotation, insisting that its missionaries were "most anxious to address Radical Audiences rather than meetings of convinced Unionists" (*UWUC Active Workers' Committee Minutes*, 15 November 1912, cited in Urquhart 2001, xvi). Just as religious missionaries aimed to convert "non-believers" into "believers", so the missionaries of the Council hoped to convert the UK public to their anti-Home Rule stance and thereby establish mass opposition to Home Rule. Through these missions Ulster was constituted as British, loyal, and Protestant, and the UWUC not only supported the men of Ulster, but asserted women's agency within the Ulster unionist movement. Members of the Council were not going to accept a merely supportive, behind-the-scenes role, but were prepared

to take on work which placed them front and centre as public speakers. They also established networks and supporters across the UK. This work was so important to the UWUC that it established a committee – the Active Workers' Committee – which regularly reported on the number of places at which, and people to whom, its members had spoken.

Members of the UWUC established themselves as a force through such nation-work. They received requests to speak to particular organizations and constituencies. The volume of such requests is indicative of the importance which the Council attached to this work, and the obvious success its members achieved in terms of their public speaking skills and the publicity these missions garnered. The leadership of the UWUC was careful to vet such requests and the organizations with which it worked, making clear the parameters under which it would send its missionaries, as is evident in its correspondence with the WAUTRA discussed above. Although normative gender ideals cast the UWUC as a supposedly auxiliary unionist organization, the leadership of the Council asserted “charge and control” in relation to this work undertaken on behalf of the organization. Men approached the UWUC to do mission work under its aegis as early as September 1911, only nine months after the Council was founded. The Executive Committee moved that “these men be employed on special service when necessary, each case to be separately considered by the Executive Committee” (*UWUC ECM 1911-13*, 25 September 1911, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 31).

The production and dissemination of anti-Home Rule propaganda nation-work went beyond this public speaking by members of the UWUC, however. Members of the Council also produced and distributed anti-Home Rule propaganda across the UK. By 1913 they sent approximately 10,000 pro-unionist leaflets and newspapers weekly to Britain (*Annual Report of the UWUC*, 1913). Moreover, members of the UWUC organized demonstrations. In October 1912, they held a rally attended by an estimated 10,000 women; and in 1913 Edward Carson spoke to an audience of over 25,000 women in West Belfast – said to have been the largest gathering of women ever at that time in Ireland (*Annual Report of the UWUC*, 1913). These demonstrations were critical to the constitution of a united Ulster *people*. As Theresa, the 6th Lady Londonderry observed, the sight of women demonstrating *en masse* was a reminder “that the Government were [sic] not up against a political organization, but against a whole people” (*Darlington and Stockton Times*, 22 November 1913, cited in Urquhart 2000, 46). These rallies illustrated tangibly to both Irish nationalists and the British government that they would have to contend with an institutionalized, organized, and mobilized people who opposed Home Rule.

Ulster's loyal and British identity was also forged through the nation-work of members of the UWUC related to the canvassing of voters. Edith Mercier Clements declared that the creation of the Council was “the beginning of real and solid work and a thorough organising of the women of Ulster [...]”

to begin work at once, to canvass voters [...] and to endeavour to bring every single voter to the polls during elections, so that every seat in Ulster shall be won for the Union [...] the women of Ulster will be in no way behind the men in striving for so noble a cause" (*Belfast News-Letter*, 24 January 1911). It was hoped that this work would ensure electoral success for Ulster unionists and contribute to the defeat of Home Rule. Mercier Clements was one of the more progressive members of the UWUC, so her views cannot necessarily be taken as broadly representative of the Council's membership. Nevertheless, her statement reveals that at least some members of the UWUC felt a sense of insecurity regarding the auxiliary status accorded to the organization within the Ulster unionist movement, and were concerned that their nation-work be deemed as significant as that of unionist men.

Members of the UWUC also undertook the administrative nation-work related to the maintenance of the Unionist electoral registers. This was critical to the goal of unionists to defeat the Home Rule Bill. The Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava noted the importance of such work in a letter to Theresa, the 6th Lady Londonderry. She remarked: "I am sure the registration of voters is most important. There is no doubt the other side [Irish nationalists] are [sic] attending to that" (Dowager Lady Dufferin and Ava to Lady Londonderry, 4 October 1916, D 2846/1/8/49). This work was tied to the protection of the interests of Ulster and the UK. The women of Ulster, as represented by the UWUC, had a clear role to play in the unionist work of preserving the political and economic ties between Ireland and Great Britain. William Wilson, Secretary of the North Tyrone Unionist Constituency, echoed the importance of this administrative work, observing that "in Irish Constituencies the whole fight is at the Revision, not at the Election [...]and] as everyone knows, in this country [Ireland] it is a mere matter of religion" (Wilson to Dawson Bates, 9 November 1910, D 1327/23/1A, cited in Walker 2004, 25). Since elections in Ireland, including the nine counties of Ulster, were often won in the revision courts, much depended on the capacity of local political associations to ensure that its party supporters were registered and, therefore, eligible to vote to the greatest extent possible.

Members of the UWUC also asserted their political agency and established Ulster as nation and institutionalized form through the nation-work of political lobbying. They petitioned MPs and both Houses of Parliament. In June 1911, a resolution was submitted to the House of Lords in the name of the UWUC "protest[ing] in the strongest manner against the passing of any Home Rule Bill for Ireland as they know that the civil and religious liberty of the women of Ulster and the security of their homes can only be guaranteed under the Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland" (*UWUC ECM 1911-13*, 16 June 1911, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 22). This resolution connected the security of Ulster, its women, and their homes to that union. Although in 1911 women in Ulster, and the rest of the UK, did not

yet have the right to vote, members of the UWUC still felt a duty to campaign and lobby against Home Rule. In May and June of 1912 members of the Council secured 104,301 signatures to its petition against Home Rule, which had “to be rolled by machinery to bring it within reasonable bulk as the slips when pasted together measured from 1600 yards or almost one mile in length” when it was presented to the House of Commons in June 1912 (Kinghan 1975, 20; *UWUC ECM 1911-13*, 21 May 1912, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 57). Members of the UWUC had publicly pledged to “stand by our husbands, our brothers and our sons in whatever steps they may be forced to take in defending our liberties against the tyranny of Home Rule” (*Belfast News-Letter*, 19 January 1912). However, they clearly did not see themselves simply as supportive wives, sisters, or mothers, but as a polity with political agency and a duty not only to “stand by” and support “their” men, but to organize, demonstrate, and lobby in their own right against Home Rule.

4. *Ulster Day*

The Ulster unionist campaign against Home Rule culminated in Ulster Day: 28 September 1912. This day was an expression of Ulster unionists’ resistance to Home Rule and the apparent threat they deemed that it posed. It began with religious services of worship. The signing of the Solemn League and Covenant – the Covenant – by men was constituted as the high point of the day, and signified their endorsement of Ulster unionism and loyalty to Ulster and the British state (*Northern Whig*, 30 September 1912; McNeill 1922, 117-119; McGaughey 2012, 48). Women were not permitted to sign the Covenant. Thomas Sinclair, a member of the UUC, drafted the Women’s Declaration – the Declaration – which they could sign. Illustrating the prominence and authority of men and the UUC within the unionist movement, Sinclair sent a draft of the Declaration to the UWUC for comments, but unionist women were not permitted to create their own document, and the Declaration was subject to the final approval of the UUC not the UWUC (Urquhart 2016, 3).

The signatories to the Declaration and the Covenant constituted Ulster, its people, identity, values, and aims. However, these documents made clear that authority and leadership were accorded to masculine Ulster. Both asserted Ulster’s loyalty to the British Crown and appealed to God to defend Ulster from the threat of an independent Irish Parliament. Yet these gender-segregated documents and associated signing ceremonies simultaneously institutionalized separate gendered expectations for men and women. The signatories to the Declaration claimed to speak for “the women of Ulster”, and invoked God to protect Ulster and its “cherished place in the Constitution of the United Kingdom”, which they tied to Ulster’s loyalty to the British Sovereign. They “desire[d] to associate” themselves with “the men of Ulster” implying a supportive, passive role for women in Ulster, while the Covenant

invoked action. The men of Ulster pledged to defend by "all means [...] necessary" their "equal citizenship in the United Kingdom". The Declaration did not directly assert citizenship for its female signatories, but it appealed to God to save Ireland, including Ulster, from "this calamity" of Home Rule (*Women's Declaration*, <<https://apps.proni.gov.uk/ulstercovenant/image.aspx?image=W0042550004>> [05/2018]; *Solemn League and Covenant*, <<https://apps.proni.gov.uk/ulstercovenant/image.aspx?image=M0043260001>> [05/2018]). The God invoked in the Covenant was a martial God who would defend their right to remain British citizens. The Covenant drew on a history of past "stress and trial" in its confident assertion that God would continue to be on "their" side. In signing the Covenant and the Declaration, Ulster's men and women had made a pact with God. God would repay this faith by protecting Ulster from becoming a loyal, Protestant, British minority in an independent, Catholic, Celtic Ireland, and preventing the imposition of Home Rule on Ulster against the will of "its people".

Ulster unionism spoke to many women who felt strongly enough about the unionist cause to publicly declare their loyalty to the British Crown, their Protestant identity, and sense of British Ulster identity. This was most tangibly demonstrated by the number of women who signed the Declaration: 234,046 women as compared with 218,206 men who signed the Covenant; a majority of almost 16,000 female over male signatories in Ulster (*ECM 1911-13*, 16 January 1913; Urquhart 1994, 100). Nonetheless unionist men and the Covenant were deemed to be the primary agents in the constitution of Ulster. Newspaper coverage of Ulster Day emphasized the Covenant as *the* primary document, and its male signatories as *the* main agents in the defeat of Home Rule (*Northern Whig*, 30 September and 1 October 1912; *The Times*, 23, 24, 26-29 September 1912; McGaughey 2012, 48). The *Northern Whig* declared: "We have seen this week [...] evidence of a great brotherhood [...] which] signed the Covenant [...] and] will shrink from no steps that are necessary to give effect to it" (*Northern Whig*, 28 September 1912). Newspaper accounts also reflected the popular ideal of militarized masculinities. The "great brotherhood" of Ulster unionists was described as "well-disciplined [...] marching in fours, with a smartness and precision that commanded general admiration" (*Northern Whig*, 30 September 1912).

Differentiating feminine Ulster from this militant masculine Ulster the *Northern Whig* observed that while men signed the Covenant in the Belfast City Hall "women [...] sign[ed] their anti-Home Rule pledge in various lecture halls and other places arranged for that purpose. It is gratifying to think that the women of Ulster are standing loyally by 'their menfolk' in this crisis, are prepared to go the whole way with them, and to take their share of whatever sacrifice the step may entail" (*Northern Whig*, 30 September 1912). An editorial in the *Irish Citizen*, the paper of the Irish Women's Franchise League, criticized unionists for not addressing the position of women in their

demand for “equal imperial citizenship”; it charged that the Declaration was “[...] not the real thing; it is a mere insignificant auxiliary [...] a document of separateness of which is in itself a perpetuation of the old false tradition of women’s inequality and unfitness for political thought and action” (Urquhart 2016, 4). This constitution of Ulstermen as authoritative, disciplined, united, well-organized, and determined and Ulsterwomen as supportive and auxiliary contrasted sharply with the active role which members of the UWUC undertook within the unionist movement during the Ulster Crisis and the political agency which they asserted.

The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 paused the Ulster Crisis. The third Home Rule Bill was passed, but suspended for the duration of the war. The issue of the exclusion of Ulster from Home Rule was unresolved, but would be revisited when the war ended. Amendments to the bill were introduced in the House of Lords and passed by the UK parliament in July 1914, prior to the passage of the original bill itself. The *Amending Bill* temporarily excluded Ulster from the future *Home Rule Act*. There was neither consensus about the time-frame related to this provisional exclusion, nor whether this omission applied to all nine counties of Ulster or only to the six counties which would become the province of Northern Ireland, however (*Government of Ireland (Amendment) Bill*, HC Deb 30 July 1914 vol 65 cc1557-8; Jackson 2003, 161-164). As a result, the leadership of the UUC encouraged members of the UWUC to continue their anti-Home Rule nation-work. Richard Dawson Bates, the Secretary of the UUC, advised: “Notwithstanding the fact they [members of the UWUC] are doing war work, they should not lose sight of the main object of the association, namely the defeat of Home Rule” (Bates to Lady Londonderry, 3 January 1917, D 2846/1/8/65). Hence, although much of the Council’s focus shifted to supporting the British war effort and Ulster’s troops its anti-Home Rule work continued, but on a much smaller scale, and informally through individual members. Blurring the lines between the public and private realms members of the UWUC were urged to “in their private capacity [to] try to reach as many colonial soldiers as possible” in order to “instruct them” on an issue of public concern: Home Rule (*UWUC Advisory Committee Minutes*, 2 January 1917, cited in Urquhart 2001, xviii).

A letter sent on behalf of the UWUC to the Lord Mayor of Belfast further illustrates the gendered constitution of Ulster and the obfuscation of the private and public spheres through the work of members of the Council. A man’s duty was “to rally round the Flag”, while a woman’s “duty [was] to see [the] families and dependents [of those men] are cared for”. This letter asserted that the UWUC “form[ed] a unique organisation for investigating, registering and dealing with all cases of want or suffering and for dispensing such relief as may be found necessary” (*UWUC Council Minutes 1912-40*. 18 August 1914, reproduced in Urquhart 2001, 188-189; Draft of Letter from Lady Lon-

donderry, Lady Abercorn and Lady Dufferin and Ava to the Lord Mayor of Belfast, 11 August 1914, D 1098/3/5). Individually women were deemed to be responsible for the care and nurture of their own families; combined women were expected to nurture and care for the collective Ulster family.

Normative ideals of femininity – passivity and supportiveness – were constituted as the basis of women's anti-Home Rule nation-work through the Declaration and the constitution of the UWUC; however, by 1918 members of the UWUC were increasingly emphatic in terms of expressing their agency and displeasure with the established male power of the UUC. The leadership of the Council wrote to the UUC declaring that:

Our advice has never been asked [...] All the same we have held fast to our Unionist opinions, and our voice has been heard and acted upon although perhaps the 'Ulster Unionist Council' may have thought us an entirely negligible quantity [...] We should be comrades in defence of a common cause. What is the position of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council? It has none – we are nothing [...] we have not been treated as comrades [...] We must have more power for immediate action. (*Advisory Committee Minutes, UWUC Council Minutes 1912-40*, 4 June 1918, D 1098/1/2)

Early in 1918 the suffrage campaign's demand that women be enfranchised was partially met. The *Representation of the People Act 1918* received Royal Assent on 6 February 1918. This act granted women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification, and all men 21 years and older, the vote. This may have contributed to the greater assertiveness of members of the UWUC. Undoubtedly it afforded credibility to their demand for equal representation for the Council within the UUC relative to other Unionist organizations. This increased forcefulness indicated the sense of pride which members of the UWUC felt in relation to their nation-work during the Ulster Crisis, as well as their sense of agency. It also revealed a continuing sense of insecurity amongst Ulster unionists. Unity remained vital since the goal of maintaining the political and economic union between Ireland and Great Britain was not yet settled. Thus, differences of gender, class, faith denomination, and political ideology still had to be down-played.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the Ulster Crisis members of the UWUC played a significant part in Ulster unionism's constitution of Ulster and its opposition to Home Rule. The discourse of Ulster evident in UWUC documents such as the motion which founded the organization, its Constitution, and the Declaration constituted a collective Ulster people united by a shared culture, religion, and political aims and goals. The nation-work of the rituals of the Council, the

events associated with Ulster Day, the administration of electoral registers, as well as the campaigning and lobbying against Home Rule undertaken by members of the UWUC constituted a British, Protestant, loyal Ulster identity. Such work also established Ulster as gendered. Men and women had different roles in Ulster. Appealing to normative ideals of femininity and a history of women who had actively supported unionism allowed members of the Council to do work in the public realm in a way which did not overtly transgress gender norms, but enabled a broadening of roles for women within what was perceived to be the masculine public sphere. Many members of the UWUC drew on these ideals to instill unionist values in their children and encourage and support “their” men’s defence of Ulster. They also used such ideals to carve out space for themselves in the public realm of party politics in support, and as a significant part, of the Ulster unionist movement.

The scale of the mobilization of members of the UWUC, evident in its broad-based membership and the number of signatories to the Declaration, as well as the scope of the anti-Home Rule work undertaken on behalf of the Council makes clear that the UWUC was not peripheral to Ulster unionism; nor were its members “idle sightseers” in terms of the events of the Ulster Crisis and the constitution of Ulster. By incorporating gender into analyses of Ulster unionism one’s understanding of that movement is expanded, and divisions within the Ulster unionist movement based on normative gender ideals and the ways in which the Ulster constituted through the Ulster unionist movement was experienced differently by men and women are exposed.

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W.B. Yeats and the Introduction of Heteronym into the Western Literary Canon

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Abstract:

At first glance, heteronyms may be considered as imaginary names, a kind of poetic signature. However, unlike pseudonyms, heteronyms are names given to fully developed characters that, in spite of being imaginary, possess nearly all human qualities such as physical features, biographies, world views, writing styles, etc. – characters that, surprisingly enough, are capable of having views in sharp contrast to those of the author who has created them. Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), arguably one of the most significant literary figures of the 20th century as well as one of the greatest poets in the Portuguese language, is the writer credited with the development, naming and introduction of this concept into literature. However, considering the whole body of works produced by the Irish Nobel laureate W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), strong heteronymic qualities can also be discerned in a number of his works some of which produced about twenty years before Pessoa even started his career as a writer. Through a close examination of some of Yeats's poems and other works, especially his short stories and the prose masterpiece *A Vision*, the present paper aims at illuminating the origins of the concept under study, as well as presenting its readers with the reasons why certain characters in some of Yeats's works go beyond mere masks and personae and fulfil the criteria to be considered as heteronyms.

Keywords: Fernando Pessoa, Heteronym, Mask, Persona, Pseudonym, W.B. Yeats

In those days they were men of one idea, but now we are more nervous, more developed, more sensitive; men capable of two or three ideas at once... Modern men are broader-minded
(Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Idiot*, 1868)

1. Introduction

As the focus of the present paper is on the heteronym, whose conception, i.e. both its meaning and name, are usually credited to the Portuguese modernist poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) (Cuddon 2013, 331-332), it seems fit to consider how Pessoa himself describes the concept:

A pseudonymic work is, except for the name with which it is signed, the work of an author writing as himself; a heteronymic work is by an author writing outside his own personality: it is the work of a complete individuality made up by him, just as the utterances of some character in a drama would be. (Qtd. in Monteiro 1998, 7-8)

A heteronymic work is therefore a writer's work which is not to be considered the utterances of that writer's apparent personality, but a work providing the opportunity for that same writer to utter what seems to be another man's sentiments. In spite of being created by the writer himself, a heteronymic character is presented in such a way that the readers consider him as a completely distinct figure, a real man possessing human qualities like all other real men, except one, which is being real itself.

Pessoa's heteronymic system is a rather complex one, with about 75 different names. Nevertheless, three of them, as stated in a famous fictitious letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, dated 13 January 1935, seem to be of the greatest significance: Alberto Cairo (or Caeiro) (1889-1914), a man of no profession or education, of medium height, with blue eyes, who dies of consumption; Álvaro de Campos (1890-?), a tall bisexual Jewish-Portuguese man, who is an unemployed naval engineer wearing a monocle, and Ricardo Reis (1887-?), a classicist and a physician living in Brazil (Ciuraru 2012).

Scanning the collected poems of Yeats, one comes across three fictional names; Red Hanrahan, Owen Aherne, Michael Robartes. A brief investigation outside Yeats's poetry leads to the fact that these three characters were first introduced in some stories published shortly before *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), the first poetical work in which two of these characters reappear. Hanrahan was firstly introduced in a short story collection entitled *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (1897), while the other two were introduced in three different short stories, i.e. "Rosa Alchemica", "The Tables of the Law" and "Adoration of the Magi", also published in 1897. In the first version of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, i.e. the copies published between 1897 and 1906, there are some poems whose titles include the names of Michael Robartes and Hanrahan, e.g. "Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved be at Peace", "Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew", "Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty" etc. (Yeats 1902, v-vii). In 1906, however, when a revised version of the same collection is published, the titles, and only the titles not the poems themselves, are neu-

tralized, and all the proper names are excluded and replaced by the pronoun *he*¹. Such changes must have been obviously crucial to the later obscurity of the heteronymic nature of his poetry and its pioneering role.

According to the literary critic and biographer Richard Ellmann “even as a boy he [Yeats] had begun to pose before the world as something different from what he was, and by late adolescence he had come to think of himself as divided into two parts” (1948, 177). Similarly, as a mature poet, Yeats does not always speak in his own voice, “but uses beggars, hermits and fools to voice with safety opinions about life and afterlife that he is not prepared to guarantee” (Ellmann 1960, 205). This is not a unique aspect since a lot of poets have done the same thing, but Yeats’s masks are not limited to these types. A careful examination of his works reveals a more profound and newer style of mask-making associated with recurring characters of Aherne, Robartes, and Hanrahan and similar to Pessoa’s concept of heteronym. Yeats himself asserts in the introduction to *A Vision* that “I had invented an unnatural story of an Arabian traveller I must amend and find a place for some day because I was fool enough to write half a dozen poems that are unintelligible without it” (1975, 19). Later on, we find out that this Arabian traveller is the visionary philosopher/mystic introduced earlier as Robartes.

Now the question is whether or not we can consider Yeats as instrumental in introducing the concept of heteronym into the Western literary canon. Based on the scholarship, there are a lot of similarities between the poetry of Yeats and Pessoa, but only few studies are devoted to them; Sol Biderman’s “Mount Abiegnos and the Masks: Occult Imagery in Yeats and Pessoa” and a number of papers by Patricia Silva McNeill. Biderman focuses on the two poets’ common interest in occult writings and practices as well as how such works influence their writings. Similar to Biderman’s article, McNeill’s “The Alchemical Path: Esoteric Influence in the Works of Fernando Pessoa and W. B. Yeats” is concerned with the influence of occult studies, theosophy, magic, alchemy, etc. in the works of the two poets. Focusing on three different aspects of Pessoa’s writings in “Affinity and Influence: The Reception of W. B. Yeats by Fernando Pessoa”, McNeill demonstrates the overt and partly documented influence of Yeats on Pessoa’s writings. She examines the use of Masks and heteronyms in the works of the two poets in “The Aesthetic of Fragmentation and the Use of ‘Persona’ in the Poetry of Fernando Pessoa and W. B. Yeats”. In this study, she

¹ The changes may be taken as ordinary since most poets do such mere revisions, but considering the fact that Yeats always proved himself a diligent poet revising and republishing his poems years after their original date of composition, these changes may be more than simple revisions. Considering the fact that Yeats lived in an age when old ideas of literary consistency were still strongly adhered to, he may have replaced the names afterwards to neutralize these different characters and make them part of himself and his later poems, and the first titles could have only been used to give a hint to the multifaceted nature of his works.

focuses on numerous characters from Yeats's poetry including nameless characters like hermits and beggars, mythological characters like Fergus and Oisín and his own fictional characters such as Robartes. The last of McNeill's papers is the one closest to the topic of the present study. Due to the wide variety of characters it takes into consideration, the aforementioned article cannot afford to trace heteronymic qualities of Yeats's poetry and points only to some similarities between the two poets. In this regard, the present paper focuses only on three characters and provides a detailed analysis of the poems attributed to them, showing how Yeats can be considered as an influential figure in the development of heteronymic writings.

Another relevant work, perhaps the closest one to the purpose of the present paper, is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Principles of the Mind: Continuity in Yeats' Poetry", which is different from the aforementioned in that it does not compare the two poets and focuses only on Yeats. Still, Spivak's emphasis is rather on the tone of the poems whereas the focus of the present work is on the form, language and content of the poems. Accordingly, this study attempts to provide the readers with poems that are so distinctive in their form and content that it may be argued they have been composed by different authors – a quality so close to Pessoa's concept of heteronyms. What follows is a study of some poems that could be attributed to the three different fictional characters introduced by Yeats.

2. *Owen Aherne, the Intellectual Questioner*

Aherne is a character introduced in Yeats's early fiction and later on developed in some of his poems, e.g. "The Phases of the Moon" and "Owen Aherne and His Dancers", clearly influenced by the actual events of Yeats's own life, i.e. his marriage (Jeffares 1968, 307). He is the writer of a little fictional book on the Alchemy entitled *Rosa Alchemica* (Yeats 1959, 267), a big old man, "sedentary-looking, bearded and dull of eye" (Yeats 1975, 37), who is usually considered along with Robartes as one of Yeats's "carriers of mystical and revealed knowledge" (Rosenthal 1994, 195). However, firstly, Yeats says that "a certain friend of mine has written upon this subject a couple of intricate poems called 'The Phases of the Moon' and 'The Double Vision' respectively, which are my continual study [...]" (1962, 258-259), arguably crediting Robartes with the authorship of the poems. Secondly, the letter in "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends" introduces the imaginary brother of Aherne, i.e. John Aherne, who has written to Yeats himself (Yeats 1975, 53). And thirdly, Aherne and Robartes make certain remarks about Yeats and his writings in "The Phases of the Moon." Thus, Yeats may consider, or at least means his readers to consider, these characters as real individuals living in the same world as himself, and not merely in his writings. Therefore, assuming that Aherne could also be considered a gifted poet, what follows is to consider some of Yeats's poems and see if Aherne's voice can be recognized in them.

There are a number of poems which seem to be in agreement with the characteristics described for Aherne. "Sailing to Byzantium", one of Yeats's monumental achievements, may be considered a quintessential example.

That is no country for old men. The young
[...]
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect. (Yeats 1996, 193)

Being an old friend of Aherne, the narrator of the short story "Tables of the Law" describes him by saying "When you [Aherne] and I lived together, you cared neither for wine, women, nor money, and had thoughts for nothing but theology and mysticism" (Yeats 1959, 293). The speaker in the poem's opening stanza is obviously an old, gloomy man, just like Aherne, who is in sharp contrast with his surrounding, i.e. the exciting "country of the youth", where sensual side of humanity is highlighted and intellect neglected; this is absolutely in agreement with Aherne's characteristics:

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 1996, 193)

In a note to the third and fourth lines of this stanza, Edward Larrissy writes "[these lines] may recall [William] Blake's story of his brother Robert and his death, when the soul emerged from the body clapping its hands" (Yeats 1997, 503), and from what we know of Aherne, he is interested in the works of William Blake. In "Rosa Alchemica", there is a passage when Aherne is left alone in "one of the most exhaustive alchemical libraries" he has ever seen, and after mentioning the names of some of the greatest alchemists whose works are included in the library, he points to a complete set of Blake's works, calling them "prophetical writings of William Blake" (Yeats 1959, 282). What shows Aherne's specific interest in Blake is the fact that he says there are a lot of works by poets and prose writers on the shelves, but the only writers he mentions by name are a number of alchemists, who are considered to be his colleagues or masters, and Blake, who is not an alchemist but a prophetical writer.

The most important idea in the third stanza of the poem, the speaker's desire to be "gathered into the artifice of eternity", may well be traced in Yeats's "The Tables of the Law" as Aherne utters "[...] terror and content, birth and death, love and hatred, and the fruit of the Tree, are but instruments for that supreme art which is to win us from life and gather us into eternity like doves into their dove-cots" (Yeats 1959, 300-301). Also, in the

part from “*Rosa Alchemica*”, where Aherne is talking about his discovery of the true purpose of great alchemists’ experiments, demonstrates that, like the poem’s speaker, Aherne is concerned with eternity and being unified with it:

I had discovered, early in my researches, that their doctrine was no merely chemical fantasy, but a philosophy they applied to the world, to the elements and to man himself; and that they sought to fashion gold out of common metals merely as part of a universal transmutation of all things into some divine and imperishable substance. (Yeats 1959, 267)

Moreover, there is a subtle point to be made about the speaker’s request for the “sages” to be his “singing-masters” in the poem. Reading “*The Phases of the Moon*”, one cannot help but notice that in the dialogue between Aherne and Robartes, the latter is confident and knowledgeable, while the former is the one who asks all the questions and makes all the requests; “What made that sound?”, “Why should you not / Who know it all ring at his door [...]?”, “Sing me the changes of the moon once more” (Yeats 1996, 163-167). Thus, Aherne is characteristically in agreement with the unnamed traveller/speaker of “*Sailing to Byzantium*”.

The last point to be made here about the third and fourth stanzas is that the imagery is so close to some of the objects Aherne is interested in. In a passage describing his house, Aherne says he is happy to have been able to design his rooms in a way that they become the expression of his favourite doctrine, describing “tapestry, full of the blue and bronze of peacocks, fell over [...] doors [...] [and he] looked in the triumph of this imagination at the birds of Hera, glittering in the light of the fire as though of Byzantine mosaic [...]” (Yeats 1959, 268-269). The former part of the quotation may remind us of the artificial birds “Grecian goldsmiths make of hammered gold and gold enamelling”, while the latter part seems to be describing the closest replica one can get of the image of the Byzantine “God’s holy fire” and “the gold mosaic” presented in the first lines of the third stanza. Considering these images, it seems that Aherne is trying to decorate his house in a way that evokes Byzantium, and so, it may be concluded that the favourite doctrine he was talking about has strong associations with Byzantium.

A final personality trait shared by Aherne and the speaker of the poem is their sense of hatred for life. The poem’s speaker says “Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing / But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make” (Yeats 1996, 194). In “*Tables of the Law*”, the narrator, Aherne’s friend, describes Aherne by saying “more orthodox in most of his beliefs than Michael Robartes, he had surpassed him in a fanciful hatred of all life” (Yeats 1959, 294). Thus, it may be said that both characters harbour some sort of aversion towards life.

It is obvious that Aherne is not limited to just this poem, and it can be well argued that some of Yeats’s poems related to the symbol of the tower and its winding stair are rather associated with Aherne and his house than

with Thoor Ballylee, Yeats's home, which he purchased at the age of 52 (Ross 2009, 567). It may be interesting to note that all through Yeats's poetry, the name Thoor Ballylee is mentioned only once, and that is in the short poem he wrote to be carved on a stone at Thoor Ballylee. Thus, in spite of all the commentaries written on Thoor Ballylee as Yeats's emblem, symbol and ancestral tower, the tower and its ancestral implications may not be necessarily related to Thoor Ballylee, but some other tower. Now, let us examine some of the passages from the two short stories in which the central character seems to be Aherne:

[...] in my house in one of the old parts of Dublin; a house my ancestors had made almost famous through their part [...] in the politics of the city and their friendships with the famous men of their generations [...] The portraits, of more historical than artistic interest, had gone [...]. (Yeats 1959, 267-268)

We passed between the portraits of the Jesuits and priests -some of no little fame- his family had given to the church. (Yeats 1959, 294-295)

[...] the wide staircase, where Swift had passed joking and railing, and Curran telling stories and quoting Greek. (Yeats 1959, 271)

These excerpts indicate that Aherne is of a noble, aristocratic descent, and his house has been the home of his forefathers and is actually an ancestral house. As the speaker claims in the second part of "The Blood and the Moon", the tower and its ancestral stair have seen some of the most significant characters in the history of Ireland, including "Goldsmith [...] Dean [...] Berkeley [...] Burke [...]" (Yeats 1996, 237). According to different accounts about the origins of Thoor Ballylee, the tower dates back to a time between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries (Ross 2009, 567). Furthermore, there is no solid proof showing that Thoor Ballylee had ever been visited by great people such as those described in the second part of the poem "Blood and the Moon"; it was originally built by the de Burgo family as one of their many defensive towers and was inhabited by a farmer and his wife at the time Yeats bought it (McCready 1997, 391). Another reason that the tower referred to in "Blood and the Moon" is most probably not *Thoor Ballylee* is the age of the tower stated in the third part of the poem:

The purity of the unclouded moon
Has flung its arrowy shaft upon the floor.
Seven centuries have passed and it is pure. (Yeats 1996, 238)

The lines above show that the tower, or more specifically its "floor", is at least seven centuries old. Considering that Thoor Ballylee was built in the period of time between the 14th and 16th centuries, it does not seem pos-

sible that the poem's speaker is describing Thoor Ballylee, but some other tower that might be Aherne's house. Thus, it may be concluded that this poem can also be attributed to Aherne. It is also curious to know that, based on Yeats's own acknowledgment of the possibility that he had chosen Thoor Ballylee as his home under the spell of Milton's "Il Penseroso" and Shelley's "Prince Athanase", George Bornstein states that Yeats chose Thoor Ballylee for himself to become Athanase at last (qtd. in Ross 2009, 569); but why not considering Yeats's effort to live the life he himself had created for Aherne?

Moreover, the mere mention of the word ancestral in the context of Yeats's poetry, reminds us of the first poem in the sequence "Meditations in Time of Civil War"; i.e. "Ancestral House", which is supposedly inspired by a number of such houses as Lady Gregory's Coole Park and is considered by Yeats as the symbol of "tradition, ceremony, and aristocratic strength of character" (Ross 2009, 44). Nevertheless, since there is no reference to any specific house or name, it is possible that the poem has different origins. Furthermore, regardless of such concerns with the origin, the central theme seems to be the question repeated in the fourth stanza; "O what if [...] But take our greatness with our violence?" can be traced in the following part of Yeats's "Rosa Alchemica":

When I pondered over the antique bronze gods and goddesses [...] I had all a pagan's delight in various beauty and without his terror at sleepless destiny and his labour with many sacrifices [...] I had but to go to my bookshelf [...] to know what I would of human passions without their bitterness and without satiety. (Yeats 1959, 268)

Obviously, Aherne is also concerned with the same quest as the speaker of "Ancestral Houses"; he also wants to know whether it is possible to separate elements of passion from bitterness. As Norman Jeffares asserts, the poem seems to echo the thought "that the new kind of violence which was coming into the world would be unlike the kind of violence which had brought the houses of the rich (in particular the country houses of Ireland) into being" (1968, 267). This seems to be consistent with Aherne's analytical mind and his historical knowledge, by which he seems to try to work out a kind of philosophical-alchemical perfection. Moreover, the poem's imagery, with references to "bronze and marble" architecture in the third stanza, "peacocks" in the fourth and "famous portraits of our ancestors" in the fifth, is much similar to the atmosphere and images associated with Aherne and discussed earlier².

² There are some other poems worth considering in this light: "The Statues", especially its first three stanzas, which seems to be based on the analytical method of Aherne's historical reviews and is full of images characteristic of Aherne's style; "Long-legged Fly", which follows the same historical views as "The Statues"; "Wisdom", with its references to the towers of Babylon and ancient mosaics and "Byzantium", which is considered a sequel to "Sailing to Byzantium" and contains imagery similar to that of the latter poem.

3. *Robartes, the Indescribable Visionary*

Bloom begins his book on Yeats by asserting that, like his poetic ancestors Blake and Shelley, he “was a poet very much in the line of vision” (1970, v). In fact, any serious reader acquainted with Yeats’s most notable literary achievements will most probably testify to this assertion. It may suffice to note that one of his most important and equally unique prose works was, as he himself claimed, revealed to him by supernatural agents (Ross 2009, 416), which is interestingly enough entitled *A Vision*. The purpose of this part is to consider some of Yeats’s more visionary poems and, of course, the imaginary character who seems qualified for being considered their author.

Robartes is an old friend and companion of Aherne under whose influence Aherne’s writing becomes more and more unintelligible and unpopular (Yeats 1959, 267). In Yeats’s “Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends”, he is described as “lank, brown, muscular, clean-shaven, [a man] with an alert, ironical eye” (Yeats 1975, 37), which somehow hints at his lively and adventurous nature and his sheer contrast to Aherne. He is described by Aherne as a man “whose wild red hair, fierce eyes, sensitive, tremulous lips and rough clothes, made him look now, just as they used to do fifteen years before, something between a debauchee, a saint, and a peasant” (Yeats 1959, 271). Unlike Aherne, Robartes’s primary source of knowledge is not the books he leaves unfinished and open (Yeats 1996, 160); he is one of those whose motto seems to be *I learn by going where I have to go*, shown through his travels to places as far from his comfort zone as Arabia, to live with a tribe called Judwalis and learn their mystical dance, or Teheran, to buy the lost egg of Leda (Yeats 1975, 41, 51). Furthermore, in “Adoration of the Magi”, the intuitive visionary nature of this character is vividly elaborated by the assertion that “At last a man, who told them he was Michael Robartes, came to them in a fishing-boat, like Saint Brendan drawn by some vision and called by some voice; and told them of the coming again of the gods and the ancient things” (Yeats 1959, 309).

Now let us discuss the poems which can be best attributed to Robartes. Three of Yeats’s poems with so much in common that it may be justified to call them a trilogy are taken into consideration here; “Leda and the Swan”, “The Mother of God” and “The Second Coming”. The first similarity among these poems is the fact that they all begin by descriptions of chaotic scenes to disturb the readers’ minds immediately:

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed. (Yeats 1996, 214)

The three-fold terror of love; a fallen flare
Through the hollow of an ear;

Wings beating about the room;
 The terror of all terrors that I bore
 The Heavens in my womb. (Yeats 1996, 249)

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world [...]. (Yeats 1996, 187)

The opening stanza of “Leda and the Swan” depicts the mythical rape of the mortal Leda by Zeus in the shape of swan (Holdman 2006, 89). Unlike “Leda and the Swan”, the subject matter of the second poem is an obviously religious one, i.e. the birth of Jesus Christ. However, the emotional state of the Virgin Mary is nothing like the serenity usually depicted in the Renaissance paintings, as here she feels the terror of all terrors. Moreover, the fallen flare in the poem, which Yeats himself attests to its obscurity (qtd. in Ross 2009, 160), is suggested by T.R. Henn to have as its source of inspiration not only William Blake’s drawing “Annunciation” but also Charles Rickett’s “Eros Leaving Psyche” (qtd. in Jeffares 1968, 359-360). This could be interpreted as an indication of Yeats’s idea that the two births, although one occurs in the mythological era and the other in the religious one, are of the same nature. The third stanza above, taken from “The Second Coming”, seems to be the most chaotic of all three. The poem itself, taken as a whole, is described by Carolyn Meyer as:

Part pronouncement on the immediate postwar situation in 1919, part prophecy of the terrifying shape of things to come, it [“The Second Coming”] plays upon war-wearied humanity’s hope for something better only to play into its worst fears—that the impending collapse of civilization is the sign not of the return of Christ, as the title suggests and as Matthew 24 foretells, but of a coming age of barbarism, an anti-civilization embodied by a savage, sphinx-like deity who makes the beast of the Apocalypse in Revelation pale by comparison. (2000, 189)

As it can be obviously perceived in the paragraphs above, the second and the most significant similarity among the three poems is the way they are based on the 2000-cycles of history that Yeats describes in *A Vision*. As Wendy Perkins writes in an essay on “Leda and the Swan”, each of these epochs represents a civilization which begins with a mystical conception and birth (2001, 192). The first one, described in “Leda and the Swan”, is about the beginning of 2000 BC-1 AD.

The Age of Homer [...] because springing from this union of the king of gods and the mortal woman were both Helen of Troy, who caused the Trojan War, and Clytemnestra, who slew the returning, conquering Agamemnon at the war’s end – primary themes of the Greek Age. (La Chance 1996, 2196)

The second one, described in “The Mother of God”, is about the second or the Christian era, i.e. 1 AD-2000 AD, the age beginning with the conception of Jesus Christ and the one the poet himself lives in. And finally, the third age, described in “The Second Coming”, is about the ending of the Christian era somewhere around the year 2000 AD and the beginning of a new era which the poet, who by the time of the composition of the poem had rejected his youthful optimism in the natural goodness of human beings (Lake 2000, 186), predicts to be a most terrifying era.

The next similarity of the three poems is the use of bird imagery the instances of which in the first stanzas of all the three poems intensify, or better to say, create the immediate chaotic quality of the poems. As M. Loeffler-Delachaux asserts, “the bird, like the fish, was originally a phallic symbol, endowed however with the power of heightening – suggesting sublimation and spiritualization” (qtd. in Cirlot 2001, 27). The birds in the first two poems, i.e. Zeus and the archangel Gabriel, are definitely phallic symbols through which Helen and Christ are born. However, the birds in the third poem, both the falcon at the beginning of the poem and the indignant desert birds mentioned later, seem to be somehow different. The birds in the first two poems serve two purposes, one being the intensification of the chaos and the other being their power in generating life, hence catastrophe. However, the birds in “The Second Coming” do not explicitly possess that power, and are, for the most part, just watching what is happening. The first two birds represent the central role of “the terrible animal strength of the winged divinity” (Ross 2009, 160), based on which the new eras begin, and in the era described in “The Second Coming”, the centre is broken. Therefore, it may be concluded that the poet means to assert that the new era is one with no divine, or at least central, generator; an era “of cultural dissolution [...] where the commonplace images of everyday life are merged with an apocalyptic revelation about a new order that portends instability and chaos among humankind” (Edwards 1996, 3326). Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the birds in all the three poems have similar functions and can be considered as the products of the same mind thinking about the same patterns.

The last similarity is related to the closing questions of the three poems. As Ian Fletcher interestingly observes, “A strong reason why the poem [“Leda and the Swan”] will not let us rest are those questions: rhetorical? expecting the answer, yes, no, or don’t know?” (1982, 82). Fletcher’s assertion could also be linked to the other two poems in this sequence as they too end with question marks. But, how can it be the case that the poems attributed to Robartes, who has been shown as the all-knowing answerer, most notably in “The Phases of the Moon” and “Michael Robartes and the Dancer”, end with unanswered questions?! Studying the first two poems, one realizes that they are actually historical commentaries on what we already know; the first one talking about the murder of Agamemnon and the destruction of Troy

caused by the birth of the two sisters Leda and Clytemnestra, and the second one talking about the catastrophes following the birth of Jesus Christ, the most significant of which being the Crucifixion. However, the third poem is different in the sense that it is talking about the events of a coming era, but still the reader familiar with Yeats's ideas about the 2000-year cycles of history understands that even the question in the last poem, is not one without an answer, but a rhetorical one. Accordingly, Donald Weeks discusses that "From 1916 at the latest Yeats was increasingly concerned with the decline of the west, the trembling of the veil, the Great Year, the Second Coming, and the warnings of the end which came to man from the Great Memory" (1948, v. 288). It may thus be said that the nature, and also the function, of the three rhetorical questions are the same. In fact, in the case of these poems, being able to put forth the question is equal to providing the answer, only provided that the reader is ready enough to grasp it.

As demonstrated above, the three visionary poems, by virtue of their thematic unity and formal resemblance, could be considered parts of the same sequence, and so are most probably composed by the same author whom we take to be Robartes because of his intuitive nature. However, there is one last point to be made about these poems; the fact that they are not published in the same order as presented here. Chronologically speaking, the first poem is "The Second Coming", and "Leda and the Swan" and "The Mother of God" are the second and the third ones, respectively. This fact may somehow undermine the assumption that these poems were intended to constitute a sequence, but considering the poems to have been hypothetically composed by Robartes, this could also be justified by what we know of his impulsive and not-so-orderly nature³.

4. *Hanrahan, the Merry Songster*

Like the other two characters, Hanrahan was also introduced in a collection of short stories published in 1897 and then mentioned in the title of some of the poems in the first version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), e.g. "Hanrahan Reproves the Curfew", which are all neutralized, or slightly changed, in the later and final version of the same collection. As a result, in the definitive editions of Yeats's complete poems, there is only one poem with the word "Hanrahan" in its title, i.e. "Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland" and some two or three poems, including "The Tower", in whose texts

³ The other poems deserving consideration from this point of view include "Those Images", in which the speaker puts the emphasis on the "better exercise in the sunlight and wind" rather than the "cavern of the mind", that is experience rather than systematic study; "The Valley of the Black Pig", a folklore-influenced prophesy about the fate of Ireland; "The Magi", with its visionary nature demonstrated by what the speaker sees in "the mind's eye".

the name of Hanrahan appears. Unlike Aherne and Robartes, Hanrahan is a simple man, not preoccupied with occult sciences, alchemy, philosophy, etc.

The first of the six stories describing Hanrahan's characteristics, adventures and, finally, his death begins with the description "Hanrahan, the Hedge schoolmaster, a tall, strong, red-haired young man" (Yeats 1959, 213). Hanrahan's characterization "is based on the Irish Jacobite poet Owen O'Sullivan the Red (1748-1784) [and] indeed, Yeats used the name 'O'Sullivan the Red' in the periodical versions of the stories [centred round him]" (Finneran 1972, 350). He is a young man who has "never had the habit of passing by any place where there was music or dancing or good company, without going in [...] [and] has no good name [...] among the priests, or with women that mind themselves" (Yeats 1959, 225). He is a singer/songwriter whose songs reflect the themes of love, repentance and Ireland and her grieves (Yeats 1959, 235). With these characteristics in mind, let us review the first poem "The Host of the Air" which is based on "an old Gaelic ballad that was sung and translated for [Yeats] by a woman at Ballisodare in County Sligo" (Yeats 1997, 476) and can be considered as connected with or, in a heteronymic way, composed by Hanrahan:

O'Driscoll drove with a song
 The wild duck and the drake
 From the tall and the tufted reeds
 Of the drear Hart Lake. (Yeats 1996, 56-57)

The first stanza of the poem starts with the name "O'Driscoll", a typical Irish name and ends with "Hart Lake", a lake about seven miles west of Ballisodare (Jeffares 1968, 56), showing that it is set in Ireland. Moreover, one point in this stanza about the song he sings reveals another similarity between the poem's central character and Hanrahan, a singer/songwriter. The succeeding stanzas of this poem unfold a story so similar to that of Hanrahan's life, especially the parts narrated in "Red Hanrahan", the first story in the collection centred round Hanrahan. The interest in singing, drinking and dancing is a characteristic found in both O'Driscoll and Hanrahan, but there are more interesting similarities as both men have sweethearts, Bridget and Mary Lavelle, and both succumb to the temptation of playing cards with ordinary-looking, but mysterious, old men. Hanrahan plays cards with an old man who later turns the cards into a hare and a pack of hounds and himself vanishes into the night (Yeats 1959, 218-219). The old men O'Driscoll plays cards with vanish like smoke and are found, later in the poem, to be the host of the air, i.e. related to the Sidhe who are usually depicted as evil creatures of ghostly nature.

The remaining stanzas recount how O'Driscoll wakes out of his dream and notices the changes around him; the merry crowd as well as his bride

have all vanished. It is almost the same as what happens to Hanrahan. At the end of “Red Hanrahan”, Hanrahan falls sleep and upon waking finds out a year has passed and his bride Mary Lavelle is gone for good (Yeats 1959, 222-224). The two characters face the same fate, their brides are lost forever.

In Hanrahan’s first story and the poem “The Host of the Air”, it is not only the plotlines that are similar, but some of the stylistic features of the poem also remind us of the character of Hanrahan in the story. After a time, Yeats came to hate the elaborate language and artificial characteristic of his works in the 1890s and as a result, he was also dissatisfied with the first edition of *The Stories of Red Hanrahan* and started “the pruning of verbal dead weed” with the help of Lady Gregory (Ackerman 1975, 505-506). In other words, he rewrote the stories using a simpler language. This same quality can be easily observed in the poem just reviewed. Unlike many of Yeats’s more complex and esoteric poems and also like quite a few other poems he wrote, “The Host of the Air” could be easily mistaken for the lyrics of an Irish folk song composed by an uneducated, and probably anonymous, songwriter; the poem uses the most basic words of the language. In addition, one of the other important characteristics of the poem is the lack of classical, biblical or mythological allusions and references, some of the most consummate examples of which in Western literature are to be found in Yeats’s poems such as “Leda and the Swan” and “The Second Coming”.

Finally, there is another stylistic feature easily observed in the poem that makes one consider it as a poem by Hanrahan. Looking at the lines, almost all of the same length, and considering the emphasis put on the rhymes at the end of the 2nd and 4th lines of each stanza, it may be concluded that “The Host of the Air” is rather a song than a poem. Since Hanrahan is described as a songwriter, it is most probable that he can be credited with its writing, and “The Host of the Air” can be considered as a quintessentially Hanrahanian poem.

The second Hanrahanian poem to be analyzed here is “The Wild Old Wicked Man”. While “The Host of the Air”, included in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, belongs to the early stage of Yeats’s poetry; this second poem is taken from the poet’s penultimate collection of poems, entitled *New Poems* (1938). The reason for mentioning this long interval here is to emphasize a stylistic point about the poem. “The Host of the Air” is composed in a verbally and allusively simple style incorporating Irish themes and a conspicuous emphasis on the musical aspects of poetry, which does not specifically belong to Yeats’s youth, i.e. immature poetry, but can be traced in his later poems as well:

‘Because I am mad about women
[...]
‘Not to die on the straw at home,
Those hands to close these eyes,

That is all I ask, my dear,
 [...]
 I have what no young man can have
 Because he loves too much.
 Words I have that can pierce the heart,
 But what can he do but touch? (Yeats 1996, 310)

The poem seems to be related to Hanrahan's middle age as described in "Red Hanrahan's Curse", the fourth story in the collection *Stories of Red Hanrahan*; "I have set Old Age and Time and Weariness and Sickness against me, and I must go wandering again" (Yeats 1959, 245). This is the first time in the stories where Hanrahan points to the physical decay that old age has brought upon him. Nevertheless, he is still burning with the two of the greatest urges he has always been known for, i.e. desiring women and wandering. The old man in the poem seems to be filled with the same desires because he declares himself "mad about women" and a wanderer not wanting "to die on the straw at home" (Yeats 1996, 310). As the poem progresses, he mentions his advantage over young men, that is the "words that can pierce the heart", an indication of his verbal skills; the gift bestowed, most of all, on literary men and songwriters like Hanrahan:

Then said she to that wild old man
 [...]
 I gave it all to an older man
 That old man in the skies.
 Hands that are busy with His beads
 Can never close those eyes.'
 [...]
 'Go your ways, O go your ways
 I choose another mark,
 Girls down on the seashore
 Who understand the dark;
 Bawdy talk for the fishermen
 A dance for the fisher lads' (Yeats 1996, 310-311)

As stated earlier, Hanrahan has no good name among priests or with women who mind themselves, and the lady the old man is apparently trying to woo seems to be such a lady. The fourth stanza of the poem reveals still more about the wild old man's personality; his bawdy talk and dancing. This is also in accordance with Hanrahan's personality.

'All men live in suffering
 I know as few can know, (Yeats 1996, 311)

The sixth stanza of the poem starts with a bold statement that only men of the world, that is the wild old man and the “few [who] can know” are qualified to make. The statement shows the wild old man has experienced a great deal of pain, and it may be related to the ever-present regret about a lost love, which is the case with Hanrahan.

In order to further clarify the points making “The Wild Old Wicked Man” an arguably Hanrahanian poem, it is worthwhile to consider some of the stylistic features of the poem as well. Clearly the poem, as it befits its contents, is written in a simple language. All the stanzas comprise eight lines of equal length, and the rhyme scheme is meticulously observed at the end of all the even lines. There is another characteristic which further amplifies the status of “The Wild Old Wicked Man” as a song, and that is the existence of a refrain at the end of all the stanzas which gives them a more melodic feel⁴.

5. Conclusion

Considering the discussion presented above, we may conclude that there are distinct voices in Yeats’s poetry that are different from, and even to some extent in opposition to, each other; Aherne is a weary-looking old man tired of sensual desires and lost in his studies; Hanrahan is the good-looking rustic songwriter always looking for pleasure; and, Robartes is the ever adventurous, wandering visionary. There is no doubt that Yeats himself composed all these poems, but what makes them heteronymic is the fact that his poems do not always represent the same mentality, and this is exactly what Pessoa did in his writings.

Now the question is the significance of Yeats’s writings in the introduction of the concept of heteronym into the Western literary canon. As Pessoa was the most important, although widely unknown, proponent of modernism in his native Portugal, it is almost certain that he was influenced by modernist figures such as Yeats, a fact acknowledged by his critic and translator Richard Zenith (2006). Just like Yeats, Pessoa started creating characters to be used in his poetry, only it was done about twenty years after Yeats did it. Even if Pessoa did not borrow from Yeats in creating the concept of heteronym, it is still feasible to think that the heteronymic nature of Yeats’s works could have been a source of inspiration and influence for Pessoa. Since Pessoa published only a few of his poems during his lifetime and even those poems were neither in English nor translated into English, he was not much known outside his country. In fact, it was only in the 1980’s that good translations

⁴ There is a large number of poems in Yeats’s *oeuvre* sharing qualities with the poem discussed above; “Two Songs Rewritten for the Tune’s Sake” with its emphasis on musicality and themes of lost love and sensual joys, “Ton O’Roughley” with its obviously Irish subject as well as the rejection of logic and exaltation of “pure joy”, “Colonel Martin” with its simple narrative style as well as everyday subjects and the use of refrain.

of his heteronymic works were provided for the English-speaking audiences (Zenith 2006, xliii), and until then he was mostly unknown and absolutely not considered a canonical poet. Thus, Yeats either originated the concept, albeit without giving it a name, or paved the way for its introduction into the Western literature that led Pessoa to his important achievement of heteronymic writings, praised and considered as canonical by Bloom (1994, 463-492).

As a final point, it may be interesting to take notice of Yeats's last published poem, entitled "Politics", which may well be considered as a final note, a council of personae:

How can I, that girl standing there,
 My attention fix
 On Roman or on Russian
 Or on Spanish politics,
 Yet here's a travelled man that knows
 What he talks about,
 And there's a politician
 That has both read and thought,
 And maybe what they say is true
 Of war and war's alarms,
 But O that I were young again
 And held her in my arms. (Yeats 1996, 348)

As can be seen, this poem seems to contain the three different attitudes encompassing Yeats's life and works; the travel type who knows what he talks about (similar to Robartes), the one who has both read and thought (similar to Aherne's), and the sensual one (similar to Hanrahan's). The interesting thing is that the speaker does not reject any of them, a sort of reconciliation or blending of the three different mentalities.

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How Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneac Took the GPO: Parody in James Stephens's *Deirdre* (1923)

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Abstract:

This article looks at the parodical aspects of James Stephens's novel *Deirdre*, published in 1923. It uses Linda Hutcheon's theoretical framework on parody to analyse how Stephens both follows the medieval tradition and the Revivalists, and distances his work from their influence. He breathes life into the age-old narrative of Deirdre by adding dialogues, psychological insights and humour to the story, but also by implicitly comparing the Sons of Uisneac to the Irish Volunteers of 1916. This serves to glorify the rebels, whom he had portrayed in his witness account *The Insurrection in Dublin*, but the depiction of the fratricidal fight at the court of Emain Macha at the end of the Deirdre legend also acts as a critique of the Irish civil war.

Keywords: Deirdre, Irish Revival, James Stephens, Parody, 1916

In the 1920s, James Stephens set out to rewrite the great Irish epic *Táin Bó Cuailnge* in five volumes. The ancient narrative relates the war between Maeve of Connacht and Conachúr mac Nessa of Ulster¹, in which Cúchulinn achieved fame by single-handedly defending Ulster from the Connacht assailants. Stephens's ambitious endeavour never reached completion, but he thus produced *Deirdre* in 1923, an introductory novel to these events also known as "The Cattle-Raid of Cooley". The happenings of the *Táin* are recounted in several versions in eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts (O'Rahilly 1967) and the story of

¹ For the purposes of clarity, the spelling used in this article with regards to the Irish names of the characters is that used by Stephens himself. The names are however more commonly come across as follows: Maeve is the Anglicisation of Medbh, Conachúr mac Nessa is more common as Conchobhar mac Neasa, just like Fergus mac Roy is more often spelled Fergus mac Róich, when Cúchulinn is Cú Chulainn, and the lenition in "Uisneac" is generally indicated with a final "h" in standardised Irish.

Deirdre is to be found, unsurprisingly, in the same volumes (Hull 1949), since it constitutes a prefatory tale to the larger epic. It is known in the Irish storytelling tradition as “Longes mac n-Uislenn” for the older narratives and “Oided mac n-Uisnig” for early-modern texts, “the exile” or “the death of the sons of Uisneach”. There are indeed a number of versions of this story, ranging from Old Irish recensions to early-modern sources (Breatnach 1994, 99).

The medieval narrative purports to explain the presence of Fergus mac Roy, Conachúr’s stepfather, on Maeve’s side during the war. It is centred on the character of Deirdre, of whom it was predicted at her birth that she would bring destruction upon Ulster, hence her name, which means “troubler”, according to Stephens (1923, 8)², who makes repeated use of this etymology at key moments throughout the novel (D, 85, 113, 121, 176, 221). Destined to be married to the king, Deirdre sees a raven drinking a calf’s blood on the snow and vows to love only the man who has hair as black as the raven, skin as white as snow and lips as red as blood. Needless to say, this augury does not depict Conachúr, and tragedy ensues. Deirdre indeed falls in love with Naoise, son of Uisneac, and they escape with his two brothers from the king’s wrath to Scotland, where they remain in exile for seven years. When Conachúr welcomes them back to Ireland, it is only under Fergus’s protection that Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneac agree to return. The king’s betrayal and his attack on them upon their arrival at his court of Emain Macha brings about the death of the Sons of Uisneac, and prompts Fergus to rally Maeve’s army, therefore setting the scene for the great battle of the *Táin*.

James Stephens is the first to have adapted the Deirdre legend into novel form (Martin 1977, 140), since W.B. Yeats, George W. Russell (A.E.) and J.M. Synge rather chose to rewrite it for the stage. Stephens’s retelling appeared over a decade after the dramatic renditions of the Revival, since George W. Russell’s *Deirdre* was produced in 1903, Yeats’s *Deirdre* was published in 1907 and Synge’s *Deirdre of the Sorrows* appeared in 1910. In a letter to Frederick Eddy on 6 November 1923, Stephens writes that his “intention in writing *Deirdre* was to keep as closely as possible to the recorded facts; and while making the story as old as time to make it at the same moment as modern as tomorrow” (Finneran 1974, 295). As previously noticed by several researchers, Stephens’s main emphasis in the book is on the psychology of the characters, an innovative approach at the time.

This study offers to look at another aspect of the novelty of Stephens’s re-writing of the Deirdre legend: his portrayal of the sons of Uisneac, who share some of their traits with the 1916 rebels. Stephens parodies the age-old narrative, in Linda Hutcheon’s sense of the word, notably by putting the Easter

² All subsequent quotations from the novel are abbreviated to D, followed by the page number from this edition.

Rising Volunteers in the footsteps of Naoise and his brothers. In doing so, he glorifies the rebels of his time, revives the heroes of the Irish mythological past and criticises the civil war taking place in his city of Dublin.

1. *Stephens's Parodical Approach to the Irish Tradition*

Parody is at the heart of Stephens's prose writings, as exemplified by *Deirdre*. It has been noted that Stephens was the "first of the Irish writers to treat the Celtic gods and heroes irreverently and is thus the fore-runner of a burlesque tradition in Irish fiction that later includes Joyce, Eimar O'Duffy and Flann O'Brien" (Martin 1977, 42). However, it should be emphasised that what is meant by "parody" here, as in Linda Hutcheon's work,

[...] is *not* the ridiculing imitation of the standard theories and definitions that are rooted in eighteenth-century theories of wit. The collective weight of parodic practice suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity. (1988, 26)

The process is one through which the artist emulates models at the same time as s/he is distancing themselves from these predecessors. Unlike the ridiculing type of parody dismissed by Hutcheon, "this parody paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity [...]" (*ibidem*, 26). It is built on an intertwining of past and present, old models and new artists, tradition and creation. It acknowledges the authority of past literary works and inscribes itself in the continuity of this tradition, while subverting it. Giovanna Tallone remarked that "The saga material in James Stephens's *Deirdre* leads directly backwards in time. [...] Above all, the old legends come out as a continuum whose heroic dimension does not belong to the past only, but takes a new life in the shaping of Irish nationalism" (Tallone 1990, 75). In rewriting the story of Deirdre and of the Sons of Uisneac, Stephens follows in the footsteps of the *seanachai* of old, as well as of the Revivalist leaders, quietly claiming his work to be cut from the same cloth as theirs. But he also twists the tale for nationalistic purposes. Referring to previous texts confers the legitimacy to then subvert them: "but all of their parodic transgressions remain legitimized, authorized by their very act of inscribing the backgrounded parodied text, albeit with critical distancing of various degrees" (Hutcheon 2000, 83). The parodical deference with difference is not necessarily avant-gardist, but can be seen as conservative, since by using the work of their predecessors, it further etches them in the canon (*ibidem*, 101). But parody rests on the challenge made to the touchstones of the (literary) past. It is thus a process of both emulation and emancipation, through which past and present enter in a dialogue. At the heart of parody is an "act to preserve the very forms that it attacks" (Dentith 2000, 37).

By rewriting the great Irish myths and legends, Stephens is challenging the Irish literary heritage, but he is also inscribing his own writing in the continuity of the old Irish storytelling tradition. He updates and makes the story “as modern as tomorrow”, to take up his words quoted earlier, in a number of ways. Using the novel form allows him to develop the psychology of his characters, as has been noted by critics such as Augustine Martin and Hilary Pyle (Pyle 1965, 98; Martin 1977, 140). For example, Stephens took liberties with the old narrative when he decided to include in *Deirdre* the episode of Maeve leaving Conachúr, to whom she had been married against her will:

It happened at last that Maeve came to the decision which for a long time had been forming in her mind. She decided that she would not remain with the King of Ulster any longer, and, having so decided and faced all its implications, she was not long finding an opportunity to get away from him. [...] But matrimony had been poisoned for them at the very fountain, and a dear, detestable memory for Maeve was that her husband had outraged her before he married her, and that he had taken her then and thereafter in her own despite. (D, 22-24)

Her affront to his kingly pride makes Deirdre’s escape with the sons of Uisneac all the more loaded with consequences: the king certainly cannot tolerate another woman leaving him if he hopes to retain some of his regal honour. His vengeful wrath thus becomes much more understandable, though no less unacceptable. This inclusion is a “bold stroke” on Stephens’s part, for Patricia McFate (1979, 75), since it allows Stephens to draw a parallel between the two women, making Conachúr’s character more human thanks to the psychological insight into the humiliated king’s mind. McFate also notices that Deirdre herself gets a more modern and human side: because of a series of changes from the original versions, Stephens softens the aspect of treason. For instance, Deirdre’s marriage to the king is not settled at her birth in Stephens’s version, unlike the ancient texts (*ibidem*, 92): so, in falling in love with Naoise in the novel, Deirdre is not transgressing a royal decree yet.

Hilary Pyle highlights what she has called Stephens’s interest in the “psychological cause of the tragedy” (1965, 98), which is also visible in Deirdre’s escape from Emain Macha. Her flight from the court when she discovers that she is due to marry a king twice her age whom she regards with a childlike awe is no longer seen as a teenage elopement. By depicting the relationship between Deirdre and her foster mother Lavarcham and the girl’s secluded education, Stephens portrays the heroine in much more depths than the medieval narratives have done. Her cloistered childhood is painted with innocent and idyllic colours:

Thus she grew in gentleness and peace, hearing no voice less sweet than the voice of the birds that sang in the sunshine, or the friendly calling of the wind she played

with; seeing nothing more uncomely than the gracious outline of far hills, the many-coloured sky that fled and was never gone, the creatures that lived unmolested in the trees about the castle, and the wild deer that grew tame in nearby brakes. (D, 17-18)

Furthermore, Lavarcham teaches her every information about Conachúr, although “its inevitable effect was to stamp the unseen king with a seal of time, so that, although Lavarcham insisted that he was only thirty-five years of age, the young girl’s mind regarded him as one who could have been father and grandfather to a hill” (D, 20). Her horror, when told that she is to wed him, then becomes understandable, if not predictable. The emphasis on the characters’ psychology allows Stephens to show them under another light. For many critics, the modernity of Stephens’s version therefore lies in “the humanizing of the saga figures by explanations of their emotions” (McFate 1979, 81). By leaving aside the blood-thirsty raven of the older versions, Stephens subverts them and gives an insight into the young Deirdre’s development as a young woman: she does not fall in love with Naoise because of a prophecy but because of his qualities.

The tragic dimension of the narrative is nevertheless underlined right from the start, at Deirdre’s birth when it is predicted that she will bring ruin to Ulster (D, 7). The king, who can decide on the child’s death so as to prevent the unfolding catastrophe, sets the tragic tone: “It is not soldierly, nor the act of a prince to evade fate. [...] Therefore, all that can happen will happen, and we shall bear all that is to be borne” (D, 8). Even before the prophecy is uttered, three forebodings are mentioned, indicating that something evil is coming his way: three comets had blazed in the sky as they were making their way to their lodgings for the night, the king’s horse had broken its leg and one of his men had taken ill (D, 6). Later comments in the novel hint at the tragedy about to happen as well. When Deirdre is escaping her secluded palace to reach the camp-fire of the sons of Uisneac, the narrator comments: “So she marched towards destiny” (D, 66). There is also an ominous foreboding in the words of Naoise’s brother Ainnle that announces the battle to come between Naoise and his brothers on the one hand and Conachúr and his army on the other: “It would be a queer thing [...] if a boy were to fight with his own foster-father” (D, 75). This tragic aspect is further put into relief by the absence of colours in the narrative: from the moment Deirdre flees with the Sons of Uisneac, everything is described in shades of darkness, since the only tones mentioned are that of silver, ebony and jet. Deirdre is linked to the moon (D, 65-66), while the latter turns everything “silvery to the view” (D, 94). Indeed, “at times, when there was neither light nor dark, a world of grey and purple [...] enclosed her in” and “grey moths” are as “dim as ghosts” (D, 95-96).

To relieve this tragic tension building up as the novel unfolds, Stephens added dialogues and humorous comments in his retelling. Just as the narrator has listed the sombre premonitions outlined above, comic details are

added to relieve the tension the auguries carry: “one of his attendants had been taken with mortal vomitings, and it did not seem that he would finish until he had emptied his body of his soul” (D, 6). These remarks lighten up an otherwise tragic narrative, considered in Irish tradition one of the “three sorrows of storytelling”, as the narrator points out when portraying the ill-fated family: “Uisneac, who had married one of Cathfa’s three daughters, and for whose little son Naoise the queens of Ireland would weep so long as Ireland had a memory” (D, 5). In the words of McFate, *Deirdre* is noted for the “addition of colour and humour to the darker tales of treachery and murder and the addition of dialogue which is comprehensible to the modern reader” (1979, 81). A humorous tone is indeed adopted right from the first page, when the relation between Conachúr and his queen is described in a chiasmus: “Maeve had the knack of annoying him more than anyone else was able to [...] for he was always trying to get the better of her, and was seldom without the feeling that she was getting or had just got the best of him” (D, 3). It is indeed often the king and his whereabouts which bring about an ironical or funny comment: “Meantime, night was at hand, and one must sleep, and it is vexatious to sleep alone” (D, 3-4), remarks that put the “salt of everyday life” in the legend, to reuse Jacqueline Genet’s words (1990, 9).

As a number of critics have noted, Stephens thus takes up an age-old story and rewrites it in novel form, adding humour and dialogue to a tragic narrative. In doing so, the modern writer is trying to make sense of the old narratives to his contemporary readers. The author also challenges the older texts in this implicit statement that they are no longer up-to-date in their style, though not in their theme. He is distancing himself from the tradition in that he is writing it differently, in the form of a novel, with extra details or emphases, but at the same time Stephens is inscribing his work within the tradition because he is striving to bring it closer to his contemporaries. In Hutcheon’s words, the process “both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies” (1988, 11). Stephens’s stepping in the footsteps of the old Irish storytellers who recounted the Deirdre legend evidences his reverence towards the tradition, while his rewriting emphasises the novelty he is bringing to the story. This parodical retelling paradoxically thus both brings him closer and apart from the medieval narratives.

2. *The Sons of Uisneac and the 1916 Rising*

In his rewriting of the story, Stephens added an extended description of the final battle, which differs from the original texts, in a romanticized section: “The passage [...] presents the sons of Uisneac in much fuller detail than they appear in the legends. Here, Stephens seizes an opportunity to present Naoise as a chivalrous warrior and a brilliant commander of his hopelessly outnumbered forces” (McFate 1969, 92-93). Another aspect of Stephens’s parodying of the legend of Deirdre is indeed his likening of the 1916 Volun-

teers to the Sons of Uisneac, an aspect hardly commented upon in previous studies of his works. Stephens, who was registrar at the National Gallery in 1916, was a first-hand witness of the Easter Rising in Dublin and described his experience in a short, journalistic essay simply entitled *The Insurrection in Dublin* and published in the latter half of 1916³.

The similarities between his portrayal of Naoise and his brothers Ainnle and Ardan in *Deirdre* on the one hand and the Irish Volunteers in *The Insurrection in Dublin* on the other hand are striking. Stephens describes the Sons of Uisneac ensnared in the Red Branch building at the court of Emain Macha and besieged by Conachúr's men in a fashion which is not without reminding the readers of the rebels trapped in the General Post Office, St Stephen's Green or Jacob's Biscuit Factory in 1916 (D, 229-286). When the Ulster warriors eventually return from exile upon the invitation of the king who promised not to exact revenge, Deirdre, Naoise and his brothers make their way back to Emain Macha under the protection of Fergus mac Roy and his sons. When Fergus is treacherously held back, his sons are left to provide assistance to Deirdre, Naoise, Ainnle and Ardan, against whom the king's vengeance is unleashed. They take refuge in the Red Branch building, in the same way that the Volunteers barricaded themselves in the GPO and other buildings around Dublin.

The element of surprise is an important aspect of Stephens's description in his essay on the Rising, put forward right at the start: "This has taken everyone by surprise. It is possible, that, with the exception of their Staff, it has taken the Volunteers themselves by surprise [...]" (I, 1). Similarly, the captain of the king's troops at Emain Macha complains to Conachúr that "this work has been thrown on us at a moment's notice, and we are not prepared for it. I can get them out in a day, but not in a night" (D, 247).

On the first day of the Easter Rebellion, Stephens witnessed the comings and goings of the Volunteers in Dublin city centre:

As I drew near the Green rifle fire began like sharply-cracking whips. It was from the further side. I saw that the Gates were closed and men were standing inside with guns on their shoulders. I passed a house, the windows of which were smashed in. As I went by, a man in civilian clothes slipped through the Park gates, which instantly closed behind him. He ran towards me, and I halted. He was carrying two small packets in his hand. He passed me hurriedly, and, placing his leg inside the broken window of the house behind me, he disappeared. Almost immediately another man in civilian clothes appeared from the broken window of another house. He also had something (I don't know what) in his hand. He ran urgently towards the gates, which opened, admitted him, and closed again. (I, 7-8)

³ Stephens 2000 [1916]. All subsequent quotations from it are abbreviated to I followed by the page number, from this edition.

The personification of the gates of St Stephens' Green points out the fact that the narrator witnesses the scene from the outside, curious of what is going on within these fences. Hence the emphasis on sounds at the start of the paragraph, with the plosive consonants of the onomatopoeic "sharply-cracking whips" of the bullets: Stephens can only describe what he hears and the little that he sees, and guess what else might be happening in the Green. On the contrary, in *Deirdre*, the focalisation of the novel is on the side of the warriors, inside the Red Branch building, which is reflected in the absence of personification of the doors of the house. Naoise's instructions to his brothers however strongly echo Stephens's first experience of the Rising:

You will slip out by this door, and will run, and fight as you run. Range where you please, but run always. In five minutes – do not delay, Ainnle – make for yonder door. This one will be shut, and the slingsmen will be inside that door to cover your retreat. It is understood? [...] The instant you are in, Ainnle, fly to this door again, while we close the other behind you. Open all the bolts but one; Buinne will help and I and Iolann will dart out for five minutes. (D, 242-243)

The dialogue between Naoise and his small troop give a further emphasis on the insider's view the reader is getting of the battle. The tactics employed by the Sons of Uisneac trapped in the Red Branch are similar to those Stephens witnessed the rebels use in 1916: one man darts out of cover unexpectedly while another comes back a different way as quickly as possible. It is the constant and quick ins and outs of the Volunteers that Naoise and his brothers replicate in their last stand at the Red Branch. This fighting technique gives them the advantage of unexpectedness, as the officer in command of the king's men has quickly understood:

'A fortress with six doors. They leap in and out of these doors the way frogs leap in a pool. While we are using the ram on this door, any door – and they are the devil's own fighters! We don't know where to expect them, and any one of those within is equal of ten of our men in fighting, and the superior of them all in tricks. I am to have them out before morning – it is the king's orders, but I don't know how it is to be done.' [...]

A shout arose, but it was multiplied from every side by the roaring soldiery, and one could not tell from which direction danger came. 'They have popped out somewhere,' said the captain. 'In about two minutes they will pop in again, somewhere – they know but we don't, – and in those two minutes we will lose five men or twenty'. (D, 247-248)

The officer's point of view is that of the outsider, echoing Stephens in *The Insurrection in Dublin*, therefore also implicitly underlining to the reader the advantage they have on Conachúr's men by being privy to Naoise's stratagem. An obvious feature of these tactics is the sharp shouts of the fighters

consequently followed by the opening of gates or doors and the rushing in or out of one of them. Ardan runs back in as soon as he hears his brothers' call in the Red Branch for instance (D, 241). This parallels what Stephens saw on the Green:

I came to the barricade. As I reached it and stood by the Shelbourne Hotel, which it faced, a loud cry came from the Park. The gates opened and three men ran out. Two of them held rifles with fixed bayonets. The third gripped a heavy revolver in his fist. They ran towards a motor car which had just turned the corner, and halted it. (I, 8)

Here again hearing is the most important of the senses, since sight does not provide much information for Stephens, who seems to have drawn from this experience to depict the final struggle in the Red Branch. The prominence of sounds in the description of the fights also echoes the cry which is at the start of Deirdre's story in the old texts, though it has become a "thin wail" in Stephens's retelling of the story (D, 6). The earliest versions have it that the unborn Deirdre shrieked so loudly that the whole house heard it, an ominous sound that announces the troubles to come through its contrast with the bustling banquet, as Cornelius Buttimer details (1994-1995, 2-9). Giovanna Tallone further remarks that "The original story of Deirdre is, so to speak, very verbal: it starts with a non-natural sound, Deirdre's scream from her mother's womb, which is expanded in the prophecy on Deirdre's life and death and the destruction she will cause" (1990, 75).

The efficiency of the Sons of Uisneac's way of fighting lies also in its simplicity, as the captain remarks to the king: "There is nothing to get, majesty. Their plan is the simplest. They have six doors: they choose one to come out by and one to get in by. That is the whole plan" (D, 263). Stephens puts into relief the lack of complexity of the tactics in both cases. In *The Insurrection in Dublin*, he writes:

There is much talk about the extraordinary organising powers displayed in the insurrection, but in truth there was nothing extraordinary in it. The real essence and singularity of the rising exists in its simplicity, and, saving for the courage which carried it out, the word extraordinary is misplaced in this context. The tactics of the Volunteers as they began to emerge were reduced to the very skeleton of 'strategy'. (I, 79)

In both cases, the stratagem used by the besieged fighters is built on its clarity, on the courage of the combatants and on their hopes. The Sons of Uisneac are ready to be besieged until the morning, when they are expecting reinforcements from Fergus's men, since they are under his protection and he will not tolerate such a betrayal on Conachúr's part (D, 231). Naoise and his brothers are thus awaiting relief from their kinsmen in the same way as

the Volunteers were said to be expecting forces from down the country and from Germany. A couple of days after the Rising and the executions were over, Stephens wrote: "There is no doubt that they expected the country to rise with them [...] It is quite likely that they hoped for German aid, possibly some thousands of men, who would enable them to prolong the row [...]" (I, 80-81). Even though, as Stephens recognises, the German support may have been only a rumour at the time, the situation in which both the Ulster warriors and the 1916 rebels find themselves are strikingly comparable.

Indeed, the Red Branch is set on fire by the king's men to lead the Sons of Uisneac out: "A ruddy glare could be seen by each window," writes Stephens of the building at Emain Macha (D, 271). He uses the same term to describe the fire on what is now O'Connell Street: "During the night the firing was heavy from almost every direction; and in the direction of Sackville Street a red glare told again of fire" (I, 61). The previous day, the writer had already glimpsed the fire at the GPO: "From my window I saw a red flare that crept to the sky, and stole over it and remained there glaring; the smoke reached from the ground to the clouds, and I could see great red sparks go soaring to enormous heights [...]" (I, 53). The fire at the Red Branch, which acts as an allegory for Conachúr's anger, is likewise insidious and once more puts forward both sight and sounds:

A huge golden flame licked screaming through the window, wavered hither and thither like some blindly savage tongue, and roared out again [...] for the voice of the fire was like the steady rage and roar of the sea, and through every window monstrous sheets of flame were leaping and crashing. (D, 272-273)

As discussed previously, the black and white of the seven years of exile for Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneac are prominent tones in the novel, along with the sanguine hue of the Red Branch in flames. These are the colours of the blood-drinking raven in the prophecy that Stephens has chosen not to include in his retelling, as Patricia McFate notes (1969, 92), and they seem to be an inherent, though unspoken, characteristic of the Deirdre legend. The water imagery used to depict the fire, as seen in the excerpt quoted above, is however absent from *The Insurrection in Dublin*. It acts as a subtle foreboding of the magical drowning of the Sons of Uisneac at the end of *Deirdre*. The running evocation of the sea anticipates the last and only trick that can stop Naoise and his brothers: their grandfather's magic that created a sea of water around them, making them vulnerable and unable to move forward quickly, so that the king's soldiers were able and unafraid to catch up with them (D, 280-281). The combat at the Red Branch is thus compared to a choppy ocean: "The uproar without had been terrific, but now it redoubled, and at times a long scream topped the noise as spray tops a wave", and "into the middle of these [Ainnle] went diving like a fish" (D, 244). The king himself

is paralleled with a merman, “alone amid the chop and shudder of his dismal waters” (D, 275). Enemies of the Sons of Uisneac are likened to natural elements, whether sea or fire, in order to emphasise the tragic aspect of their fight: there is no winning against nature, Naoise and his brothers are doomed.

Stephens also highlights the internecine nature of the fight in both *Deirdre* and *The Insurrection in Dublin*: “‘Which are our men and which are theirs?’ said the captain. ‘Ours don’t know in this light which is friend and which is enemy. *They* know,’ he said bitterly; ‘but we are killing one another’” (D, 248-249), the repetition of the question word highlighting the uncertainty in the soldier’s voice. The magician Cathfa, who casts the final, fatal spell on the Sons of Uisneac upon the king’s order also points out to the latter that they are his own grandsons as well as Conachúr’s nephews and foster sons (D, 277), which makes the king’s betrayal an even more despicable one. However, it is the fate of Fergus’s sons, Buinne and Iolann, which best illustrates the fratricidal conflict at hand: the brothers end up fighting against one another, when Buinne accepts the king’s reward as he leaves the Red Branch, while Iolann continues to combat on the Sons of Uisneac’s side, keeping his word, according to his role as a surety of Fergus’s protection (D, 259). As during the Easter Rising, Irishmen are fighting against fellow Irishmen, according to Stephens in the final pages of *The Insurrection in Dublin*:

It was hard enough that our men in the English armies should be slain for causes which no amount of explanation will ever render less foreign to us, or even intelligible; but that our men who were left should be killed in Ireland fighting against the same England that their brothers are fighting for ties the question into such knots of contradiction as we may give up trying to unravel. (I, 88)

Not only are the tactics and the situations of the men involved similar, but the very nature of both the attack on the Red Branch and the 1916 rebellion mirror each other in Stephens’s narratives.

Besides, both represent youth repressed by monarchy, since the young men of 1916 were rebelling against the English crown and the Sons of Uisneac are fighting the king of Ulster. The writer emphasises the youth of the protagonists in both books: he describes a Volunteer as “no more than a boy, not more certainly than twenty years of age” (I, 10), while Deirdre is herself twenty-three in Book Two at the time of the siege of the Red Branch and Ardan, the youngest brother, is twenty-one when they come back to Ulster (D, 166). At the start of their story, the main characteristics of the sons of Uisneac are youth, carelessness and laughter. Deirdre indeed watches them and listens, unbeknownst of Naoise and his brothers, “to the babel of laughter which sped between them. Back and forth it went, endless, tireless. Youth calling and answering to youth; catching a facile fire from each other, and tossing it back as carelessly” (D, 98). Stephens similarly portrays one of the

1916 leaders, O’Rahilly, as “a man of unceasing ideas and unceasing speech, and laughter accompanied every sound made by his lips” (I, 90) and further stresses: “in my definition they were good men” (I, 89), as if to indicate his implicit disapproval of such an assault on these youths, as well as to highlight their courage.

The bravery of the Sons of Uisneac echoes that of the Volunteers. An attempt is made to parley, but Naoise, who incidentally bears the same name as Stephens’s son, ignores it and does not surrender (D, 259), fighting until death for his honour and for the love of his brothers and his wife Deirdre. The main difference between the Volunteers and the Sons of Uisneac in the novel is in fact that the former eventually surrendered, when the latter never do. Naoise and his brothers thus embody the spirit of resistance. Even though the 1916 rebels surrendered after nearly a week of rebellion, Stephens also applauds their pugnacity, in lines already quoted by McFate:

Bravery, courage, lightheartedness – the essential qualities in battle of Naoise, Ardan, and Ainnle – are the attributes Stephens cites for the rebels of 1916. Those who fought in the Uprising faced impossible odds, displayed selfless concern for others, and refused to surrender to their enemies. Stephens told one of the stories about the Volunteers in his first account of the Uprising: an Irish garrison refused to surrender to the English officer in command because “they were not there to surrender. They were there to be killed. The garrison consisted of fifty men, and the story said that fifty were killed”. (1979, 76 quoting I, 30-31)

In what is the only critical analysis (briefly) linking *Deirdre* with the Easter Rising, she further remarks that in this lengthy and detailed depiction of the siege of the Red Branch and the combat against Conachúr’s men, Stephens departs from the previous retellings of the Deirdre legend, thus putting into relief the courage and bravery of the Sons of Uisneac. He follows the inclination of his times, since, as Máire Herbert notes, “The Irish Revival of the late nineteenth century sought to redefine the country’s present by recalling a past world of nobility and bravery” (1991, 13). Stephens puts the emphasis on heroic resistance with this long portrayal of the final battle. That the prophecy at Deirdre’s birth is less detailed in Stephens’s retelling than in the medieval versions also puts more emphasis on the courage of Naoise and his brothers, than on the tragic aspect of their story. It is a conscious choice from Stephens who preferred to highlight heroic fight.

3. *For the Honour of Ireland*

Whereas the other works of the Revival used Deirdre as the allegory of Ireland to stir a patriotic movement, Stephens’s rewriting of Deirdre came over ten years later, a few years after the Rising. *Deirdre* was published in

1923, during the Civil War, a year after Ireland gained her independence. In 1921, Stephens noted: “The nation that has a mythology is blessed beyond expression. She has but to bathe again in her own fountains to be refreshed from whatever travail, and Ireland is returning to her fountains” (McFate, 1983, 180). Like the other artists of the Irish Revival, Stephens reused the heroes of old in his writings, even though the height of the Revival preceded him by about two decades. He too found inspiration in the legend of Deirdre. McFate remarks that

Stephens’s versions of the same story are found in his first three novels. In each work a beautiful woman, representing Ireland, is championed by an Irishman who is in turn a young patriot, a Gaelic deity, and an angel with an Irish name. Many of Stephens’ works reflect his dedication to the literary reawakening of Ireland. (*Ibidem*, 12)

The character of Deirdre is indeed to be paralleled with Caitilin in *The Crock of Gold* (1912) and the Marys of *The Charwoman’s Daughter* (1912) and *The Demi-Gods* (1914). In *Deirdre*, the eponymous infant heroine is implicitly paralleled with Ireland when the king says that she places herself under his protection and the warrior Bricriu mutters under his breath that “Ulster is under [the king’s] protection” (D, 7-8).

So, like Yeats and Synge, Stephens idealises Ireland through the heroine, but he also glorifies the 1916 leaders through the figure of Naoise and his brothers. By using the characters of the Sons of Uisneac as metaphors for the Irish Volunteers, Stephens is thus equating the former with the latter. In his essay entitled “First Aid to Storytellers”, he advised that “what is happening is your theme” (undated MS, f. 17). It is no wonder then that he used the contemporary events of 1916 as material for his novel. John A. Murphy, in the introduction to *The Insurrection in Dublin*, writes that Stephens “devoted his energies to the imaginative recovery of Ireland’s poetic and mythological past. There can be little doubt that the impact of the military and political upheaval provided him with a fresh inspiration and pointed the new direction that he had been hoping for” (I, xx-xxi). *Deirdre* is the result of Stephens’s interests in both the contemporary affairs of his time and Ireland’s legendary past and ancient literature. Martin writes of *The Insurrection in Dublin* that “this is history as seen through the prism of national myth” (1977, 109), but this could also apply to *Deirdre*, since by setting the Volunteers in the footsteps of Naoise, Ardan, and Ainnle, Stephens is feeding into the process of idealisation of the 1916 rebels, which has been at work ever since.

Yet, in *The Insurrection in Dublin* he wrote: “It is not my intention to idealize any of the men who were concerned in this rebellion. Their country will, some few years hence, do that as adequately as she has done it for those who went before them” (I, 88-89). Stephens was indeed visionary and understood

the Irish imagination perfectly when he wrote during the week of the Rising: "All this, I said to myself, will be finished in a few days, and they will be finished; life here will recommence exactly where it left off, and except for some newly-filled graves, all will be as it had been until they become a tradition and enter the imagination of their race" (I, 44-45). Even though he refuted the idea of romanticising the rebels in his 1916 essay, the writer published in the same year a poetry collection entitled *Green Branches*, which features the following lines from the poem "Spring 1916": "But gather buds, and with them greenery / Of slender branches taken from a tree / Well bannered by the spring that saw them fall / [...] Green be their graves and green their memory" (Stephens 1916, 13-14). Stephens, who knew one of the 1916 leaders, Thomas MacDonagh (McFate 1979, 6), was a fervent supporter of the founder of Sinn Féin, Arthur Griffith, and had written a pamphlet in praise of the latter, comparing Griffith to Cúchullin the year before *Deirdre* was published (Stephens 1922). He also succumbed to the process of eulogizing the 1916 Volunteers in *Deirdre*, since, as Sean Kinsella argues, "The real importance lies in placing the individual act in the context of tradition. It is the mythic Ireland that determines the act and it is within that context that historical acts acquire their significance and validation" (1994, 22). In placing the 1916 rebels alongside the Irish heroes of the Ulster Cycle, Stephens implicitly validates and glorifies the Volunteers. The book is indeed dedicated in Irish to "the glory of God and the honour of Ireland", *Do chum glóire Dé agus onóra na h-Eireann*. These are the words which conclude the Irish Constitution and have been used throughout the years in various contexts, from Irish war memorials to portal inscriptions, at the Irish college in Leuven for example.

But the context of the publication of Stephens's novel is also revealing. The book, which describes the fratricidal battle of the Sons of Uisneac and their allies against the forces of Conachúr mac Nessa, echoes the Irish civil war going on at the time. The internecine fights waged in the book amongst Ulstermen quite tellingly translate the historical context and provide an implicit critique of the political situation of Ireland at the time, even though, as Werner Huber remarks, "political content has rarely been associated with Stephens's writing", except regarding Irish nationalism (1995, 95-96). Stephens would have witnessed the combats between pro- and anti-Treaty forces in Dublin during the civil war, although he did not write a book about it this time. His ironical and disheartened comments in a 1923 letter to his patron and friend W.T.H. Howe nevertheless highlight his disapproval of the plight of Ireland: "Things here are much as they were. Guns go off every night, and bombs are thrown, or, which is a newer delight, land-mines are exploded. It has all come to seem meaningless, and I expect it will stop shortly" (McFate 1983, 134). This led him and his family to move to London in 1925 to escape the incessant Irish guerrilla war. Choosing Ulstermen to represent the 1916 Volunteers is also significant at the time of the civil war, when the partition of Northern Ireland

from the Irish Free State was the main cause of the armed struggle going on country-wide. *Deirdre*, which portrays the 1916 rebels as embodiments of the Sons of Uisneac, is an implied condemnation of the civil war which will be at the heart of the epic it prefaces, the *Táin*, and which pens in the 1923 novel.

Stephens thus rewrites both the legend of Deirdre and the story of 1916. He parodies the Irish heroes with their embodiment in the rebels. The “repetition with critical distance” which is at the core of parody is clearly seen at work in *Deirdre*: Stephens emulates the ancient tradition by taking up an old epic, but also sets his novel in the footsteps of both the Revivalists and the 1916 ideals; yet he also moves away from the legendary material by adding humour and dialogues, to refashion it for modern audiences. The author’s critical distance is also expressed in his choice of the Sons of Uisneac as embodiment of the spirit of 1916, rather than Patrick Pearse’s Cuchullin. Through the parodical process, not only does he put his work in the line of the ancient storytellers, but he also implicitly argues that the 1916 rebels are the heirs of the great Irish warriors. In the same way that the Sons of Uisneac died but achieved everlasting fame for their bravery, so will the Irish Volunteers. Stephens’s retelling of the Deirdre legend is indeed a first step to this end.

James Stephens produced in 1923 a literary work which stemmed both from its troubled contemporary times and from the ancient Irish storytelling tradition. A book of the late Irish Revival which was awarded the prize at the Aonach Tailteann Festival in 1924 for best work of fiction in the previous three years (Finneran 1978, 16), *Deirdre* sets out to recount the story of the eponymous heroine, but above all of the three Sons of Uisneac who stood alongside her, against Conachúr mac Nessa, king of Ulster. The aim of the novel is triple: to set Stephens’s writings in the tradition of both the old Irish sagas and the Irish Revival, to glorify the 1916 Volunteers, and to implicitly condemn the civil war during which it was published. Like his predecessors of the Irish Renaissance, Stephens idealises Ireland in the figure of Deirdre, but he also romanticises the 1916 rebels by identifying them with Naoise and his brothers. Through the parodical process he employs, the author sets his own work in line with the Irish literary tradition, while departing from it at the same time in this rewriting of the Irish heroes as Volunteers.

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Silence and Familial Homophobia in Colm Tóibín's "Entiendes" and "One Minus One"¹

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Abstract:

The present study focuses on two of Colm Tóibín's gay short-stories – "Entiendes" (1993) and "One Minus One" (2010) – in which the homosexual son meditates on his attachment to the dead mother. In both texts, Tóibín characterises the mother-son bond as being fraught with silence, resentment and lack of communication. In "One Minus One" and "Entiendes", the son's closeted homosexuality coexists with familial legacies of shame, uneasiness and duplicity. The central characters in the two texts are similar, as they experience the same type of existential exile, solitude and alienation derived from their complex attachments to home and family. As shall be explained, the author dwells on the damaging effects of familial homophobia, highlighting the limitations of the dominant heteronormative family model to accommodate gay sensibilities.

Keywords: Colm Tóibín, "Entiendes", Homosexuality, Ireland, "One Minus One"

In his gay fiction, Colm Tóibín has often explored aspects connected with familial homophobia, the fear of rejection and the taboo of homosexuality. The present study will concentrate on two short-stories – "Entiendes" (1993) and "One Minus One" (*The Empty Family*, 2010) – in which the homosexual

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son meditates on his attachment to the dead mother. In both texts, Tóibín portrays the mother-son bond as being fraught with silence, resentment and lack of communication, with mother and son employing strategies of avoidance and self-protection in order to deal with feelings that cannot be talked about. Both “Entiendes” and “One Minus One” feature protagonists who experience familial despondency, solitude and exile, as well as a half-hidden longing for the dead mother. In both cases, sexuality emerges as one of the raw areas between the son and the mother.

Typically in his fiction, Tóibín offers depictions of motherhood which clearly undermine the stereotype of the nurturing and self-sacrificing mother, the most obvious example being the rebellious Katherine Proctor in *The South* (1990), who abandons her ten year old son for a new life in Spain. Furthermore, as John McCourt has also observed, most of Tóibín’s fictional mothers and sons become entangled in “a question of finding, claiming and maintaining an independent personal space in which to live and develop” (2008, 154). In this battle for a “personal space”, mothers and sons try to evade each other’s influence. This kind of strained mother-son bond is a recurrent topic in many of Tóibín’s narratives, either from the perspective of the mother or the son. For example, in his recent novels *The Testament of Mary* (2012) and *Nora Webster* (2014), the subjectivity of the mother takes central stage, whereas many of the short-stories in *Mothers and Sons* (2006) and *The Empty Family* (2010) are focalised through the viewpoint of the son. Both perspectives – the mother’s and the son’s – are present in his latest novel, *The House of Names* (2017). Fathers – with the notable exception of judge Eamon Redmond in *The Heather Blazing* (1992) – become secondary, shadowy or absent characters in Tóibín’s canon; their subjectivity is usually displaced from the core of the story.

In her essay “After Oedipus? Mothers and Sons in the Fiction of Colm Tóibín” (2008), Anne Fogarty becomes one of the first critics to examine the mother figure as “a perennial and recurrent motif in Tóibín’s novels” (168). In her study, Fogarty calls attention to the difficult bond between the mother and the gay son in Tóibín’s texts, observing how the son’s desire for freedom and emancipation is often countermanded by the confining presence of the mother. Fogarty further argues that, even when the mother is dead or absent, her memory becomes the repository of much regret and frustration: “The secluded, hostile space of the maternal [...] becomes the locus in which all the conflicts engendered by the family are reinforced and in which the insidious effects of homophobia inscribe themselves” (177). Significantly, as Fogarty suggests, a past of familial homophobia shapes the subjectivity of many of Tóibín’s gay characters, who maintain a painful yet loving attachment to the mother.

Interestingly, the family becomes a prominent topic in much of the gay literature produced in the last decades of the twentieth century – and Tóibín’s gay fiction is no exception to this. In his seminal *A History of Gay Literature* (1998), Gregory Woods develops the following idea:

Gay literature has had a great deal to say about families. Indeed, the family is one of our principal themes. In the first place, it has constantly to be reiterated that homosexual women and men actually come from within families. Families create us, for the most part (though I am not saying that they *cause* us). In the second, we either come to an accommodation with those families, or we distance ourselves from them, or they reject and eject us. In the third, many of us create families of our own, or we find ourselves inventing new configurations of relationships which might be called alternative families. (345; emphasis in the original)

Tóibín – who praised Woods’s study in an article for the *London Review of Books* (Tóibín 1999) – clearly draws on this notion of the “alternative family” when in *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999) he surrounds Declan, an AIDS victim, with two gay friends who have taken care of him during the earlier stages of his disease, at a time when his biological family was unaware of his health condition. In the course of the story, “the friends’ love for Declan and their cooperation with his hitherto distant family become central to the novel’s ethics of inclusion and reconciliation” (Carregal-Romero 2016, 371).

What both Woods’s quote and Tóibín’s *The Blackwater Lightship* also suggest is that, even if homosexuals can create in due time their own alternative families, most of them keep strong emotional ties to their biological family. As can be inferred, the nuclear family often becomes an intimate but conflictive arena for many homosexuals, whose sexuality necessarily implies a breakaway from the established path of heterosexuality. Because of its disciplinary role, the family often becomes the primary site where the lesbian daughter or gay son learns the lessons of self-acceptance or repression with regard to her/his sexuality. The possibility of rejection – and the anxiety it brings – becomes another reality frequently shared by many homosexuals, for whom “the unconditional love that is stereotypically perceived to characterize and symbolize biological kinship loses much of its ‘unconditional’ or ‘naturally given’ quality” (Xhonneux 2014, 125).

Familial homophobia should be understood within a cultural climate in which parents – most frequently, mothers – were blamed for their children’s homosexuality. For most of the twentieth century, parents of gays and lesbians were made to feel ashamed and inadequate on account of their children’s sexuality, since “psychiatrists throughout the world treated homosexuality as an illness primarily caused by poor parenting” (Meem, Gibson and Alexander 2010, 68). Misconceptions and negative stereotypes about homosexuality have thus greatly affected these parents’ appreciations of their children’s sexuality – a situation which caused much suffering and incomprehension within families.

In *The Ties that Bind: Familial Homophobia and its Consequences* (2009), Sarah Schulman perceptively argues that “homophobia originates and is enforced, initially, within the family”, which becomes “the primary source of pain and diminishment in the lives of many gay people” (33). Schulman then

highlights the interconnectedness between familial and social homophobia when she comments that, for many heterosexuals, the family provides “the model for social exclusion, for it is also where most straight people learn to use homophobia to elevate themselves within the family politic, which is the prototype for the broader social politic” (33). Familial homophobia, Schulman adds, has lasting and painful consequences for homosexuals, as the lesbian/gay person experiences diminishment and “learns to tolerate this or be complicit with it in order to be loved [by her/his family]” (23).

As will be argued in what follows, in “One Minus One” and “Entiendes” Tóibín brings to light the pernicious effects of familial homophobia. In the two stories, the son’s closeted homosexuality coexists with familial legacies of silence, uneasiness and duplicity. In both cases, the gay son has not broken bonds with the dead mother, and this loss revives feelings of melancholia, as well as the painful irreversibility of past wrongdoings.

“Entiendes” is Tóibín’s first gay narrative and was published in 1993 in a collection entitled *Infidelity*, edited by Marsha Rowe, a supporter of gay rights and a feminist who “had been involved in the very early women’s movement in England” (O’Toole 2008, 193). “Entiendes” is set in Buenos Aires, and the story foreshadows the type of complex mother-son bond that Tóibín would also explore in many of his later gay fictions set in Ireland and elsewhere, such as *The Story of the Night*, *The Blackwater Lightship*, “Three Friends” and “A Long Winter” (both in *Mothers and Sons*, 2006) or “One Minus One”. No critic, to my knowledge, has worked on Tóibín’s “Entiendes” so far.

Being his first gay story, “Entiendes” broke new ground in Tóibín’s fiction in 1993, the year when male homosexuality ceased to be illegal in Ireland. As a homosexual who grew up in a dark time for gays and lesbians, Tóibín declared that, before 1993, “the laws forbidding us to love, forbidding us to couple as others do, affected us” (“A Brush with the Law”, 2007). Criminalisation made male homosexuality an offence against society and, thus, had a devastating effect on the lives of gay men. Though lesbianism was not criminal², lesbians were similarly discriminated, as their sexuality was seen to defy Ireland’s family-centered values³. Only twenty-two years later, in May 2015, Ireland became the first country to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote⁴. “Internationally”, as Patrick James McDonagh highlights,

² There were two attempts (1895 and 1922) to make lesbianism a crime. See Walshe 1997, 6.

³ In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland*, Joni Crone argues that coming out to the family is often a more complex issue for lesbians than for gay men: “We are ordinary women, and as ordinary women, reared in heterosexual families, we have been socialized into a mothering role as helpers, assistants and carers. ‘Coming out’ as an Irish lesbian involves undoing much of our conditioning” (1995, 61).

⁴ The result of the referendum – 62% for same-sex marriage – might be surprising given the recent history of entrenched homophobia in Ireland – in the early 2000s, research conducted

“Ireland received widespread admiration as a beacon for LGTB civil rights” (2017, 66). Though homophobia still lingers today in Ireland (it remains particularly strong in primary and secondary school environments⁵), “the huge changes in sexual mores and family life over the last decades brought about [...] a significant lessening of discrimination against lesbians and gay men” (Nolan 2007, 357).

Despite this changing social climate, Tóibín’s portrayals of homosexuality are often coloured by his own experiences as a gay man in the Ireland of his youth. As he admits in *Love in a Dark Time* (2001), Tóibín grew up at a time when homosexuality “was not allowed for as a possibility” (275), a fact which affected him as a gay man: “My sexuality [...] was something about which part of me remained uneasy, timid and melancholy” (2). In an interview, Tóibín also comments on the work of younger homosexual writers and remarks that: “In Keith Ridgway’s *The Long Falling*, the gay characters have a wonderfully easy time in Dublin. They try to liberate the older generation [...] Emma Donoghue, similarly, has a much more open universe. I’m just slightly too old to have experienced this liberation so that it fundamentally entered my spirit” (Canning 2003, 202). In most of Tóibín’s gay narratives, his protagonists are not entirely freed from the emotional constraints of the past. As Eibhear Walshe astutely observes, Tóibín’s gay fiction reflects “the ambivalence in any new recognition of diverse sexual identities within a culture and a literature” (2013, 69). Far from producing celebratory portrayals of gay liberation, Tóibín often dwells on the harmful effects of a painful past of shame, silence and exclusion surrounding homosexuality, on the level of the individual and the family⁶.

As he also does in his 1996 novel *The Story of the Night*⁷, Tóibín locates “Entiendes” in the Argentina of the mid-1970s, during the period of the mili-

in twenty-four countries concluded that Ireland was one of the most homophobic nations in the Western world, together with Greece and Northern Ireland (see Ferriter 2009, 509). In *Ireland Says Yes* (2016), Gráinne Healy, Brian Sheehan and Noel Whelan underline that there is today in Ireland a notable generational gap, as younger people grew up at a time when sexuality was more openly discussed. In general, younger people were strongly supportive and enthusiastic about marriage equality: “Younger voters had come of age in a more liberal era. They saw this referendum as being more important than elections” (Healy, Sheehan, Whelan 2016, 41).

⁵ See O’Higgins-Norman 2009; Mannix-McNamara *et al.* 2013 and Bird 2016, 14-15.

⁶ A clear exception to this is Tóibín’s semi-autobiographical short-story “Barcelona, 1975” (*The Empty Family* 2010), where a young gay man enjoys his sexual liberation away from home and Ireland.

⁷ After he published “Entiendes”, Tóibín reworked and expanded this short-story and turned it into his first gay novel, *The Story of the Night*. Unlike the short-story, the novel features a protagonist, Richard, who is half English, whose father is dead and whose mother is an English woman who lives alienated from the Argentinian society.

tary regime, when political dissidents were tortured and murdered⁸. The narrator in “Entiendes” briefly reflects upon this past of violence in Argentina, coming to the conclusion that “we saw nothing, not because there was nothing, but because we had trained ourselves not to see [...] It was something in the atmosphere, something unsaid and all-pervasive” (14). In the story, Tóibín connects Argentina’s social climate of denial and alienation with the narrator’s personal experiences as a gay man. Just as the murders executed by the generals were invisible to the wider society, homosexuality was similarly regarded as clandestine, a social reality whose existence was surrounded by a culture of silence. Tóibín himself relates how, during his time in 1980s Argentina, “[he] kept meeting gay people who had never told a single person that they were gay [...] and they would tell you, ‘no one knows and no one will ever know’” (O’Toole 2008, 196). Significantly, as Kathleen Costello-Sullivan notes in her analysis of *The Story of the Night*, Tóibín’s portrayal of gay sexuality in Argentina clearly reflects a similar situation in Ireland, when gay sexuality was still criminal: “Given the slowly-dawning realization of equality for gay members of Irish society and the social and political exclusions which that history entailed, the representation of Argentina’s oppressive, silencing polity invariably resonates with the Irish context” (2012, 98).

“Entiendes” is narrated from the point of view of a son coming to terms with the death of his mother. All the events are recounted in retrospective, as if the passing of time had brought some clarity over the past: “She has been dead now for some years; her bones are firmly locked away in the family vault” (10). We learn that the protagonist in “Entiendes” has grown up as the sheltered son of his lonely mother. For reasons unknown to the narrator, the father disappeared long ago, never to come back: “I expected a postcard to come in the door some morning with news from him, as I have done all my adult life. A card in our box in the hallway. One card” (25). On this subject and others, the mother zealously guarded her privacy, reluctant as she was to speak about the man who had abandoned her.

In “Entiendes”, Tóibín constructs the mother as a woman trapped in a kind of internal exile, confined in a world from which there is no possi-

⁸ Working as a journalist, Tóibín attended in the 1980s the trial of the generals who had committed the assassinations of political dissidents, expressing the view that: “The generals took over power determined to rid Argentina of its political opponents. Bodies were found but there wasn’t much publicity. Life continued as normal, as it did elsewhere in Europe under similar circumstances. Those who drew attention to what was happening were accused of offering aid to the subversives. When the armed forces came in the night and dragged off a member of the family, the family called the police, they tried to make statements in police stations, they hired lawyers and went to the courts; they applied over and over for *habeas corpus*; they believed the system was still working. Nobody knew what was happening and if people had been told they wouldn’t have believed it” (1990, 21).

bility of escape or self-reinvention. In her attempt to recuperate her old life as a writer⁹, the mother retreats to her study and begins to rewrite her published novels: “She wrote nothing new, but took down all the old books and reworked them as though there was a chance that some publisher would bring them out in a new version” (9). Her isolation comes to an end when the mother falls in the shower and breaks her hip. The son now regrets: “I needed to be with her so I dropped some hours at the Academia San Martin [...] I helped Mother to dress, and wheeled her about the apartment as she pleased” (16). This new proximity is spiced with a sense of oppression, as the narrator readily complains about his “greedy, capricious mother” (18). Nonetheless, Tóibín characterises the bond between mother and son as being so intense that, years after her death, the protagonist senses the mother’s presence within the rooms of the apartment. Though he acknowledges his need to relocate his loss emotionally, the son is not ready to distance himself from the influence of the mother: “Some day soon I will open the curtains and let her fly out” (27).

In “Entiendes”, the son’s closeted homosexuality ironically brings him closer to the mother. This particular connection between gay children and the biological family is explored by Barry McCrea in his analysis of family narratives in modernist fictions. McCrea posits the following idea: “Breaking out of one’s birth family seems to be structurally connected with heterosexuality. Paradoxically, gays seem fated to be structurally chained to the birth family forever” (2011, 13). As McCrea suggests, heterosexuality is culturally associated with marriage and the founding of new families. Homosexuals, however, have been traditionally deprived of these possibilities. In places where heterosexism remains the norm, homophobia flourishes and same-sex desire becomes difficult to accept on both a personal and social level. In his fictional 1970s Buenos Aires, Tóibín portrays gay sexuality as an experience about which nobody speaks, and this has the direct consequence of preventing homosocial bonding. In the story, Tóibín has his narrator interacting with potential lovers – strangers he meets on the street or in other public spaces – through silent signs just to engage in anonymous sex, the sexual companions behaving as if they were “conspirators laden down with desire” (15). This type of sex, Tim Edwards explains, has to be understood within the social, economic, and political contexts constructing codes and sexual

⁹ Because of social conventions, the mother in “Entiendes” had stopped writing when she got married, abandoning her literary career. This brings echoes of Tóibín’s words about his own mother: “My mother had published poems before she was married, in the *Irish Press*. She had cut those poems out, and she kept her books apart from my father’s [...] She knew a lot of poetry. But the fact that she had stopped writing, I think, was on her mind, always. That she could have, if circumstances had been different, that she could have been a different sort of person” (O’Toole 2008, 185).

activities. This “pick up” system, Edwards argues, emerges from the “erotization of the inequality of gay sexuality” and becomes a counter-reaction to the oppression and regulation of same-sex desire (1994, 89). In Tóibín’s short-story, the shame and silence surrounding same-sex desire has a strong effect on the narrator’s personal life. In such a context, I contend, the narrator can hardly establish affective ties with other gay men in a way that could allow him to construct an independent sphere of intimacy away from the engulfing presence of the mother.

In his search for love and companionship, the narrator develops a romantic and sexual interest in his closest friend, Jorge. His encounters with him are filled with silent expectation: “I listened for a clue that Jorge might understand [...] *Entiendes?* You could ask and this would mean Do you? Are you? Will you? [...] Sometimes I became tense with worry that I might blurt it out” (11). The narrator’s hopes are shattered when he summons up the courage to confess his sexuality, trying to find out whether Jorge is also gay. To his dismay, Jorge’s only reaction is to express preoccupation for his friend’s mother: “I needed to tell him how much I had wanted him, how my hopes had depended on him and that now things would change and I did not know how. But he was worried about my mother [...] It was hard for my mother, he said” (18). As Tóibín shows in his story, Jorge does not repudiate his friend, but, like many other people of his time, he can only see homosexuality as a burden and a source of shame for the family.

Later in the story, the protagonist cannot contain his turmoil when the mother starts to worry about Jorge’s continuing visits: “Had it ever occurred to me, she asked, that [Jorge] was homosexual, and that was why he came?” (20). Now that the mother breaks the taboo of homosexuality, the son discloses the secret of his gay orientation. Even if the son shows his vulnerability and “stand[s] in front of her shaking” (20), the mother maintains her customary remoteness and coldness. Her indignation, though, cannot be hidden: “Somewhere in her face there was utter contempt” (21).

Despite her indignation, the mother begins to display an interest in her son’s life and encourages him to confess his most intimate experiences. Bemused, the son accedes to her request and starts confiding in her: “We were actors in that beautiful old tiled hallway night after night as we settled down to lurid tales of a wayward son at home and on his travels” (21). These “lurid tales” include his trip to Barcelona, as well as the sexual liberation he enjoyed “away from [his] country and [his] family” (17). Strangely, the mother’s willingness to know about her son does not translate into a new openness towards him. In fact, as she begins to come to terms with her son’s homosexuality, she refuses to express her feelings: “She said nothing to me about what I told her. I did not know – indeed, I do not know – what she thought of me, whether she was shocked and disturbed, or relieved or amused by the stories I told her” (24).

In the final part of the story, Tóibín unveils the secret of the father's disappearance by having the protagonist going through her late mother's papers in her study. There, the son discovers one of her mother's manuscripts, in which she tells the story of his parents' honeymoon in Barcelona. As the narration progresses, the son is startled to find out that,

In her story the husband one day leaves his newly wedded wife in the hotel and walks into the city. It is late, according to her story [...] As I read, I realised the scene she was now setting, the event she was recounting. As I read, I followed my own account of my life in the city. (26)

In this tale, the husband walks out deep in the night into the company of other men – just as the narrator had done during his time in Barcelona. The father's alleged homosexuality is thus disclosed by the mother's belated confession. Now that he has discovered the secret, the son experiences a kind of communion with his lost mother: "Everything became clear about her [...] She was in the room hovering as if she were in every cell of my body" (26).

As is revealed, the mother blocked the son from the knowledge of his father's sexual proclivities and his reasons for deserting the family. Though Tóibín leaves us with no insight into the mother's subjectivity and provides no further comments, I would suggest that the mother's strategic use of silence comes to represent the containment of sexual realities whose very existence is hard to accept, on a personal and social level. Now that the father's sexuality has been disclosed, the son is left with a legacy of frustration, family fragmentation and abandonment. Ultimately, through the figures of the isolated mother and the tormented son, Tóibín foregrounds the crippling power of the shame and silence surrounding homosexuality.

Like "Entiendes", "One Minus One" revolves round the troubled relationship between a gay son and his already dead mother. The story is a first person narrative of a middle-aged man living in Guadalupe (Texas), who finds himself haunted by painful memories: "My mother is six years dead tonight, and Ireland is six hours away and you are asleep" (1). The protagonist's words are imaginarily transmitted to a former boyfriend of his, the person to whom he confessed all his fears and worries: "I wish I had you here, and I wish that I had not called you those other times when I did not need to as much as I do now" (7).

As is soon discovered in "One Minus One", a kind of existential solitude becomes the permanent condition of the narrator, a man who lives far away from home, "in a place where so much is empty because it was never full, where things are forgotten and swept away" (10). In ways that are peculiarly relevant to Tóibín's character, Edward Said theorises that exilic figures "[are] always out of place" (2001, 180) and "feel their difference as a kind of orphanhood" (182). "What is true of all exile", Said further argues, "is not

that home and love are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both” (185). It transpires, then, that the exilic individual associates home and love with loss and, consequently, “homecoming is out of the question” (Said 179). As Julia Kristeva also explains in *Strangers to Ourselves*, the exile is free of ties, but “the consummate name of such a freedom is solitude” (1991, 12). Because of this solitude, Kristeva explains, the exilic subject goes through a state of “matricidal anguish” (9):

As far back as his memory can reach, it is delightfully bruised: misunderstood by a loved yet absent-minded, discreet, or worried mother, the exile is a stranger to his mother. He does not call her, he asks nothing of her. Arrogant, he proudly holds on to what he lacks, to absence, to some symbol or other. (5)

Interestingly, in “One Minus One” Tóibín seems to bring to the fore-front several of the characteristics described by Kristeva and Said with regard to exilic subjects, specifically their symbolic condition of homelessness and orphanhood. In the story, the narrator has experienced the death of the mother, and her memory revives bitter sentiments of regret and grief, coupled with a sense of emptiness. Simultaneously, this is also a narrative where, as is typical of Tóibín, “the desire for freedom and easeful self-erasure is countermanded by the incessant and insidious sway of the home, the past and the mother” (Fogarty 2008, 171).

As explained, in the story Tóibín has the narrator reminiscing about the death of his mother, which he defines as “the last real thing that happened to [him]” (1). The memory of this loss brings to his mind past rivalries, reproaches and envies. “One Minus One” is a story where much remains unexplained: we have, for example, little glimpses of sibling jealousy – “[Cathal] was the one [the mother] loved most” (9) – and the emotional disconnection shown by the sister, Sinead, who speaks of the family “as though it were as distant as the urban district council or the government or the United Nations” (4). Like his sister, the narrator has distanced himself from his family, both geographically and emotionally. After all, the narrator seeks emotional healing by talking to his absent former partner and not to his brother or sister, thus showing that his locus of intimacy is placed far away from the biological family.

As we soon learn, the narrator’s strained relation with the mother is linked to childhood trauma. This trauma originates from his father’s terminal illness and the long period that the parents spent away from home, when the protagonist and his brother, Cathal, were “deposited” (6) at their aunt’s house¹⁰. In his adulthood, the narrator still finds himself reconsidering how

¹⁰ *The Blackwater Lightship* and *Nora Webster* feature almost identical episodes, with two small siblings spending time alone in the house of a relative whilst the parents spend time in Dublin for medical tests. In both cases, the father dies and the mother returns home

his childhood trauma “should be nothing, because it resembled nothing, just as one minus one resembles zero” (7). The protagonist, however, does have a painful connection to the past, as is illustrated by his difficult return to Ireland in the days when his mother was about to die. On his way across the Atlantic, he starts to cry inconsolably:

I could feel that this going home to my mother’s bedside would not be simple, that some of our loves and attachments are elemental and beyond our choosing, and for that very reason they come spiced with pain and regret and need and hollowness and a feeling as close to anger as I will ever be able to manage. (8)

Tóibín reflects here on the narrator’s primeval union with the mother and on the impossibility of breaking bonds with her, no matter how far away he had stayed. He now regrets his estrangement from her, coming to the awful realization that there will be no more possibilities to amend the mistakes of the past:

There would be no time any more for anything to be explained or said. We had used up all our time. And I wondered if that made any difference to my mother then, as she lay awake in the hospital those last few nights of her life: we had used up all our time. (10)

In his reunion with the mother, the son returns to the locus of the familiar: “I sat by her bed and spent a while wetting her lips. I was at home with her now” (11). His need for closeness is now fulfilled, but it brings with it the agony of imminent loss. The narrator acknowledges his failure to behave as “a good son” (12), but he still harbours his own grievances, lamenting that “[he] had been given no choice, that she had never wanted [him] very much, and that she was not going to be able to rectify that” (12).

Though the topic of sexuality is not as paramount in “One Minus One” as it is in “Entiendes”, homosexuality also emerges here as a taboo between mother and son. Tóibín portrays no images of outright rejection in this story, but the silence surrounding the protagonist’s sexuality becomes meaningful.

suffering from depression. As Tóibín has declared on several occasions, his own father suffered a stroke, spent several months in Dublin for tests and underwent a brain operation. All these events caused a childhood trauma whose repercussions reverberate in his fiction. As he explains: “I have a close relationship with silence, with things withheld, things known and not said. I am sure that no one said anything to me, for example, before I went into that room where I saw my father after the operation. And no one mentioned afterward that we would not easily be able to understand his speech [...] And then in July 1967 my father died. There was a funeral and the house was full of people, but there was silence again soon afterward [...] My younger brother and I stayed with my mother. We thought about my father, but we did not talk about him” (2015, 31-32).

Apparently, the narrator had kept his relationship with his former boyfriend apart from his family. At the mother's funeral, for example, they maintain a distance, as though they were strangers: "I looked for you among the crowd and could not see you as the hearse came after Mass" (1). He also remembers that: "A friend of my mother's, who noticed everything, came over and looked at you and whispered to me that it was nice that my friend had come. She used the word 'friend' with a sweet, insinuating tone" (2). This becomes a moment of recognition, albeit a veiled one. The use of the euphemism "friend" points to a reality of utter discretion concerning gay sexuality. In *Tóibín's* story, this sense of discretion and silence is heightened by the fact that not once is the word "gay" mentioned, nor are there any specific allusions to the narrator's and his former lover's time together as a couple.

As is disclosed, the mother knew about her son's homosexuality and talked about it with others, but the extent to which he was accepted in his family remains uncertain. What becomes clear is that the mother and the son did not seem to have grown close enough to overcome their familial estrangement: "I regretted how little she knew about me, as she too, must have regretted that, although she never complained or mentioned that" (9). Without explaining exactly why, the narrator tells his former partner that his mother had "never wanted [him] very much" (12) and that, in his family reunions, "[he] was protected from what might have been said, or not said" (12). It is also made clear that, despite his distance from the mother, the narrator had feared her rejection for long: "I imagined how coldly or nonchalantly a decision to spend the summer close by, seeing her often, might have been greeted by her, and how difficult and enervating for her" (12).

The story finishes with a scene recreating the mother's last moments before passing away. Because of this loss, an elemental part of the son's sense of self has gone away, never to be replaced: "We walked down the corridor as though for the rest of our lives our own breathing would bear traces of the end of hers, of her final struggle, as though our own way of being in the world had just been halved or quartered by what we had seen" (13). When he flies back to the United States, the narrator experiences a kind of bittersweet liberation from the anguish experienced at his mother's deathbed: "I would not be given a second chance. In the hours when I woke, I have to tell you that this struck me almost with relief" (13). Paradoxically, in the course of time, *Tóibín's* narrator achieves no such desired relief or liberation, as he finds himself six years later reviving the death of the mother, "as though no time had elapsed" (1).

As has been observed, *Tóibín's* main characters in "Entiendes" and "One Minus One" are defined by their urge to come to terms with the past; in both instances, the memory of the lost mother becomes the repository of regrets, missed chances and shameful silences within the family. Even if the plots of "Entiendes" and "One Minus One" differ in many aspects, both texts can be read as nuanced examinations of the mother-son bond in the face of trauma,

grief and the taboo of homosexuality. Therefore, as I have argued, in the two stories the central characters' subjectivity as gay men cannot be understood outside their familial history of silence and disaffection. Although they have become free from familial homophobia, Tóibín's protagonists seem to live with the consequences of a past of self-suppression.

For these protagonists, home and family do not become sources of comfort and unproblematic belonging, as is illustrated by their bond to the mother, tinged with contradictory feelings of necessity and repudiation. Far from Ireland, Tóibín's narrator in "One Minus One" lives in "a place where there is nothing" (10); his characterisation fits into Said's and Kristeva's conceptualisations of the exilic figure, an "orphan" for whom "love and home are lost" (Said 2001, 182) and who "holds on to what he lacks, to absence" (Kristeva 1991, 5). The same could be said about the emotional state of the protagonist in "Entiendes"; he, instead, inhabits a family home still haunted by the mother's ghost, as he acknowledges his necessity to evade her memory and "open the curtains and let her fly out" (27). In their alienation, the central characters in "One Minus One" and "Entiendes" are similar, experiencing a kind of existential solitude derived from their complex attachments to home and family. The two stories reveal a less than fulfilling and satisfactory relationship to the first love object – the mother. Ultimately, by foregrounding the silences and occlusions around the maternal relation, Tóibín exposes the corrosive effects of familial homophobia.

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From High Hopes of the Celtic Twilight to Last Hurrahs in Inter-war Warsaw: The Plays of Casimir Dunin-Markievicz

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Abstract:

Recent reassessments have done much to show that Casimir Markievicz's cultural activism in Ireland made unique contributions to its renascent cultural nationalism: his portraiture recorded key moments and personages of the age; whereas his role as a dramatist and theatrical impresario in thrall to Shaw, theatrical naturalism and social engagement represented a supplementation of the Celtic Literary Revival. As a further contribution to what is a growing awareness of the importance of Markievicz as a historical, artistic and literary figure, this article will seek to show that, following the breakdown of his marriage and his return to Poland in 1913, Markievicz would also play a meaningful if short-lived role in the emerging modernity of Warsaw's post-war theatrical world. It will also look to assess why his career foundered, with consequences for his own literary legacy here in Poland.

Keywords: Irish Theatre, Celtic Literary Revival, Markievicz, Polish Theatre, Reception

1. Introduction

Popular acquaintance with the life of Casimir (Kazimierz) Dunin-Markievicz is largely limited to knowledge of his having been the dilettante appendage of the Irish firebrand revolutionary and activist Constance Markievicz, *née* Gore-Booth. However, recent reassessments have done much to show that his cultural activism in Ireland made unique contributions to its renascent cultural nationalism: his portraiture recorded key moments and personages of the age; whereas his role as a dramatist and theatrical impresario in thrall

to Shaw, dramatic naturalism and social engagement represented a supplementation of the Celtic Literary Revival (see Quigley 2012; Arrington 2014; Keane 2016). As a further contribution to what is a growing awareness of the importance of Markievicz as a historical, artistic and literary figure, this article will seek to show that, following the breakdown of his marriage and his return to Poland in 1913, Markievicz would also play a meaningful if short-lived role in the emerging modernity of Warsaw's post-war theatrical world. It will also look to assess why his career foundered, with consequences for his own literary legacy here in Poland.

2. *Cutting a Dashing Figure in Dublin*

Casimir Markievicz and Constance Gore-Booth first met as art students in Paris in 1900, and their chance meeting was the beginning of a whirlwind romance and courtship, which was soon followed by marriage, where whiskey and champagne flowed in their comfortable Parisian apartment. The couple was coaxed back to Ireland by the prospect of receiving portraiture commissions, and soon Casimir and Constance, socially trading on the bogus titles of Count and Countess, established a position in Dublin's bohemia, moving easily between the Dublin Castle set and the city's literary and artistic circles (Fijałkowski 1962, 263-264; Arrington 2012, 38-40). As representatives of Ireland's School of Young Artists, both placed their works in various exhibitions and collections with the likes of George William Russell (AE), and became involved in the campaign to retain Hugh Lane's art collection in Dublin (Arrington, 2012, 40). It was in 1908 that Markievicz began to write plays, inspired in no small part by his involvement as one of the founders of the Independent Dramatic Company and the Theatre of Ireland. The plays Markievicz produced at that time were regarded more as society events than socially relevant theatre, and in terms of their plot and general tone, skirting as they did the borders of acceptable morality, G.B. Shaw's *The Philanderer* (1893) was very much a prototype piece. Whilst critics would point to their need for polishing, Markievicz's plays would be regarded in some quarters as giving the Irish theatre-going public a respite from the Abbey's peasant plays (Cox 1908, 7). W.B. Yeats, who though resentful of distractions from the Abbey project, agreed to hire the Abbey out to the Independent Dramatic Company and the Theatre of Ireland for a production of Markievicz's commemorative play of the 1798 rebellion, *The Memory of the Dead*, which premiered on 8 March 1908. Constance played the lead role of Nora, who declares over the corpse of her husband Dermot, shot by the English militia, that their children will be brought up with the ideal of laying down their lives for Irish freedom. Indeed, although it is a play that is today a largely forgotten piece, it has been accredited with having idealized the idea of blood sacrifice, which saw its dénouement with the events of Easter 1916, and with

the executions that followed (Morash 2002, 152). Indeed, if Constance had been hitherto swept up by the cause, it was her playing the role of Nora that caused her to embark on an Irish nationalist and revolutionary path.

3. *New Horizons*

However, the call to arms that *The Memory of the Dead* represented was the high watermark of Casimir's involvement in the cause of Ireland's freedom. Whilst he was prepared to tolerate Constance's firebrand views, he had no interest in accompanying her to conspiratorial meetings and political rallies. Indeed, in every respect, Constance's activities had for some time begun to run contrary to her husband's expectations of a congenial life in Ireland spent painting landscapes, dabbling in drama, and impressing all and sundry with his fencing prowess and fondness for scotch and soda (Makuszyński 1935, 7). Casimir would soon leave Ireland, rejecting out of hand a potential Irish conflict, and throw himself into an unfolding conflict in far-off Albania, where he ended up becoming a close advisor to Austria's Prince William of Wied, and played a central role in placing him upon what was a contested throne. But whatever the intended outcome, the Albanian adventure came abruptly to its end at the start of 1914, when Casimir had to leave the country at a moment's notice (*ibidem*, 7). He turned up in Warsaw in early April, and took a room in the plush Bristol Hotel, which was the shortest of walks to the newly opened Polish Theatre.

Markiewicz soon made the acquaintance of the theatre's manager, Arnold Szyfman, who was at the time basking in the crowd-pleasing successes of an ad-hoc Irish season with his productions of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913) and J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1906), having profited handsomely from the considerable talents of an English-to-Polish translator, Florian Sobieniowski, who, having met personally with Shaw in London, had been authorized by Shaw to be his man in Poland, in terms of translating and overseeing the production of his plays, including his collection of royalties (Keane 2016, 45-48).

Szyfman was charmed to meet someone of almost mythical status who could claim an intimacy with the world of the Celtic Literary Revival. The director knew of Markiewicz's celebrated marriage, his reputation as an artist, and almost certainly had read of his theatrical successes in Ireland. In turn, the playwright had a number of items to show Szyfman, such as newspaper cuttings, reviews, perhaps manuscripts of his Irish staged plays, and a published copy of *The Memory of the Dead* (1910) (Fijałkowski 1962, 266). Szyfman was extremely impressed by Markiewicz, as not only did he commission a play but settled on having it staged by the end of May that same year. An obvious choice of plays would have been *The Memory of the Dead*, but Markiewicz was a good way along with a Polish reworking of his English-language play, *The Dilettante* (1908), which entailed the creation of a new title *Dziki Pola* (*Wild Fields*), and

the introduction of minor alterations to the plot, including the relocation of the play from rural Scotland to a rustic Ukraine. In keeping with a fascination for regional dialects, exemplified in recent years by the work of Polish playwrights Stanisław Wyspiański and Jan Kasprowicz, *Wild Fields* featured a strong local dialect spoken by the servants and the local villagers who would relay back and forth the minutiae of local happenings.

In *Wild Fields* the protagonist is a bounder called Count Józef Przedmilski, the son of a widow who owns a gentry lodge mansion near Humań and Zaporozże, which was an area historically known as Dzikie Pola. His mother is blind, having lost her sight in an accident that also claimed the life of her husband. The first love interest is Roma Splawa Podlipska, a young woman, recently married, who has brought a large dowry to the union. However, she has fallen deeply in love with Józef and the intensity of her passion makes her incapable of hiding it from her husband, who remains unperturbed by the infatuation and assures Roma that it will soon pass telling her that she can love as much as she wants, provided she goes to bed early and gets her beauty sleep. Another of Józef's paramours is Hela Rzepkiewicz, the young daughter of the estate steward, whose family have served the Przedmilskis for generations. Józef's third love interest is Ciupa Topnicka, a widow who makes no claim on him and like a Marquise de Merteuil is interested in the salacious details of his other dalliances. Józef's comfortably manageable love life begins to unravel when Roma divorces her husband. Being the guilty party, she ends up surrendering much of her money to her cuckolded husband. And since she has sacrificed so much, she presses Józef to marry her. But Józef has no wish to get married, and cruelly reveals his involvement with Hela, who may be expecting his child. Playing out a romantic fantasy where she takes on the role of the selfless lover, Roma eventually decides that Hela should marry Józef. However, when Józef visits the house of Hela's father, he sees a bucolic painting on the wall and is convinced that it is the work of Jean-Antoine Watteau. He offers to buy the painting for 500 rubles, all the while hoping to sell it for 10,000 rubles. Taking his fraudulence beyond the pale, Józef settles matters with a promissory note. In the third and final act, Hela and Roma meet and "swap notes". When they realize what Józef is plotting, they come to despise him. But Józef is not slightly concerned about either his tarnished reputation or his standing with his lovers. He takes the painting and sets off to Warsaw with the intention of selling it.

Markiewicz completed his manuscript of *Wild Fields* on 21 April, signing it K-Ma, although in typed letters below he wrote "Bristol Hotel / Copyright by Casimir Dunin-Markiewicz"¹. *Wild Fields* had its premiere on 30 May 1914. Although much was made of Markiewicz's Polish debut, with Warsaw's press

¹ This manuscript is to be found in the archive of the Theatre Museum of Warsaw, call no. 711.

only too happy to welcome him into the theatrical fold, the play had a short run. Reviews universally praised the production, the performances and the play's unconventional setting (Baliński 1914, 449; Krzywoszewski 1914). Although surely pleased with the moderate success of *Wild Fields*, Markiewicz did not remain in Warsaw until the end of the play's theatrical run. Inspired by Tsar Nicholas' manifesto to the Polish nation that promised liberation, he joined the ranks of the Imperial Huzar regiment². Badly wounded in the Carpathian campaign, Markiewicz was duly decorated for bravery and then discharged. Later that year, with his estate and the surrounding areas fast becoming a battleground for the White and Red armies, Markiewicz was forced to move to Kiev, and at the end of 1918, like many of his neighbours and friends, he fled to Warsaw as a war-refugee, carrying all that was left to him in a suitcase.

4. *Out in the Cold*

Markiewicz soon became part of a literary salon centred around the cultural newspaper *Świat* (World), and he also attended a weekly Thursday morning open-house hosted by the theatre critic and crack marksman and hunter Władysław Rabski, who had a spacious apartment in the Krasiński Palace on Krakowskie Przedmieście. Loud and rambunctious, this was the kind of society Markiewicz found easy entry into (Fijałkowski 1962, 265), and he was just about as impoverished as every other writer and journalist trying to eke out a living in the city. His first earnings would come from royalties for the play *Marta wychodzi za mąż* (Marta is Getting Married), first performed in Warsaw's Teatr Rozmaitości (Variety Theatre), and then shortly after in Kraków's Teatr Bagatela (Bagatelle Theatre) as a support feature for Fijałkowski's satirical *Pan Poset* (The Parliamentarian) (1919). For quite some time Markiewicz had lived solely on the paltry proceeds of this play. Once again, Markiewicz had chosen Ukraine as the backdrop for his play, with its mix of opulent landowners and peasantry, sharing both living space and customs (Fijałkowski 1962, 266). Even though the manuscript has been lost to posterity, a summary was provided by one of the foremost theatre critics of the day, Emil Breiter, writing for *Gazeta Polska* (1919, 3). The play tells the story of a father who rents out his daughter, Marta, to his brother once a year; a practice which continues for nine years. Marta manages to extract herself from this arrangement only when she meets a young suitor, to whom she confesses all. She then chooses to confront her mother with the truth in the third act, which serves principally to explore the protracted nature of the outrage itself. In his review, Breiter was less appalled at the weightiness

² For more on the Tsar's manifesto, see Davis 2005, 282-283.

of the subject than concerned with the artistic qualities of the play. He understood that Markiewicz was attempting to achieve a naturalism which presented a deeply shocking issue from an objective perspective. However, the critic also reminded the dramatist that an intended construct should not take a story beyond the bounds of plausibility. For Breiter, it was the believability of the plot and not the heinous misdeed that stretched credulity. Indeed, he marvelled at the idea of Markiewicz banking on the fact that his play would “épater le bourgeois”, when in fact it had been clear on the night of the premiere that those of his class in attendance had felt sullied by the insinuation that this sort of abuse was commonplace. Markiewicz, Breiter so suggested, could claim a prize for having conceived the nadir of unpleasant situations.

When Szyfman reopened the Polish Theatre, following its enforced closure in the years 1916-1918, he looked to Shaw to re-launch the enterprise in what was now a newly independent Poland (Szyfman 1964, 218). He chose to stage *Fanny's First Play* (1911) followed by a production of *Major Barbara* (1905). However, the production of *Fanny's First Play* proved to be only a qualified success: the technical challenge of “a theatre within a theatre” had flummoxed the play's fledgling director Aleksander Zelwerowicz. The directorial reins for *Major Barbara* were handed to Markiewicz, who could claim some first-hand knowledge of the industrialised landscape of Britain's cities (Pieńkowski 1919, 5). Though Markiewicz acquitted himself admirably with this production, he was not part of the core group of directors whom Szyfman called upon regularly, and thus he failed to secure another commission. It was then that Markiewicz's theatrical career began to founder irretrievably, and a staging of *The Memory of the Dead* in a small and marginal Warsaw theatre only confirmed his flagging fortunes (Krzywoszewski 1919, 12-13). The final nail in the coffin of his theatrical career came with Rabski's review of his *Nawrócenie totora* (The Conversion of the Rogue), which had premiered in Warsaw's Teatr Komedia (Comedy Theatre) on 15 November 1922. Rabski, who was something of a mentor to Markiewicz, stated that some months previously he had unequivocally told Markiewicz, who had presented him with the completed manuscript, that the play could in no way be considered as a work of literature. Having seen the play on stage, the critic could not hide his displeasure at the fact that Markiewicz had disregarded all of his corrections and suggestions (Rabski 1925, 162-164). Rabski proved not to be the sole critic of the play, as an unsigned review featured the following remark: “dowcip jest banalny, a intryga komediowa irytująco niezręczna [...] Publiczność [...] kazała”³ (Unsigned 1922, 7). It appears that for Rabski and his fellow theatre aficionados, the time for hailing Markiewicz as a promising

³ “the humour is banal and the comedic intrigue exceptionally irritating. [...] The audience [...] was coughing”.

playwright had passed. In spite of the continuing strength of his literary and theatrical friendships, Markiewicz found himself outside the loop.

5. *The Final Bow*

To fill the yawning gaps in his daily routines, and to plug an ever-widening hole in his finances, Markiewicz took an office job as a legal counsel in the American Consulate in Warsaw, a position he retained until his death in 1932 (see Quigley 2012, 215-216). Despite securing notable portraiture commissions during the 1920s and writing a novel on the recent Irish conflict, Markiewicz remained a marginalized figure in Warsaw's vibrant literary and artistic scenes. However, an opportunity for a theatrical swansong arose when he chose to co-write a play with Fijałkowski, the fruits of their collaboration being the three-act *Miłość czy pięść?* (*Love or Fisticuffs?*), a light comedic and matinee-esque romance set in the Eastern borderlands. The play brought Markiewicz back to the stage of the Polish Theatre in that it was staged in the adjoining Little Theatre, opened in the early 1920's to cater for the public's more levitous tastes. The production followed a celebrated staging of Shaw's breezy comedy *Misalliance* (1910), to which *Love or Fisticuffs?* was destined to be compared, sharing as it did several tropes, such as an indolent aristocratic set, and audience-pleasing romantic resolutions.

Given Markiewicz's propensity for writing naturalistic plays, the absence of a shocking theme can be attributed to Fijałkowski's more clementine choices. In the play an elderly aristocrat, shortly before his death, draws up two wills, leaving his expansive but encumbered estate to two distant young relatives in such a way that both have an equal claim to the entire property. One of the relatives is a humdrum university lecturer in philosophy, Dr Butrym, who harbours misogynist views. The assignee of the parallel will, Ms. Rozpędowska, is a bright and vivacious female athlete, handy with her fists, who likes to walk about in revealing sports attire. The actual sparring, however, occurs between their respective lawyers, who try to outmanoeuvre one another with their use of legalese. But as an improbable flame of romance fans between Butrym and Rozpędowska, the lawyers join forces in an attempt to fend off the bailiff, who in former times had been a baron and a dramatic poet – clearly this was a character who represented Markiewicz's own reduced circumstances. In the end, an ingenious plan is concocted to sell the forested part of the estate to an Englishman, who happens to be looking for a good business investment in the area. Romance blossoms between the competing benefactors of the will, marriage is planned, and ownership rights are shared. Markiewicz must have surely wished that his own life had panned out in a similar fashion.

The premiere took place on 15 July 1930, and following generous applause at the end of the performance, Markiewicz was called to the stage to receive an ovation. He also fielded questions from the audience, many of

whom, it was reported, were left speechless at the sight of the playwright's gigantic frame (Grubiński 1930, 3).

Several critics saw in the play a deconstruction of Markiewicz's own previous playwrighting failings, representing as it did a departure from his traditional aphoristic resolutions of unsavoury topics. Having said that, the critic Tadeusz Kończyc sensed that beyond the play's light-heartedness was a yearning for home: "[...] Jak to na kresach: 'Poznawszy się i pokochawszy' [...] a z miłości do ziemi, z której wyszli – połączyła dwoje młodych węzłem serdecznym"⁴ (1930, 3). That said, Kończyc wondered whether Markiewicz's reputation as a writer of insalubrious material would leave some disappointed by the play's rather middle-of-the-road romance: "Nie wiem, czy publiczności szerokiej przypadła do gustu atmosfera wczorajszej sztuki. Nie była na scenie trójkąta [...]"⁵ (*ibidem*, 3).

Love or Fisticuffs?, like the majority of Markiewicz's plays, has been lost to posterity, but its reviews and the recorded accounts indicate that the production presented Warsaw's theatre-going public with an opportunity to turn out and pay tribute to a beloved though misunderstood figure, whose theatrical status had become associated with being out of sync with the literary tastes and mores of the age. Critics, whilst less than effusive about the play's artistic noteworthiness, expressed their relief that the playwright had chosen to abandon the kind of tropes seen in *Marta is Getting Married*, which had scarred the collective memory of all those who had braved to sit through its performance (Grubiński 1930, 3). The writing of the play and the production itself crowned what had been a theatrical career of mixed fortunes, with critics ultimately adjudging the play to have relied too much on the willingness of actress Maria Modzelewska, playing Ms. Rozpędowska, to be in a state a relative undress for long periods of the play. As Henryk Liński noted, her performance had been both visually and aesthetically pleasing (14).

6. Conclusion

Markiewicz died two years later at the end of 1932. A close friend, Kornel Makuszyński would write some years later that his "polonus vagabundus" had not left to posterity a single mature literary work, but he took consolation from the fact that Markiewicz's collaboration with Fijałkowski had returned him to a theatre which should always have been the rightful venue for the performance of his plays. So some redress in the end had been made. Although Markiewicz's theatrical career in inter-war Warsaw was one of

⁴ "[...] like in the borderlands, having met and fallen in love [...] and from their love of the land from which they came - they are joined by a sincere bond".

⁵ "I don't know if the public liked what they saw yesterday. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't. After all, there was no *ménage a trois* on the stage".

thwarted expectations, it represents an important link between Poland and Ireland's theatrical traditions. Sadly, Markiewicz would always remain betwixt and between, destined to never be fully embraced by either.

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Introducing Countess Constance Markievicz née Gore-Booth: Aristocrat and Republican, Socialist and Artist, Feminist and Free Spirit

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To celebrate the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising, *Constance Markievicz. Lettere dal carcere. L'Irlanda verso la libertà* was published in Italy, edited by Loredana Salis who also wrote the preliminary essay, the introductions to the various sections and provided chronological references and footnotes; the translation is by Lucia Angelica Salaris, while an afterword focusing on the proto-feminist ideas of the writer of the letters was added by Cristina Nadotti.

Linda Hogan, in her essay "Occupying a Precarious Position: Women in Culture and Church in Ireland", has rightly remarked:

Our understanding of the true extent of women's involvement in the creation of contemporary Ireland is in some measure modified by the retrieval of the memory of the politically and religiously significant women who have been written out of history. (2000, 681)

Volumes have been published in Italy by scholars who have studied and written about the lives and achievements of the two Gore-Booth sisters, protagonists, each in her own different fashion, of the history of Ireland during those first crucial twenty years of the 20th century. In fact, witness is borne to the vitality of Irish Studies in Italy by Rosangela Barone's *The Oak Tree and the Olive Tree – the True Dream of Eva Gore Booth* of 1991, Marta Petrusiewicz's *Un sogno irlandese. La storia di Constance Markiewicz comandante dell'I.R.A. (1868-1927)* of 1998 and, last but not least, by Salis's recent volume. These works are central to retrieval of the memory of two women who, from apparently distant political and religious stances, contributed to the birth of contemporary Ireland and who, due above all to misogynous negligence, have been written out of our history books. It is rather significant that the two Gore-Booth sisters are barely mentioned in the ground-breaking first three volumes of the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (Deane, 1991), though they are quoted and referred to several

times in volumes IV and V of the 2002 edition of the same anthology covering *Irish Women's Writings and Traditions* (Bourke *et al.*, 2002). In her introduction, Loredana Salis provides us with both biographical details and satisfactory footnotes to the *Lettere* which permit the reader to fully understand the calibre of the woman who wrote them and the importance of her role in the history of contemporary Ireland which she, in her unconventional way, contributed to shape.

Constance Georgina was the elder of the two Gore-Booth sisters, a skilled horsewoman and gifted artist, who acquired a title when she married the much-discussed Polish count Casimir Dunin Markievicz whom she met in *bohémienne* Paris where she went to study art.

Seminal encounters were destined to change the course of the life of this undeniably privileged though rebellious young woman, open to knowledge and life, who made a radical choice, in strident opposition to her own social class – the landowning Anglo-Irish gentry – and fought to free Ireland from Britain's colonial yoke.

Maud Gonne, the revolutionary actress and the object of poet W.B. Yeats's unrequited passionate love, induced her to take part in the formation of the female wing of the independence movement; trade unionist Jim Larkin involved her in the provision of assistance to strikers during the great transport walkout of 1913, while the leader of the left-wing division of the 1916 Easter Rising, James Connolly, marshalled her to his side making her second-in-command of the unit at St Stephen's Green which she defended valiantly for six days. In 2015, Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, in a collection of documents published as *When the Clock Struck in 1916: Close-Quarter Combat in the Easter Rising*, wrote:

Countess Markievicz's military plans for the Easter 1916 Rising written in a Polish notebook were based on Robert Emmet's rebellion and her notes on it and the lessons to be learned from it confirm to historians that the rebellion was far from an amateur affair. The simple fact that a woman was making military notes is groundbreaking. (Quoted in McGreevy, 2016)

The Countess was arrested and sentenced to death along with the other leaders of the insurrection but spared, to her own personal chagrin, only because she was a woman, while her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. She was released as the result of the 1917 amnesty. More than once she was imprisoned in both Ireland and England, but during one of these periods of incarceration she was the first woman ever to be elected to the Parliament of Westminster, where she never set foot, refusing as she did, to swear loyalty to the British sovereign. She was also the first woman in Western Europe to become a government minister when as a member of Sinn Féin she was made Minister for Labour during Éamon De Valera's independent government. She remained in office from 1919 to 1921.

On the opposite side of Europe, we find Aleksandra Michajlovna Kolontaj, a minister in Lenin's government from 1917 to 1918, whose biographical and ideological traits bear a striking resemblance to those of the Countess.

But "Madame" the Countess was a woman with a clear vision of the *rôle* attending women in the Ireland of the future:

Now, here is a chance for our women. Let them remind their men, that their first duty is to examine any legislation proposed not from a party point of view, [...], but simply and only from the standpoint of their Nation. Let them learn to be statesmen and not merely politicians. (Markievicz 2002 [1918], 100)¹

Her younger sister, Eva Selena Gore-Booth, poet and theologian, was an active feminist engaged in social aid to the deprived citizens of Manchester alongside her partner Esther Roper, whom she met in 1896 at Bordighera when both women were guests at "Casa Coraggio" owned by the Scottish philanthropist, George MacDonald. Eva's was a strongly pacifist form of commitment of a mystical-Christian kind, totally unlike her elder sister's mission of armed rebellion. Despite these differences, the relationship between the two was welded by strong bonds of sisterhood. It is no fluke that Barone's pioneering work on Eva devotes as many as eight pages (18-25) to an essential, all-round indispensable portrait of Constance.

Historian Marta Petrusiewicz's study, in perfect keeping with the book's editorial line, aims at outlining Markievicz's markedly ideological character, availing itself of a collection of documents, excerpts from her speeches, letters and political discourses.

Radically different is the work carried out by Loredana Salis and published recently in Italian in book form. This volume is a collection of "Con's" letters from prison, most of them addressed to her sister and edited in 1934 by Esther Roper, in an effort to contrast the amnesia of historians, or worse still, misogynist attempts to underplay Markievicz's political commitment and pass it off as the caprice of a young, spoilt, bored aristocrat, as portrayed in the biography entitled *Constance Markievicz: or the Average Revolutionary; A Biography* (1934), published that same year by Seán O'Faoláin and followed by a re-edition, revised, issued in 1968, in the light of the well-documented biography by Anne Marreco, *The Rebel Countess: The Life and Times of Constance Markievicz* of 1967.

Constance Markievicz – aristocrat and republican, socialist and artist, feminist and free spirit – a similarly complex and multi-faceted character, needed more careful and empathic treatment than a biography based simply on facts and documents.

¹ Constance Markievicz, *Women Ideals and the Nation*, was commissioned by the feminist association Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), and published in 1918 under the title *A Call to the Women of Ireland*, <<http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000180471>> (05/2018).

Constance Markievicz. Lettere dal carcere. L'Irlanda verso la libertà is an effort made by two women to focus on the Countess's intimate life. The letters are translated by Lucia Angelica Salaris, owner of the small publishing house based in Sardinia. The book also includes detailed contextual footnotes, a chronology and a highly insightful introduction by Loredana Salis which explains, among other relevant points, the core of her research. She has not attempted to produce yet another biography of the Countess, but has chosen to provide us with a different picture of her, not a portrayal of a late Romantic Byronic heroine, but one aimed at assessing her literary and artistic achievement, the fruit of the suffering and seclusion which we find in the letters she addressed to her sister, the only person she truly loved during her life. Writing and drawing were all that was left of her creative life during her time in prison: "Mi piace così tanto scrivere e non ho perso questo piacere. È ben saldo nella mia mente" (72)².

Salis provides us with a portrait not a biography, a portrait which permits further qualities to surface and come to the fore, thanks to details, isolated turns of phrase, all conveying a sense of profound truth. The letters bear witness to the suffering in prison of a woman, endowed with the sensitivity of an artist. Her words, often censured by an anonymous though ever-present censor, reveal her most intimate feelings with a levity which bears witness to her mindful concern for the vicarious suffering her dear addressee was bound to experience. Like the voiceless female inmates of the prison's other cells, who lacked both the words required to express their pain and addressees capable of hearing and empathising with them, she was well aware of her physical condition and appearance:

Queste sono le domande che dovrebbero essere rivolte a me e a tutti i prigionieri politici al momento delle visite:
 Quanto pesi? Quale era normalmente il tuo peso?
 Cosa ti viene dato da mangiare? Riesci a mangiarlo?
 Quanto esercizio fisico al giorno fai?
 Con che frequenza ti danno biancheria pulita?
 Sei costipato? Riesci ad avere delle medicine?
 Che temperatura c'è nell'ambiente in cui lavori?
 Qual è il tuo compito? Quanto lavoro fai in una settimana?
 Se non permettono a me o a chiunque altro di rispondere, fate pressione con ogni mezzo possibile per avere delle risposte. (67)³

² "I love writing it so, and I've not lost it. It's in my head all right!" (Markievicz 1934, 150).

³ "These questions should be asked me and all political prisoners at a visit: What do you weigh? What was your normal weight? What do you get to eat? Can you eat it? How much exercise do you get per day? How often do you get clean underclothes? Are you constipated? Can you get medicine? What temperature is the room you work in? What is your task? How much do you do in a week? If they won't let me or any of the others answer, push to get answers by every possible means" (Markievicz 1934, 145).

Markievicz's *Letters* recall Gramsci's *Quaderni dal carcere* (2014 [1949-1951]) as rightly noticed by Salis in the introduction, but they contain something more direct and personal than his political writings, because they are written by a woman to her sister and strike an intimate note, an immediate desire to denounce the human condition of those confined to prison. In a certain sense they are more pragmatic than Gramsci's works which are theoretical. There is also a literary quality in them. The details, the angle which brings the portrait to life, definitely recall Gramsci's letters to his wife and sons (2012 and 2016) which just as surely provide a portrait of the man as Constance's do of the woman:

L'altro giorno, per la prima volta dopo più di tre mesi, mi sono guardata allo specchio, ed è piuttosto divertente incontrare se stessi come una persona sconosciuta. Ci siamo inchinate e abbiamo sorriso l'una all'altra, ho pensato che ho i denti sporchi e che avrebbero un gran bisogno di un dentista, e sono molto dimagrita e bruciata dal sole. Tra sei mesi non mi riconoscerò più, data la mia pessima memoria per i volti! [...] meno vedo il mio viso, più cresce la mia curiosità nei suoi confronti, e non risento del suo invecchiare. (73)⁴

This volume is a valuable research and teaching resource. A general bibliography of the many references from the copious notes is missing, probably due to the publisher's choice to reach a vaster readership. But it is also one of the consequences of the fact that this is a very ambitious work in progress, of which what follows is proof. In an effort to provide an appropriate background to her portrait, Salis conducted the two interviews included in the following section of this issue of *Studi irlandesi, Voices*, in which she tries to recreate the Anglo-Irish milieu into which Constance was born and in which she was raised, a reality which has slowly and inexorably vanished from contemporary Ireland.

To complete the artistic and literary portrait of Constance Markievicz and Eva Gore-Booth we are now waiting for this young Italian scholar to issue the first critical edition of the plays produced jointly by the two sisters, passionate about theatre. The first play, entitled *The Death of Fionavar from The Triumph of Maeve* was written by Eva and illustrated by Constance in the ominous year of 1916 (fig. 1 and 2). Other plays followed: *Blood Money* (1925), *The Invincible Mother* (1925), *Broken Dreams* (1926-1927). On 29 January 1927, Constance writes to Eva about *The Death of Fionavar* and of her desire to work together for the theatre about which she believes she knows a lot:

⁴ "I saw myself, for the first time, for over three months, the other day, and it is quite amusing to meet yourself as a stranger. We bowed and grinned, and I thought my teeth very dirty and very much wanting a dentist, and I'd got very thin and very sunburnt. In six months I shall not recognise myself at all, my memory for faces being so bad! [...] The less I see my face the more curious I grow about it, and I don't resent getting old" (Markievicz 1934, 149).

Sto ancora leggendo il tuo 'Maeve'. [...] Mi piace moltissimo l'ultimo monologo di Maeve, ma sarebbe molto difficile da mettere in scena. Vorrei tanto insegnarti come scrivere un'opera teatrale in versi. È possibile e può avere successo. Vorrei che potessimo collaborare. Starò diventando presuntuosa? Ma so di capire ciò che riguarda l'arte del palcoscenico, il pubblico teatrale e la produzione – e con questo intendo l'intero processo – dall'autore fino alla comparsa più insignificante. Metto tutti questi elementi tra i componenti che contribuiscono alla produzione di una messa in scena, e tutti devono cooperare. Non si può suonare musica d'organo con uno scacciapensieri, e tu fai suonare musica per organo al tuo zufolo. (83)⁵

The publication of their plays would add an important *tessera* to the mosaic of the history of Irish theatre in the 1920's, of which the Abbey Theatre was an important, though by no means exclusive, expression.

This time, a larger budget will be required if reproductions of the beautiful illustrations of the first play are to be included. These were produced by Constance while in prison and sentenced to death, using the feather of a bird which she picked up in the prison courtyard, an incident she recalls and comments on after she has been transferred to an English prison:

Quando esce il tuo prossimo libro, e quello con i miei disegni, se mai uscirà? Erano venuti molto male. Ora posso fare assai meglio. Quando ho lasciato l'Irlanda stavo giusto ritornando al mio chiaro-scuro. Mi ero fatta delle penne con piume di corvo trovate nel cortile. Sono molto meglio della maggior parte delle penne: si ottiene un tratto così morbido e sottile. (72)⁶

And when the book came out she observed her pictures very carefully, even noticing the changes made by the printer:

Io sto bene e non sono per niente infelice. Mi piace moltissimo il libro, è una grande gioia: La rosa l'hanno messa recisa dentro il triangolo, ma io non l'avevo messa ben dritta?

⁵“I am still reading your 'Maeve.' [...] I do love Maeve's last speech, but it would be very difficult to make a stage success of it. I long to give you a lecture on writing a verse play. It could be done and a success made of it. I wish we could collaborate. Aren't I getting conceited? But I feel I understand audiences and stage craft and play-producing: – by this, I mean the whole process – from author to the meanest super. I include all these as material that goes to produce a dramatic performance, and they must all pull together. You can't play organ music on a Jew's harp, and you give your penny whistles organ music to play” (Markievicz 1934, 161-162).

⁶“When is your next book coming out, and the one with my pictures, if it ever does? They were very bad. I can do much better now. I was just beginning to get some feeling into my black and white when I left Ireland. I made quills out of rooks' feathers that I found in the garden. They are much nicer than most pens: you can get such a fine, soft line” (Markievicz 1934, 150).

[...] Mi piace molto essere presente nella poesia e mi sento così importante.
(66-67)⁷

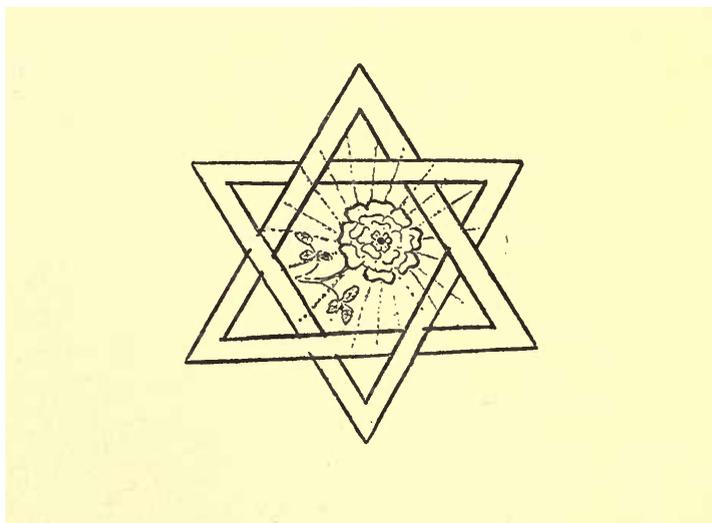


Figure 1

The following are passages from the above-mentioned poem that opens the volume. One cannot help noticing how these lines are echoed in “Easter 1916” which Yeats wrote years later to comment on “the terrible beauty” born from the Rising and what it had meant for him, “I write it out in a verse - / MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse / Now and in time to be” (Yeats 1990, 178):

Poets, Utopians, bravest of the brave,
Pearse and MacDonagh, Plunkett, Connolly,
Dreamers turned fighters but to find a Grave,
Glad for the dream’s austerity to die.

And my own sister, through wild hours of Pain,
Whilst murderous bombs were blotting
Out the stars,
Little I thought to see you smile again
As I did yesterday, through prison bars. (Markievicz 1934, 132)

⁷ “I am alright and not a bit unhappy. I love the book, it is a real joy. They have put the Rose in the triangle on its side, didn’t I put it up right?” (Eva Gore-Booth 1916, 15); “[...] I love being in poetry and feel so important” (9).

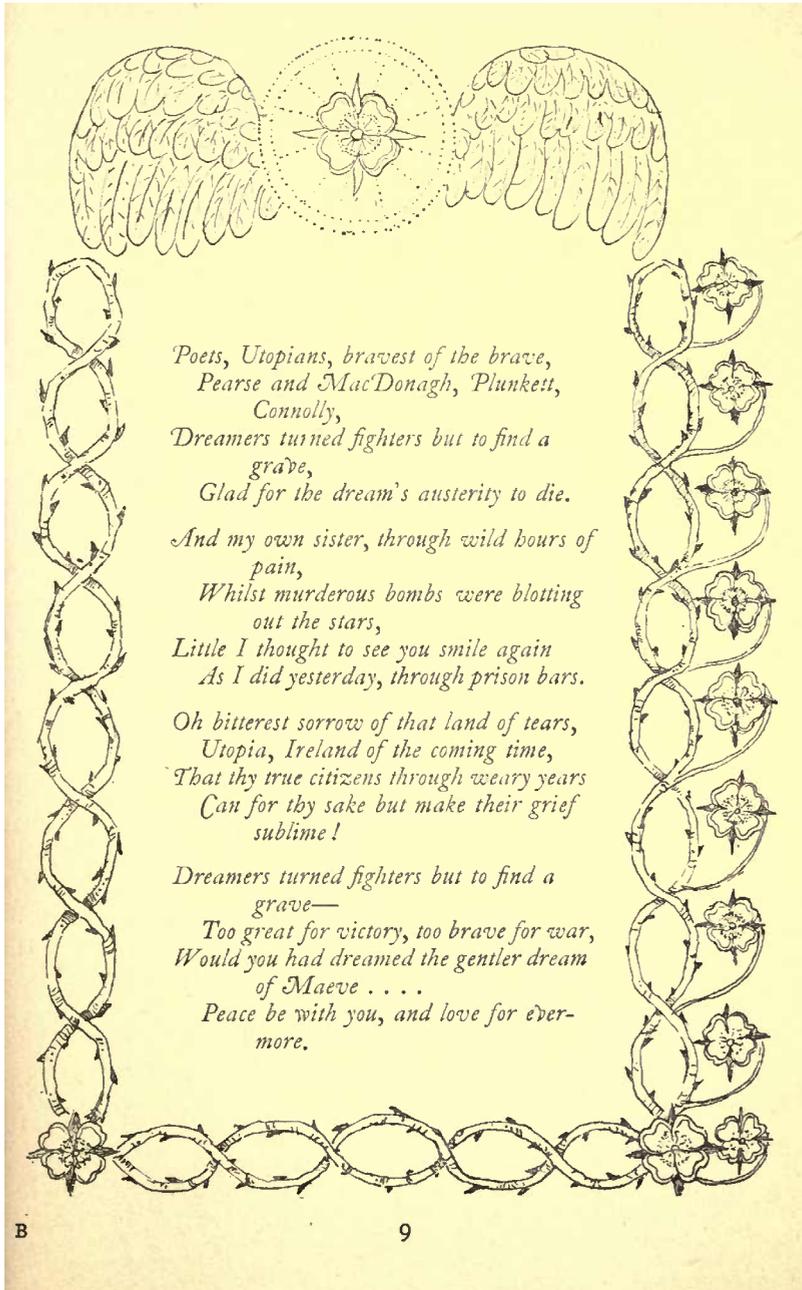


Figure 2

ENVOI

The *fil rouge* of Loredana Salis's work is that transgression is the necessary condition of freedom. "Biting the apple of freedom" is the powerful metaphor Constance used to describe it during a political rally. It expresses her sense of life and the way she had chosen to live it to the end of her days. In these words, we denote the very essence of her commitment and devotion to her cause and people, the far-sightedness of her vision of what Ireland should be, as well as the bravado of someone who rebels against the rules of her class and gender and does it *in yer face*. Constance not only plays the part of the larger-than-life leader but she is one. Nadotti in her afterword rightly remarks that Markievicz is one of those women who want "to give trouble" through the strength of their ideas. And this is what she did and what her memory continues to do to many.

We shall conclude by recalling for a moment poet William Butler Yeats's negative obsession with Constance Markievicz, a friend of his youth, whose political choice he never accepted or approved of. He made his disapproval the object of "his denunciation of abstract thought in beautiful women" (482) an idea central to the poem "A Prayer for My Daughter", included in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* dated 1921.

If, according to the Irish poet, Eva was, in her youth frail and sweet as a gazelle, though devastated by "some vague Utopia" ("In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz"), Constance, now in prison, was in her youth as powerful, free and wild as "a rock-bred, sea-born bird" ruined by a "bitter, abstract thing" ("On a Political Prisoner").

At this stage, to illustrate Yeats's opinions of the two sisters, we can juxtapose passages from three of his poems, the first two published in the aforementioned collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, the third published in *The Winding Stairs and Other Poems* (1933), written, however, in 1927, shortly after the deaths of the two sisters.

"Easter 1916"

[..]

That woman's days were spent
 In ignorant good-will,
 Her nights in argument
 Until her voice grew shrill.
 What voice more sweet than hers
 When young and beautiful,
 She rode to harriers?
 [..]. (Yeats 1921, 176)

“On a Political Prisoner”

She that but little patience knew,
 From childhood on, had now so much.
 A grey gull lost its fear and flew
 Down to her cell and there alit,
 And there endured her finger's touch
 And from her fingers ate its bit.

Did she in touching that lone wing
 Recall the years before her mind
 Became a bitter, an abstract thing,
 Her thought some popular enmity:
 Blind and leader of the blind
 Drinking the foul ditch where they lie?
 [...]
 She seemed to have grown clean and sweet
 Like any rock-bred, sea-born bird:
 [...]. (Yeats 1921, 180)

“In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz”

The light of evening, Lissadell,
 Great windows open to the south,
 Two girls in silk kimonos, both
 Beautiful, one a gazelle.
 But a raving autumn shears
 Blossoms from the summer's wreath;
 The older is condemned to death,
 Pardoned, drags out lonely years
 Conspiring among the ignorant.
 I know not what the younger dreams –
 Some vague Utopia – and she seems,
 When withered old and skeleton-gaunt,
 An image of such politics.
 [...]. (Yeats 1933, 241)

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Voices

The Duty and Pleasure of Memory: Constance Markievicz

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Abstract:

The year 2018 marks a hundred years since the proclamation of the Representation of the People Act and of the Qualification of Women Act by the UK Parliament. It also marks a hundred years since a woman – Constance Markievicz – was first elected in Westminster. A protagonist in the Irish fight for independence, serving almost five years in prisons in England and Ireland, Markievicz devoted her life to political and civil reforms. She became a member of the first Irish Parliament, and in 1919 was nominated Secretary for Labour, thus making also the first female Cabinet Minister in Europe. Women like her contributed to make history and were often the victors, but somehow became marginalised in official chronicles or went lost in the folds of time. Long trapped in the selective mechanisms of collective memory, these women are finally being acknowledged their fundamental role in the shaping of modern nations. Where Markievicz is concerned, the duty and pleasure of memory prompts the work of people engaged in reassessing and promoting her legacy. Two such examples are Olivia Crichton-Stuart, a great-great child of Markievicz's, and Constance Cassidy-Walsh, since 2003 co-owner of Lissadell House, the Gore-Booths historical property, to which she and her family have since committed. What follows is an informal conversation with both.

Keywords: Constance Markievicz, Commemorations of 1918, The Gore-Booths and Lissadell House, Women in history, Irish Independence

So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news, and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out—
(Shakespeare, *King Lear*, V.3.13-16)

Freedom's not an idea, it's a passion!
(Bond, *Lear*, 1978 [1972], 90)

The year 2018 marks a hundred years since a woman was first elected in the Westminster Parliament, the occasion being the General Election of 14 December 1918. A year later, another woman, the American Nancy Astor, would achieve a similar result, but unlike her predecessor she took her seat in the House of Commons. Back in 1918, the Sinn Féin candidate for Dublin's St. Patrick Division, Constance Markievicz had refused to do so since admittance to the Commons entailed an oath of allegiance to the monarch and to the very power she and other "Shinners" "meant to overthrow". When the results of the election became public, Markievicz was in jail, having been arrested for her role in the Easter Rising in 1916 and also sentenced to death, but spared execution "solely and only on account of her sex" (Markievicz 1987 [1934], 24). She was an aristocrat, born into the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and brought up between London, Dublin and Sligo, in the west of Ireland, the place which would inspire her to pursue equal rights for all disadvantaged people – the poor, the tenants, women, the uneducated mass – and to dedicate her life to the cause of freedom – for Ireland, her people, and all individuals. A "new woman" involved in feminist emancipation movements alongside her sister, she gave birth to the first Irish branch of the Boy Scouts – the future army of the free State – and became a protagonist in the Irish fight for independence, between 1916 and 1923. Markievicz spent various years in prisons in England (Aylesbury and Holloway) and in Ireland (Cork and Dublin), at times being amnestied or on the run, but always very active on the front of political and civil reforms. She became a member of the Dáil Éireann, the first Irish Parliament, and in 1919 was nominated Secretary for Labour, thus making also the first female Cabinet Minister in Europe (a post she held until 1922).

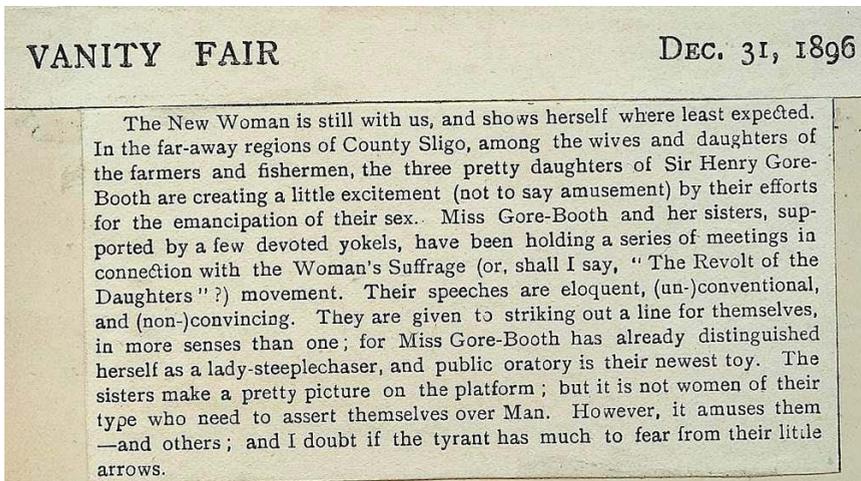


Fig. 1 – "The New Woman" question (newspaper cutting, 1896) – the "three pretty daughters" are Eva, Constance and Mabel Gore-Booth

The year 2018 marks a hundred years since all that, and since the proclamation of the Representation of the People Act, which enabled all men and some women aged over 30 to vote for the first time, and of the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act, which allowed women to stand for election to the House of Commons. Both 1918 acts are being commemorated as part of the “Vote 100 Project”, a four-year programme of activities recently launched by the UK Parliament¹. The scheme echoes the need to “recognise the role that women have played in the house of Commons and in public life”², and it represents a significant change in the way the question of memory is dealt with today, including the acknowledgement of political figures such as Constance Markievicz³. In this respect, the celebratory events of 2018 should facilitate a contemporary reflection on the legacy of women who made history and were the victors, but somehow and for a long time went missing from official chronicles, gradually marginalised if not lost in the folds of time. Trapped in the selective and defective mechanism of collective memory, women like Markievicz could finally gain their due place in modern and contemporary history, while a new look at their accomplishments will hopefully reconnect present generations with their historical past, letting them see it differently, make sense of the here and now, imagine how the future may be, and the extent to which all of us can effect change.

The story of Constance Markievicz is the story of a woman who “did what she thought was right and stood by it” (Markievicz 1987 [1934], 26). She “went out to fight for Ireland’s freedom” (*ibidem*), passionately devoting her life to the right of sovereignty for a country devastated by colonial power. Ridden with several incongruities, overshadowed by mutually contradicting sources, most biographical accounts of her life make a scholar’s work daunting and an historian’s task especially challenging. A faithful profile of this late-Victorian political activist (who was born 150 years ago, in 1868) entails a significant amount of reading and a good degree of discernment between myth and fact. It requires also a serious questioning of the cultural milieu of which her image (past and current)

¹ “Vote 100”, <<https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/vote-100/>> (05/2018).

² Theresa May speaking to the House of Commons on 25 October 2017, reported in <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-10-25/debates/908056A9-60E1-451D-B225-717B3F1C75D7/OralAnswersToQuestions>> (05/2018); and in the *Belfast Telegraph* of 27 October 2017: <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/centenary-celebrations-could-be-held-at-westminster-for-sinn-fein-abstentionist-36267404.html>> (05/2018).

³ As part of the women’s right to vote centenary commemorations, to mark the anniversary of her election in 1918, the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament) will present the Parliament of England with a portrait of Countess Markievicz. At Lissadell House the exhibition “The Voice of Women – 100 years of achievements?” opens on 28 March 2018, to honour “the work of women engaged in the emancipation of women through suffrage” and assess the impact of Markievicz’s 1918 election upon the actual representation of women in public life and in politics, <<http://lissadellhouse.com/2018-events/>> (05/2018).

is a legacy. A “monster” for some, and a “heroine” for others⁴, “Madame” (as she was known in her days) was and still is a controversial character. In the aftermath of her arrest, in 1916, distorted and discordant versions of her trial record circulated which depicted her as a “self-pitying woman” pleading for mercy of the court-martial, or else as a “looney” (see Quigley 2016, 58-59, 62-63) who begged to be executed⁵. Many could not forget nor forgive her English roots, the fact that Constance Markievicz belonged to the Ascendancy and therefore was one of *them*, ultimately an English woman with no right to the Irish cause, a self-proclaimed patriot with an attitude. Yet, upon her death, in 1927, an estimated crowd of 300,000 people followed her coffin along the streets of Dublin to pay their tribute and bid her their last goodbye.

Prejudice and personal idiosyncrasies have left a deeper and a more enduring mark in the collective memory, owing largely, though not exclusively to Seán O’Faoláin’s ungenerous biographical account of 1934 (reprinted in 1967 and 1987)⁶. In response to that volume, and to honour the memory of two revolutionary sisters – Constance and Eva Gore-Booth – in the same year, 1934, Esther Roper gathered Markievicz’s prison letters and published them together with poems, newspaper cuttings, and several tribute photographs of the time (see Markievicz 1987 [1934])⁷. The dominant mood of Roper’s volume is the urge to acknowledge Madame’s place in the cause of freedom for Ireland and the Irish. Driven by the duty to remember, her alternative portrait literally laughs at gilded butterflies, also suggesting how memory is a matter of responsibility as well as a pleasure⁸. And indeed, *Prison Letters of Constance Markievicz* discloses a charismatic personality – the alluring “rebel Countess”

⁴To Josslyn, her brother and administrator in the years of her imprisonment, Constance wrote: “Don’t bother about rumors, My enemies will make a monster of me; my friends a heroine & both will be equally wide of the truth” (letter dated 17 October 1916, *Lissadell Papers*, D4131/K/1, Public Record Office for Northern Ireland, Belfast).

⁵This was based on Constance’s reaction to the verdict which spared her life: “I do wish you lot had the descency to shoot me” (Quigley 2016, 70). Patrick Quigley dedicates a whole chapter to the vicissitudes of Madame’s “Two trials”, including newspaper reports at home and abroad and the ensuing reactions from the general public. The troubled history of Constance Markievicz’s trial is recounted by Esther Roper in her introduction to the *Prison Letters* (Markievicz 1987 [1934], 25-32). Subsequent references to the *Letters* are taken from the 1987 edition.

⁶The volume helped consolidate the stereotype of an “average” and privileged woman, who was spoilt, knew not what to make of her spare time, and thus ended up pursuing the thrill of armed violence. I have discussed this aspect in “Biting the apple of freedom”, an introductory essay to *Lettere dal carcere di Constance Markievicz* (2017).

⁷Esther Roper had been Eva’s life companion. Her volume was published and reprinted in the same year as Seán O’Faoláin’s first and third editions of *Constance Markievicz*. The second edition, significantly, appeared in 1966, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising.

⁸“We will all laugh at gilded butterflies”, old Lear tells Cordelia towards the end of the play (V.iii.12-13), confident that sooner or later false tales and malignant people will be exposed (Shakespeare 1992, V.3.12-13).

(Markievicz 1987 [1934], 112) – a sensational woman with a captivating story well worth re-discovering.

The past may be a foreign country “where things are done differently”⁹, but there is something ominously familiar about that place. While in prison, when confinement must have felt unbearable, Constance found relief in art¹⁰, her first love, and in recollections of Italy, which she had visited in 1896 with Eva and which would always occupy a special place in their hearts. It was then, in Bordighera, “by the tideless sea [...] under olive boughs” (qtd. in Barone 1999, vol. I, 51), that Esther and Eva had become acquainted and fallen for one another; years later, in 1920, preoccupied for Constance’s condition in jail the couple appealed to Pope Benedict X in the Vatican¹¹. Madame’s pictures from Italy are often amusing: in a letter to Eva, for instance, she evokes an unusual dish she had tried – “I remember things they called ‘uccellini’ at least it sounded like that – but I don’t know what they looked like with their feathers on, as I always saw them, almost daily, in stews!”¹². For Constance the Belpaese was a “lively” place which “fill[ed] one with hope”, it certainly filled her with the hope of a free and egalitarian Irish State. The women of the Risorgimento she found highly inspirational, representing a precious model for her fellow contemporaries and for those seeking to debilitate patriarchal rule in public and private contexts, especially in Ireland.



Fig. 2 – Eva to Constance – a postcard from Rome, 1920
Courtesy of Constance Cassidy-Walsh

⁹ To paraphrase the incipit of L.P. Hartley’s novel, *The Go-Between* (1953, 7).

¹⁰ While in solitary confinement, in Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin (1916), Constance wrote poetry on toilet paper; in Aylesbury Women’s Prison, in London (1916-1917) she was allowed to keep a prison journal, a 55-page notebook “rich [...] of drawings, poems and sketches that give us an insight into the beliefs that nourished the revolutionary generation”. Cfr. Quigley 2016, 50, 3, 165.

¹¹ The episode is recounted by Esther Roper in Constance Markievicz, *Prison Letters* (1987, 104).

¹² Letter from Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, 1 April 1921, *ibidem*, 269.

Italian culture and history are central to Madame's reflections on Irish politics, and yet scholarly contributions to the topic have been cursory at the national level except for Rosangela Barone's unrivalled *The Oak Tree and the Olive Tree* (1991), and Marta Petrusiewicz's historical profile of 1998 (*Un sogno irlandese. La storia di Constance Markiewicz comandante dell'IRA [1868-1927]*). It thus seems appropriate to recall the Gore-Booths' Italian connection among the pages of the present journal, and to go back to that moment in European history when "Convict 12" asked (herself) why the Irish were still "the only people left in chains" (Markiewicz 1987 [1934], 269). Markiewicz grew firm in her conviction that the road to freedom began somewhere *in the past*, and that was where she would trace the roots of all evil – What had gone wrong?, What had the Irish "done differently from other nations?" (246). There was no easy reconciling the effects of English colonisation with memories of the mighty High Kings and Gaelic heroes; for sure the glorious past of saints and scholars looked truly foreign to her, but it was Ireland's past nevertheless. Today, in post-national societies, at a stone's throw from the Brexit, a dialogue with that past appears to be all the more necessary, and where Constance Markiewicz is concerned, valuable work is being carried to remember her and reassess her legacy. Two fine examples are Olivia Crichton-Stuart, a great-great child of Madame, and Constance Cassidy-Walsh, the present owner of Lissadell House, the historical estate she and her husband acquired in 2003, and to which the whole family has since committed. I was first introduced to them by Pamela Cassidy, Constance's sister, a very generous and patient lady who made time for me and helped me liaise with my incredibly busy interviewees – both of them working women/wives/mothers/professionals.

Brought up in the north of England, Olivia Crichton-Stuart is an artist, formerly a university lecturer in music, now an alternative medicine practitioner with a fascinating life story to tell. She has travelled the world before settling in Cambridge, UK, where she now lives with her husband and two children (one of them is a very promising choir boy aged 7). Mrs Cassidy-Walsh, daughter to a judge and a woman Senator, is herself a barrister, in fact one of the few women Senior Counsel in Ireland. Originally from Co. Kildare, she is married to Edward Walsh, a Senior Barrister, and they have seven children. The family lives between Dublin, Lissadell House and the east of Ireland. Constance is also a very active volunteer, helping the poor and homeless and organising fundraising events for Fr. Michael's Capuchin Day Centre in the capital city. What's in a name, one is almost bound to say!

The following pages result from an informal conversation with both women. I deliberately pose similar questions, for the most part, but the answers end up moving towards opposite directions. Mrs Crichton-Stuart depicts the idyll of her childhood days in Ireland, among caring relatives devoted to the arts and with a profound, almost Romantic and enduring sense of beauty, in spite of pending difficulties, and the early signs of decadence of their class. A precious testimony

of the Gore-Booth's grandeur and of their place in a by-gone era, the first part of the interview offers a nostalgic view of a crucial phase in the history of Ireland, from the big house tradition to the fate of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Constance Markievicz's ideas and actions have since affected the way in which society has viewed the family name, both in Ireland and England, and this too, as Olivia points out, forms part of Madame's legacy. There is a genuine pride and a great affection towards her relatives in her words, and a strong sense of responsibility towards the past and its memory for present generations. The genealogy tree below was created *ad hoc* and in keeping with the interview's mood and contents. The second part of the interview projects us into the future, and it is a future that looks for (and looks back to) a past to be revisited, for duty as well as for pleasure. Fully restored to its original magnificence, after five decades of neglect, Lissadell House is now open to visitors and scholars who can enjoy the sights and atmosphere of the place, learn of the extraordinary Gore-Booth family and view documents of rare historical value¹³. It takes an incredible amount of time and energy to keep the site up and running, and this is the challenge of a team of passionate people with a great cause well worth their efforts.

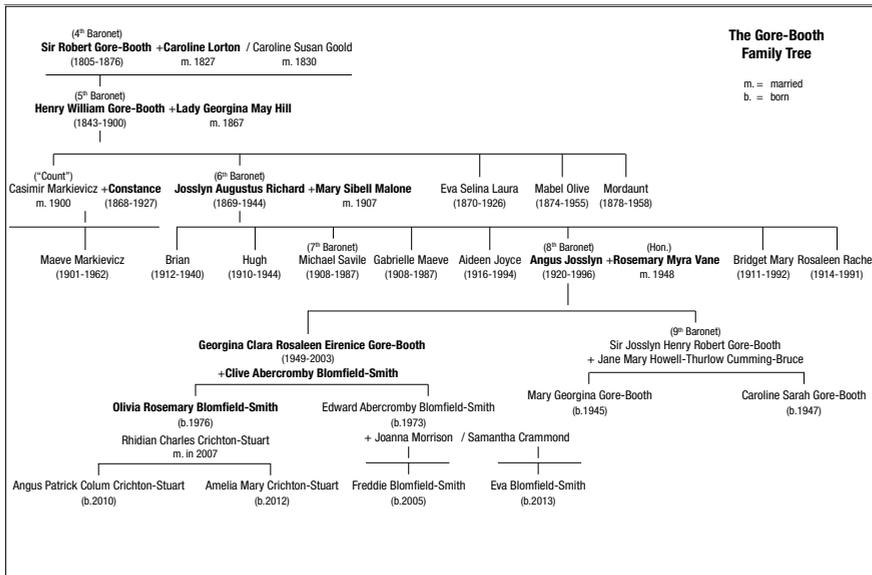


Fig. 3 – The Gore-Booth Family Tree

¹³ These are part of the Lissadell House Heritage Collection, from which some documents have been published recently (eg. *Constance Markievicz Journal 1916*, published by *Willow Ireland* in 2016; and two Lissadell Brochures: *The prison poetry & sketches of Countess Markievicz and Eva Gore-Booth. Her Poetry & Sketches*, both published in 2017). See <<http://lissadellhouse.com/>> (05/2018).

In conversation with Olivia Crichton-Stuart:

LS: What was it like to grow up in a family such as yours?

OCS: I suppose like many families there are all sorts of different points to consider in answering this question, the first part, of course, is what was a family such as mine like and then what was it like growing up in it? All sorts of influences, characters and situations come into play.

Being Anglo-Irish is one situation which I think many people find a bit unsettling. I know Aileen, my great-aunt said she neither felt English nor Irish. In England it would be easy to mistake us as completely English as we all talk with an English accent but, if you know the subtleties of it you begin to catch on to a few words, turns of phrases and the odd subtle accent that I associate with Aileen's way of talking and the Anglo-Irish in Ireland in particular. Lissadell however has the happiest memories for me, and for my mother I know it was her spiritual home but in Ireland people think you are not Irish and in England I don't, and I know my mother didn't feel totally English either. Nomads in a funny kind of way wanting to belong somewhere.

LS: Would you say that Constance Markievicz felt the same?

OCS: Who knows? What I do know is that many of us, particularly the women of the family are continually drawn back to the sublime beauty of Sligo and its ever changing scenery. There is something very magical and spiritual about it which inspires music, art, and poetry. Not only does it inspire it, it seems to run through many of my family. My view is that my family were, and are incredibly sensitive. Sensitive of mind, sensitive to other people's needs, sensitive to the surroundings both negative (war, poverty, seeing the hardships of others) and positive (beauty in nature, happiness and joy of others, arts), sensitive of other's views and sensitive physical health. How they each reacted to it is in very diverse ways although some things are pretty universal. They were extremely aware of what was going on around them. I believe this sensitivity brings with it an increased awareness of beauty around them but also, particularly in women, who are by nature empathic, an awareness of other people's suffering. They were affected by the many wrongs in the world. I believe that sensitivity needs to be expressed in music, art, poetry and creativity which was another characteristic of many of my family. This can cause turbulence but it can cause great joy.

LS: It is interesting to discover, as you talk, how Lissadell and the Sligo area nourished everyone's sensitivity, not only Eva's and Constance's.

OCS: The arts were enjoyed by all and to a greater or lesser extent each member explored their particular favourite mode of expression. We all

know that Eva was a poetess and that Constance an artist. Those members of the family that I was lucky enough to remember whilst growing up were Aideen, who loved nature and used to get up early to hear the dawn chorus and was greatly troubled by the waning birdlife at Lissadell, she loved art and enjoyed music and dancing and company. Bidy (Bridget) loved art and painted in vibrant colours; she was a bit more serious but generous and kind like Aideen even if she had very little. Rosaleen was a very kind, gentle and caring soul, she loved music and played the harp, she loved animals and birds (she kept rescue donkeys and peacocks). My grandfather, Angus, was very sensitive and kind by all accounts from my mother and what my grandmother told me. I remember him only when he was mentally ill. He was very gentle with me and when I spoke to him about music he would talk for hours about it and sometimes slip into the language of the composer he was speaking about – Russian I remember at one point. The war was perhaps too much for him to bear. He married for love, a loving, gentle and generous woman (my grandmother Rosemary). He was diagnosed with schizophrenia when my mother and uncle were very little. Apparently at the time he played a huge amount of piano music and also was once heard getting up to play the organ in the night. My mother believed he did it to relieve his internal pain. I understand he also played the violin and I remember finding a flute and a clarinet at Lissadell which may have been Brian's or Hugh's. I am uncertain but I think that is perhaps what Aideen said. Gabrielle played the organ. The very building was designed for music. The gallery which is at the core of the building was designed to improve acoustics for music with curved doors and an organ was placed in the middle and a beautiful walnut piano. I later learned that music was even commissioned for Sir Robert Goore-Booth in Italy¹⁴. The flute was an earlier instrument and so perhaps it belonged to a previous generation than Brian and Hugh's. It was not laid out like a modern flute.

My mother was an artist who also loved poetry and music, she would always have music playing on the radio or a tape while I grew up. In particular she loved quartets, singing herself and big orchestral work. (She was not allowed to go to Art college as it was considered inappropriate for a girl of her social standing... Which just shows how much Constance must have had to battle for approval two generations before her). She enjoyed singing and playing the piano but was very sensitive to the world and everything around her. She found that even the news was too dreadful to listen to, refused to listen to it or get a newspaper at one stage and often hid in her shell but had

¹⁴ The family's Italian frequentations include a long-lasting friendship with composer Antonio Andriani, who set to music some of Eva's poems, which Eirenice Gore-Booth, her great niece, used to sing.

a great sense of humour, as did my grandmother, and could be quite militant at times but didn't have the courage to go with it. Incredibly frightened of the world around her but tried to hide it. I studied music (nearly studied art but decided that music was my greatest love). My two children have shown great signs of the arts in them.

What runs through and through my family is the need to express themselves creatively. They drew comfort from expression in art, music, poetry, nature, creativity and imagination in difficult situations. Recognising the beauty in all things and being able to create beauty, even if it was just in imagination – despite prison, despite mental health problems, despite weak physical health, despite political/acrimonious situations. It is what sustained them.

LS: One of Constance's worst detractors, Seán O'Faoláin, saw no real talent in her. In his opinion her interest in the arts was a question of class privilege, if not a reflection of her being a spoilt and bored girl.

OCS: Being from a privileged background meant for the men and for modern women an education and influence (I was the first generation to go to university). Some may view it as a privilege which comes with responsibilities but many may not. Sadly it is those that do not view that way that are often remembered more keenly with bitterness, and often those that do are "tarred with the same brush". This association and attitude that being from a certain class means that you must be a selfish and thoughtless individual is something I think we were and are all aware of and have come across many times. I always hoped that people would see me for me and I think many of us as a family would have said/say the same.

One thing that I was taught by my mother and will continue to teach my own children is never to behave as though someone is below you in any way, intelligence, social scale, education etc.

LS: And this is what Constance, and her father before her, also did. I am thinking of the tenants and of how the Gore-Booths opposed to the evictions – sadly a common practice in those years.

OCS: The attitude towards those that worked on the estate that my mother had been taught from her mother and that same attitude that Aideen, all her siblings and Constance and Eva had was similar. They all visited the estate workers, particularly after retiring to see that they were ok. I remember this clearly as a child and there were several old folk we would visit in England who would often offer me sweets and one would always send me a Kitkat and a handkerchief for my birthday when I was little. They were like extended family. When we came to Lissadell every summer

and then began to come at Easter time too, there was always a great list of visiting we had to do and we became friends with some of the workers grandchildren. Many of whom were retired estate workers and their families. Aideen always felt it was extremely important and she also felt that it was her duty and obligation to watch out for them too. I think many men who have grown up in this environment find it difficult to show the empathy that the women could as they were rather taught to hide their feeling and emotions.

LS: The women seem to occupy a very special place in the history of the family, they certainly do in your recollections. How about the men?

OCS: My mother had quite an unusual childhood, her mother (my grandmother Rosemary Gore-Booth) came from an English aristocratic family from the North of England and, as far as I understand, she met Angus Gore-Booth in the war. They were both very sensitive souls. Angus was extremely intelligent, very sensitive and very musical and I think was one of those brains that was on a knife edge of brilliance, creativity and mental illness. Had he been in a different time and a different situation perhaps mental illness may not have succumbed as it did. Rosemary Gore-Booth (born Vane) was the daughter of the 10th Baron Barnard. She was one of the most generous, kind and long suffering people I knew. My mother was the eldest child and my uncle Joss, the current baronet, was the youngest. It was when my uncle was a baby and my mother not much older, that Angus, my grandfather was diagnosed with schizophrenia. At the time he had thought it wise to live in a caravan in winter, which I have since found photos of. He began to be considered rather unsafe to be around children, although he greatly loved them. Then, mental illness was seen as something not easily treated and also something many families at the time hid away as if it were an embarrassment. A young mother, my grandmother, came home to England to ask for help and support from her family in bringing up her children. I think it was an incredible sadness for her as, unlike many marriages in those days in the social class system where parents urged their children to marry so and so as "they were the right sort", she married for love according to my mother. I have one letter from my grandfather (Sir Angus Gore-Booth), after 17 years thanking my great grandmother and God for the kindness and generosity of my great-grandmother in helping my grandmother bring up my mother and uncle. He was thankful and appeared to be understanding of his inability to have brought them up. My grandmother sadly succumbed to Parkinson's disease and so needed more help than first anticipated. My great-grandmother therefore had a huge influence on their upbringing, as she did mine. She lived well into her nineties (my teens).

LS: What are your memories of those years, when your grandmother was alive and the family lived in England? Did you manage to visit Ireland?

OCS: My mother, Eirenice Gore-Booth, and uncle Joss were largely brought up in England in their grandparent's home, Raby Castle, until their grandfather died (10th Baron Barnard). It used to be very cold in the castle and later my mother would never put the thermostat above 10 degrees centigrade to save fuel but also because she had grown up in a big old drafty house feeling cold! Having heating was somewhat a luxury!

My mother chose the antithesis of the right husband for herself. I think she thought her husband was a strong crutch, but later discovered the blustering behaviour was hiding deep insecurity but expressed all in the wrong ways that my mother didn't have a hope of changing. The result was a very broken family and my mother, brother and I growing up in a little house in the village below the castle where she grew up. The greatest highlight of my childhood, and I know the highlight of my mother's life at the time, was to "escape" to Lissadell to see family, paint, sing and enjoy the beauty of it all. She would pack up the car and she would try to be brave and drive up to Scotland, stay with cousins there and then on to the ferry across to Ireland. We would see Rosaleen in Northern Ireland and latterly Bidy and then on to Lissadell (Aideen, my great-aunt) and Angus (my grandfather). At the time[,] the political situation in Ireland was not stable and ironically she was always nervous driving our English number plated car all the way through Northern Ireland. In fact at one stage when we were at Lissadell, we even thought we were being followed. It was quite frightening.

LS: This is where your sense of being "a nomad", as you said, the feeling of never being treated like a local begins? How did people's behaviour towards you change, while in Ireland and while in England?

OCS: We never knew how people viewed us and what reaction people would have to us. Were we English? Were we Irish? Were we that terrible Anglo-Irish family that Constance shunned? Were we welcomed and celebrated as family of Constance? Did people judge us for the people we were and not who or what we might be associated with? Half the time we didn't know whether we were walking into what might be possibly dangerous or walking into a welcome. Aideen had a few frightening stories and so she must have felt the same much of the time.

I know there were situations where people in England would think we had a rather embarrassing background and treated us as if it was rather unfortunate... It didn't help also having divorce and mental illness in the family for my mother and her generation. At the same time there was the grandeur of the family that was respected somewhat. Certainly in England Constance

would be the subject of a tricky conversation, but in Ireland sometimes one would be treated as if we were somehow special. I remember in an exhibition my mother held in Dublin a gentleman was so taken up by the family resemblance and the idea he was in the presence of a relation of Constance that he knelt down to the mother who didn't know quite what to do other than wait until he got up again and carry on talking.

LS: What was it like living in Ireland, when you stayed at Lissadell?

OCS: There was lots of fun to be had even in a cold house that quite often resembled a museum. I used to bicycle around the gallery at Lissadell. My brother and I would take turns playing the piano and when he played I would dance around the room pretending to be a ballerina with great jumps. I used to sing and play for hours enjoying the amazing acoustics of a room that was designed for music in between the times when Aideen was showing people around. Sometimes I would go with her and then she would make me sing. She used to do the same to my mother. The house was great for hide and seek, particularly the basement which was not so organised as it is now. I used to run down the corridors upstairs and if no one was looking try to pretend to be Mary Poppins and slide down the last banisters. There was an antique wheelchair which my brother and I quite liked to sit in and wheel around. I remember looking at the butterflies which would get trapped in to the upstairs rooms and dry in the sunlight. There was a long speaking tube to talk down on the back stairs and that was also quite fun for a while too. If we were bored, we would head outside and entertain the tourists (a few would ask for autographs because they noticed us come out of the house and were probably disappointed that because my mother had married our names were not Gore-Booth!). We would swim and play on the sand which I always thought was rather magical (I even collected what I thought was magic sand to take back to England), ride our bicycles, I and my mother liked to ride horses which we did with friends. Aideen bought a Shetland pony called Tara which I used to ride. We would play with other children nearby. My mother was a pretty fearful person but [also] a pretty fearless rider. Aideen got her riding side saddle in Ireland too. Mummy and I would also paint and Edward, my brother, liked to fish. Aideen would tell us stories and take us around all her friends, many of which were retired estate workers or families of them. She would often get me to sing to them which I sort of enjoyed but was also a little embarrassed.

My mother's paintings, which she sold by exhibiting them on the billiard room table, would pay for our trips to Ireland and we would have a few treats and go out for dinner, buy lobster to cook with the proceeds. Aideen loved food and entertaining and so did we. She used to dress up in her favourite outfit and say she felt like the "Bees Knees" [*The Bee Gees*] and she

would say the food was “dishious” (which was supposed to be delicious with a mouthful as children we thought that was very funny ... Only elders can speak with their mouthful) or “Numnum” ... I think because she had spent so much time with children. She used to comb my hair a hundred times as she said that it would shine even brighter that way.

My uncle Joss who inherited Lissadell from my grandfather, Angus Gore-Booth, made some improvements, but that was only shortly before he sold Lissadell. When I was a child the running water upstairs wasn't drinkable and so Aideen would give us a jug to take up stairs to bed. We would make hot water bottles miles away from our bedroom and take them up to a horse hair bed which sagged dreadfully on one side and went up at the head and the feet and so you were often propelled out of bed. When I was little I shared with my mother and so invariable rolled over her side in the night. My brother often brought a friend with him from school and stayed in the room above the bow room (at the time you couldn't see out to the sea as the woods had got so overgrown). Sometimes the electricity didn't work and we used candle upstairs. There was one working light in the hall that hung in a corner of the corridor that ran all the way from one side of Lissadell to the only other bathroom upstairs at the time which was on the other corner of Lissadell (a corridor at right angles). If I needed the bathroom in the night, I ran from our bedroom down to the corner (as fast as possible through the bit where I thought there was a ghost), hoped not to get splinters in my feet as I could never be bothered with finding my slippers (it often felt like an old boat underfoot and the pictures that I past on my scamper were of the expeditions of the ship Kara amongst icebergs that Sir Henry took). When I got to the bathroom, we had to use a bucket to flush the “lav” as Aideen would have said it as the flush didn't work! Nothing ever really worked properly. There was an enormous Victorian bath with sides that at some stage used to spray water out whilst standing, it no longer worked and is no longer there, but you could only get about an inch of hot water from a little tap on the side that had been added and actually the best thing I decided to do with the bath was to use it as a slide – slide down and splash into the inch of water in the bottom!

LS: Your memories of Lissadell recall images evoked by Eva and Constance in their children diaries, an almost idyllic place they would go back years later, in their correspondence, at difficult times, when circumstances forced them to live apart. I wonder how much about their story and especially about Constance's engagement in Irish politics you had a chance to learn at home, in school, and later on, as an adult through the media, for instance, or through scholarly attention.

OCS: I learnt nothing of Constance at school. I remember mentioning it in a history class once and my teacher did know who she was but was in-

terested more in what I had to say about than in what I could learn. I was educated in England. I learnt from my family that she was a very famous woman that in Ireland was celebrated for her bravery and courage, but in England she was someone that at best was remembered as the first elected female into the House of Commons. I have learnt most of the finer details from books but latterly even BBC Radio have taken an interest and I have heard several interesting programmes. What people forget is when a family has such a history, they have a tendency to talk more about current news, who is doing what and menial discussion as opposed to their own history. I always wish they had spoken about it more. As children we might be intrigued but often dismissed that history as there are other matters to attend to. I remember Aideen discussing what has become known as “the Lissadell Affair” and what happened to Gabrielle as it was her part of the history that mattered the most to her.

[At the death of her father in 1944 (Josslyn, the 6th Baronet), and since the only male heir (Michael) was unfit to assume the governance of the estate, Gabrielle Gore-Booth took charge of the property. She was aged 26 at the time. With Aideen, her sister, and their mother, Gabrielle would soon be reduced to near poverty and eviction by the almost dissolution of the family estate in the 1960s]¹⁵.

LS: It is a truly sad story, and in a way the “Affair” marked the beginning of the end of the Gore-Booth era at Lissadell¹⁶. Going back to Constance, what is your opinion of her as a woman? Reading through her Prison Letters there

¹⁵ “Gabrielle managed the estate under the supervision of the then Solicitor General [...]. In 1952 a new Solicitor General was appointed, and he took a more active role in managing the estate. He found that the family had run up a large overdraft as a result of death duty payments and the general agricultural economic depression. [...] In September 1954 Gabrielle discovered that timber receipts of £5,750 were not recorded in the year-end accounts. A confrontation followed; the accounts were amended, but relations between them became strained. In February 1956 he sacked Gabrielle, and appointed a new manager. Gabrielle retaliated by locking all the gates of Lissadell. [...]. Court action led to years of delay before their claim for an inquiry into the management of the estate was dismissed as ‘reckless’, ‘absurd’ ‘fantastic’. [...] Calls for a public inquiry were followed by an investigation by RTÉ’s current affairs programme”. From a dedicated section in the Lissadell House Online page, <<http://lissadellhouse.com/countess-markievicz/gore-booth-family/gabrielle-gore-booth/>> (05/2018). A touching and insightful account is found in Gore-Booth 2014.

¹⁶ In 2003, Sir Josslyn (the 9th Baronet) and his wife Lady Jane bid their farewell to the House. He claimed that “the place would never be profitable” and pointed out that “neither of their daughters, Mary, 18, and Caroline, 16, should be ‘burdened with the responsibility of this place’ because it had been a burden to them as well as a privilege”. See “Final farewell to Lissadell House” (2003), an interview with Harry Keany (<<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/sligochampion/news/final-farewell-at-lissadell-house-27547894.html>>, 05/2018).

is strong sense of coherence and integrity throughout, the fact that she remained truthful to herself and the cause she embraced to the end.

OCS: She was a very courageous woman who wanted to put what she saw as a great wrong right. Because she was a woman she probably saw the great unfairness of her own situation and thus saw unfairness highlighted in brilliant colour in many different forms around her which angered her and made her want to fight back. I can really appreciate her boredom and feeling of being confined by her class, her sex and expectations of her by her family and thus her willingness to fight against it all and overthrow the whole system on behalf of everyone that has suffered the system which, in many ways, was driven by the English peerage/government. I am sure she was many a time undermined and dismissed in her own family on the basis she was a “silly” woman that wasn’t allowed to be intelligent or have a view, wasn’t allowed to use the power of influence that the men had, wasn’t automatically given a good education, wasn’t allowed to be too intelligent, was sent away at port time at the table and probably had to fight tooth and nail to get to art college. I can appreciate all these as some I have seen in action and in terms of education, my own mother was not allowed to study beyond the age of 16, as it would have “ruined her attractiveness to have become intelligent or held interesting views”. This was thought may have interfered with her marriage of the “right sort of man”. She was not allowed to go to art college. I can see much of my mother’s own frustration and the occasional frustration of my own from the old aristocratic system. I can see that this instilled a view of the world around her as being unfair. I am sure that there were lovely people around her that she cared for that worked for Lissadell and that the experience of spending time with them must have also underlined their situations to her. The same oppressive system she had been frustrated by needed to be overthrown. She wanted to help them but how was she to help a problem that was so universal. She must have seen dreadful poverty and unfairness and felt responsible for the system, of which she was associated closely with. She also may have had strong feelings of wanting to belong somewhere. She was given no importance as a woman amongst men and had little power over her destiny. Even a suitable match would have been approved and encouraged for her. To find meaning and to achieve something in her life for many people and to be respected and loved for it must have been the compelling driver for her, enough to even neglect her own family (she must have felt that what she was achieving would help so many more families in much worse situations than her own).

LS: And that included fighting a war for independence, going to prison, risking her life literally every day.

OCS: I have never agreed with fighting or war, but I can completely appreciate why she felt that it was the only way to be heard at the time.

LS: For her ideas, for speaking her mind openly, she was a woman ahead of her time. And so was Eva. Looking at Ireland just over 100 years from the Easter Rising, what would you say is their legacy and the legacy of women who fought that war?

OCS: Curiously enough I think both their legacies are connected with being able to be heard without violence. Constance felt that at the time violence was necessary but they overthrew that system and now I believe they have cleared the way for open negotiation without violence and a voice for all. There is still some way to go but I hope fairness and balanced discussion and negotiation will always prevail.

LS: A lot has been said and written about Madame's relationship with Eva, with Maeve and Stasko, and also with Casimir. What is your opinion of her as a sister, a mother, a wife?

OCS: I think a lot of people have viewed her as irresponsible. Eva and Constance were a very solid team, in some respects, supporting and understanding each other's compelling battle to overthrow the system. Their closeness and understanding was a great strength to each other although I get the impression that perhaps Eva was more mature, philosophical and a solid support for Constance. Eva was more considerate in her actions, Constance was flighty and could not be held back, hot headed and inclined to shoot from the hip when she felt that something was wrong or unfair.

LS: We have entered the so-called decade of centenaries – 1912-1922 – and as part of it there have been and there will be a number of celebratory events, both in Ireland and in England. What will be your role, if any at all, and what in your opinion should be done, for instance at Lissadell House or in the Sligo area?

OCS: Nothing planned. I am not at the forefront of the public Gore-Booth awareness because my surname is not Gore-Booth. The name goes down the male side of the family. I wonder whether that would have annoyed Eva!

In conversation with Constance Cassidy:

LS: What is your earliest recollection of Constance Markievicz?

CC: My father, and many of his generation, revered Countess Markievicz for her work for the poor of Dublin, and for risking her life for Ireland's freedom. He named me "Constance" after Countess Markievicz. And I have given the name Constance to two of my daughters, Elanor-Constance, and Constance-Elisabeth.

LS: How did you become involved in the Gore-Booth property?

CC: As a young child, our family had holidayed in the Sligo area and had regularly visited Lissadell where we had met with the late Ms. Aideen Gore-Booth. In those years, the house was in an increasing state of decay and could be acquainted with the decaying “Satis House” in which Ms. Havesham lived in the wonderful Charles Dickens story, *Great Expectations*.

My husband had worked as a barrister on the Midland Circuit which included Sligo and thus was familiar with Lissadell. When the property came on the market, we both felt that it was an opportunity to create something special from a tourism perspective, particularly since both of us practice; and as barristers there is no good will to sell off when one ceases to practice, and both of us were mindful of the fact that we have seven children.

LS: Has your view of Constance Markievicz changed, and if so, in what terms?

CC: Initially, I would have viewed the Countess as being an Irish revolutionary and as being one of the persons who played a formative role in the establishment of the New State. However, I now realize there is much more to her life. From an early stage she was a remarkable artist and in fact exhibited at the Royal Dublin Society in the years 1903-1907 along with her husband Casimir Dunin Markievicz, and George Russell (A.E.) among others.

She also was one of the first suffragists, promoting the right of women to vote from as early as 1896 with her sister Eva Gore-Booth. Constance was also extremely conscious of workers’ rights and of the suffering of the poor. From having led a life of luxury she embraced a life of toil working for the poor and endeavouring to achieve a fairer and better society within Ireland.

LS: How did Lissadell contribute to the Easter Rising centenary celebrations?

CC: We have had a number of events endeavouring to mark the life of Constance. One of the more successful was the first lunch for all of the female Ministers in Government held in July 2016, and which was led by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, who was the first woman, after Constance Markievicz, to serve as a Minister in an Irish Government, albeit at a remove of some sixty years later.

The previous year, in July 2015, we had the Cabinet (the executive arm of Government in Ireland) hold a meeting in Lissadell, in the Dining Room. This was the first time the Cabinet met outside Dublin in nine years. It was a compliment to Countess Markievicz.



Fig. 3 – Meeting of the Cabinet in Lissadell, July 2015

In this year, we also had the Prince of Wales and his wife the Duchess of Cornwall, unveil a plaque to her memory and that of her sister, Eva Gore-Booth. The plaque contained the eulogy to the sisters by Ireland's greatest poet, W. B. Yeats.



Fig. 4 – The Royal Visit at Lissadell, May 2015

We also had a wonderful celebration for her 90th anniversary of her death (July 2017) and where there were recitations of her prison poetry, recitations of the poetry of W. B. Yeats honouring Constance Markievicz and her sister, Eva, and finally a reading of a graveside oration delivered by Eamon de Valera on the occasion of her funeral on 17 July and which was read by Eamon de Valera's grandson, Deputy O'Cuiv, in terms utterly reminiscent of his grandfather.

LS: Constance was a woman ahead of her time, in many ways. And so was Eva. Looking at Ireland 100 years from the Easter Rising, what would you say is their legacy and the legacy of women who fought that war?

CC: In the aftermath of the establishment of the Irish Free State the women who had been equals in the struggle for independence and in achieving the Irish Free State were essentially brushed aside and it was almost sixty years later before women again were allowed to play a true, prominent position. The progress of women in Ireland has been slow but is gathering pace; but true equality between the sexes remains yet to be achieved.

LS: Most biographers and people writing about Constance, both within and outside academia, tend to remember her through anecdotes. And there seems to be no end to the amount of unusual and bizarre situations involving her. What is your favourite Markievicz anecdote?

CC: In 1908, Constance, Countess Markievicz assisted her sister Eva Gore-Booth in challenging the election of Winston Churchill as a Member of Parliament in the Manchester By Election of that year. Churchill supported a licensing bill which would have banned women from working in bars after 6pm (the fear was that the bar maids were taking men's jobs). Constance drove a coach and four horses through Manchester, and made many speeches in favour of the women bar maids. In response to heckling from the audience – a man said “can ya cook a dinner?!!!”, Constance replied, “yes, but can you drive a coach and four with reins in one hand”, a feat for which she was notable.

LS: A lot has been said and written about her relationship with Eva, with Maeve, with Sasko, with Casimir. What is your opinion on her private role as a sister, a mother, a wife?

CC: As a sister, particularly with Eva Gore-Booth, she shared an extremely intense and emotional relationship and both believed they could commune telepathically. As a wife she enjoyed a remarkable lifestyle with Casimir until her interests were swayed by her increasing involvement in politics from 1908, after which, whilst they remained firm friends they diversified. From the time of the Great Lock Out in 1913, Constance's interests were primarily on serving the poor and in advancing the cause of Ireland.



Fig. 5 – Countess Markievicz (driving) and her sister, Eva, in action
(*The Daily Graphic*)



Fig. 6 – Sir Winston Churchill escorted by the police
(*The Daily Graphic*, 23 April, 1908)¹⁷

Her husband Casimir elected to return to his native Ukraine for long periods, and in 1914 he enlisted with the Russian forces and served in the army in World War I. Casimir was seriously injured and nursed back to health by a young female relation who appears to have perhaps replaced

Constance in his affections. Casimir was at Constance's death bed in 1927 and they remained firm, loyal friends, but the spark of the initial years was no more.

As a mother she had a distant and perhaps estranged relationship with her daughter, Maeve (born in Lissadell in November 1901). In one account of the life of Constance, she arranged to meet her daughter Maeve after Constance had returned from her campaign on behalf of Ireland after a tour of America in 1920. They were to meet in a hotel in London, in the drawing room for tea. But when Maeve entered the drawing room she failed to recognise her own mother. It was only when she met with an acquaintance as she was leaving the hotel that she was informed that her mother was indeed present. This shows the hardship Constance had suffered for her years with multiple periods of imprisonment, but also the lack of relationship with her daughter during Maeve's teenage years, and it was only after the establishment of the Irish Free State and the cessation of the Civil War that they became better acquainted, yet they were never close.

¹⁷ Eva and Constance were involved in a by-election campaign for the abolition of a Liberal government bill against the employment of barmaids. The "attack on the barmaid trade", Eva maintained, represented a "serious displacement of women's labour by act of Parliament". Cf. Tiernan 2003, 126. Winston Churchill, the Liberal Candidate, was defeated in the campaign. See also "In defence of barmaids: the Gore-Booth sisters take on Winston Churchill" (<www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/in-defence-of-barmaidsthe-gore-booth-sisters-take-on-winston-churchill/>, 05/2018).

LS: Lissadell House is among the most popular tourist destinations in Ireland. Who is the average visitor, and what type of questions do you get asked?

CC: We attract numerous visitors from Ireland, many of whom are familiar with Lissadell House from the poetry of William Butler Yeats, other visitors from Ireland who are aware that the place is the childhood home of Constance Markievicz, and others who simply know it as a grand old house. We also receive many foreign visitors, who want to learn about the history of Ireland; and so we have increasingly dedicated extensive exhibition halls to highlighting the role of Lissadell and the Gore-Booth family in the emergence of Ireland as a nation.

People often ask me whether I am related to Countess Markievicz. The answer is no. Just because we live in her family's house does not mean that we are related to her!

LS: Seen from the outside, your life here seems to be almost enviable, though I assume that being the owners of the Lissadell estates must be also very engaging. What is the toughest part of your "job"?

CC: As well as opening up our house at Lissadell to the public, I am also a mother of seven children, and a busy barrister. Finding the time to manage all of the various demands can be very demanding. Serving the public can be hard, particularly where my husband and I and our children try to make a visit to Lissadell a unique experience.

LS: What are Lissadell's plans and projects for the future, especially in relation to the so-called decade of centenaries?

CC: We have already established a series of historic exhibitions which we regularly renew, reorganise and endeavour to make more relevant. Over the last two years we have undertaken an extensive planting programme with 100,000 flower bulbs planted, with the addition of two new gardens, one dedicated to the memory of Canadian singer and songwriter Leonard Cohen, who played two concerts in Lissadell in 2010. Lissadell was always recognised as one of the leading horticultural estates in Europe and it is our ambition to make it a place of beauty, tranquillity and enjoyment in a magnificent seaside setting. We continue to work on improvements and this is probably a lifelong commitment.

LS: The question I did not ask?

CC: It is the question I like to keep asking: "Why?", and that is probably too complex a question to answer, but ultimately there is a magical fascination to Lissadell, and whilst it requires incredible dedication, for my husband and I to see Lissadell alive and thriving is reward in itself.

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Writings

In Place of a Foreword: Encounter with Éilís Ní Dhuibhne

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The recent publication of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Selected Stories* last September marks a very significant step for a writer who has never stopped being engaged in the art of storytelling. Her varied and intense writing career spans over almost thirty years, so this collection is a sort of celebration of one of the deepest, most sensitive, resonant and effective voices in contemporary Irish fiction and writing. Ní Dhuibhne has received a wide range of Arts Council bursaries and awards, her novel *The Dancers Dancing* (1999) was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2000 and she was awarded the prestigious Irish Pen Award in 2015, an honour given, among others, to Edna O'Brien, Jennifer Johnston and Frank McGuinness. A very special moment of official recognition was the Symposium "The Writing of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne" organized by the School of English, Drama and Creative Writing at University College Dublin held in January this year.

It is therefore a great honour for *Studi irlandesi* to have the opportunity to publish a new short story by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, "The Kingfisher Faith", which in terms of content, plot, narrative organization and style in a way is a sort of continuity and a new departure in her writing.

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne has published novels engaged with different concerns, such as environmental issues in the futuristic novel *The Bray House* (1990), the rite of passage of a summer in the Gaeltacht in *The Dancers Dancing* (1999), and the present (now past) of Celtic Tiger Ireland in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* (2007). She has written fiction for children and young readers as well as plays and novels in the Irish language, has participated in the collective volume *Ladies' Night at Finbars' Hotel* edited by Dermot Bolger (2000), and in the collective comic crime novel *Sister Caravaggio* edited by Peter Cunningham (2014). A professional folklorist, Ní Dhuibhne has published extensively on different aspects of Irish folklore, also taking part in the innovative Urban Folklore Project in the 1980s. She taught Creative Writing at UCD for a number of years until her retirement in 2016, an experience she describes in the volume edited by Anne Fogarty, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, and Eibhear Walshe, *Imagination in the Classroom* (2013).

However, it is in the realm of the short story that Ní Dhuibhne's voice finds a most suitable and effective expression. Her first collection *Blood and Water* came out in 1988, showing her special narrative strategy of interlacing old stories and their modern counterpart, for example in the pioneering story "Midwife to the Fairies", in which her postmodern rewriting of a traditional tale interlaces with the ancient legend, graphically rendered in italics, and cross-references provide modern contextualization to traditional motifs. For example, the midwife of title is called to assist a young woman in labour in the same way as in the traditional story she is summoned to assist a fairy woman in labour.

A similar strategy appears in stories from the collections *Eating Women is not Recommended* (1991) and especially *The Inland Ice* (1997), in which a rewriting of the traditional tale "The Story of the Little White Goat" with the title of "The Search for the Lost Husband" provides a thematic background for the stories in the whole collection. In *The Pale Gold of Alaska* (2000) Ní Dhuibhne mixes her background in folklore with a greater concern for contemporary Ireland, which becomes a priority in *The Shelter of Neighbours* (2012), whose title comes from an Irish proverb – "Ar Scath a Chéile a Mhateireann na Daoine", people live in one another's shelter. The fictional estate of Dunroon Crescent in South County Dublin is a setting for potential disorder, and danger may come from your neighbours as well as from outside. A variety of motifs and themes intertwines with the main plot, drug addiction in "The Shelter of Neighbours", anorexia in "Bikes I Have Lost", the difficulty of communication between generations and sexes in "The Man Who Had No Story" and "It is a Miracle". Characters occasionally migrate from story to story, like Audrey who returns fleetingly in "Red-Hot Poker" as someone who "suffers from depression", and Finn O'Keefe, the writer of "The Man Who Had No Story" who reappears also in "The Shelter of Neighbours". Story organization is often based on Ní Dhuibhne's usual alternation of past and present, which highlights the obsessive presence of the past with which it is not easy to come to terms.

This is what happens in "The Kingfisher Faith", which exploits consolidated narrative strategies in Ní Dhuibhne's fiction.

The story opens on the *ille et nunc* of space and time: "The plane landed in Dublin at 8.00 a.m.", looking backward and forward simultaneously. The end of the long flight from Australia also marks a new beginning for Kelley, who is moving into her new house that was being refurbished during her absence. Little by little, fragments of her past life emerge, she has children and grandchildren in Brisbane and in Spain, she is learning Spanish. "Spanish. Why learn it? His wife speaks perfect English, the little boy is bilingual. They don't even want her to speak Spanish, it's pure self-indulgence [...]". Kelley lost her husband due to prostate cancer three years ago and this is basically the reason for leaving "the big bungalow by the sea where she

had lived with [Erik] for thirty-five years” and moving to the Dublin north side. Unfortunately work is still under way, with “a huge electric saw on the kitchen floor, and a cement mixer in the back yard”, so her new beginning in her new house is to be delayed. There is something else that causes some sort of delay. Three letters with the Breast Check logo await her. “There were three envelopes and three letters [...] They had written three times”.

The narrative core of the story revolves around Kelley facing the second step of investigation, a common experience for a lot of women underlies the story, which is organised into five sections, four of them with a subtitle as well as a number. This is quite unusual in Ní Dhuibhne’s fiction, which exploits the narrative device of subtitles only in the long short story, or novella, “Bikes I Have Lost” from *The Shelter of Neighbours*.

“The Kingfisher Faith” does not provide a subtitle for the first part, which acts as an introduction by setting Kelley’s return from Brisbane. This is a stylistic choice as the paratextual element of the story’s title introduces the bird imagery that underlies the text and is a catalyst already in the first paragraph. Enjoying the Australian “burning sun” and “clear skies”, Kelley feels “a bird, a migratory bird, a swallow sailing swiftly above her own life”. The metaphor is emphasised by the use of alliteration, shedding light on the bird’s flight as well as the sense of freedom embedded in flying. Bird images are evoked later on when at the hospital everything is “sky blue”, but only in the final part, Part 5, “The Kingfisher”, does the kingfisher of the title become prominent.

Traditionally birds are messengers of the gods and a kingfisher is generally considered a symbol of peace, prosperity, abundance, grace, it is all in all a very positive sign. The Australian laughing kookaburra belongs to the same family, which may create an implicit cross-reference to Kelley’s trip to Australia. In Greek mythology, Alcyone dies of grief at her husband’s death by drowning and follows him into the sea, to be then transformed by the gods into a kingfisher as a sign of her devotion. A kingfisher is notably a water bird and water imagery appears in the story in the simile used to describe Kelley’s expectations for her new house, “But today was the day when the house would reveal itself to her in all its bare beauty, like Botticelli’s Venus rising from the *waves*, the *tide* of the builder’s energy and creativity [...] It would be whole and lovely as a *shell*” (emphasis added).

Though explicitly mentioned only in the final part, the kingfisher and its imagery underlie the whole story, marking the love between Kelley and Erik, and the context of illness and disease and the process of grieving. This takes place in particular in part 3, “Ladies in Sky Blue”. The five sections of the story are uneven in length, and in all of them Ní Dhuibhne exploits the narrative strategy of inserting blank spaces, gaps, among paragraphs, often made of just one sentence or even one single word or exclamation as a way to add emphasis. This happens in part 2, “The Letter”, to convey the wor-

rying message of the three letters, but especially in part 3, which is also the longest. Anxiety seeps through the three one-sentence paragraphs marked by gaps as the receptionist “Doesn’t even ask her to spell her name”. / “Nobody knows how to spell Kelley’s surname.” / “This person obviously knows something”. Likewise, Part 3 closes with a list of three names and surnames, again separated by textual blanks.

Part 3 is also characterised by the use of the present tense, which conveys the immediacy of the second check procedure, while memories of her husband’s illness and death shift to the past tense. The alternated use of past and present is a distinguished marker of Ní Dhuibhne’s fiction highlighting the inseparable overlapping of memories and the present moment. “The Kingfisher faith” also presents a high number of alliterations, “the front foyer is full – full of women and not a few men”, or “Their shoes or sandals, sticking out from under the gowns”, of similes, “The place is as silent as a tomb”, of direct questions, “Are all the silent women people who have got the second letter, calling them back?”, of repetitions, “*People* are always saying – *people* in newspapers, *people* on radio shows, *people* of that sort [...]” (emphasis added), of oxymorons, “sweet sorrow”, and all these stylistic choices merge with intertextual references to literary and non-literary texts somehow related to death and the process of grieving. The sentence “There is nobody who will be devastated when Kelley sheds off the mortal coil” is an open indirect quotation from *Hamlet*; on the other hand, Elizabeth Kübler Ross’s work on the various stages of reaction for cancer patients dominates the second half of Part 3.

In Part 4, entitled “The Test” – this being actually both a mammogram and an ultra sound scan – the fragmentation of the text into one-line or one-sentence or one-word units intensifies, and leaves Kelley in a further waiting room, in a limbo. The story of Kelley’s tests remains unfinished as Part 5, “The Kingfisher” moves back to the past tense to shed light on the memory of a glimpse of a kingfisher, “the flash of blue”, whose suddenness is marked once again by the stylistic choice of a one-sentence paragraph, soon to be followed by one word: “Kingfisher”. The lack of definitive or indefinite article personifies the bird and makes the encounter even more special (“She had never seen one before”), a nearly magic event leaving the end of the story open on a feeling of extraordinary joy that surprises Kelley with faith in the future: “It was, she thought, a good omen”. “It” has a double meaning, this being the kingfisher according to tradition, but also the freshly perceived feeling of surprise, a sign of life and continuity.

Studi irlandesi is grateful to Éilís Ní Dhuibhne for considering the Italian scene for the publication of a previously unpublished story and for offering the readers of the Review the possibility to encounter the wide spectrum and perspective of her fiction. *Go raibh míle maith agat, Éilís.*

The Kingfisher Faith

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The plane landed in Dublin at 8.00 a.m. The grey morning air touched Kelley's skin like cold water. Queensland had been too hot. But there was a joyousness in the burning sun and the clear skies, the children swimming on riverside beaches in the middle of the city. It lightened the heart. Kelley had felt deliciously weightless in the warm bright air, she had imagined herself a bird, a migratory bird, a swallow, sailing swiftly above her own life. Back to earth now. When all is said and done, Ireland is a melancholy land. It's not surprising that so many people emigrate. They cite economic reasons but that's not the whole story. The young Irish in Australia say they miss home, but add that they like the weather in Queensland or Victoria or wherever they happen to find themselves on that distant continent. If they like the weather chances are they're never coming back.

When she gave her address to the taxi man, he asked her an unusual question:

"Have you lived there for long?"

She had an unusual answer.

"As a matter of fact I am moving in there today."

It turned out that the taxi man had lived around the corner when he was younger. The fact is, she often meets people who lived around the corner when they were younger. Around the corner were lots of houses "in bedsits," back then. Some of them survive, but the area is getting more upmarket, meaning no young person can afford to buy a house there, or even rent a flat.

When they turned onto her new road they saw that the white van was parked outside her house. The hall door was open.

"Don't think you'll be moving in today, love!" laughed the taxi man.

During her dreamy dozes on the plane Kelley had imagined this moment. She would open her new front door, make a cup of coffee, then have a lovely little nap on the camp bed in the bedroom. Oh the bliss of lying down in a bed after twenty four hours of sitting up in a cramped plane! Back from Australia for the first day in her new house. The builder had been working on it for months, and it would be pristine, freshly painted, exquisite. Tomorrow her furniture would arrive from the yard where it had been stored for al-

most a year in a steel container, and everything in the house would become chaotic, for a while – perhaps quite a while. But today was the day when the house was to reveal itself to her in all its bare beauty, like Botticelli's Venus rising from the waves, the tide of the builder's energy and creativity. The fresh paint, the bright windows. It would be whole and lovely as a shell.

"Damn!" she raised her eyebrows and shrugged. "They said they'd be finished yesterday."

"If I had a Euro for every time a builder promised to be finished and wasn't, I'd be a millionaire," said the taxi man. This is not an unusual thing for a taxi-man to say. They are masters of the proverb, and any other formula that keeps the wheels of conversation turning.

2. THE LETTER

There were a few silent men in overalls in the house, a huge electric saw on the kitchen floor, and a cement mixer in the back yard. So she parked her suitcase upstairs and took the bus to her sister's house, out in a suburb in County Meath, which had been her home for almost a year, since she moved from the big bungalow by the sea where she had lived with her husband for thirty five years.

There was nobody at home apart from the cat, a suave chartreuse. Usually reserved and aloof, the cat was delighted to see Kelley, and rubbed her smooth silky fur against her leg until food was offered. Kelley made the cup of coffee for which she had been longing for hours, and began to open her letters. Bills. Good news comes by email, bills in the post. There were two marked "Confidential. Only to be opened by the addressee." When she opened the envelope she saw the BREAST CHECK logo on the letterhead. She had completely forgotten that she had had the routine mammogram just before she left for Brisbane, a month ago. They always wrote a week or two later to say everything was all right.

But not this time.

There was a recall for a second investigation. There were three envelopes and three letters, in fact. They'd written three times.

So.

A leaflet accompanied the letter, including information. A call back does not mean anything is wrong, it murmured reassuringly. Then it described what would happen on the second visit. Another mammogram, an ultrasound scan, and possibly a biopsy using a needle. (There were a few different kinds of needle, some more unpleasant than others, Kelly guessed.) You may be more comfortable in a skirt and blouse or trousers and blouse, it said, and asked people who used perfume or deodorant (deodorant? Are there women who don't use deodorant?) not to put on too much of either. Prepare to stay in the clinic for three hours. You may bring someone with you.

3. *LADIES in SKY BLUE*

You are supposed to arrive at the clinic at 8.15 a.m.. Another early start. The Dublin Horse Show is on. It is Ladies' Day, the day when women in remarkable hats compete to win the "Best Dressed Lady" competition, so there is plenty of traffic on the M 50. But Kelley manages to arrive at 8.30.

The Breast Check Clinic is familiar – she's been here, over the years, at least half a dozen times. It's a nice place, considering it is part of a hospital, a hospital where you don't have to pay a few hundred Euro for a five minute chat with a doctor. The colour scheme is white with touches of sky blue, always guaranteed to produce a sense of freshness. The magazines on the tables – *Country Life*, *Image*, *Vogue* – are up to date, unlike the magazines in any other waiting room Kelley has ever been in. The staff are well-mannered, kind and thoughtful. Today, however, this kindness is a mixed blessing. The receptionist greets her with a gentle smile, doesn't ask her to produce any documents.

Doesn't even ask her to spell her name.

Nobody knows how to spell Kelley's surname.

This person obviously knows something.

Whenever Kelley has been here before there have been only a few other women waiting. But today the front foyer is full – full of women, and not a few men. The husbands, the boyfriends. No doubt sisters and daughters and mothers and female friends too, but you can't distinguish them from the patients, at this point in proceedings. Everybody looks solemn, but nobody is freaking out. In fact nobody is even talking. The place is as silent as the tomb. Are all the silent women people who have got the second letter, calling them back? Or are there women on their third or fourth test, women who actually have got cancer? Probably not, she thinks. Probably they are all in the same boat. The second letter folk.

One in twenty gets called back, according to the leaflet.

That's not a comforting statistic. Nineteen times out of twenty – nine and a half times out of ten – everything looks fine, on the mammograms. In this room are the five per cent who failed the test.

Still. The statistic for survival is pretty good. Even of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer, 85% survive (for five years.)

Five years which would include a lot of hassle in the form of chemotherapy, radiotherapy, hair loss. And so on.

And what if it has already jumped around to other place in your body? Then you could have a month.

Her left breast certainly feels a bit peculiar. There's an itchy spot underneath, and the nipple feels rather stiff. (These symptoms occurred for the first time this morning, on the M 50, when she was driving to the hospital.)

She would have to get a wig. Well, OK. Friends who had gone through the treatment looked good in their wigs, frequently better than they'd looked

with their real hair. Wigs were thick and shiny, like the hair of teenagers. Hot, but that wouldn't be much of a problem in Ireland, and she wouldn't be going to Australia, or anywhere else, if she were having chemo. And as for going to bed... nobody ever sees her in bed any more.

Actually, the more she thinks about it, the less she cares about the treatment, or even about dying.

When her husband, Erik, died, three and a half years ago, she had often wished she had died too. That feeling wore off. Time heals: the tired truism, like so many banal proverbs, is true. For the past year she has thought of Erik less and less often; the period of intense pining is over. Now she enjoys many things in life – learning Spanish, drinking wine, talking to her grandchildren on Skype. Up to a point she enjoys many things. And it would be most unfortunate to die just as she moves into her new house. She could do with about a year, a year untrammelled by illness, just to arrange the furniture and pick the right paint for the walls, to get to know the house and the neighbourhood, to find out if her expectations of living closer to the city centre would really make much of a difference to her life.

But on the other hand, she still feels no great pressure to stay alive now that Erik is dead. She wouldn't mind joining him, in death – not that she has the slightest expectation of any afterlife. She would just meet him as a knife meets a fork in a drawer, lifeless object to lifeless object. Ashes to ashes in the vast graveyard of the lifeless, out in Shanganagh by the sea.

She's glad really that he's not one of those husbands in the waiting room. The partner who is not sick is often more tortured by worry than the one who is. She herself was terrified, when Erik was ill, whereas he seemed to take it in his stride. Seemed is the word. Because now just one day after getting that letter she understands how he must have felt when he got his diagnosis of prostate cancer. He must have had the thoughts she has been having, since yesterday. Which are, Soon I may be leaving all this. The sea and the garden and what's for dinner. My books. My music. My friends. Soon I may no longer exist. But how can anyone get their head around that huge but evanescent idea, the idea of their own non-being? That's a thought which is as hard to catch as a cloud, as water in a sieve. It's the very essence of the unconscionable.

People are always saying – people in newspapers, people on radio shows, people of that sort – that we should spend more time thinking about death. But as far as Kelley can figure out, it's impossible to think about it at all. You can think around it, but you can't imagine death itself. Much easier to imagine what it will be like to live on Mars, or what it was like to be a stone age man, woman or child. Or animal. But your own non-being? You could as easily imagine what a stone feels, or a bone, or a box of ashes. She has concluded that the only sensible way to deal with death is the one most people employ. Namely, ignore the damn thing.

Maybe the prospect of death feels different if your partner is still with you, alive. Yes. It must do. Having a partner still with you would be both a blessing and a curse. A, you don't want to leave them, and B, you have to worry about how they'll feel, when you do. (Not that that seemed to worry Erik very much. But it crossed his mind, from time to time, and then he would say something like "You'll marry again, won't you, darling?" And she would laugh, frightened, and say, "Have you anyone in mind?")

Kelley didn't marry again. And just as well. Now when she's dying of cancer she won't have to say goodbye to someone who shares her life and they won't have to say goodbye to her. These partings, of the living and the dead, are not sweet sorrow. They are deep and searing sorrow, ghastly sorrow, which you would only wish upon your very worst enemy. There is nobody who will be devastated when Kelley sheds off the mortal coil. Good! A few people will be sad for a while, probably – well, she hopes so. Her children, her grandchildren. Her sister and brother? Maybe a friend or two. But nobody will be catastrophically affected the way she was when Erik popped his clogs. Nobody will be sorry overmuch. So she has one less thing to worry about. In fact, when you think about it, just as she's free to come and go on holidays, or to move house, or hop on a plane to Brisbane, she's free to die. Free as a bird. Freer, because dying is free – it's the one big trip everyone can afford, although some go economy and some in business class.

The women are called in batches of three or four for the first examination. Everyone looks up expectantly when the nurse comes in with the names and everyone looks at the women who turn the corner, and disappear. What awaits them, around that corner?

Another waiting room. That's what.

First you go to a little cubicle, take off your blouse and bra and replace them with an enormous blue smock. You put your clothes and bag into a basket, and, clutching this and the flap of the smock, go to the second waiting room. This is also quite crowded. Kelley gets one of the last seats, facing the other women. So she can have a good look at them. Most are between fifty and sixty. Well, they'd have to be, since they don't start doing the breast check until you're fifty. Their shoes or sandals, sticking out from under the gowns: tasteful sandals, flat or almost flat, leather, the two band sandals that have been fashionable for the past two years and – in Kelley's opinion – suit most women very well. She has a pair herself although she's wearing shoes at the moment. The women have neat casual hair styles, lightly made up faces. A few are reading actual books, while others look at the magazines – again – or at the TV in the corner. Nobody talks. Twenty odd women, wearing identical sky blue gowns, waiting for the second breast check, and not a word from any of them. It would not be so silent in the Mater, on the other side of the city, Kelley guesses. This is south county Dublin, where Kelley fits in,

although she's moved to the north side, where people are kind but suspicious of her, where she still feels like a bit of an alien, a duck who has flown from Stephen's Green and accidentally ended up on the other side of the river.

She passes the time by learning a poem off by heart. Swallow Swallow Swallow, the poem starts. Teach me how to fly high in the sky so that summer will begin. Teach me your songs so that I can spend my days in the meadows and the hills, so that I can fly up to the stars. The poem is for children, by a Spanish poet, and it is in Spanish. It's a very simple poem but it's challenging to memorize it. She has to repeat the lines dozens and dozens of times, and still she tends to stumble on one of them. That I may spend my days like you is the line that trips her up, again and again. It's expressed rather awkwardly, to force a rhyme.

"Girls!" this nurse addresses them as "Girls!". And it has begun to feel like school here. Uniformed, single sex, waiting for a test – a Viva.

Kelley is so concentrated on the poem about the swallows that she almost forgets why she is here. Which is the point, which is why she decided to do this. Partly because she's concentrating and partly because she's tired she doesn't seem to be especially worried, as far as she can tell.

The fact is, she doesn't believe there is anything wrong with her. But she barely express that thought even in the privacy of her mind. Tempting fate. And then... maybe she is just doing what people do. Denying. The first stage, for cancer patients, according to Elizabeth Kubler Ross, is denial. Kelley is very familiar with the Kubler Ross stages because they are also applied to bereavement, and when Erik died she read dozens of books on this subject, finding them comforting. Misery likes bedfellows. All the grief books and websites said it was a mistake to apply the Kubler Ross stages to bereavement but they summarized them anyway. The Kubler Ross stages, these books pointed out, originally applied to terminally ill people, not to the ones they left behind. And when you think about it, denial of a loved one's death doesn't make a huge amount of sense, even though – in a way – most religions are based on that belief. It's true that when Erik died, during the first weeks, Kelly sometimes thought he was just away on a holiday, or in another room, and would be back if she just held on for a bit. But these were momentary lapses, lapses of her body, her muscle memory, as it were, rather than of her mind. She was in a state of forgetfulness, not *in denial*. Not really. Really she knew he was dead and that there was no getting around that fact, which is the terrible thing about death. It is so heart-breakingly irreversible.

Bargaining is stage two. Kubler Ross. Kübler, there's an umlaut. Again, she wondered what you would bargain about, once your lover was dead? Bargain? If he comes back to life I'll give my money to charity? I mean, come on. But yes, these stages make much more sense when applied to serious illness. I'll be good if I don't have it. If I don't have it, I'll go to Greece and help the Syrian refugees. If I don't have it, I'll go to Brisbane straight away,

on the next plane, to visit my son and my beloved grand-daughter, and then straight on to Spain where my other grandchild lives. If I don't have it I'll live life to the full for once. If I don't have it I'll never complain or worry again.

But – here comes stage two, or is it stage one, denial – I don't have it, I feel perfectly fine. Every single woman in this room is probably indulging in Stage One denial, while doing a bit of Stage Two Bargaining. You can very easily do both simultaneously. There is nothing wrong with me, and if there isn't something wrong I'll de-clutter the house from top to bottom and travel the world.

But for one in ten there will be something wrong. That does not mean that nine out of ten in this room – which contains about twenty women – are going to escape. There could be something wrong with every single woman in this room, in their sky blue smocks, with their silent nicely made up south county Dublin faces. These could be the unlucky percentile; ten out of a thousand. While various other waiting rooms, scattered around the world, could be full to the brim of women whose tests will be clear. Statistics are tricky, and they only comfort the ones who are lucky, in the good percentile.

A dark haired woman, attractive – they are all fairly attractive but this one has that extra sparkle – comes in, carrying her basket. She giggles and says, “Gosh, it's scary!” And there is a response. Of course. Everyone laughs and nods in agreement. The woman she sits beside exchanges a few words with her. Then all the women in the waiting room start chatting to one another. The garden of sky blue erupts into a symphony of gossip.

Monica Ryan.

Sibyl Freeman.

Geraldine Murphy.

Kelley is listening to the story of how Maura Mc Govern had got The Letter the day before she was going on holiday to Tuscany and agonized over whether or not to tell her husband, when they called out her name.

4. *THE TEST*

“My name is Meg,” says the woman. “I'm the radiographer.”

There's another mammogram.

“Just the right breast,” Meg says. She's rather bossy.

The itch in the left breast disappears, while its companion, the good right, is squashed like a pancake between the glass plates of the mammogram machine.

Then another wait in the same waiting room. Maura has vanished so Kelley goes over the poem again, and manages to recite it in full. But her concentration is slipping. Why is she doing this?

Spanish. Why learn it? Her son's wife speaks perfect English, the little boy is bi-lingual. They don't even want her to speak Spanish, it's pure

self-indulgence; she has no real reason to bother about it. She pulls herself away from the thought. If she allows that sort of thinking to get a grip, soon there'll be no reason for doing anything. There'll be no reason to get out of bed, or go on living. Everything is just rubble, someone in an Alice Munro story says. Once Erik died, it all became rubble. Activities, like the Spanish classes, were just a way of getting through. That's why she took it up, to focus the mind, to keep it in denial about the rubble of the universe. Now it has become a goal, a thing she works hard at. Don't ask why.

Kelley Monaghan.

An ultra sound scan.

This will feel a bit cold, the doctor says, but it won't hurt, like the mammogram.

The mammogram didn't hurt either, Kelley says. Then bites her tongue. She shouldn't have said that. The doctor looks offended. It used to hurt, Kelley hurries on apologetically, when I first came, it hurt, but not any more. I suppose you get used to it, the doctor says. You're no longer afraid.

And your breasts get flabbier. They don't try to fight back when squashed between two glass plates.

The ultra sound doesn't even feel very cold.

The doctor looks at the image on the screen.

Kelley looks. A tangle of criss-crossed lines. She searches for a shadow, a disruption to the pattern. But it's double dutch, this picture of the interior of her breast.

"Well..."

You can tell by their faces. She knew about Erik's diagnosis before it was iterated by the anxious consultant.

"Oh!"

"There's something not quite clear."

"Oh."

"We'll do the biopsy, just to be on the safe side."

"OK."

"There's probably nothing to worry about but something is not clear."

"Right."

"Emma will show you the way."

And so, clutching the flap of hersky blue smock and her plastic basket, she follows Emma to the next room, which is another waiting room.

5. *THE KINGFISHER*

When she went out to her sister's the day before yesterday, she got off the bus at the stop called The Bridge. She herself and most people call it the Aldi stop, but the Aldi is new and the bridge has been there for centuries, on the road to Tara, spanning the Broadmeadow River. This is more of a stream

than a river, and not very well looked after. It flows past blocks of apartments, housing estates, its banks are unkempt and littered. But in some places – The Bridge is one – it is thickly overhung with shrubs and trees, and the water races along merrily through a lovely green tunnel of dappled leaves.

Just as Kelley alighted from the bus the sun came out. That's probably why she stopped and looked for a while down at the river, as it danced along in the bright light. Or maybe she stopped because she was remembering the Brisbane river, broad as a lake, festive with water buses and white yachts. Maybe that's why she looked into the little stream with the big name. Broad-meadow River.

Then, the flash of blue.

Down the river under the overhanging foliage dashed the bird, quick as a swift, faster than a plane.

Kingfisher.

She had never seen one before. Before in her life, and she is sixty three years of age.

For five decades she had wanted to see one, but never until this moment, on The Bridge beside Aldi.

Douglas Hyde, first president of Ireland, adduced the kingfisher as a reason for believing in the fairies. How many people have seen a kingfisher? He asks, in an introduction to a book of fairy legends. And yet we believe they exist. So why not believe in the fairies?

It's logical. Up to a point.

Kelley has not believed in the fairies since she was ten years old, but she has always believed in the kingfisher. A kingfisher is not a fairy. But it is a rare wild bird, and to see one, even for a the smallest particle of a second, is a great treat. And a particle of a second is all you'll get - the merest glimpse, a hint of a blue bird as lovely as a drop.

That's how it is, with wild things. You see them by chance. Whale watching tours, dolphin tours, mainly don't work. You see the whale when you're not looking for it, and the dolphin. That's what wild means. Wild cards, out of your control. They find you, generally when you least expect it.

Her heart rose, when she saw the Kingfisher, the flash of blue in the golden green tunnel over the water.

She could be still surprised by joy.

It was, she thought, a good omen.

Recensioni / Reviews

William Wall, *The Yellow House*, Ennistymon, Salmon Poetry, 2017, pp. 106, € 12, ISBN 978-910669-87-7

William Wall (Cork, 1955), narratore e poeta conosciuto in Italia per la raccolta poetica *Le notizie sono* (Faenza, Mobydick, 2012), sapientemente tradotta da Adele D'Arcangelo, è noto anche per i suoi legami con numerose istituzioni culturali del nostro paese, tra cui Scuola Interpreti e Traduttori di Forlì¹, oltre che per la collaborazione con autori come il compianto Giovanni Nadiani, scrittore e germanista di grande talento. Alcuni mesi fa è uscito un suo nuovo libro, che segna una tappa significativa nella crescita della sua scrittura, avviata verso un'ulteriore maturazione. I riconoscimenti in questi anni, infatti, non gli sono mancati: il suo romanzo *This Is The Country* si è qualificato per il Man Booker Prize, 2005, il Young Mind Prize e per l'Irish Book Awards; i suoi racconti e le sue poesie hanno vinto numerosi premi, tra cui The Virginia Faulkner Award, 2011. Nel 2017, con i racconti dal titolo *The Islands*, si è aggiudicato il prestigioso Drue Heinz Prize for Literature, premio che gli ha consentito di tenere *reading* di successo negli Stati Uniti.

La sua nuova raccolta poetica si sviluppa lungo due direttrici principali: lirica ed elegiaca, la prima; più vicina ai canoni della poesia civile, la seconda. In qualche modo speculari appaiono la poesia di apertura e di chiusura, "The Yellow House" e "Lament for the Yellow House", entrambe ispirate a una perdita, a un venir meno, seppure a distanza di decenni e nel segno di una diversa intensità emozionale.

La poesia che offre il titolo al volume inaugura una serie di testi nei quali si consuma l'elaborazione del lutto per le persone care perdute e dove il registro lirico si declina attraverso il sentimento della *caducità* delle cose e del vivere. Di questo tema aveva parlato Freud in un brevissimo ma illuminante scritto del 1915 (*Vergänglichkeit*), in cui riportava una conversazione con Rainer Maria Rilke e Lou Salomè: tutto ciò che avevano amato sembrava a loro svilito dalla transitorietà delle cose, mettendo in discussione il valore della bellezza e quello stesso dell'esistenza. Muovendo da questo senso di caducità, in non poche pagine di

¹ Dipartimento di Interpretazione e Traduzione, Università di Bologna.

Wall si respira un'atmosfera di rivisitazione del passato dove, pur in presenza di un registro malinconico, una scrittura vigile e sorvegliata evita ogni forma di abbandono al rimpianto.

Analogamente alla poetessa statunitense Sharon Olds nell'ispirata raccolta *The Living and the Dead* (1984), William Wall percorre un suo personale viaggio nell'Ade dove, attraversando i luoghi dell'assenza, ritrova i fantasmi del passato. Il primo itinerario parte dalla casa dove era cresciuto, *the yellow house*, appunto, distrutta nel 2008 da un'esplosione. Tra le macerie della memoria, il poeta rivede frammenti di vita vissuta, traendone un'amara conclusione: "the past is an animal / burrowing inside out" (il passato è un animale / che scava scomposto); "the past [...] is a mine in the heart" (il passato [...] è una miniera nel cuore)², mentre sullo sfondo sfilano le *dramatis personae* in un crescendo di solitudine.

L'esplorazione prosegue nelle "Five elegies", dove "la morte è una presenza forte", come scrive David Toms in un'accurata recensione apparsa alcuni mesi fa. William Wall, nei panni di Odisseo, prosegue la sua discesa metaforica nel sottosuolo dove, sullo sfondo del porto di Genova, con un'immagine degna dei poemi omerici, vede "the wine dark sea and the stars" (il mare color rosso vino e le stelle) e una lucciola solitaria sotto una pianta di limone a evocare la sorella scomparsa. In una delle poesie più riuscite, c'è spazio anche per gli amici, per quel Guido Leotta, scrittore ed editore faentino scomparso improvvisamente e prematuramente, lasciando "jazz in the air / or smoke" (jazz nell'aria / o fumo) e la consapevolezza che l'assenza, quando si manifesta, lo fa spesso senza preavviso, "as a cliff-fall / swifts scattering / nests tumbling eggs / the dust / the broken wave // and in the silence / that follows the catastrophe / the applause of gulls' wings / scavengers gathering at the edge / their shadowy blades" (come la caduta di un masso / rondini che si disperdono improvvisamente / nidi che capovolgono uova / la polvere / l'onda spezzata // e nel silenzio / che segue la catastrofe / l'applauso di ali di gabbiani / spazzini che raccolgono / le loro lame ombrose).

La raccolta è scandita da alcuni omaggi all'Italia dove Wall, con la moglie Liz, da qualche anno trascorre lunghi periodi. Ecco allora le traduzioni da Dino Campana ("Le vele") e da *I fasti dell'ortica* di Maria Luisa Spaziani, con un omaggio alle vittime di Mauthausen: un testo che introduce una sezione in cui lo sguardo del poeta si rivolge al contesto sociale e politico, con un'attenzione al quotidiano insolita nella poesia italiana, ma abbastanza frequente in quella irlandese contemporanea.

"Pictures from Italy", titolo mutuato da Dickens, inquadra l'orologio della stazione di Milano dove incombe la presenza di Mussolini nel 1922, anno della marcia su Roma, mentre quello della stazione di Bologna segna drammaticamente le 10:25, orario in cui il 2 agosto del 1980, una bomba attribuita ai fascisti,

² Non essendo il volume pubblicato in Italia, mi sono affidato a una mia traduzione di servizio.

provocò un'orrenda strage. E nella piazza centrale della città, gremita di manifestanti in sciopero, significativa è l'immagine del poeta che ascolta "Bella Ciao" ed acquista un magnete con l'effigie di Gramsci, uno degli intellettuali a lui più cari, al punto da avere tradotto in inglese *Le ceneri di Gramsci*, lo splendido poema di Pasolini a lui dedicato.

In molti testi il tono si fa quasi epico, affrancato dal registro più intimista della prima parte, e ci regala pagine di rara potenza, come in "Via Antonio Gramsci", dove in primo piano si impone la *storia* con i fantasmi di Mussolini e De Valera, mentre "Bandiera rossa", l'inno dei comunisti italiani, viene cantato sotto voce come fosse un basso continuo che ritma e scandisce il credo politico dell'autore.

In una Londra dagli echi eliotiani ("unreal city"), Wall invoca il ritorno di un pensiero guida nella difficile traversata del nostro tempo: "[...] we are unprepared / to take our third class ticket / to the nineteenth century / where are you now Antonio Gramsci / when we need your like again" (siamo impreparati / a prendere il nostro biglietto di terza classe / per il diciannovesimo secolo / dove sei ora Antonio Gramsci / quando abbiamo nuovamente bisogno di uno come te?).

Dopo un momentaneo ripiegamento nel privato con la bellissima poesia d'amore "I would know your step", quasi a fare da controcanto all'immersione nella durezza della storia, Wall chiude il cerchio della specularità, proponendoci nel finale "Lament for the yellow house", casa che non è più quella del poeta in apertura, bensì quella di Van Gogh, distrutta da una bomba degli Alleati ad Arles, nel 1944, e riprodotta nella copertina del libro grazie al celebre dipinto. Come la casa dell'infanzia del poeta è andata distrutta, così anche l'abitazione dove vissero Van Gogh e Gauguin è scomparsa, lasciando un cielo cobalto e una pietra sulfurea con il sapore di qualcosa di caro che non è destinato a tornare, nonostante le nostre invocazioni: "I want to walk my yellow house / the crooked room / the crooked floor / give me back my things of air / my yellow bed / my yellow chair" (voglio camminare nella mia casa gialla / nella stanza storta / sul pavimento storto / ridatemi le cose svanite / il mio letto giallo / la mia sedia gialla).

Le due case e i due destini si confondono, ma resta come lascito dell'artista olandese al poeta quel "paint from the real" (dipingere dal vero) che forse accomuna due poetiche e due modi di rappresentare la realtà.

Daniele Serafini

Adrian Frazier, *The Adulterous Muse: Maud Gonne, Lucien Millevoye and W. B. Yeats*, Dublin, Lilliput Press, 2016, pp. 320. £20.00. ISBN 978-18-4351-678-1.

Maud Gonne is perhaps best remembered as the muse of W.B. Yeats, the object and subject of his poetry and the woman who refused his numerous marriage proposals; the Irish Joan of Arc, the glamorous Irish heroine and liberator of Ireland, and the rebel who roused great crowds in Ireland against the injustice of British domination. A number of volumes, including

Samuel Levenson's *A Biography of Yeats's Beloved Maud Gonne* (1976), Nancy Cardozo's *Lucky Eyes and a High Heart: The Life of Maud Gonne* (1978), Margaret Ward's *Maud Gonne: Ireland's Joan of Arc* (1993), and Gonne's own autobiography *A Servant of the Queen* (1938) contribute to such romantic and heroic portraits. In this refreshing study, *The Adulterous Muse: Maud Gonne, Lucien Millevoye and W. B. Yeats* (2016), Adrian Frazier deconstructs the sentimental image of Gonne and dispels the illusion of her as Ireland's Helen of Troy. Focusing on Gonne's life in France and considering the ways her time in Paris contributed to her political career, Frazier examines areas of Gonne's life that have hitherto been unexplored, and in doing so offers an honest and revealing portrait.

Frazier begins by noting:

What has been missing from accounts of Maud Gonne is a close investigation of her years in France, which was, after all, her primary residence from the age of twenty to her early fifties. It is as if her biographers have been standing on Dawson Street in Dublin, or in Bloomsbury in London, and we see Maud Gonne coming to one or the other only from the shadows of another life in another country, romantic and unknowable. (4)

In this introductory statement, Frazier establishes the foundation of his study: the significance of France on Gonne's development and her position as a metaphorical "Parisian flower" (4). He also briefly considers Gonne's self-created mythology, her relationships with many influential figures of the period and her reputation as a proto-Feminist and "New-Woman". Much of the insight and pleasure of this collection comes from its solid and thorough research. The numerous examples taken from anecdotes, interviews, literature and the periodical press, notably *L'Écho de Paris*, *Le Figaro*, *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, *Le Démocrate de Seine-et-Oise*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *L'Irlande Libre* and *The Court and Society Review*, provide a number of interesting accounts and details of Gonne's beauty, wit, intelligence and her activities.

Among the topics covered in this study are Gonne's relationships with England, Ireland and France; her portrayal in George Moore's novels, the periodical press and in Yeats's poetry; her public persona and the manner in which she and Iseult Gonne were substituted for Georgie Hyde-Lees in Yeats's affections. Given the title of this study, it is unsurprising that Frazier devotes a considerable amount of attention to Gonne's sexuality in connection with Millevoye and Yeats, yet he only briefly mentions John MacBride. The relationship between Gonne and Millevoye was not a secret in Paris but Gonne strove to keep it a hidden matter in Dublin. Frazier provides a brief, concise and richly detailed biography of Millevoye, whom he describes as a right-wing writer, editor and politician who was a passionate supporter of General Georges Boulanger. When Gonne and Millevoye met, Boulanger

and his “boulangistes” were rapidly rising to power in Paris before 1889. Frazier complicates this matter by noting:

Millevoye made a proposal, but it was not a marriage proposal. That would be impossible. [...] What Lucien Millevoye offered was another sort of *alliance*, a secret one, in which as a pair they would do all they could to harm England, she for the sake of Ireland, and he for Alsace-Lorraine. [...] Maybe he just wanted to enjoy sexual intercourse with Maud Gonne, and so he told her what she wished to hear; i.e., that this was undercover politics, top secret and very deep, and not just sex. Sex was only the way to put a fatal seal on the *alliance*. (41-42)

Whatever the reason for this alliance, so significant was Boulanger to both Gonne and Millevoye that they named their son, conceived in the wake of Boulanger’s fall, Georges. As Frazier points out, “Maud Gonne did not simply have an affair with Lucien Millevoye; she was part of a political team with him” (4-5).

Turning his attention to Gonne and Yeats’s spiritual and physical relationships, Frazier argues that Gonne happily aligned herself with Yeats, becoming his muse, which she knew would assist her fame. According to Frazier, Gonne actively cultivated this relationship to her own benefit and the benefit of Irish Nationalist groups such as Inghinidhenah Éireann, Cumann na nGaedheal and the new Irish National Theatre Society. However, Frazier does state with conviction that Yeats knew about Gonne’s relationship with Millevoye. Moreover, describing when Yeats and Gonne finally consummated their physical relationship, Frazier, quoting Yeats, notes: “The great event when it finally transpired was a disappointment. [...] Nothing could compare with the oft-imagined flesh of the muse; the uncovered body of a 42-year-old mother of three disenchanting him” (244). Thus, the reality of their sexual encounter was not romantic, nor did it live up to Yeats long held fantasy.

Despite the positive aspects of this study, there are a number of negatives that overshadow the otherwise exemplary work. For example, while this study complements Anne Matthews’s *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900-1922* (2010) and “Challenging the Self-Invention of Maud Gonne 1866-1901” (2013), Frazier’s criticism of the inaccuracies found in Gonne’s autobiography is unrelenting, and at times makes for an uncomfortable read. Rather than viewing such inaccuracies as suggestive evidence of Gonne being a manipulator of the truth, this study may have benefitted from a more balanced view or a consideration of the theory of self-fashioning. Frazier’s decision to conclude his study with Yeats’s marriage to Georgie Hyde-Lees in October 1917 and Millevoye’s death in March 1918 is abrupt and somewhat puzzling. Although Gonne “had her glory” (263), her connections with these men continued long after these dates. These issues aside, the amount of archival materials, newspapers and previously neglected or unknown sources considered throughout this study are exceptional. The attention to detail,

the nuanced way in which Frazier addresses Gonno's life and her French, or rather Parisian activities is original and well-conceived. The range of topics covered in this study offer readers a concrete position from which to expand and further consider Gonno's Parisian connections, and the wider interactions between French and Irish figures.

Robert Finnigan

Anne O'Connor, *Translation and Language in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A European Perspective*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 242. £ 89.99 (hardback). ISBN 978-1-137-59851-6.

From Douglas Hyde's translations of Gaelic prose, to Brian Friel's play *Translations* (1980) and Nuala ni Dhomhnaill's poetry collections *Pharaoh's Daughter* (1990) and *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* (2007), the questions and issues of translation have preoccupied Irish authors and Irish studies for over a century. The importance, and by extension the significance of native language rights, have once again been brought to public attention with Britain's exit from the European Union and the case of Northern Ireland as Gaelic speakers lobby for the implementation of the Irish Language Act. In this timely monograph, *Translation and Language in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A European Perspective* (2017), Anne O'Connor focuses on a period of significant linguistic and societal change by questioning the creative, conflictual and hegemonic energies unleashed by translations. However, given that Anthony Pym's *Method in Translation History* (1998), Outi Paloposki's "Translation History: Audience, Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity" (2013), Christopher Rundle's "Theories and Methodologies of Translation History: The Value of an Interdisciplinary Approach" (2014) and Lieven D'hulst's *Essais d'histoire de la traduction. Avatars de Janus* (2014) provide authoritative debates on translation, what new insights into the nature, application and history of translation theory can O'Connor offer?

In the opening of this study, O'Connor answers this question by outlining its purpose:

This book will look at Ireland's connections with Europe in the nineteenth century and how these were forged through language and translation. [...] [A]ttention will be paid to the flows and connections between Ireland and Europe, the movements and circuits that transcend national geographical and linguistic borders. (1)

Much of the insight and pleasure of this study is derived from the solid and thorough research, which is drawn from an array of interdisciplinary sources. O'Connor's inclusion of various original and translated examples are exceptional and worthy highlights, as are the range of topics discussed

throughout this text. Many of the chapters demonstrate with ease that translation is not a static or rigid notion or practice but rather an “aspect of society which can trigger change, disruption and transformation” (17). Among the notable discussions in this study, there is chapter 3, “Translation and Religion”, which provides a guiding concept as the subject of religion is mentioned in all other chapters. Placing religious matters at the centre of her discussion, in this chapter, O’Connor devotes her attention to “a variety of religious publications from sacred texts to auxiliary texts for liturgical, educational and devotional purposes” (16). In chapter 6, “The Female Pen: Translation Activity and Reception”, O’Connor examines the patterns of production and reception of translations by Charlotte Brooke, Jane Elgee, Marty Eva Kelly, Olivia Mary Knight and Frances Cashel Hoey, among others. Arguing that translation “enabled women [...] to participate in the cultural, political” (193), Connor demonstrates with conviction that “woman translating in a male-dominated industry” (17) capitalised on the dynamics of mediation and the sites of new cultural production and construction.

Worthy of particular attention is chapter 2, “The Translation Trade: Economies of Culture in the Nineteenth Century”, examining the trade of translations, specifically the influential agency and patronage of publishers. O’Connor draws on the example of the Dublin publisher, James Duffy. In a nuanced and sensitive discussion, the importance of translations in Duffy’s trade and how his publications acted and reacted to emerging and developing Irish reading trends are emphasised with conviction. As O’Connor notes, “The expansion of the reading public, technological advances and changes in copyright laws all contributed to emerging possibilities in the world of letters in Ireland” (15). Moreover, in her examination of the commercial success of certain types of translation, O’Connor foregrounds that literary success of Duffy stemmed from his engagement with this trade in translations.

Moving forward, chapter 4, “Death of the Author, Birth of the Translator? Translation and Originality on Nineteenth-Century Ireland” is devoted to an examination of the literary sphere, the relationship between translation and originality. By concentrating on the translation activities of Francis Mahony, James Clarence Mangan and their experiments with translation and creativity. Considering the creative tensions in translation as both an original and a derivative text, O’Connor demonstrates how their works “challenged the notions of originality and authorship in the nineteenth century” (16). Furthermore, drawing on the example of James McPherson’s Ossian controversy, O’Connor authoritatively questions the overlaps between translation and imitation, and considers how, in the work of these two translators, translation could function in the liminal space between inspiration and imitation.

In “‘Very Pretty, Signor’: Vernacular and Continental Currents and Clashes”, chapter 7, O’Connor investigates contrasting views and styles concerning the valorisation of Irish translations over Italian importation as seen

in *The Dublin Penny Journal* and *The Comet* in 1832. Employing a micro historical reading of a discussion on the qualities of translations from Italian compared with translations from the Irish language, O'Connor argues that the competitive nature of trade publications "could be used to bolster and galvanise rival sides" (17). Significantly, by exploring these varied translation trends from Irish and from Italian, O'Connor is able to contextualise this collision point as a way of demonstrating how translation activities interacted with literary prestige, competition, valorisation and mobilisation on a European stage. Finally, focusing on examples from Metastasio, Giovanni Battista Casti, Carlo Innocenzo Frugoni, James Hardiman, John O'Donovan and Mangan, O'Connor similarly considers the functions and utilities of translations from Irish as opposed to translations from European languages to question "how the vernacular interacted with the continental in nineteenth-century discourse[s]" (197).

There are a number of negatives that overshadow the otherwise insightful analysis. For instance, O'Connor employs a concerted level of academic jargon and theoretical terminology, which, at times, makes this study appear dense. However, given its specialised nature, this is understandable and attests to the level of research conducted by O'Connor. The number of topics, or aspects of translation studies discussed in this monograph, is, at times, distracting and overwhelming, and this is further evident in a number of essays which appear to be underdeveloped or too brief. The wider range of subjects and topics present will appeal to those with a good working knowledge of translation studies, but it is by no means an introductory text. These issues aside, by drawing on artistic, literary, historical and linguistic materials, O'Connor embraces and employs an interdisciplinary approach with ease. This book will be of interest to those working in the arenas of Translation Studies, Irish and Cultural studies as well as those of History and Comparative Literature.

Robert Finnigan

Manuela Palacios (ed.), *Migrant Shores. Irish, Moroccan & Galician Poetry*. Calligraphies by Hachemi Mokrane, Ennistymon, Salmon Poetry, 2017, pp. 138. € 12. ISBN 978-1-910669-96-9.

Migrant Shores. Irish, Moroccan & Galician Poetry is a collection of poems in which perspectives about the processes and consequences of migration, from the point of view of these three different nationalities, are given a voice. Moreover, this anthology represents a successful attempt to establish a dialogue between Ireland, Morocco and Galicia regarding not only mobility but also identity, gender and translation.

The book under review includes contributions by twenty-eight poets: seven poets from Morocco – Mohammed Bennis, Taha Adnan, Fatima Zah-

ra Bennis, Imane El Khattabi, Mohamed Ahmed Bennis, Aicha Bassry and Mezouar El Idrissi –, seven poets from Galicia – Martín Veiga, Chus Pato, Eva Veiga, Baldo Ramos, Gonzalo Hermo, Marilar Aleixandre, María do Cebreiro –, and fourteen poets from Ireland – Paula Meehan, Máighréad Medbh, Susan Connolly, Hugh O'Donnell, Catherine Phil MacCarthy, Sarah Clancy, Thomas McCarthy, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Lorna Shaughnessy, Maurice Harmon, Celia de Fréine, Keith Payne, Breda Wall Ryan, Mary O'Donnell. The Irish poets have the daunting task to translate the previous texts and respond with a poem. This structure emphasizes the relevance of translation, which goes beyond transcription and tries to render the particular feelings of the source and target communities, languages and cultures. The will to find a common experience of migration combines with the indispensable difference in speech, creating a sort of conversation between both the poems and the poets.

The editor of this anthology, Manuela Palacios, is deeply acquainted with both the edition of compilations and the intercultural discourse generated when different identities come together. Palacios has previous experience with anthologies, such as *To the Winds Our Sails* (2010), *Forked Tongues* (2012) and *Six Galician Poets* (2016), amongst others. Moreover, she has translated European and Arabic literature and has edited and co-edited a number of books in relation with mobility. Most of these publications involve translation as a fundamental tool, but also provide a (textual) space for different languages, identities and subjectivities to interact. Palacios' anthologies always aim to compile and put in contact artists and speeches that are not dominant, and to approach them to the English-speaking world. In this case, the editor opts for presenting two different nations in dialogue with Ireland. In the volume we find two distinct parts: on the one hand, poets from Galicia and Ireland, and poets from Morocco and Ireland on the other. The three countries have a conspicuous history of migration, but the comparison between them is uncommon. Manuela Palacios aims to put together three cultures and literatures which have been traditionally marginalized, and to do so, she chooses a topic such as migration, which clearly exemplifies their historical background, as well as the shared imaginary of the poets who participate in this anthology. Furthermore, *Migrant Shores* stresses the impact of gender on migration, as it looks for female voices to relate these experiences and to make the readers aware of the transversality of oppression. The book seeks to start a conversation among these voices about what it means to be a woman in a foreign land, showing the various and grievous roles they can enact, which range from prostitution to exile.

The collection starts with an introduction written by the editor. Palacios remarks how the topic of migration addresses concepts such as the conspicuous vulnerability of the subjects and their bodies, as well as their belongings. Bearing colonialism (and postcolonialism) in mind, the introductory discussion refers to the shared feeling of dislocation, common to the three

literatures, but not usually compared. Palacios underlines the particular characteristics of women's diaspora and their frequent invisibility, which makes the necessity to talk about them more urgent, especially in the current context. *Migrant Shores* also entails a translation challenge, by which the process of translation becomes a process of creation that remains attentive to the bond between the texts. The format, with the Irish poets replying with their respective poems to the rest of the participants, starts a dialogue between them and stresses their obvious similarities, but also the differences. As in migration, translations become a tool to negotiate with the other and to find the inevitable alterity within the self.

In the texts, relevant poets from Ireland, Morocco and Galicia address topics such as the uncertainty of exile, the process of migration during childhood, the ambivalence of identity or the capacity to (re)learn and (re)position oneself in the world. They also allude to the natural anxiety that comes with migration, the fear to go and the shame to come back, the disappointment of the "promised land", and the bellicose path of fleeing as experienced by the refugees. Furthermore, the book aims to highlight the gendered perspective, with several poems mentioning the position of women in migration, and addressing topics such as prostitution and sexual exploitation. This is poetry that also emphasizes the difficulty of these subjects to reconcile with their subjectivities, being stuck in "a liminal space with no exit" (125). The collection successfully combines promising poets with consolidated ones, deploying an evolutive but coherent discourse throughout the whole book. This dialogue is accompanied by calligraphies by the Algerian artist Hachemi Mokrane, who also illustrates the cover of the book. These calligraphies are not only aesthetic but profound: they foster a narrative from subtle impressions which connect with the general topic of the anthology and with the dialogue established by the poets.

Migrant Shores is of interest for both the general and the academic public, and succeeds at bringing together poets from Morocco, Ireland and Galicia around a common concern. This infrequent exchange provides readers with an insight into migration, but also gender, translation and trauma studies. Moreover, the excellent edition enhances the powerful conversation brought alive from the first page and contributes to promote the writings of twenty-eight exceptional poets in the English-speaking world.

Arancha Rodríguez Fernández

James Joyce, *Pomes Penyeach. Poemi un penny l'uno – Poesie una pena l'una*, a cura di Francesca Romana Paci, Torino, Nuova Trauben, 2017, pp. 64, € 12. ISBN 978-88-9931-214-5.

Nel 1927, sei anni dopo la pubblicazione di *Ulysses* e mentre lavorava a quella che sarebbe diventata la sua opera più impegnativa, *Finnegans Wake*,

James Joyce convinse la casa editrice Shakespeare and Company – la stessa che aveva dato alle stampe l'*Ulisse* – a pubblicare una raccolta di tredici poesie, a cui aveva dato il titolo, fra lo scherzoso e il sibillino, di *Pomes Penyeach*. Solo due erano del tutto nuove; le rimanenti erano già comparse in precedenza, singolarmente, in vari periodici e antologie. Il libro non ebbe il successo sperato; nel corso della vita di Joyce fu ristampato solo due volte senza ottenere particolare attenzione da parte della critica.

Per lungo tempo l'opera poetica di Joyce non ha goduto della stessa attenzione e considerazione della sua produzione narrativa; questa raccolta in particolare è stata giudicata come una sequenza un po' incongrua di poesie scritte in momenti diversi, apparentemente senza alcun legame fra loro. Ma a queste tredici poesie lo scrittore irlandese teneva molto e lo testimoniano, come ricorda Francesca Romana Paci, alcune lettere da lui inviate a Sylvia Beach, in particolare quella del 27 maggio dello stesso anno, in cui le rispediva le poesie in fase di pubblicazione "in their proper order with correct dates" e, appunto, la circostanza che ognuna delle poesie reca l'indicazione della data e del luogo di composizione, la maggior parte a Trieste e Zurigo, una a Dublino e una a Parigi; circostanza, quest'ultima, che permette alla traduttrice-curatrice di affermare che Joyce voleva che alla sequenza delle liriche fosse riconosciuto un ordine geografico-temporale a testimonianza di un percorso "di tipo auto-biografico storico-narrativo". Se ciò è vero, cade naturalmente anche l'accusa che *Pomes Penyeach* non mostri alcuna relazione con tutta l'opera di Joyce. Questo rapporto invece esiste ed è da ricercare nella comune consapevolezza di un ciclo vitale che ha nella trasformazione e nella crescita la sua cifra essenziale. Tale ciclo, per essere espresso, ha bisogno di una struttura portante, che nei racconti passa attraverso la forma-ballata, in *Portrait* e nell'*Ulysses* l'epica, in *Finnegans Wake* ancora la ballata. Anche questa raccolta, apparentemente erratica di poesie sparse, recupera, nell'analisi e nelle riflessioni dell'autrice, la qualità di collezione unitaria, in cui le linee guida sono costituite dalle modulazioni con cui si manifestano il sentimento e la pena d'amore, dall'amore filiale (la prima poesia della raccolta è probabilmente legata allo sconforto per la morte della madre, sentimento complesso, che Joyce riprenderà nel primo episodio dell'*Ulysses*), a quello più intensamente erotico, in cui il desiderio tracima nel rimpianto e nella nostalgia, all'amore come accettazione.

La malinconia di cui sono intrise ricorda certamente, come osserva giustamente Paci, l'ultimo racconto di *Dubliners*, "The Dead", ma anche lo sconforto che accompagna certi momenti delle peregrinazioni di Leopold Bloom attraverso la città-universo di Dublino. Se ciò può essere connesso con momenti autobiografici ripensati e riordinati nell'intento di dare un senso unitario e progressivo a quello che l'esperienza ci presenta in modo caotico e apparentemente irrazionale, non bisogna trascurare l'aspetto più propriamente artistico di questa apparentemente semplice raccolta di poesie, quel

gusto, cioè, per la parola sensuale che si fa musica e la sensibilità per i ritmi, anche della poesia popolare, assunta non come facile pretesto per evocazioni di ambienti e atmosfere pseudo-naïf, ma con quel gusto per la ricerca e valorizzazione di un patrimonio espressivo in cui si celano le radici più profonde e produttive della cultura antropologica e identitaria di un paese. Non vi è neppure assente quell'algolagnia, che il lettore dell'opera di Joyce ritrova particolarmente nel personaggio di Leopold Bloom e in molte lettere inviate da Joyce a sua moglie Nora, in particolare quelle scritte fra i mesi di agosto e dicembre 1909; un'algolagnia che la curatrice intravede perfino nel titolo. Apparentemente semplice da tradurre, a un'analisi più attenta questo *Pomes Penyeach* rivela un alto grado di ambiguità: nella sua stessa formulazione, infatti, tale titolo sembra manifestare quel gusto per la stratificazione semantica, innescata dalla compressione di segni linguistici diversi, anche opposti, in un'unica sequenza verbale, ovvero dalla loro deformazione, che Joyce utilizzerà più diffusamente e coerentemente in *Finnegans Wake*. Ignorando gli ovvii "poesie o po(e)mi, pometti da un soldo", Paci suggerisce, oltre al più immediato "Pomi un penny l'uno", il più stimolante "Poesie una pena l'una", una soluzione che viene ampiamente motivata nelle note – più veri e propri saggi che una serie di semplici annotazioni – e dichiarata nell'ultima poesia della raccolta "A Prayer", dove compaiono locuzioni come "calma crudele", "misera della sottomissione", "la sua parola sconcia" e che si conclude con un esplicito "Prendimi, salvami, consolami, oh, risparmiami".

Come osservato sopra, le note non si propongono come semplici esplicazioni di eventuali "cruces" nel testo, ma come veri e propri brevi saggi, che completano e surrogano quanto argomentato in postfazione.

È una prosa, quella delle note, che tiene costantemente d'occhio il lettore, di cui richiede l'attenzione, ma a cui si vuole evitare qualsiasi dubbio o equivoco di interpretazione, essendo la studiosa consapevole che il fatto che il messaggio parta non garantisce automaticamente che giunga a destinazione o venga recepito correttamente. I concetti fondamentali – quelli che nell'interpretazione della curatrice fanno dei *Pomes Penyeach* un vero e proprio percorso erotico-sentimentale-affettivo alimentato dalla consapevolezza del mutare (che vuol dire maturazione, ma anche vecchiaia e morte) – compaiono più volte, illustrati e esemplificati, nei commenti alle singole poesie, per cui il lettore ha infine la sensazione di aver accompagnato l'autrice nel suo percorso esegetico, e quasi di avervi contribuito. Esiste peraltro un secondo livello di lettura rivolto a lettori più avvertiti, ed è quello che in maniera più sottile fa riferimento a conoscenze che vanno dalla liturgia cattolica alla storia della filosofia alla letteratura inglese, oltre alle citazioni in lingua inglese e latina nel testo non tradotte, le parole greche non traslitterate. Tutti aspetti, peraltro, che Joyce tocca nella sua opera.

Le traduzioni sono spettacolari e certamente molto diverse da quelle proposte precedentemente da altri, pochi, traduttori soprattutto nella resa

delle molte parole composte, come “moongrey nettles” che diventa “ortiche grigioluna”, “seadusk” che approda a un suggestivo “maescuro”, o ancora “Goldbrown”, che con “orobruniti” sembra alludere all’episodio delle Sirene in *Ulysses*; ma anche per senso del ritmo, che dell’originale cerca di mantenere l’alto grado di drammaticità, e per una sorta di tenerezza per il suono delle parole che ne ispirano altre, come in “She Weeps Over Ragoon”, dove il verso che chiude splendidamente la prima quartina, “At grey moonrise” acquista una freschezza inusitata e suggestiva nella traduzione: “Nella grigia alba lunare”.

Molto utili per una piena comprensione dei testi sono, come si è detto, le note che occupano un’ampia sezione del volume, ben 24 pagine, e contengono fra l’altro interessanti e competenti riflessioni sulle sue scelte traduttive. Il titolo della prima poesia della raccolta, per esempio, “Tilly”, viene resa con “Aggiunta”, il che lascia inizialmente sconcertati. Si penserebbe infatti a uno dei possibili significati di “tilly” in inglese, un tipo di tiglio, la cui scorza è tanto velenosa da essere usata per intingervi la punta delle frecce; tale interpretazione sarebbe compatibile con il tono di sconforto degli ultimi due versi, in cui l’io lirico dice di sanguinare “for my torn bough”. Paci però giustifica la sua scelta non affidandosi soltanto a questo specifico testo, ma in primo luogo a un’indagine filologica sul significato che la parola ha non in inglese, ma in *Hiberno-English* e al tono dell’intera raccolta, anzi al macrotesto joyciano, che a ciò, come è noto, si presta particolarmente. Analoghe osservazioni si possono fare, all’interno della stessa poesia, per quanto riguarda la preposizione “above” nel verso “he drives his beasts above Cabra”, che viene tradotta inaspettatamente con “oltre”, piuttosto che “sopra”. Qui la scelta è determinata, non tanto sulla base di considerazioni topografiche (“non ci sono alture significative sopra Cabra”), quanto in considerazione di un percorso interpretativo che legge questa prima poesia della raccolta come una malinconica metafora di una condizione di pena, privazione e morte, per cui il muoversi del pastore e del gregge *attraverso*, più che *sopra* Cabra, acquista un poderoso valore simbolico. Non si tratta infatti di un semplice quadretto bucolico: il sentiero che le pecore e il pastore percorrono non è certo il “tratturo antico” di dannunziana memoria: è una sera d’inverno e il gregge si muove verso casa (ed ecco ricomparire un altro dei temi cari a Joyce, quello del *nostos*), e verso ovest. Nell’accezione popolare, andare verso ovest (going west) è sinonimo di morte e la luce scarsa della sera ne accresce il valore simbolico. Una luce analoga la si ritroverà in molti racconti di *Dubliners*, particolarmente il primo, “The Sisters” e l’ultimo “The Dead”, il che rafforza l’ipotesi che proprio la prima lirica della raccolta esprima lo sconforto del poeta, che a sua volta ci rinvia al primo episodio dell’*Ulisse*, confermando la profonda coerenza che lega le poesie di *Poems Penyeach* tra loro e insieme le collega a tutta la produzione letteraria di Joyce.

Giuseppe Serpillo

Elisabetta D'Erme, *Trieste vittoriana – Ritratti*, prefazione di John McCourt, Monterotondo, fuorilinea, 2017, pp. 363. € 20,00. ISBN 88-965-5141-7.

Quando chi ama la letteratura e le arti, e soprattutto la narrativa e la poesia, pensa oggi a Trieste, i primi nomi che sorgono nella mente sono quelli di Rainer Maria Rilke, di James Joyce, che a Trieste ha trascorso anni fondamentali per la sua vita e la sua opera, di Italo Svevo, di Scipio Slataper, e poi di Umberto Saba, di Fulvio Tomizza, di Gillo Dorfles, di Claudio Magris – e questa è solo una parte di un elenco che dovrebbe essere molto più lungo. La reputazione di Trieste come città “musicalissima”, inoltre, è molto forte, sostenuta dall'attività secolare del suo Teatro Verdi, e dal solido credito del Conservatorio Tartini (per inciso, fondato nel 1903, un anno prima dell'arrivo di Joyce), ma anche da molteplici iniziative musicali private, passate e presenti. Simultaneamente, nell'immaginario europeo e non solo, la città possiede l'antichissimo fascino di un crocevia di culture diverse, di un incontro, e di un varco verso l'altrove – un varco verso grandi spazi, nuova conoscenza, e anche, nel senso più lato, avventura: per i paesi europei più occidentali è un varco verso l'Oriente; per la Mitteleuropa verso il mare e ancora l'Oriente; per il grande Nord è un varco verso l'Italia e oltre nel Sud Adriatico e Mediterraneo. Trieste, in breve, è un panorama culturale che tutte queste prospettive moltiplicano – difficile da cogliere nella sua interezza, ma ancora più difficile da trascurare.

Più di una volta Trieste è stata chiamata “Porta dell'Oriente” (per onore di cronaca, così sono state allo stesso modo chiamate Venezia, Istanbul e anche l'intera Russia). Ora, nel 2017, il libro di Elisabetta D'Erme, *Trieste vittoriana – Ritratti*, offre altre tessere di materiale interessante all'immagine di Trieste e all'immaginazione di chi di Trieste sente tuttora il fascino geografico, storico, multiculturale, e contraddittorio.

Fin dalla prima parte del suo titolo, *Trieste vittoriana*, il lavoro di Elisabetta D'Erme si dichiara un libro di lettura impegnativa, avvicinando, come fa, il nome di Trieste e la sua realtà geopolitica austro-ungarica della seconda metà dell'Ottocento alle realtà politiche e culturali multiple del lungo regno di Vittoria. Se l'aggettivo “vittoriana” è, evidentemente, un'indicazione sia temporale sia di provenienza dei personaggi dei quali saranno tratteggiati i “ritratti”, è anche un segno ben chiaro delle complicazioni e dei travagli di quel periodo storico in Europa e nel vicinissimo Oriente limitrofo – un Oriente, come è stato spesso osservato, che di fatto è un Oriente europeo, limitatamente conosciuto, spesso conturbante. Troppo spesso oggi si tende a trascurare quanto e cosa l'Impero Ottomano abbia rappresentato per le potenze europee e viceversa; e cosa, in seguito, abbia rappresentato la Russia tra Ottocento e Novecento. Un discorso storico difficile che D'Erme tratteggia con brevità ma con efficienza.

I personaggi ritratti da Elisabetta D'Erme sono viaggiatori “britannici” che hanno avuto a che fare con Trieste, o per brevi soste e soggiorni sulla via di altre mete o per lunghi periodi stanziali, collegati a funzioni ufficiali di rap-

presentanza dello United Kingdom. È un dettaglio degno di nota l'attenzione che D'Erme pone nell'uso di "britannico" e "inglese". Questo le permette sia di avere più spazio di indagine sia di sottendere elementi coloniali e para-colonialisti.

Il libro si compone essenzialmente di due parti. La prima parte, *Sguardi vittoriani*, che costituisce circa un terzo del volume, offre un panorama generale di numerosi passaggi e soggiorni nella Trieste dell'Ottocento di viaggiatori provenienti da varie parti del Regno Unito e della letteratura di viaggio che ne consegue e ne è documento – una letteratura di mole impressionante, fatta di *memoir* e resoconti di viaggio scritti dai viaggiatori stessi. I personaggi, quindi, sono, sì, tratteggiati sulla base dei documenti esistenti negli archivi triestini, ma anche su letteratura di viaggio che include ma non tratta solo Trieste. Trieste, per quanto prolungata, interessante o conturbante sia la sosta dei viaggiatori in città, è tuttavia una "stazione di passo" in un insieme. La seconda parte è necessariamente più estesa. Brevemente collegata alla precedente, si evolve poi molto rapidamente nella vera e propria galleria di "ritratti".

La bibliografia che correda il volume, molto ampia e divisa in settori, mostra che gli argomenti che l'autrice tratta hanno già suscitato interesse nel passato e continuano a farlo oggi. Però, è doveroso notarlo, la bibliografia si compone in gran parte di fonti primarie, che mettono in luce un retroterra di lavoro e nello stesso tempo suggeriscono possibilità di studi e ricerche future. L'autrice, d'altronde, dichiara apertamente che il suo è un "work in progress", del quale, anzi, anticipa direzioni e argomenti che si propone di approfondire. Le due parti sono precedute da una prefazione generale di John McCourt, e da un breve e chiaro capitolo dell'autrice stessa, capitolo che fa di quelle pagine una introduzione vera e propria al libro e una dichiarazione di motivazioni e intenti:

Chi erano i viaggiatori che nell'Ottocento arrivarono a Trieste dal Regno Unito? Quali erano le tappe dei loro itinerari? Quali i loro interessi? Chi la scelse come luogo di residenza? Che tipo di città si offriva ai loro occhi? E che cosa trovavano una volta avventuratisi verso l'interno o lungo le coste istriane e dalmate? (19)

Che cosa, inoltre, li affascinava, il luogo – "quel luogo" in particolare – o il viaggio in sé come scoperta? Nel capitolo seguente, intitolato *Viaggiatori versus Turisti*, D'Erme chiarisce subito la distinzione, cara ai britannici, fra "viaggiatori" e "turisti", citando, fra l'altro, Evelyn Waugh (32): "Fino a prova contraria, ogni cittadino inglese all'estero preferisce considerarsi un viaggiatore e non un turista" (da *Lebels: A Mediterranean Journal*, 1930). D'Erme non può, per scelta, esaminare con la teorizzazione delle differenze di Eric Leeds in *The Mind of the Traveler* (1991) gli scritti di viaggio e le personalità di tutti i personaggi che presenta nella prima parte del libro, perché la sua attenzione è programmaticamente focalizzata su Trieste, e Trieste, come già accennato, è solo una tappa di quei viaggi. Ciononostante, i documenti storici, commerciali e sociali, e i frammenti di scritti di viaggio, persino le me-

morabili ottocentesche e novecentesche guide turistiche che D'Erme sceglie di inserire nel racconto aprono scenari interessanti, sia per studiosi di storia, politica, e geografia economica, sia per studiosi di panorami culturali, di letteratura e musica, sia per ipotetici lettori amanti di romanzi come *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) di Anthony Hope. Ovvero: la documentazione reale non riesce a far impallidire neanche oggi il fascino della possibile avventura. Non riesce a farlo neanche per chi abbia letto Marco d'Eramo, che, con ironica sottigliezza, intitola il suo bel libro sul turismo *Il selfie del mondo* (2017) e dichiara con il titolo del primo capitolo che il turismo è "La più importante industria del secolo".

La seconda parte del libro, come già ricordato, è due volte la prima per numero di pagine e affronta i "ritratti" come *close-up* in un contesto. I personaggi sono: Charles James Lever (1806-1872), scrittore irlandese, medico, diplomatico britannico, unionista anomalo, amante della identità e libertà del suo paese; Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890), di padre nord-irlandese e madre inglese, esploratore, viaggiatore avventuroso, orientalista, poliglotta, scrittore, traduttore e diplomatico britannico; Michael William Balfe (1808-1870) musicista, compositore, violinista, direttore d'orchestra e cantante irlandese – padre anglicano, madre cattolica; e il misterioso J. Joyce, non James Augustine Aloysius Joyce, l'autore di *Ulysses*, ma quello che D'Erme chiama "l'altro Joyce".

I rapporti di Charles Lever con l'Italia sono molto lunghi e piuttosto articolati, gli anni trascorsi a Trieste sono gli ultimi cinque della sua vita, dal 1867 al 1872, anno, appunto, della sua morte. Lever non è un personaggio semplice, anzi, perché la sua biografia procede per numerosi mutamenti di contesto e svolte repentine che la rendono difficile da sintetizzare. È stato un romanziere di grande successo, ha vissuto lo scemare del proprio successo, dopo la morte è stato a lungo dimenticato, le sue opere non sono state ristampate (salvo un paio di eccezioni) dai primi del Novecento, e solo ora ci sono cenni di futuro recupero (per avventura alcuni dei romanzi di Lever sono stati ristampati proprio mentre usciva questo libro di D'Erme – e sono ora acquistabili anche in rete). La complessità della vita di Lever porta D'Erme a dedicare ampio spazio alla situazione politica e culturale dell'Irlanda ottocentesca, e a dare cenno delle peregrinazioni di Lever in Germania (conosce Goethe) e in Belgio, e, in particolare, a illustrare i suoi anni pre-Trieste in Italia, dove lo scrittore vive a Firenze, a Bagni di Lucca e a La Spezia. Ci si rende conto così che Lever, nato a Dublino, passò, come James Joyce, la maggior parte della sua vita lontano dall'Irlanda, mentre nelle sue opere l'Irlanda è sempre centro focale e materia di narrazione. James Joyce e suo fratello Stanislaus conoscevano i romanzi di Lever e ne avevano una evidente buona opinione – James lo cita in *Finnegans Wake*, Stanislaus ne parla nel suo inedito diario triestino (107-108). Incidentalmente, anche G.B. Shaw aveva notevole stima per Lever.

A Trieste, Lever arriva nel 1867 e rimane fino alla fine come Console di Sua Maestà Britannica. Sappiamo da numerose sue lettere, che D'Erme cita, come la città, paesaggi a parte, non gli piacesse, e lo irritasse doversi occupare di commercio e imprenditoria. Sappiamo delle sue tendenze depressive, dell'uso di morfina, delle spese eccessive, dei costanti problemi finanziari, del suo spirito cupo, del suo sentirsi in esilio. Ciononostante, Lever scrive a Trieste i suoi romanzi più maturi, *Paul Gosslett's Confessions in Love, Law, and the Civil Service* (1868) – un titolo particolarmente suggestivo se si pensa alla personalità di Lever; *That Boy of Norcott's* (1869); *Lord Kilgobbin, a Tale of Ireland in Our Own Time* (1872); *The Bramleighs of Bishop's Folly* (1868 e 1872). D'Erme, dopo aver fatto notare e deplorato che i romanzi di Lever non siano stati ancora tradotti in italiano, così riassume:

Dall'alto dell'esilio della villa di Chiadino a Trieste, conscio di non essere ormai più da tempo il beniamino dei lettori, Charles Lever seguì nondimeno a scrivere fino all'ultimo giorno della sua vita. I romanzi "impegnati" della maturità avevano perso la chiassosa gioiosità degli esordi ed erano ora percorsi da una buia malinconia mista a cinico umorismo. Anche la sua corrispondenza trasudava amarezza [...]. (111)

Eppure Lever viene a patti con Trieste, e alla fine la considera l'unico luogo in cui può scrivere con una certa tranquillità. Non è possibile ricordare tutte le informazioni e le riflessioni che D'Erme offre, soprattutto quando dai dati appaiono le contraddizioni e i paradossi delle posizioni dello scrittore, la sua poca simpatia per i "commercianti", le amicizie con ricche famiglie ebraiche di Trieste, la sua intelligenza politica della situazione europea, i suoi rapporti negativi con l'*intelligence* poliziesca austriaca, la sua percezione dell'Adriatico. Da tutto questo la curiosità del lettore è vivacemente provocata. Più di tutto lo è dai richiami ad alcuni dei romanzi, che è evidente contengano sagacemente *in disguise* problemi, somiglianze, collegamenti tra Irlanda e Italia, e non solo. Cercare nei romanzi scritti a Trieste i collegamenti profondi tra la città, la visione del mondo che Lever si era costruito, e, non secondariamente, tra la città e la visione di se stesso è una possibile via interessante per future ricerche.

Il Console Lever è seguito a Trieste dal Console Sir Richard Francis Burton, un personaggio apparentemente molto diverso da Lever. Lungi da essere caduto in temporanei o prolungati oblii, Burton ha goduto e gode tuttora di ragguardevole fama. Edward Said, per non fare che un esempio, gli dedica in *Orientalism* abbondante spazio sia in pagine sparse sia in veri e propri passi che sono quasi brevi saggi, nei quali Said, pur considerandolo un "imperialista", apprezza le straordinarie conoscenze linguistiche di Burton e la sua "autentica" cultura circa l'Oriente, indicandone come "prova", tra altri dei suoi lavori "orientali", il famoso resoconto autobiografico *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (1855). Per inciso, spesso, e paradossalmente, il suo nome compare in *Orientalism* insieme a quello di Flaubert, quando quest'ultimo è ricordato per il romanzo *Salammbô*.

Anche per lui Trieste sembra non essere stato un luogo ideale o eletto da scelta personale. Tuttavia Burton rimane a Trieste per quasi diciannove anni, fino alla morte nel 1890, e dalla città, dai paesi limitrofi e soprattutto dalle coste orientali dell'Adriatico mostra di saper trarre moltissimo; a Trieste intraprende e conclude le sue famose traduzioni delle *Mille e una notte* e del *Kama Sutra*. Anche nel caso di Burton, la costruzione del "ritratto" richiede a D'Erme un assemblaggio di non poca documentazione precedente il consolato a Trieste – un lavoro non facile data la vita avventurosa di Burton, i suoi moltissimi viaggi in tutto il globo, e la mole dei suoi scritti. Irrequieto e contraddittorio, Burton sa comunque vedere e godere della bellezza dove la trova, e ha l'immaginazione per mitologizzarla e scenografizzarla. D'Erme definisce una "mito-biografia" *The Life of Captain Sir R. F. Burton*, che la moglie di Burton, Isabel Arundell, scrive dopo la morte del marito e pubblica nel 1893:

Il secondo volume, che conta 665 pagine, inizia appunto con il loro arrivo a bordo della 'Marocco' e fornisce la descrizione, praticamente giorno per giorno, dei diciannove anni che Richard e Isabel trascorsero nella città giuliana. Quindi è la voce di Isabel, adorante, agiografica e censoria a parlarci di Burton in quella che possiamo tranquillamente definire una "mito-biografia". (210)

I Burton, con migliaia di libri e cimeli preziosi, si sistemano dapprima in un appartamento di ventisette stanze, e poi in una elegante villa circondata da un grande giardino, situata in Largo del Promontorio, un luogo di una bellezza che non può che ispirare *Stimmung* romantica. Pure, ancora più della villa i Burton amano Opicina, dove hanno quello che D'Erme chiama un "pied-à-terre" presso una nota locanda, e dove la mito-biografia racconta che abbiano passato giorni molto felici. L'interazione di Burton con Trieste e i suoi dintorni vicini e meno vicini scaturisce vivace dalle pagine di D'Erme, che unisce i dati delle sue ricerche ai racconti di Isabel: i Burton hanno molti amici, pranzano in grandi alberghi e in trattorie all'aperto, esplorano aree archeologiche, luoghi pittoreschi, compiono ascensioni e passeggiate in montagna, nuotano nell'Adriatico, perlustrano il Carso, l'Istria e buona parte della Dalmazia. Burton, tra l'altro, vede somiglianze tra i "Castellieri" istriani e simili *compound* celtici. Ispirati da questi viaggi, rimangono numerosi scritti di Burton, scritti, che, fa notare D'Erme, non sono mai stati tradotti in italiano, e in generale non sono abbastanza valorizzati.

I Burton amano l'opera – a Trieste e a Venezia assistono, tra altro, alla tetralogia wagneriana del Nibelungo, all'*Aida* verdiana, e al *Mefistofele* di Boito (214). Il particolare apprezzamento per Arrigo Boito, del quale il libro di D'Erme non può ovviamente andare a fondo, è un elemento che potrebbe aprire un sentiero letterario e musicale piuttosto interessante, pen-

sando che in quegli anni la Scapigliatura era nata e continuava a espandersi – e pensando anche che Burton era amico e ammiratore di Swinburne e del pittore Frederick Leighton.

Il periodo triestino, comunque, è soprattutto quello in cui l'onnivoro Burton traduce integralmente e annota *Le mille e una notte*, basando il lavoro su una collazione dei testi delle versioni disponibili (sono almeno cinque). D'Erme puntigliosamente informa che il manoscritto di Burton, pubblicato in sedici volumi, consta di tremila quattrocento quindici pagine! (217).

La figura di Michael William Balfe è il terzo "ritratto". È immediatamente chiaro quanto D'Erme ami Balfe, la sua musica e il suo genio irlandese di "farsi" cosmopolita. Come già accennato, Balfe, che parla anche italiano, francese e tedesco, si muove spesso attraverso l'Europa, da Parigi a Londra, a Vienna, a San Pietroburgo, a Dublino, e vive lunghi e intensi rapporti con l'Italia, da Milano, a Bergamo, Palermo, Venezia e, appunto, Trieste (nel "ritratto" si citano una mezza dozzina, o più, di altre città italiane). D'Erme lamenta che Balfe non abbia lasciato altri scritti se non la sua musica (e poche lettere) e che avesse l'abitudine di distruggere le sue agende e libretti di appunti. Ma la sua musica resta, e resta la documentazione di archivio delle rappresentazioni delle sue opere e delle sue interpretazioni in opere altrui come baritono e/o basso, così come di altre funzioni musicali che assunse, come, per esempio, quella di "maestro concertatore". È molto popolare e deve certamente molta della sua popolarità alla grande capacità di creare melodie, pezzi che sono quasi canzoni (o vere e proprie canzoni), che il pubblico memorizzava e a sua volta cantava fuori dal teatro – così, vale la pena di aggiungere, accadeva anche per Rossini, Donizetti e Verdi. Inoltre, Balfe è ricordato con evidente piacere "melodico" nelle opere di numerosi scrittori e poeti, tra i quali, come è noto, James Joyce (non solo in *Dubliners*, ovunque, nel *Portrait*, in *Ulysses*, in *Finnegans Wake*).

Ancora giovanissimo, Balfe conosce Rossini, a Parigi, e ne riceve l'apprezzamento e soprattutto l'aiuto. Le pagine dei rapporti con Rossini sono tra le più godibili del libro. Balfe è presto felicemente sposato con la soprano austriaca Lina Roser (1810-1888), una primadonna di quel periodo e parte di un entourage che comprende cantanti quali Maria Malibran (grande amica di Balfe) e Giuditta Pasta. Oltre che con Rossini, Balfe ha in seguito rapporti d'amicizia con Bellini, con Donizetti (fino alla triste fine), e altri compositori italiani, dei quali conosce anche i librettisti, con cui a volte collabora.

Non sembra, ci informa D'Erme, che avesse particolari interessi politici (neanche in Irlanda), ma certamente sapeva muoversi, salvo qualche inciampo, nella complicatissima Italia e nella complicatissima Trieste. Balfe risiede a Trieste in due riprese, la prima nel 1833, la seconda dal 1853 al 1854; prima quindi sia di Lever sia di Burton, D'Erme, però, ne fa il suo terzo "ritratto", inserendolo dopo gli altri due. Le date sono importanti dal

punto di vista politico e storico, perché indicano che, anche se non si occupava di politica, Balfe era costretto a tenere conto della situazione. Particolarmente interessanti, e, per come sono riferite da D'Erme, divertenti, sono le vicende delle trasformazioni che deve subire l'opera forse più nota di Balfe, *The Bohemian Girl* (prime rappresentazioni a Londra, 1843, e a Dublino, 1844). La finta zingara può essere boema e Taddeo può essere polacco e patriota a Londra e a Dublino, ma non possono esserlo in area asburgica e per giunta in quegli anni di accese rivendicazioni nazionali. Così a Trieste (1854) alcuni dettagli della trama dell'opera e il paese dove la storia si svolge devono cambiare. E i cambiamenti non sono pochi, anche perché le vicende sono piuttosto intricate e, ovviamente, melodrammatiche. Non si può ricalcare tutti i percorsi, tenuto anche conto che il librettista Alfred Bunn (citato anche da Joyce) si ispira al libretto di Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges per la pantomima e balletto *The Gipsy* (musica di François Benoist e Ambroise Thomas), libretto a sua volta ispirato alla novella *La gitanilla* di Cervantes (282-287). Basti ricordare questo: Saint-Georges ambienta la vicenda in Scozia, Bunn, per evidenti ragioni, trasferisce la vicenda in Boemia: Thaddeus è un irredentista polacco, l'oppressore è l'impero asburgico. Una simile trama a Trieste avrebbe provocato un "incidente diplomatico" (297, 299), e quindi il librettista e traduttore italiano Riccardo Paderni deve modificare Bunn e ritornare nella Scozia di Saint-Georges, cambiando anche il titolo, che diventa *La zingara*, e modificando alcuni nomi e dettagli – il libretto italiano è conservato al Civico Museo Centrale Carlo Schmidl di Trieste e, scrive D'Erme

[...] mostra la natura censoria degli altri cambiamenti del plot: l'azione si volge ora in una 'fiorente valle tra la Scozia e l'Inghilterra' [...]. Thaddeus è diventato Gualtiero, nobile scozzese fuggitivo, che lotta per l'indipendenza della Scozia dalla Gran Bretagna [...]. (301)

Insomma, pur non occupandosi di politica e di irredentismo irlandese, Balfe, probabilmente senza grande trasporto, finisce per apparire un patriota irlandese. Comunque *La zingara* a Trieste "fu un trionfo" di repliche, pubblico e critica (303-307).

D'Erme, infine, dedica le ultime pagine del suo libro allo sfuggente "altro Joyce", del quale non si è ancora scoperta l'identità, ma del quale resta un libro, *Recollections of the Salzkammergut, Ischl, Salzburg, Bad Gastein with a Sketch of Trieste* (1850), in cui a Trieste sono dedicate ben una cinquantina di pagine, che D'Erme definisce "splendide", argute e precise. Così, per ora, termina la galleria di "ritratti" che contribuiscono alla rappresentazione del paesaggio materiale e immateriale di Trieste, ma, come già anticipato, D'Erme intende proseguire le ricerche.

Francesca Romana Paci

Renzo Crivelli, *Un amore di Giacomo. Poemetto in prosa di James Joyce nella Trieste di primo Novecento*, Roma, Castelvechi, 2017, pp. 221. € 22,00. ISBN 978-88-3282-111-6.

Sedici pagine in tutto, in ognuna smilzi paragrafi di poche righe, distanziati uno dall'altro da larghi spazi bianchi; pagine scritte a Trieste, mai date alle stampe durante la vita del suo autore, eppure *Giacomo Joyce*, breve testo misterioso, pubblicato per la prima volta da Faber nel 1968, a cura di Richard Ellmann (uscito in italiano nello stesso anno, tradotto da Francesco Binni), è stato e continua a essere oggetto di studio e di letture critiche quasi incredibilmente numerose, non ultima quella di Enrico Frattaroli in uno dei "Quaderni" di *Studi irlandesi* (2015) – (a Frattaroli Crivelli dedica qualche pagina). Non è facile neppure dire cosa sia *Giacomo Joyce*: poesia in prosa? insieme di "sketches" in prosa, come dopo tutto dice lo stesso Joyce in una lettera a Pound? appunti per uso futuro, ancorché non programmati come tali? sfogo emozionale per raggiungere il superamento di una crisi? ricerca di ordine attraverso la scrittura? o strumento di *revanche*, magari sotto la guisa di un dono, un dono mai consegnato? L'indicazione più usata dagli studiosi (si evita la parola "definizione" perché suonerebbe davvero inappropriata) è quella di "poemetto in prosa"; e questa è anche la scelta di Renzo Crivelli, che ne discute con ampiezza nell'ultima parte del terzo capitolo del libro – quasi a fine libro, quasi una richiesta di rilettura (156-171).

Crivelli con *Un amore di Giacomo* costruisce intorno a *Giacomo Joyce* un contesto insieme ampio e minuzioso, concreto e immateriale, ideale, ma non irreale. Durante una conversazione, Crivelli stesso ha chiamato il suo lavoro "un racconto". Un racconto, comunque, che si allarga in cerchi sempre più ampi, ma assolutamente non attenuati, includendo dati, informazioni, testimonianze, interpretazioni critiche e, infine, un immaginario verosimile – come a un certo punto Crivelli suggerisce, un immaginario amoroso barthiano (133).

Il libro, dopo una relativamente breve "Introduzione", si compone di quattro capitoli, articolati in sottocapitoli; l'insieme irradia collegamenti molteplici, a volte canonici e a volte sorprendenti; i titoli dei primi tre capitoli, "Un amore di Giacomo", "Ma chi è 'Chi?'" "A scuola di desiderio" sono la linea guida della ricerca; il quarto capitolo, succinto, è una descrizione ragionata del paratesto/dei paratesti del poemetto, e opera come raccordo funzionale con la riproduzione dell'intero testo di *Giacomo Joyce*; il testo in sé, preceduto da fotografie d'epoca, segue tradotto in italiano dallo stesso Crivelli; ognuna delle sezioni che compongono le sedici pagine del "poemetto" è da Crivelli identificato con un numero romano, per facilitare i riferimenti; il volume è completato da note, bibliografia e indici.

Prima di tutto, conviene considerare il titolo dato da Crivelli al suo libro: con *Un amore di Giacomo*, l'autore vuole deliberatamente e apertamente

richiamare la parte intitolata *Un amour de Swann* (il famoso romanzo nel romanzo) della sezione *Du côté de chez Swann* della *Recherche du temps perdu* di Proust. Giacomo è a suo modo *persona* di Joyce, come Swann lo è di Proust – *bien entendu*, ciascuno a suo modo. Nel caso di Joyce, ben più di qualche dettaglio favorisce la trasparenza – per esempio il suo nome, che compare due volte, Jamesy (foglio 6; XVII) e Jim (foglio 15; XLV); e il nome di Nora, che compare, molto strategicamente, verso la fine del “poemetto” (fondo pagina del foglio 15; XLV); inoltre compare una menzione del *Portrait* (foglio 12; XXXIV) e una di *Ulysses*, una, ma complessa, entro una sezione rimarchevolmente lunga rispetto alle altre (foglio 15; XLV). Quello che non compare mai è il nome dell’“amore di Giacomo”. E il nome della fanciulla è un mistero che ha appassionato notevolmente tanto il pubblico dei lettori quanto una buona parte dei critici di Joyce. Anche se non ci può essere dubbio che il *battage* internazionale che ha preceduto e seguito la pubblicazione di *Giacomo Joyce* nel 1968 sia stato principalmente una operazione pubblicitaria. Crivelli nella sua “Introduzione” ripercorre alcune delle tappe salienti di tutta la vicenda, dal ritrovamento del “poemetto”, alla interpretazione e pubblicazione di Ellmann, ai commenti triestini circa il “frammento amoroso”, fino alle osservazioni angolose di Helen Barolini in un articolo uscito sulla *New York Review of Books* subito dopo la pubblicazione.

Chi era, dunque, quell’amore triestino? È Amalia Popper? O un’altra allieva di Joyce? O una sovrapposizione di diverse fanciulle? È importante sapere un nome? Si può leggere *Giacomo Joyce* senza sapere con precisione chi era la giovane donna? È una questione di “doxa” *versus* “episteme”, o viceversa? Vale la pena notare ancora una volta che il “poemetto” inizia con una domanda lapidaria, “Who?”. La risposta, invece, non può essere lapidaria. Crivelli affronta il testo estraendo da ogni pericope del poemetto dati e segni per sostenere la ricostruzione del contesto triestino di allora, che a sua volta diventa via di comprensione, meglio di “intellezione” del testo. Nella scrittura di Crivelli il contesto cresce, pagina dopo pagina, energico e vivo sia in sé sia nel vissuto amoroso di Giacomo, un vissuto amoroso che sembra proprio includere più di una giovane donna, tutte appartenenti a una classe sociale alta e facoltosa, tutte brune, e tutte ebreë – impossibile non pensare alle belle, sensuali e ricche ebreë di “A Little Cloud” e di “Counterparts” in *Dubliners*.

Si inizia con l’arrivo di James Joyce e Nora Barnacle a Trieste, in una città che Crivelli mostra al lettore come se fosse vista dagli occhi dei due giovani irlandesi e insieme da quelli di un osservatore bene informato su di loro e sulla città (informato, non onnisciente). Si prosegue poi rapidamente lungo una linea guida sostanzialmente cronologica. La nascita del primo figlio, qualche problema tra lo scrittore e Nora, gli eccessi alcoolici, le frequentazioni della zona di Cavana. La prima fanciulla, la prima allieva ricca e alto-borghese, è Annie Schleimer; unica femmina della famiglia, ha sette fratelli, è attraente (così la mostra la fotografia che Crivelli include a fondo libro), ama la mu-

sica, possiede e suona professionalmente un buon pianoforte, ama gli sport, ama le escursioni in montagna, alle quali si unisce talvolta anche Joyce, gode di più libertà di quella solitamente concessa alle figlie femmine – si parla persino di un “bacio rubato” (31). Annie, una sua amica ha avuto occasione di raccontare, ormai non più giovane, conservava ancora un fascio di lettere di Joyce e una copia di *Ulysses* annotata ai margini, ma nulla di tutto questo è stato, finora, ritrovato (32).

Dopo l'intervallo romano, un'altra allieva irrompe nella galleria di fanciulle triestine, Amalia Popper, anche lei attraente, ricca e alto borghese. Per Ellmann, come noto ai joyciani, è lei l'amore di Giacomo, mentre per altri (autorevoli), come è altrettanto noto, Amalia è importante, ma è una di una piccola schiera di agoniste (in senso proprio). L'elegante Amalia (di lei restano fotografie) si attaglia bene al ruolo inconsciamente disdegnoso di “a young person of quality” (foglio 1; I), alla frequenza a teatro (foglio 12; XXXVI), ai *lorgnette* (foglio 1; I), alle inclinazioni letterarie; inoltre, nonostante due soggiorni della fanciulla a Firenze per motivi di studio (41), i tempi sono compatibili con tutta la vicenda amorosa (nonostante le obiezioni di Helen Barolini!). Anche a casa Popper c'è un pianoforte e si tengono serate musicali, cui Joyce partecipa. Inoltre Amalia si interessa all'opera letteraria del suo professore di inglese – come è noto, in seguito tradurrà alcuni racconti di *Dubliners* e scriverà una succinta biografia di Joyce.

Ma, lasciando da parte una certa Signorina G., per altro decisamente accattivante (48-49), altre figure femminili altolocate condividono negli anni joyciani la scena triestina e l'attenzione di Joyce. Per prima, Crivelli racconta di Emma Cuzzi, che prende lezioni di inglese da Joyce insieme a due amiche, Olivia Hannapel, e Maria Luzzatto. Sono tutte e tre giovanissime; una fotografia a fondo libro le mostra insieme, ognuna attraente a modo suo – si deve guardarle a lungo: unite e stranamente disunite dalla coreografia statica della fotografia, le tre figure sono orientate con un lieve scarto, ognuna guarda in direzione diversa, nessuno sguardo converge. Emma Cuzzi, pur non bellissima, appare fresca, carnale e solida; è una donna che ama le gite in montagna e pratica sport, ha una passione per l'equitazione; “Emma, la cavallerizza” è chiamata (110) – in famiglia si amano i “purosangue” (71); e, forse, Emma può persino suscitare un ricordo di Hedda Gabler. Comunque, Emma appare la più vicina a Joyce. Olivia Hannapel e Maria Luzzatto sono entrambe molto belle e, leggiamo, sembra che suscitino in Joyce sia attrazione sia un acuto risentimento di classe – Crivelli appoggia il suo discorso, in parte, anche a studiosi che lo hanno preceduto (81-82).

Ma la domanda è sempre: chi è “Who” in questa raffinata schiera di fanciulle? Crivelli percorre cronologicamente gli anni triestini paralleli al testo di *Giacomo Joyce*, ed è abile nel suggerire indizi, possibilità, e insieme nel non pretendere suggelli di verità rivelata. Scrive, per esempio, nel sottocapitolo “Una e nessuna”:

Tanti sono gli “indizi” che portano, a seconda delle interpretazioni, a ognuna di queste giovani donne. E, in alcuni casi, essi si incrociano e si mescolano fra di loro. [segue un elenco di “indizi”] Certo è che, per tutte e tre queste ragazze, vale il forte *appeal* sessuale e sentimentale che muove “Giacomo” a vagheggiarle in tutti modi. [...] Sembra quasi che per lui l’unità fisica lasci il posto a una frammentazione a metà fra la suggestione degli stereotipi attrattivi del suo tempo e una declinazione feticistica degli “strumenti” del desiderio [...] c’è tutto l’immaginario maschile degli inizi del Novecento, legato ai tipi di abbigliamento femminile in voga. [...] da quelli della supposta innocenza dell’alta borghesia a quelli espliciti delle donne di Cavana. E in mezzo a loro [...] Nora [...]. (113-114)

La parola “stereotipi” è particolarmente importante. La posizione di Nora è inquietante: qual è, infatti, la posizione di Nora tra “a person of quality” e una giovane donna in un bordello? Nora, dice Crivelli (120), sembra “sintetizzare”. Certamente, in ogni caso, Nora è raggiungibile, le fanciulle ricche dell’alta borghesia non lo sono, non per Giacomo Joyce – “Che coltura!” (foglio 1; III), sì, ma non un giovanotto “di classe” e, per giunta, è senza soldi. Anche su questo lavora la creatività mitopoietica di Joyce, mettendo Giacomo al centro di una situazione che vuole adombrare una allegoria di tradimento – e di sacrificio, perché il tradimento produce un sacrificio mistico, una “Passione”. In *Giacomo Joyce* entra se non esattamente la liturgia qualcosa più di una allusione al Venerdì Santo (foglio 10, XXVIII). La rappresentazione ha aspetti di mitizzazione grandiosa. Crivelli scava nelle immagini, nelle allusioni e nelle irradiazioni dirette e velate del testo nelle ultime pagine del capitolo “Ma chi è ‘Chi?’”. Il testo joyciano ha momenti di penetrante intensità poetica. Basti l’esempio, per gusto personale di chi scrive, della breve pericope “quia frigus erat”, onni-dominante nel vasto spazio allusivo, sacro e dissacrato, di una chiesa, parigina e triestina insieme (foglio 10; XXVIII); quelle tre parole, provenienti dal *Vangelo di Giovanni* (18,18), ci obbligano a riconoscere quanto sia insufficiente qui l’aggettivo “sinestetico”, il primo a venire alla mente, ma che veicola solo una pallida indicazione della carica poetica di quelle tre parole e del collocamento che Joyce costruisce per loro. Forse è una irradiazione eccessiva, ma come respingere il pensiero che nel *Vangelo di Giovanni*, poco dopo (19,5), compare “Et dicit eis: Ecce homo”? Sicuramente non è, invece, eccessiva la irradiazione che collega la sezione con la poesia “Nightpiece” (Trieste, 1915) in *Pomes Penyeach*, e le sue inquietanti e solenni risonanze “ecclesiali” – si pensi all’ultimo verso, “waste of souls”.

Alla fine, comunque, ritornando al “racconto”, è evidente che, se Amalia è forte e centrale, imperante, tutte quelle figure femminili (le tre principali, Annie, Amalia, Emma, e poi Olivia e Maria – e forse altre?) sono tributarie della creazione di “un amore”. A questo punto Crivelli, oltre che puntualmente al testo di *Giacomo Joyce*, si appoggia anche ad altre opere di Joyce, a *Dubliners* e soprattutto al *Portrait*, che del resto, come già accennato, è di-

rettamente menzionato in *Giacomo Joyce* (foglio 12; XXXIV). La lettura è trascinante. Se le giovani donne e le loro famiglie sono rappresentate vive nel loro *milieu*, o contesto o se si vuole cronotopo (e non è poco), così, nel racconto, è rappresentato anche Joyce a Trieste – qui, a buon diritto, lo si può dire il *personaggio Joyce a Trieste*. I collegamenti di immagini e di pensieri con il *Portrait*, il ripetersi di coreografie sceniche e di contemplazione del “personaggio” senziente sono palesi: Stephen e Giacomo guardano entrambi da una posizione di fatto solitaria, sono in scena e contemporaneamente fuori scena; non solo spettatori, sono osservatori, attori e creatori, e, ci si permette di dire, *cameramen* e registi di se stessi. L’interesse di Joyce per la nascente arte cinematografica è ben noto. Impossibile, a margine, non ricordare, con le dovute differenze, il quadro di Velázquez, *Las meninas*, e le pagine che al quadro dedica Michel Foucault in *Les mots et les choses* (nel famosissimo quadro il pittore è lui stesso un personaggio del quadro). Senza porre se stesso nel quadro, è troppo professionale per farlo in un libro come questo (ma altrove potrebbe benissimo farlo!), anche Crivelli è un buon *cameraman*; particolarmente versato negli indugi sui dettagli e nelle fughe da indugi troppo lunghi.

Nel terzo capitolo, “A scuola di desiderio”, Crivelli fa compiere al “racconto” una virata di qualche grado verso l’alleanza, le alleanze, di intelletto e carnalità. Prende l’avvio dai *Frammenti di un discorso amoroso* di Roland Barthes. L’affermazione “il discorso amoroso [...] aderisce all’Immagine”, citata da Crivelli (129), guida il percorso. “Immagine” ha la lettera maiuscola, che invita a includere immagini viste dal senso preposto, e anche immagini pensate, immagini create nel linguaggio, create nella mente – del resto l’etimologia di “idea”, con qualche passaggio, è la stessa di “vedere”.

Nella “Scuola di desiderio” chi sono gli scolari, chi è l’insegnante, e cosa si insegna? La scuola “anatomizza” non solo e non tanto “l’oggetto d’amore” quanto l’innamorato (131 e seguenti), e insieme l’esprimersi nel testo – con il testo – dell’innamorato Giacomo. Crivelli assale la rocca *Giacomo Joyce* con tutti i mezzi, passando dalla raffinata astuzia di Barthes alle doviziose analisi di Jacques Lacan, molto interessato a Joyce, analisi che si estendono anche alle notorie lettere “oscene” tra Joyce e Nora. Il desiderio amoroso, la sua fisicità, la sessualità materiale, la sessualità come storia individuale, come costruzione immaginativa, la sessualità come mitopoiesi sono affrontate avvalendosi nello stesso tempo di una raggiera di rapporti di *Giacomo Joyce* con le altre opere dell’autore, *Ulysses*, il *Portrait* e anche *Stephen Hero* e *Pomes Penyeach*.

Particolarmente interessante la disamina circa il feticismo, che, peraltro, è tutt’altro che un fenomeno univoco e che si esprime in molti gradi. Senza dubbio Joyce è feticisticamente attratto da svariati e numerosi articoli di abbigliamento femminile, e, ovviamente, soprattutto dalla biancheria intima, che tocca la carne calda della donna e con quella carne non solo si identifica, si unisce. Pure, c’è qualcosa di più, anche se pellicce, guanti, calze, cappelli e *lingerie* fanno parte del feticismo più convenzionale e senza tempo. Come

osserva Crivelli, essi “sembrano avere la caratteristica di oggetti quotidiani trasfigurati dal desiderio sessuale. A fare la differenza è la loro valenza erotica oggettiva, che implica un aggancio culturale all’immaginario di chi li osserva” (145). “Valenza erotica” resa oggettiva dal vissuto di chi guarda e immagina, o soltanto immagina. C’è qualcosa di più perché l’amore erotico si estende dal corpo amato all’oggetto, l’oggetto, diventa parte del corpo, ne assume il calore, la forma, il movimento, l’attrattiva. Pensiamo alla “linguetta” di pelle di uno stivaletto, “boots laced in deft crisscross over the flesh-warmed tongue” (foglio 4, X): la linguetta si assimila alla carne, quasi si fa carne, carne di lei – e “tongue”, inoltre, è “linguetta” e insieme ben più di “linguetta”. Questa assimilazione, questo farsi estensione del corpo dell’amata (o dell’amato) si opera anche per i luoghi, per una casa, una stanza, un mobile, un giardino, un albero, e non è solo joyciana, ha un lungo *pedigree*; non è poi così algido, per esempio, neanche Petrarca quando scrive di un ramo, “gentil ramo ove piacque / (con sospir mi rimembra) / a lei di fare al bel fianco colonna” (Canzone XXVII).

Come dice Crivelli “*Giacomo Joyce* contiene molti enigmi” (156). E Crivelli propone vie convincenti di interpretazione e soluzione, dal tema composito degli occhi, del contatto visivo, della visione, della vista fisiologica, dei grandi problemi di vista di Joyce, alla questione della “confezione e forma” del poemetto (156), inclusi l’aspetto del *layout* materiale del testo, la disposizione delle pericopi sui fogli e gli spazi bianchi – Crivelli, commentando Frattaroli, scrive: “Gli spazi bianchi, dunque, sono *parte* del testo.” (165-166).

Particolarmente interessante all’interno del discorso la inscindibilità di forma e contenuto – importante, anche se non va più di moda parlare di unità di *forma e contenuto* se non in connessione con un certo modernariato della critica. Crivelli cita Giorgio Melchiori; quindi quella che qui segue, incastonata nelle parole di Crivelli, è la citazione di una citazione, ma vale la pena:

[C]i troviamo di fronte a “un’opera compiuta e conclusa, esperimento pienamente riuscito in una forma totalmente originale di scrittura, che partecipa del racconto, del diario, del saggio, dell’autobiografia e della lirica, senza essere nessuno di essi”. La sua originalità, innanzi tutto, risiede nella collocazione di “ricordo” tra una prima stesura, datata 1904, di *Un ritratto dell’artista da giovane*, e la sua forma definitiva, uscita nel 1914. (159)

Personalmente, aggiungerei, quasi scusandomi, che, in particolare, il “ricordo” è massimamente cospicuo con le ultime pagine del quinto capitolo del *Portrait*. Crivelli, a sua volta, aggiunge: “Per cogliere la reale struttura di *Giacomo Joyce* occorre inquadrare questo testo sperimentale nell’ambito del movimento imagista [...]” (160). L’Imagismo e, in modo complesso, Pound hanno su Joyce un effetto profondo; su quell’effetto Crivelli scrive pagine molto interessanti (160-164). Joyce non ha in Pound una fiducia *toto corde*,

vorrebbe da lui una fedeltà più assoluta, ma dalla struttura lirica dell'imagismo poundiano è senz'altro influenzato (Pound non sembra accorgersene). Lo si può osservare, come ho avuto occasione di scrivere, anche in alcune poesie di *Pomes Penyeach*, che del resto sono state in parte composte negli anni della creazione di *Giacomo Joyce*.

C'è ancora un aspetto di *Giacomo Joyce* che vorrei considerare: l'infelicità. L'infelicità è data per implicita: infelicità per l'amore non concesso, per l'amore che non risponde, per l'*omen* e la realtà del calare della vista, sì, certo, ma anche per un diffuso e prepotente senso di inferiorità sociale, principalmente dovuta al censo, e a un forte orgoglio che antagonizza l'offesa del classismo. Le allusioni e osservazioni sparse di Crivelli sono tante (73; 74; 90, desiderio di "fare un salto di classe"; 97; 103; 106); e parecchie altre, più oblique. Qualche nota simile si trova nella "Introduzione" di Ellmann, e anche nella "Prefazione" di Binni (entrambe 1968).

Quanto a Joyce, segni di sofferenza per un classismo che lo offende e per un orgoglio lancinante compaiono in tutte le sue opere, in *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, nel *Portrait* (soprattutto), in *Ulysses*, in *Finnegans Wake*. Si potrebbe dire, con il poeta nord-irlandese (britannico) Louis MacNeice, "the earth compels" (è anche titolo di una sua raccolta poetica, 1938) – la terra costringe, obbliga, forza da noi le nostre reazioni. È fantasioso pensare a un timore di svirilizzazione provocato dalla povertà e dalla differenza di classe, e quindi a un desiderio di *revanche*? non credo – per inciso, timore e *revanche*, ben più vistosi, sono anche in D. H. Lawrence.

In alcune sezioni di *Giacomo Joyce* il risentimento di classe si manifesta in brevissimi giudizi sulla giovane donna, come del resto avviene almeno nella poesia "A Flower Given to My Daughter" in *Pomes Penyeach* – non l'aggettivo "frail", ma "sere", al terzo verso, mentre "time's wanwave" si concilia, inquietante, con la data del 1913.

Anche la copiatura "in bella" su fogli speciali può avere qualcosa a che fare con la questione della classe sociale. Prima di tutto implica una struttura pensata, portante e strutturante; ovvero: la copiatura in bella e i fogli di carta da disegno sono paratesti importanti, intrascurabili. Ma consideriamo quello che dice Ellmann nel 1968 sul manoscritto:

Joyce wrote it in his best calligraphic hand [...] on both sides of eight large sheets [...]. The sheets are of heavy paper, oversize, of the sort ordinarily used for pencil sketches rather than for writing assignments. They are faintly reminiscent of those parchment sheets on which in 1900 Joyce wrote out the poems of *Chamber Music* for his wife. (Ellmann 1968, XI-XII)

Possiamo immaginare che quei fogli siano stati preparati per essere un dono? Se è così, il dono è vendicativo, spietato verso la donna oggetto d'amore e anche verso se stesso, un dono venato a suo modo di masochismo insieme

infantile e rovente, una sorta di accusa: “io ti ho amata, e ora leggi in questi fogli cosa mi hai fatto” – e allora? “What then? Write it, damn you, write it! What else are you good for?”; “E allora? Scrivilo, dannazione, scrivilo! Che altro sai fare?” (foglio 16; XLVI).

Francesca Romana Paci

Giovan Battista Fianza, *Luke Wadding's Art. Irish Franciscan Patronage in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, St. Bonaventure, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2016, pp. viii + 248. USD 79.95. ISBN 978-15-76594018.

The Irish Franciscan Luke Wadding can be considered one of the most outstanding figure in Irish history. However, with the exception of few analyses, his acumen combined with his capacity to play many influential roles at the Papal Curia are still wrapped in mystery. The new book of Giovan Battista Fianza sheds light on one of the most unknown side of Wadding's career and activity which is his role as art patron.

Structured in seven chapters with ten appendices, the author relies on new untapped sources to demonstrate how and to which extent the Irish Franciscan played a key role in the competing and often tricky context of patronage in seventeenth-century Rome. After an introductory chapter which provides a short but extremely clear overview of the complexity of Wadding's figure, the author brings the reader into the church and convent of St. Isidore's, the first Irish College which was founded in Rome by the Irish Franciscan.

The church of St. Isidore's and its annexed world – the altars, the decorations, and the paintings – are used as a platform to illustrate the magnitude of the web of prominent lay and religious personalities with whom Wadding was in contact. Fianza succeeds to reconstruct the difficult process which brought to the construction of the church by identifying its patrons, but, in particular how and for which reasons they decided to invest in St. Isidore's. One of the many groundbreaking strengths of this section of the book is that it draws on a combination of different types of sources such as letters, notary deeds, financial account-books, and ledgers of payments. These latter come from the Monte di Pietà bank, and they provide a very detailed insight of Wadding's activity as patron. Indeed the author tracks the consistent flow of money which was handed to Wadding, but, at the same time, he identifies the most prominent figures – like the Spanish ambassadors, and the cardinals – who gravitated around the Franciscan. The unveiling of this “financial” network is a crucial feature which serves to illustrate the main artists who were invited by Wadding to work at St. Isidore's. Indeed Fianza's investigation goes beyond the mere financial aspect, by focusing both on the manpower – notably the famous artists Carlo Maratta and Domenico Castelli – and the techniques they adopted.

The last two chapters of the book further prove Wadding's deep involvement as art patron. Chapter six investigates how he played a seminal role in commissioning engravings and illuminations for the books which were used for the liturgical activities at St. Isidore's. Chapter seven instead explains the painted and engraved portraits of Wadding. This last chapter is extremely interesting because it reveals the complex and intriguing history behind Wadding's portraits, with particular emphasis on the artists who painted them and the patrons who committed them.

In conclusion Fidanza's book provides an innovative contribution to the one of the less investigated role of Wadding's polyhedric activity. The use of many different sources combined with a multidisciplinary approach makes this book a must read which will not appeal the historians of art, but anyone who wants to know more on the multifaceted life of one of the most fascinating Irish figure of the seventeenth century.

Matteo Binasco

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, *Selected Stories*, Victoria-Dublin, Dalkey Archive Press, 2017, pp. 230, \$ 17.00, € 14.50, ISBN 978-1-94315-031-1.

Mary O'Donnell, *The Light Makers*, Dublin, 451 Editions, 2017 (1992), pp. 196, £ 10.95, € 13.50, ISBN 978-0-9931443-3-2.

The publication of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Selected Stories* and the reissue of Mary O'Donnell's debut novel *The Light Makers*, first published by Poolbeg in 1992, mark two happy returns. Both published in 2017, the volumes represent a sort of celebration of two of the most sensitive and remarkable voices in contemporary Irish writing and anticipate two memorable events that have recently taken place this year. In fact, a very special moment of official recognition was the Symposium "The Writing of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne" organized by the School of English, Drama and Creative Writing at University College Dublin held in January. And the first critical volume on the writing of Mary O'Donnell has recently been published, edited by Maria Elena Jaime de Pablos for Peter Lang. *Giving Shape to the Moment. The Art of Mary O'Donnell: Poet, Novelist and Short Story Writer* provides a sharp insight into O'Donnell's creativity from a variety of critical perspectives.

Ní Dhuibhne's *Selected Stories* includes twelve stories written over the span of nearly thirty years. Choice is always hard when making a collection that is also a selection, necessarily something has to be left out, but clear criteria underlie the volume. The stories follow the chronological order of publication of the various volumes, starting with "Blood and Water", first published in the collection of the same title in 1988, and finishing with "The Coast of Wales", appeared for the first time in *The Long Gaze Back*, edited by Sinéad Gleeson in 2015. Therefore, readers who are familiar with Ní Dhuibhne's short story writing clearly identify stories taken from *Blood and Water* (1988), *Eat-*

ing *Women is not Recommended* (1991), *The Inland Ice* (1997), *The Pale Gold of Alaska* (2000) and *The Shelter of Neighbours* (2012). This provides an interesting insight into the narrative development of the author, shedding light on forms of continuity and development. As Anne Fogarty pointed out in her "Introduction" to the 2003 collection *Midwife to the Fairies" and Other Stories*, Ní Dhuibhne "explores the divergences and continuities of tradition and modernity" (Fogarty, XI).

This already comes to the fore in the first story, "Blood and Water", which in a way can be considered seminal work in the contrast between the country and the city, the landscape of Donegal, the experience of Irish college, the sense of shame of the young protagonist of having an aunt who is "not the full shilling" (3) and of resembling her physically. The story will later develop into the 1999 novel *The Dancers Dancing* and its version in the Irish language *Cailíní Beaga Ghleann na mBláth* of 2003. Ní Dhuibhne's academic background as a folklorist is strongly present in her fiction, marked by the interlacing of old stories and their modern counterpart. In "Blood and Water" folklore is a reference and a structuring principle marking the divergency between two worlds. The repellent "big splodge of a dirty yellow substance" the young protagonist sees in the scullery turns out to be "nothing other than butter, daubed on the wall after every churning, for luck" (8), but she needs the modern frame of academic work in the form of a course in Ethnology to make sense of a Donegal tradition. Thus in this fine story past and present interlace, and in a similar way this happens also in "The Flowering", in which Lennie busily tries to discover her roots in her ancestor's story, Sally Rua. The story weaves together different layers, the discovery of personal and communal past, creativity, art and the consequences of their deprivation, the conscious use of fiction and history, besides being Ní Dhuibhne's personal statement on creativity and the art of writing. Sally Rua is an artist at crochet, the flowering of the title, and when deprived of her flowering she goes mad: "She went mad because she could not do the work she loved, because she could not do the flowering. That can happen. You can love some kind of work so much that you go crazy if you simply cannot manage to do it at all" (29).

"Night of the Fox" casts a bridge to "Blood and Water" in terms of a holiday in the country, in Wavesend, a recurring location in Ní Dhuibhne's fiction, this time in modern Ireland. The fleeting glimpse of a fox provides a magic moment in a context of a family journey and of sadness, as one of the people the family is going to visit is seriously ill.

"Summer Pudding", from the collection *The Pale Gold of Alaska*, is set in the historical background of the Famine. Two sisters are the only survivors of a family destroyed by famine and illness and join a group of tinkers heading to Wales. They learn to steal and beg, going against their own principles just to try and make a living and the animal-like look of the traveller

community both frightens and attracts them. The story has a careful and detailed historical background, also mentioning the Ladies of Llangollen, thus evoking a specific context. Catriona Moloney has also pointed out the subtext of the Old Irish legend of Deirdre and Naoise, implicit in the name of one of the tinkers and in the thwarted relation with him of one of the sisters.

“The Woman with the Fish” is in tune with the theme of the collection it comes from, *The Inland Ice*. Here, the ancient Irish folktale of “The Little White Goat” is rewritten as “The Search for the Lost Husband”, a feminist retelling of the traditional story in which a young girl falls in love and then goes to live with a white goat who turns into a man at night. The unfortunate young woman has a lot in common with her more modern counterparts like Anna in “The Woman with the Fish”, whose overpowering emotion makes her defenceless.

“The Pale Gold of Alaska” is loosely based on Míic Mac Gabhann’s memoir *Rotha Mór an tSaoil* (1959), translated into English as *The Hard Road to Klondike*. Set during the gold rush, the story features the character of Sophie, a young woman leaving Donegal to go to America and falling in love with Ned, thus changing the pattern of her life forever. Her expectations of married life happiness are thwarted by reality and only her native Indian lover makes her feel alive again. When the baby she has had from him dies, she turns into an animal madwoman, like Sally Rua in “The Flowering”, walking “around the shanty town, wrapped in her sealskin coat, chanting [...] incantations, without cease” (111).

If “The Day Elvis Presley Died” sheds light on a temperance camp in the 1960s and on the difficulty of cultural differences and interpersonal relationships, “The Banana Boat” is an interesting experiment in intertextuality, something Éilís Ní Dhuibhne uses extensively in her postmodern rewritings of traditional tales. The danger of losing her son who risks drowning off the coast of Castlegregory arouses a storm of emotions in the protagonist narrator, who realises she is losing her adolescent children anyway as they grow up and change. Strong intertextual references are present in the story as an alternative to Ní Dhuibhne’s more frequent use of intertwining a traditional story and its modern counterpart. The authorial voice of “The Banana Boat” openly acknowledges Mary Lavin, paraphrasing the opening of her story “The Widow’s Son”: “This is the story of a widow’s son, but it is a story that has two endings” (Lavin 1964, 105). Lavin’s reflection on the “double quality” of “all our actions” and “the possibility of alternative” (115) is implicit in the first-person narrator in “The Banana Boat”: “I realize right now that there are two ends to the story, two ends to the story of my day and the story of my life. I think of Mary Lavin’s story about the widow’s son [...]” (172). Likewise, Alice Munro is also openly present in “The Banana Boat”, “There is another story on my mind as I drive home. ‘Miles City, Montana’. Alice Munro. A story of a near-drowning” (174). Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s intertextual

acknowledgment in “The Banana Boat” includes direct quotation from Munro’s story. The mother’s question “*Where are the children?*” is twice repeated in “Miles City, Montana” (Munro 1997, 273, 275) and textually retrieved in Ní Dhuibhne’s use of italics as in the original.

“Illumination” is loosely based on Ní Dhuibhne’s own experience in a writers’ retreat in California a few years ago, and the context and location give the opportunity to develop reflections on writing alongside motifs from folklore and fairytales. Walking in the forest nearby, the nameless first-person narrator finds herself in a mysterious house inhabited by three mysterious people, hospitable but also seductive and reticent. Echoes of fairytales are implicit in the strange character of the hostess, half-way between a witch and a fairy, offering food that seems to appear out of nowhere, while an unseen mountain lion, coyotes, bobcats replace wolves in fairytales. Focussing on the character of a writer, the story also reflects on the meaning and the purpose of writing.

“A Literary Lunch” and “City of Literature” are twin stories, set in the context of Arts Council meetings in two different social and historical moments, the former in the years of the Celtic Tiger, the latter in its aftermath, providing an interesting and occasionally sarcastic and entertaining insight into the world of Dublin’s literary life. The meeting whose aim is to assign funds and bursaries to writers takes place in a fashionable bistro in “A Literary Lunch” and the meal “was going to cost about a thousand euro” (206), featuring expensive wines, oysters, truffles, and *pâté-de-foi-gras*. “City of Literature” is a diminished counterpart: the literary lunch is now “a little light refreshment” whose “gourmet sandwiches” (209) have been actually made overnight by one of the board members and the Chardonnay, Sauvignon and 2001 Bordeaux are replaced by “a little Barolo” (220). Patterns of authority and power underlie both stories, and in both the failed fifty-year-old writer Francie Briody – “a writer whom nobody read” (203) – twice takes his revenge on the continual refusal of financial support. In “A Literary Lunch” he murders the head of the board he deems responsible for his failure, in “City of Literature” he paradoxically is given the funds while he is spending his sentence in prison.

Wales returns in the last story of the collection, “The Coast of Wales”, a very intimate and sensitive account of sorrow and bereavement, a meditation on grief and an echo of Ní Dhuibhne’s own personal experience in recent years. The graveyard where the story is set is presented with no trace of sentimentality, rather the funny episode in which another widow almost risks losing her little dog under the wheels of a hearse entering the cemetery has funny undertones with a wry touch: “First your husband, then your dog” (228). The dog miraculously is unscathed by the accident. The graveyard is also a place of silence and peace, it is orderly and well kept, and the thoughts of death haunt the first-person narrator with realistic and unsentimental reflections: “But how much time have I got?” (225).

Reflections on the life husband and wife shared involves the coast of Wales of the title; the place is actually absent, but it features in an act of love: “Some of yours (your ashes) are at home too. I am planning to scatter them on a nice headland near the place where *we* went on holiday on Anglesey, where almost everyone speaks Welsh” (225). Wales is a special place for the couple who conceived their first child there (227) and in her imaginary talk with her husband the protagonist-narrator indulges on the invisible presence of Wales: “There is a coast that you can’t see over the horizon. Wales [...] Just because you can’t see it doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist” (227). The invisibility of Wales is thus interlaced with the husband’s invisibility, still existing in the ashes, tomb and lawn cemetery that mark the story.

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s *Selected Stories* is an interesting chronological journey through three decades of her writing, a gift for those already familiar with her short fiction as well as a stimulating introduction to her stories for new readers.

Mary O’Donnell’s debut novel, *The Light Makers*, was first published in 1992, to be followed by *Virgin and the Boy* (1996) and *The Elysium Testament* (1999) and by the more recent *Where They Lie* (2014). Though better known for her poetry, Mary O’Donnell has also published two collections of short stories, *Strong Pagans* (1991) and *Storm over Belfast* (2008). The recent reissue of *The Light Makers* marks in retrospection both the impact the novel had at the time and the changes that have taken place in Ireland over the past twenty-five years. When first published, *The Light Makers* was welcomed as “compelling” and “erotic” in its focus on the troubled relationship between Hanna and her husband Sam and on the strong presence of the body, both male and female, in a variety of perspectives.

The Light Makers opens with the first visit of Hanna Troy, a professional photographer, to the Dublin Women’s Centre, where she has an appointment with a psychotherapist following the breakdown of her marriage. Asked to put off her appointment for a few hours, Hanna walks around the city killing time, a journey in space that is also a journey in time, going back to the various events of her childhood and more recent life.

In a similar way to Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s handling of time, interlacing past and present in a continuous meandering in time, O’Donnell’s *The Light Makers* opens in the present tense while the narrative moves backwards and forwards. An interesting stylistic choice characterises the novel, mostly written in the present tense, with occasional excursions into the simple past. In correspondence with Eibhear Walshe, Mary O’Donnell’s account of the composition of the novel points out her dissatisfaction with its original third-person narration: “I was not happy with this. It had an overly-subjective feel that seemed emotionally and tonally slack. It was instantly rewritten in the Continuous Present, first person, and that made all the difference to my writer’s eyes” (Walshe 2018, 85). The divisions into chapters alerts the reader of the shift from the day

in Dublin to the flashes of remarkable events in childhood and adolescence. Flashbacks are evenly diluted in the novel in colourful assortments recreating Hanna's past life and her troubled marriage with her husband Sam.

One of the basic reasons for their problematic relationship and especially for Hanna's discomfort is her infertility. In spite of no obvious medical impediments on her part, Hanna has difficulties conceiving. She recalls the endless attempts and the innumerable tests she has had to undergo, while Sam refuses to check the possibility of his own possible sterility. Divergence in attitude between husband and wife is provided in the psychological, emotional and physical ordeal Hanna goes through while Sam is keeping "busy": "During the years that we tried and tried, Sam kept busy. While I was tripping in and out of the clinic and taking the pills, while we went in for a great deal of hectic sex at certain times and none at others [...] Sam worked. I was busy too but somehow my mind was drawn out" (53). Paradoxically, at the end of the novel Hanna discovers Sam has been having an affair with a French colleague, Sandrine, who is revealed to be expecting his baby, which emphasises her sense of guilt and failure.

While waiting for her meal in the pizza parlour, Hanna is obsessed by the story of a Kenyan woman she has read about in *The Guardian*, stoned to death because barren. "That Kenyan woman who was stoned for being barren, according to *The Guardian* article, almost had her head smashed in for something that was beyond her control. And what about her man, her master, her husband? Some men never even consider that it can happen to them. Who knows what the real situation was? The awful point is that it was she, the Kenyan woman, who bore the evidence of some dread, internal drought, it was she whose belly never swelled" (52). The Kenyan woman is a sort of textual wanderer as it appears in very similar terms also in O'Donnell's story "Breath of the Living" from her first collection *Strong Pagans* of 1991, which deals, like the poem "Antarctica", with motherhood and infertility.

In *The Light Makers*, Hanna is metaphorically "stoned" in different ways by her husband's infidelity and by the "socially assumed things ... a home, a job, friends, having children" she considers "a lie" (1), thus questioning accepted codes of behaviour.

The obsession with fertility seeps through in the memory of the stag party Hanna and Sam see while having a drink in a village. The episodic ritual cruelty of a fertility rite is a subtext that stays on throughout the novel, highlighting the corporeal presence of the body in a variety of ways.

The reader becomes acquainted with Hanna's extended close-knit family, explored in their contradictory relationships and complex dynamics, her parents, Daniel and Kate, her unstable stepsister Rose, her distant cousin, Bill, with whom she experiences sex her first time. In narrative climax, the episode overlaps with Rose's suicide attempt.

Hanna recalls her first meeting with Sam and in spite of his betrayal, their rows and the bitterness his behaviour gives rise to, and his emotional steril-

ity, Hanna's love for him remains strong and does not change even when she learns of his utmost act of deception, conceiving a child with another woman.

Sam is a famous and fashionable architect, whose projects and buildings mark the landscape of pre-Celtic Tiger Dublin. "Coming from the east side of the city it is impossible to avoid Sam's buildings [...] All those new estates which are politely termed 'developments' were designed by Sam" (45). He is obsessed by glass and light and his great achievement as an architect arrives when he manages to complete his opus magnum, "the Cragg-Mortimer Centre", "the Glass Palace" (179): "Sunlight streams down from the huge glass dome above our heads, with its glass and steel cupola, and, as light rays strike the sundial, an image is thrown not only on the flat surface of the dial itself but right down through the fluted base from which it is reflected radially" (180). Sam's obsessive collection of crystals to which he adds a new piece every now and then is an objective correlative for the priority and immateriality of light "which catch the light and refract a world of prisms" (63). Hanna indulgently calls it "Sam's circus" (63), "a collection of tiny animals and birds, Czechoslovakian lead glass pieces" (63). Like a child with new toys, Sam gradually and regularly adds new pieces. "little bears, prickly hedgehogs, spiders, birds, flowers, dogs and artful cats that glitter like crushed gemstones [...]" (63-64). Furthermore, a new piece is an allomorph and an anticipation of the Glass Palace: "a tiny house, transparent from every angle, devoid of overt colour, yet inviting concentrations of light at every turn" (123).

As a photographer, Hanna herself works with light and the use of light in the novel is both a metaphor and a structuring principle. In fact, as Jeanette Shumaker points out, both Hanna and her husband Sam are literally and "figuratively" (Shumaker 2013, 16) lightmakers, using light as a form of creation that illuminates the world, yet they are unable to illuminate their own situation and mutual needs. Early in the novel Hanna reflects on her use of light, which instead of illuminating creates deception: "How we distort light! How we pervert our human image by clever camera-work! It is my speciality. I have seen them all – socialites, actors, writers, editors, business people – only too delighted to have me create an image that is not really theirs for some newspaper, magazine or poster" (36).

At the end of the novel Hanna finally accepts herself and her infertility. Taking a photo of herself is an act of illumination, of light-making, creating a sense of "weight lifting and being replaced by lightness and airiness" (194-195), and she smiles "fully, for myself and my own life". Such self-awareness magnifies when Hanna repeats her name, "I am Hanna Troy" (195), establishing her identity in a new way. Throughout the story Hanna has made connections, has looked at her past and has looked critically at her social class and the society she lives in, which still marginalizes the barren woman. The words "I am Hanna Troy" also show a greater awareness of Hanna's name, like the horse of Troy she has secrets and is able to attack her own defencelessness.

In this novel of light and darkness, Mary O'Donnell's voice still speaks resonantly after twenty-five years. An interesting detail marks the end of this reissue from the 1992 Poolbeg edition: 451 Editions has chosen to add an extra page with the French word "fin", uncapitalised and printed in the middle of the blank page, a multiple signifier of ending but also of continuity.

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Giovanna Tallone

Donato Di Sanzo, *Tra pragmatismo e devozione. Le relazioni diplomatiche tra Santa Sede e Irlanda durante il pontificato di Pio XI (1922-1939)*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2017, pp. 172. € 14,00. ISBN 978-88-498-5137-3.

Tra pragmatismo e devozione di Donato Di Sanzo rappresenta molto di più di una ricostruzione storica delle relazioni intercorse tra la Repubblica d'Irlanda e la Santa Sede a ridosso dell'indipendenza irlandese. Il volume, infatti, si inserisce in un filone di studi sulla diplomazia vaticana nella prima metà del secolo Ventesimo, ormai abbondante e solido in termini sia metodologici sia interpretativi, finendo per impreziosirlo con una ricerca equilibrata e molto ben presentata.

Solo apparentemente periferico «rispetto al centro del mondo contemporaneo» (Di Sanzo 2017, 31), il caso irlandese si rivela viceversa quantomai interessante e funzionale a gettare nuova luce su quelle che potrebbero essere definite come le tre macro-tematiche – o, alternativamente, i tre piani d'analisi – di riferimento per la storiografia più recente ed accurata in materia di relazioni internazionali della Santa Sede, ovvero, la ricostruzione dei rapporti tra Vaticano e singoli Stati, l'impatto che tale dinamica ha determinato sull'andamento della diplomazia pontificia e sul posizionamento internazionale della Santa Sede, ed, infine, la questione relativa allo stile di governo di Papa Achille Ratti. Esemplificativa, in tal senso, la considerazione preliminare dell'Autore, che sottolinea come il caso dell'Irlanda "risulta essere assolutamente emblematico e testimonia il pragmatismo con cui Pio XI e la

diplomazia vaticana seppero conciliare un sostanziale interesse all'indipendenza di un Paese massicciamente e tradizionalmente cattolico con l'esigenza di ricostruire una relazione diplomatica con il mondo anglosassone e, più in particolare, con la Gran Bretagna, finalizzata alla ricerca di un ruolo sempre più influente nello scenario internazionale" (29).

Rispetto al periodo d'interesse, precisato il dato per cui tra il pontificato di Benedetto XV e quello di Pio XI fosse sussistita una sostanziale continuità in termini di condotta diplomatica a cui si sarebbe poi sommata l'accelerazione rattiana per un riposizionamento internazionale che Emma Fattorini ha definito sempre più marcatamente anti-totalitario con l'ingresso negli anni Trenta, Di Sanzo sottolinea come, di fronte ai complessi e tragici eventi occorsi sull'isola irlandese tra il 1916 ed il 1920, la linea vaticana di neutralità interessata fosse stata, anzitutto, rispettosa del principio dell'autodeterminazione dei popoli e del contenuto dell'enciclica *De pacis reconciliatione christiana* (1920).

Lo scoppio della guerra civile in Irlanda e la turbolenta vicenda dell'Irish Free State si rivelano un terreno particolarmente intricato per la Santa Sede. Soprattutto, la gestione dei rapporti con l'episcopato irlandese durante le fasi più cruente dello scontro tra neutrali, repubblicani e componente *pro-Treaty* e la contemporanea esigenza di mantenere rapporti sereni con la diplomazia inglese mettono a dura prova il Vaticano. I meccanismi decisionali e i rapporti tra papa Ratti e il suo Segretario di Stato, Gasparri, confermano ancora una volta la sollecitudine del pontefice e il lungimirante pragmatismo della condotta diplomatica vaticana in quegli anni. L'insuccesso della missione guidata da monsignor Luzio nel 1923 costituì, infatti, il punto di partenza – o, perlomeno, il retroterra diplomatico – per una nuova stagione nei rapporti Irlanda-Santa Sede.

Non a caso, il secondo capitolo del volume poggia sulla premessa per cui quella di Luzio fu una mera parentesi negativa nel grande disegno "ierocratico" di papa Achille Ratti. Come per altri contesti, anche per l'Irlanda la dialettica internazionale promossa dalla Santa Sede tra la seconda metà degli anni Venti e il decennio successivo significò un miglioramento dei rapporti diplomatici e del radicamento delle rappresentanze cattoliche sul territorio. Da qui la ricostruzione del processo attraverso cui il Vaticano di Pio XI e la diplomazia irlandese, grazie al nuovo corso inauguratosi con Walshe e McGiligan, sarebbero giunti all'instaurazione di relazioni ufficiali. Una vicenda, questa, immediatamente condizionata sia nella tempistica che nella sostanza dall'ingombrante intromissione di un Foreign Office inglese desideroso di "usare" il *rapprochement* tra il Vaticano e lo Stato Libero irlandese per rilanciare la questione delle relazioni formali anche con Londra e, parimenti, dalla scelta vaticana – esplicitata più volte dal Segretario di Stato Gasparri e confermata anche dall'arcivescovo Pietro Pisani in occasione delle celebrazioni per il Centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici irlandesi nella primavera del 1929 – di seguire quella che l'Autore definisce "una *road map* vaticana tesa a limitare al minimo le reazioni contrarie dei vescovi irlandesi" (84).

Ulteriormente rallentata dagli effetti del Concordato siglato in Laterano con il governo italiano e, quindi, dall'inevitabile ridimensionamento della questione irlandese nell'agenda diplomatica vaticana, la nomina del nunzio apostolico a Dublino – uno degli ultimi atti di Pietro Gasparri in Segreteria di Stato – ebbe luogo nel novembre 1929. La scelta ricadde su monsignor Paschal Robinson, un *American-Irish* che, nota Di Sanzo, “per il suo autorevole profilo internazionale avrebbe offerto garanzie al governo dello Stato Libero e al tempo stesso rassicurato l'episcopato irlandese” (99). Come più volte palesato al Rappresentante irlandese Charles Bewley, nei programmi del nuovo Segretario di Stato Eugenio Pacelli, la nunziatura in Irlanda avrebbe dovuto rappresentare un importante *listening post* rispetto a tutto il mondo anglofono.

L'elezione di Eamon De Valera nella primavera del 1932, tuttavia, complicò perlomeno inizialmente il corso dei rapporti tra la Santa Sede e l'Irlanda, soprattutto in ragione del fatto che la piattaforma politica del nuovo *leader* implicava una decisa inversione di rotta rispetto a questioni da sempre ritenute “diplomaticamente scivolose” in Vaticano, come, l'adesione irlandese al Commonwealth e, quindi, la completa indipendenza dalla Gran Bretagna. Preceduto dalle perplessità derivanti dal nuovo quadro politico irlandese, il Congresso Eucaristico Internazionale di Dublino si rivelò un successo senza precedenti da un punto di vista organizzativo; lo “stile diplomatico di De Valera e dei suoi ministri – spiega l'Autore – sorprese notevolmente il cardinale legato Lorenzo Lauri” (121), configurando, in buona sostanza, la prima tappa di un graduale processo di avvicinamento tra De Valera e la Santa Sede.

Superata una nuova fase di tensione derivante dalla “guerra economica” anglo-irlandese, che per la diplomazia vaticana poteva pesare in termini di ricezione internazionale del contemporaneo Concordato che stava siglando con la Germania, i rapporti tra il nuovo leader irlandese e la Santa Sede conobbero un repentino miglioramento, che, sulla scia dell'attivismo diplomatico e filo-rattiano di De Valera in occasioni importanti come il conflitto italo-etiope, determinò il “tacito” assenso vaticano al testo della costituzione irlandese del 1937, “la più cattolica del mondo” (143). Furo-no gli anni decisivi per sigillare quello che Di Sanzo, a conclusione di un volume particolarmente accorto a bilanciare aspetti eminentemente diplomatici con temi di storia politica nazionale ma anche spunti ecclesiologici, definisce “un lunghissimo processo di ricongiunzione, perché si caricarono di un valore ultradiplomatico e portarono la piccola isola cattolica a testimoniare la propria presenza istituzionale nel luogo simbolo della devozione, non solo degli irlandesi in patria, ma anche dei milioni di *Catholic-Irish* dispersi nel mondo” (148).

Luca Castagna

Barry Keane, *Irish Drama in Poland: Staging and Reception, 1900-2000*, Bristol-Chicago, Intellect, 2016, pp. 188. £65.00, \$ 84.24 ISBN 9781783206087.

In this rich, fluently written book, Barry Keane does exactly what he says he is going to do on the cover. His subject is the staging and reception of Irish drama in Poland in the twentieth century. The book must be of interest and use to a variety of readers: *aficionados* and *aficionadas* of Irish drama; those interested in the Polish theatre; those whose concern is with the reception of works of one national literature within the culture of another nation; and those who like a good literary story well told.

The Irish nation in the 20th century (and not only) punched culturally well above its weight. It was a small country, with a small population, a land bedeviled by colonialism, war, religious conflicts and tensions, and (at times) extreme poverty. But the fiction and verse of Ireland have been central to English-language writing in that unhappy century. Drama has obviously been a major component of the Irish literary and cultural gift to Europe and the world. Modern drama is inconceivable without Wilde, without Shaw, without Synge, without Yeats, without O'Casey, without Beckett. Keane's subject is the Polish engagement with that rich theatrical tradition. If anything, the Polish experience in the twentieth century is nastier than the Irish one. Divided up and annexed by the great Central European powers in the late eighteenth century, Poland as a state ceased to exist between 1795 and 1918. A brief inter-war period of independence was put a stop to by Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. In the next decade, the Polish lands became one of the killing fields of Europe. The recovery of statehood in 1945 was deeply compromised and provisional; Poland had little sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the dictates of the Soviet Union. The years 1945 to 1989 were quite varied in terms of repression, freedom, resistance, and conformity. The whole hateful East Bloc system collapsed in 1989, and the last nearly thirty years have been ones of political and economic transformation, and a redirection towards what used to be called the West. But yet, Polish literary and theatrical work has been of European and world standing: names like Witkiewicz, Miłosz, Różewicz, Gombrowicz, Wajda, Kantor, and Grotowski are well-known (or should be) outside the Polish-speaking world. Also in that awful century, Polish theatre makers and commentators found time and energy and opportunity to engage with the drama of a small and distant island.

Keane's book is divided into four main chronological chapters. These are organized according to a Polish periodization, more than an Irish one, although there are overlaps between the two. Chapter 1 is entitled "Compromised Heroes: Irish Drama in the Era of Young Poland (1900-1918)". Here Keane writes of early twentieth-century productions of and commentary on works by Wilde, Shaw, Synge, and Yeats in the years of social and cultural ferment before the Polish recovery of independence in 1918. Polish produc-

tions of Wilde's social comedies, for example, *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1905, of *Salomé* (also 1905), and even a stage version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1916), are dealt with in a rounded and complex manner, as befits the institutional, cultural, political, and translation issues involved. Amongst all the fascinating material included in this chapter, Keane's discussion of the translation and staging of *The Playboy of the Western World* in Warsaw in 1913 is particularly memorable. How to translate the dialect? How to deal with the specifically Irish (and, thus, incomprehensible) geographical references? How to deal with the national implications of source text and translation? As always, Keane has a fascinating story and he tells it well.

The following chapter considers Polish interest in Irish drama in the inter-war period. Here, Shaw's plays are the primary focus for discussion, but Keane also writes about Adolf Nowaczyński's attempt to promote and imitate the work of George A. Birmingham, an attempt that appears to have come to nothing in a wonderfully complicated way. Chapter 3 is entitled "Walking on Eggshells: Irish Drama in the Post-War Era (1945-1960)". Shaw returns here, but new figures and texts make an entrance too. Highlights are the production of O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman* in Warsaw in 1955, of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in Warsaw in 1957 (many Beckettians in the West are surprised by that early date; most East Block versions of *Godot* come much later, if at all), and of O'Casey's *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* in Warsaw in 1960. Chapter 4, "Towards the Modern Era (1960-1979)", looks at Irish drama in the Polish theatre in some of the darkest and coldest years of the Cold War. This chapter includes fascinating discussions of the Polish theatre's interest in dramatizations of Joyce's *Ulysses* (in Gdańsk in 1970, and in Warsaw in 1974), of the cautious approach in Poland to Behan's work (*The Hostage* had to wait till 1971 for its Polish *première*, although a published translation of the piece had existed since 1960), and of the Polish reexamination of Beckett's work in the 1970s. Keane also charts the rather bemused and sometimes hostile responses to productions of Brian Friel's *Translations* in Kraków in 1980 (which is odd, because the play about remapping colonial territory strikes a few chords in the Germanization of Polish place names and the Polonization of German ones at different points of Polish history; of course, maybe it strikes too many). There is a very brief Epilogue on the interest in Irish drama of the early 2000s, but this is outside Keane's purview. The book ends with a very valuable bibliography of Polish translations of Irish drama, reviews, and theatre diaries and notes.

Apart from a great story, apart from its documentary value, Keane's book contains excellent analysis of how reception works in different times and different places. He continually charts the complicated interactions of translators, impresarios, critics, politicians, journals, and institutions. For example, Keane's complex discussions of the premiere of Synge's *the Playboy of the Western World* as *Kresowy Rycerz-Wesotek* is a model of how vari-

ous vectors concatenate to produce a production and response. Introduced by a speech stressing the shared national situations of Poland and Ireland, the production produced virulent condemnation from an influential critic with an axe to grind. The translation which did the rural Irish as a Polish dialect from the *Tatras* put the play in the context of contemporary Poland and Polish drama, but meant that audiences were confused about how to respond to the comic elements in the play. However, the run was long and the takings reasonable, so the story ended reasonably happily. Similarly, Keane's presentation of the progress toward a production of *Waiting for Godot* (very influential in Polish theatre and culture) in 1957 involves a careful disentangling of various threads in the process: grand political change in 1956, the foundation of Adam Tarn's theatre journal *Dialog* (still going strong today), the cautious publication of a commissioned translation of Beckett's play, the pre-performance public political handwringing about Beckett's promotion of inertia, Party intellectuals' desire to put the Polish theatre in an international (and historically Polish) avant-garde context, the ambitions of individual theatre people.

All the above makes informative and instructive reading, as, indeed, does the whole book. Fluently written, without silly jargon, the product of extensive research, well-informed, full of insights and well-managed complex material, this is an excellent book that should find a large readership.

David Malcolm

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Patricia Hughes (<p2760@me.com>) was Research Associate in Modern History at the University of Birmingham (1986-1988). She has worked from 1987 to 2011 as a Lecturer in the Continuing Studies Department at the University of Warwick whilst teaching German. Patricia absorbed her father's, Kevin O'Neill's, history: his real mother, known as Honor Bright was reputed to have been a prostitute in Ireland. She had been murdered when Kevin was four, and no killer had ever been convicted. Kevin didn't know who his father was. Patricia's research reveals who killed Honor Bright and why, rewrites William Butler Yeats's biography and reassesses his literary output after 1918, and exposes criminality at the highest levels of government in the Irish Free State. It clarifies her family history too.

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