Tintéan

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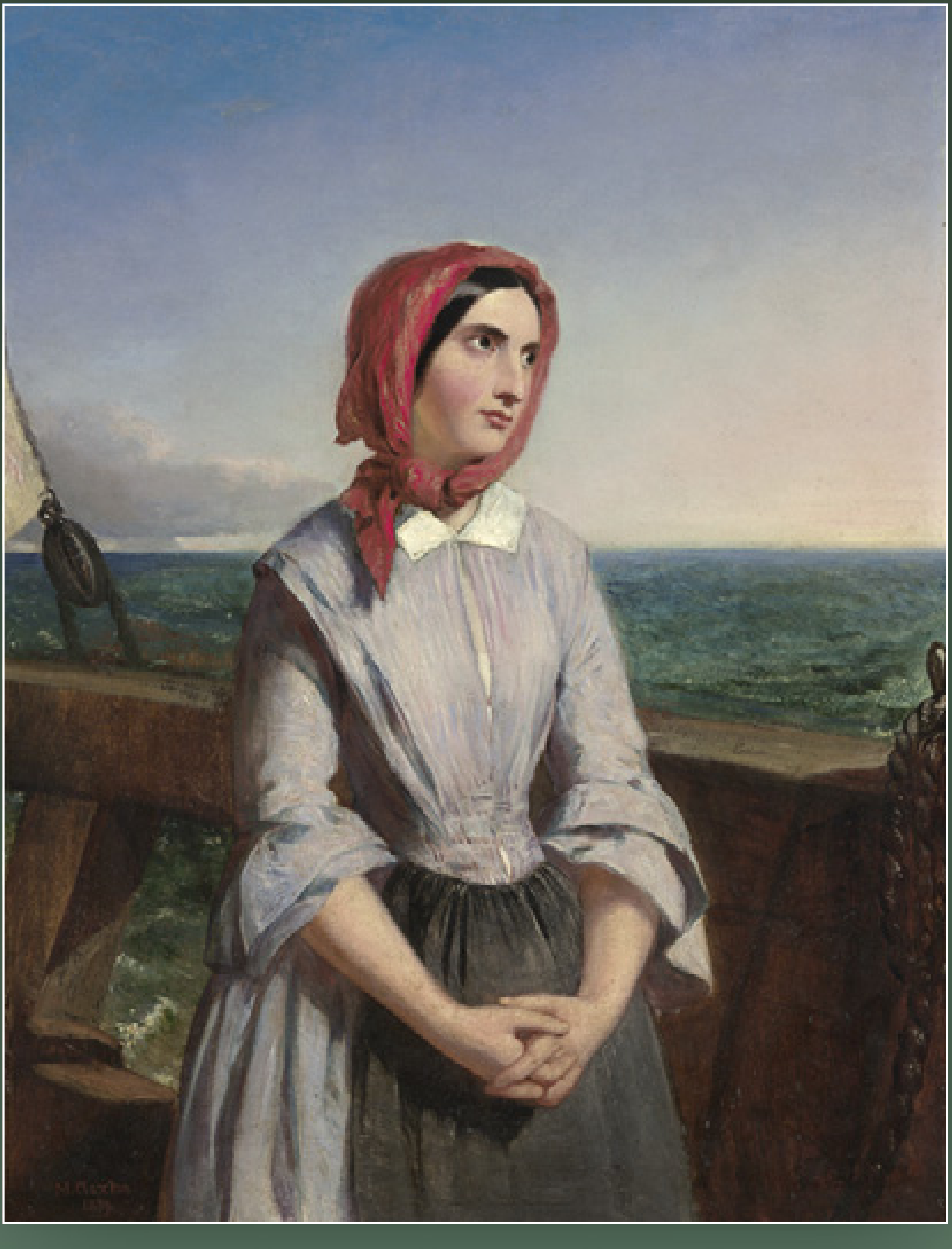

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***Tintéan* No 12, June 2010**
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England 1813–81, lived in Australia
1850–54
An emigrant's thoughts of home 1859
oil on cardboard
60.7 x 47.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented by the National Gallery
Women's Association, 1974

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The Australian Irish Heritage Network

Objectives

The Australian Irish Heritage Network aims to build the social, cultural, sporting, historical and literary consciousness of Irish Australians and to explore and celebrate the development of Irish heritage and culture in Australia.

Principal Activity

As its first priority, AIHN produces the literary magazine *Tintéan* (meaning hearth in Gaelic and pronounced 'Tintawne' – the fada on the á giving the syllable the dominant stress and the 'augh' sound, as in 'taught'). The focus of the magazine is to build and explore the Australian Irish identity. The magazine welcomes material which explores the big themes of exile, diaspora and settlement. It also encourages the telling of the micro-stories that express narratives of individuals and families. There will be a continual study of the political and economic evolution of Ireland, and of the contribution which Irish-Australians have made to Australia. The intention is to explore and celebrate the playing out of the Irish heritage in Australia – past, present and future.

Activities

As well as the magazine, AIHN plans to conduct social and educational events; disseminate news and information via the internet; offer recognition for service to literary and historical endeavours; issue cultural and political comment; and research and record our heritage.

Membership

Anyone identifying with Irish heritage is welcome to join.

AIHN Committee

President: Peter Kiernan
Vice-President: Frances Devlin-Glass
Secretary: Bob Glass
Treasurer: Patrick McNamara
Committee Members: Felicity Allen, Catherine Arthur, Liz McKenzie

Letters

Hackett, Mannix and Calwell

In *The Riddle of Father Hackett*, Brenda Niall has interesting insights about Hackett and some contemporaries. But her interpretations about my late father, the Rt Hon Arthur Calwell, are inevitably influenced by her close association with B A Santamaria who tried from outside the political system to destroy the careers of anyone who opposed his efforts to control a major political party. My father's refusal to be intimidated by the Movement does not equate to being 'a good hater'. The incredibly malicious abuse that he and other ALP supporters endured, often silently so as not to hurt the Catholic Church, has been documented by Paul Ormonde in *The Movement*, and by Ormonde, Max Charlesworth, Xavier Connor, Val Noone and others in *Santamaria: the politics of fear*.

Niall paints a very misleading picture of Calwell as a person. During his lifetime, the word 'crude' was never used about him. As Professor Geoffrey Sawer stated:

> He is one of the best speakers in the House…an orator in the tradition of Grattan, whose natural wit is salted with the remembered products of very wide reading…he makes particularly trenchant use of phrases and analogies from Holy Writ.

Fr Hackett was friendly with the Calwell family. He invited Calwell to speak on radio on the Catholic Hour with, on one occasion, Calwell giving a detailed history of Australia's contribution to the mission field. Niall also inadequately discusses the significant contemporary role of Dr Matthew Beovich, the future Archbishop of Adelaide, and his later attitudes to the Movement.

In 1945, as an Australian Government minister, Calwell initiated action to persuade the Government to establish diplomatic relations with Ireland. In 1947, when Calwell went overseas to promote immigration, Archbishop Mannix asked him to invite Eamon de Valera, his friend and then Irish Prime Minister, and Fr Sydney MacEwan to the Melbourne Catholic Diocesan Centenary Celebrations in 1948. While Hackett joined de Valera on his arrival in Sydney, Calwell, together with the Irish Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, would want to welcome de Valera, an ecclesiastical guest, to the national capital, Canberra.

Calwell brought de Valera, Frank Aiken, who was the former Irish Finance Minister, and Fr MacEwan to a reception in Ballarat, and held an official reception for de Valera, which included Fr Hackett, at Menzies Hotel, Melbourne. After the Centenary Celebrations, Calwell was cheered at the Exhibition Building when he spoke with Mannix and de Valera to a demonstration against Partition of 15,000 people. Even as Santamaria's relationship with Mannix blossomed, Mannix continued to correspond with Calwell and there was mutual respect.

Mary Elizabeth Calwell, Melbourne

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Gonged Beatle Unbrushed

Stuart Traill's article 'History for the asking' in *Tinteán* issue 11 claims that Paul McCartney's song *Give Ireland Back to the Irish* disappeared from his back catalogue at EMI and 'no longer appears on any of his compilations'. Stuart links this change in content to Paul McCartney getting 'a gong from the palace'.

While I cannot speak for the contents of the EMI back catalogue, the airbrushing from history seems to have been strikingly ineffective, given that typing 'Give Ireland Back to the Irish' into Google brings those unforgettably nasal tones to you in seconds. The song also appears in a compilation called *Paul McCartney the Complete B Sides* so perhaps Stuart is just looking in the wrong compilations.

Jacinta McBride, Carlton, Vic.

Stuart Traill replies: *the song in question was a very big hit record (an A side) for McCartney's band* Wings *in 1972 and not a B side, so to see it relegated instead of appearing on a greatest hits compilation does smack of interference.*

The Morgans of Essendon

I am in the process of making a web site about my ancestors, the Morgan family of Essendon, who had the original Cross Keys Hotel from around 1871 to the early 1900s.

My great-great-grandfather, John Morgan (1829-1880) was born at Derrynoose, Co Armagh, to Alexander Morgan and Ann (or Nancy) Lennon. I have found three highly probable siblings: Pat Morgan (b 1827, Derrynoose), Bridget Morgan (b 1833, Derrynoose) and Margaret Morgan (b 1838, Armagh; d 1912, Collingwood, Vic.). In 1863, Margaret married Thomas Gaffney at Inglewood, Vic. I have found one Alexander Morgan at Rowan, Derrynoose in the Griffiths Valuation.

John Morgan arrived in Australia in 1857 on the Crimea. In 1858 he married Margaret Alice Kelly (1834-1904) in Melbourne. Margaret 'Alice' was born in Co Tipperary to Cornelius Kelly and Mary Mologhny.

The Morgan family grave is in the Melbourne General Cemetery. Also buried there is Alice's brother, Michael Kelly (d 1898). He had been in Victoria for six months, arriving from Kimberley, South Africa. His will names two other brothers, John who had a daughter, Alice, and William, last known as a mining speculator in WA.

I would be very pleased to hear from any of your readers who have any information on my family.

Kerryn Taylor

Kerryn can be contacted at kerrynt@activ8.net.au

Sunderings

This issue of *Tinteán* foregrounds the literary to an unusual degree. We publish for the first time Philip Harvey's prize-winning poem, 'Definition', which the Jageurs Literary Award judges found to be an eloquently understated poem about the issue of Irish identity in the diaspora. It is an issue that keeps demanding to be renegotiated.

We also are delighted to welcome Evelyn Conlon, a much admired Irish short-story writer and novelist (*Stars in the Daytime* 1990, *A Glassful of Letters* 1998, *Skin of Dreams* 2003) to the stable of *Tinteán* writers. She has many threads of connection to Australia, having backpacked here in her youth and returned often. She will be back again in July with a long list of speaking engagements, another novel and book of short stories in gestation. The story we are publishing in this issue is a foretaste.

The grief of loss is the threnody that runs through both pieces and indeed through much Irish literature – one thinks of the great set-pieces of the Gaelic Irish tradition – the laments for Art O'Leary, 'The Hag of Beare', Mangan's translation of O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire, or in more comic mode, Flann O'Brien's hilarious lament for the loss of his language in *The Poor Mouth*. So entrenched is the tradition of lament in Irish letters, that sweet Celtic melancholy was deemed by Matthew Arnold, the English poet of the mid-nineteenth century, to be the hallmark of 'the' Celtic sensibility. He, of course, was setting his own nationalist agendas whereby Englishness was defined in contradistinction to Irishness: English grit, masculinity and rationality were weighed in the balance – to the disservice of 'Irishness' – with melancholy, femininity and emotionalism.

Communications have so changed the modern world that migration must be a very different experience in the 21st century from the 19th. I'm reminded of David Fitzpatrick's compelling analyses in *Oceans of Consolation* of 111 letters exchanged between Irish emigrants and their families in Ireland between 1843 and 1906. These are ordinary, everyday letters, from people who never expected to see one another again, who were not wealthy or well-educated, and indeed sometimes barely literate. What strikes one is how ritualistic and formulaic they can be and one wonders how much force of personality is dampened by the difficulties of an unfamiliar medium, and how the relationships could possibly be sustained by such exchanges. To cite the one that gave Fitzpatrick the title of his book:

> My dear Father,
>
> I am to inform you that I received you welcomed letter on the 25th. March dated January the 1st.55 which gave me and my Sister an ocean of consolation to hear that you my Stepmother Brothers and Sisters are in good health thank God. As for my uncles and Aunts [*erased*: you never mentioned a word about them but] I hope they are in good health too – at Same time, this leaves us in a perfect State of health thanks be to our Blessed Redeemer for his goodness towards us.

One is heart-scalded by the emotional poverty of this utterance – its poignant overstatement in its one poetic (overblown?) moment, its barely suppressed anger at not being told things that matter, its perhaps unconscious discriminations in capitalising some affiliations and not others. One hopes that Father loved his children enough for these deficits to be unnoticed and the letter relished for what it was: despite its empty, content-free gestures and inadequacies, it remains a deeply sincere attempt to reassure him about a loyal and ongoing filial orientation.

Conlon's short story brings separation across oceans into a new era. What Fitzpatrick's letter writer could not have was telephone contact, or Skype, with their additional emotional freight of readable voices and non-verbal excitability; and with the immediacy of texts and emails. In an age of cheap and easy communications, there is no remedy if an adult party refuses to return the ball of conversation.

Conlon's is not specifically a story of migration, of course, and it demonstrates painfully (and at times a tad comically) that distance can exist not just between oceans, but also in the short distance between kitchen and turnip beds, and be figured by silences beyond language. The errant husband cannot verbalise the three-month hiatus, and the wife is content to occupy the high ground of her virtue and discount her regime of coping, her tear-filled crossings of all the Dublin bridges; the bold-as-brass sister has no compunction in dropping out of a life for 12 months and casually resuming her relationship without adverting to the lost year. The wife and sister bear her heartbreak, her laceration alone, not quite sure of its justification. When does an absence and a lapse in communication become a breach in the relationship? How does one heal from the failure of trust?

It is a cliché of film that the rich émigré who returns to show off their acquired (usually in the USA) wealth is resented. Conlon's short story prompted me to wonder whether in literary accounts of migration there was, sitting uneasily alongside that melancholy, a thread of rage? Perhaps for the conditions that forced the removal? Perhaps for the unequal impacts on individuals in the same family, who might be expected to bear it in similar ways? Perhaps, as this story suggests, the rage is self-loathing for lacking a sense of adventure, lacking the courage to make the move? Rage can be impotent, but it can also empower.

As Australian readers, we can enjoy, even giggle at, the exotic-sounding *Wollongong*, knowing it to refer to a pristine, exquisitely beautiful piece of coastline that has been scarred irretrievably by industrialisation. Not the most exciting tourist destination Downunder. We are well placed to catch both the hint of fear that the sister may have been caught out in her high-handed and defensive mysteriousness, but also that the stay-at-home may have her own guilty secrets as she takes up her position on the high ground she can now comically but uncomfortably occupy. What she wants more than anything is intimacy, but it seems oceans removed from her.

Distance in the 21st century is a state of mind, but is it any easier to negotiate than the impediments of inarticulateness with which the 1855 letter-writer was burdened? 'Ceremonies of communication', the elaborate and sometimes empty courtesies of the past, and the tribal imperatives of another era, might not fully answer contemporary needs, but there is much to be said in favour of such rituals as gestures of goodwill and an intention to reciprocate.

Frances Devlin-Glass

News

Bloomsday's Earnest

A high-energy production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, mounted as a fundraiser for Bloomsday, was not without its challenges, and one of them would have appealed to Oscar. Staged on successive nights in the open air in Mont Albert North, and at the Celtic Club, the play is a sure-fire winner, with audience waiting for its numerous familiar one-liners. As a text, it has probably produced as many quotable quotes as *Hamlet*, its only rival.

The open-air production was challenging in unexpected ways. The February fundraiser for 2009 (*The Christian Brothers*) was performed in high heat, but 2010's offering was conducted under lowering skies, and with coats and blankets to hand.

The real challenge of the evening was that Cecily fell into a swoon in the middle of Act III. Some audience members, with less than perfect memories of the play, thought it was scripted, and indeed, of all characters, she was the most likely to engage in such Victorian forms of female conduct. What was the director to do? Brenda Addie had seen actors work through broken limbs. In her dual role as Lady Bracknell she managed to support the actor, Paige Marshall, and give *sotto voce* instructions to breathe deeply, but to no avail. Paige had not merely fainted and had to leave the stage. The play resumed with Jase Cavanagh (who had played both Butlers) in the role of Cecily with a shawl hastily purloined from a freezing Miss Prism. The tempo was picked up, and the final clinches the more titillating for the trans-sexualism. Oscar no doubt, if he has indeed been translated to Literary Heaven (as Bloomsday's *Wilde about Joyce* postulated), would have smiled benignly at such thespian brio.

Frances Devlin-Glass

Blasphemy in Ireland

Ireland recently made blasphemy a crime punishable by a fine of €25,000, but will soon hold a referendum on whether this decision should be reversed. When the law was declared Atheist Ireland published 25 blasphemous statements on the Internet in order to challenge it. Their chairman said, 'We reiterate that this law is both silly and dangerous: silly because it is introducing medieval canon law into a modern pluralist republic, and dangerous because it incites religious outrage and because its wording has already been adopted by Islamic states as part of their campaign to make blasphemy a crime internationally.' Atheist Ireland will continue to campaign for an ethical, secular, Ireland.

From* The Age*, 17 March 2010

Paisley retires

After decades opposing compromise with minority Catholics, Ian Paisley did a stunning U-turn in 2007 by forging a Northern Ireland administration with Sinn Fein deputy leader Martin McGuinness. Within a year he suffered a rapid political decline, amid grumbling from his Protestant grassroots that he had gone too far.

As a result, Mr Paisley was first forced to step down as leader of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, the anti-Catholic church he founded in 1951. Then he retired as leader of the Democratic Unionists, an anti-establishment party he founded in 1971 and built into Northern Ireland's dominant party. Finally, he stepped aside as first minister of Northern Ireland's coalition. He has now retired as parliamentary member for North Antrim, at the recent 2010 British general election.

From* The Irish Independent*, April 2010

Child abuse in the Irish Church

Fintan O'Toole has written a powerful article in the *Irish Times* about the meaning of paedophilia and argued that it is primarily about power. He commented that, with the flood of allegations coming ever closer to the Pope's door, thoughts about moral responsibility had been replaced with a defensive backlash, citing the way homosexuals were being blamed for abuse of children by priests. O'Toole describes the three-fold response of the Vatican as (1) blame the victims, (2) invoke anti-Catholic persecution and (3) point to modernity as the root of the problem. The Pope himself, says O'Toole, spoke of not allowing himself to be "intimidated by the petty gossip of dominant opinion" in his Palm Sunday sermon, thus dismissing the stories of those who were attacked as children as malicious tittle-tattle. The preacher to the Papal household, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, compared attacks on the Church's record on child abuse to "the more shameful aspects of anti-Semitism" to the subsequent fury of the Jewish community.

O'Toole suggests that the underlying theme is to construct an intellectual framework for the official narrative of the crisis. That narrative will be, essentially, that the Church was fine when it had the social authority not challenged by liberalism, freethinking and sexual openness. The paedophilia is to be seen as a result of the challenge. Even if that were to be accepted, asks O'Toole, how is the cover-up of the scandal by the bishops and the Vatican to be explained? His answer is that any social structure giving people total power over children is at risk of paedophilia; it was the Church's combination of temporal authority, spiritual control and a closed hierarchy that created the problem. It seems unlikely that a Pope whose career was spent crushing dissent will be able to grasp this let alone formulate a solution.

From* The Irish Times*, 17 April 2010

Br Frank McCarthy 1920–2010

The Australian Irish Heritage Network and *Tinteán* readers were saddened by the news of the death of Br Francis Irenaeus McCarthy CFC, who died on 7 January 2010, aged 89. Br Frank served as a Christian Brother for 73 years. He will be remembered as a 'dynamic, intelligent and inspiring teacher, a gentleman and religious brother' as Br William Wilding said in his eulogy at St Ignatius' Church, Richmond, Victoria. Br Frank was an outstanding scholar, educator and leader who enlightened generations of scholars over seven decades. He had a life-long association with Parade College, East Melbourne and Bundoora, as a student, as a distinguished teacher and as principal (1974-1976). Among many other appointments, he was also principal at CBC St Kilda (1966-1971) and spent 33 years at St Kevin's College, Toorak, with two terms as principal. His service to education was recognised with an OAM and his scholarship by several degrees and diplomas in arts and education and, most significantly, by a doctorate in literature and fine arts at Cambridge. He was an extraordinary, good and brilliant man.

Peter Kiernan

Iain MacNeil 1929–2010

Iain Roderick MacNeil, 46th chief of Clan MacNeil, died on 16 February 2010, aged

81. Known in some circles as an American law school professor who taught Barak Obama, he is more renowned in Scotland for putting his family's 3,600 hectare estate on the Island of Barra into public ownership. The family's medieval seat of Kisimul Castle passed out of the family until MacNeil's father bought it back and restored it to its former glory. MacNeil split his time between running the family estate on Barra and teaching law in America. In 2001, he donated Kisimul Castle on a long lease to the nation for a bottle of his favourite malt and £1 a year, ultimately transferring it to the Scottish Executive in 2004. The fishing and mineral rights will go to the 1,300 inhabitants of Barra.

The MacNeils claim descent from Niall of the Nine Hostages and came to Barra in the 11th century, building Kisimul Castle as a basis for piracy. So impregnable was it that it remained in the family for 400 years. Earlier MacNeils sounded a trumpet from its ramparts after meals, followed by the call, 'Hear ye, hear ye, the great MacNeil having eaten, the princes of the earth may dine.'

From* The Age*, March 2010

James Griffin 1929–2010

Emeritus Professor James Griffin has died in Canberra after a long illness. Griffin taught at the University of Papua New Guinea for 15 years where he held a chair in the Faculty of Education and later the chair in History. He was also Senior Research Fellow in Pacific History at the Australian National University. Earlier he was a teacher at Xavier College, Melbourne, for 15 years, becoming senior history master. He was member of the Catholic Worker editorial committee from 1957 to 1976. *Tinteán* will publish a tribute in its next issue.

We Were Wrong

An error was made in Maireid Sullivan's review of *The Natural History of Ireland*: the battle of Kinsale (not Kildare) took place in 1602.

Our grateful thanks

The Australian Irish Heritage Network is delighted to announce the receipt of a most generous donation from the prestigious Eldon Hogan Trust. The donation is to be directed to the support and continued success of *Tinteán* and to our other cultural and historical activities. We cannot thank enough the trustee and solicitor for the Trust, Peter J Walsh, for the major part he has played in this most welcome financial boost. In practical terms, it will provide a further secure period for the publishing of *Tinteán* and, most importantly, gives a significant stimulus to the loyal and dedicated workers, all voluntary, behind the Network's structure. Our most sincere thanks to Peter, and we trust that he will enjoy the subsequent issues of *Tinteán* that he will be receiving.

Peter Kiernan, President, AIHN

Jageurs Literary Award 2010

Left to right: Peter Kiernan (President of AIHN), Meg McNena, Philip Harvey and Philip Moore (Cultural Heritage Commitee, Celtic Club) at the presentation at Newman College

The presentation of the Jageurs Literary Award was held at Newman College on 16 March 2010 – after a year in which an award was not made, and changes to the sponsorship of the prize. (The award is now sponsored by the Cultural Committee of the Celtic Club, and this magazine, *Tinteán.*)

The winner was Philip Harvey with 'Definition', a poem about identity. The judges appreciated this understated meditation on the dilemmas of being Irish in Australia, the familiar condition of avoidance, as a result of being neither Irish nor English. The sense of hurt in these negative identifications comes through so strongly, without the alternative construction of an 'Australianness' ever needing to be mentioned. The judges were impressed by the integration of a range of histories, and the very organic way in which historical and cultural markers are imaged in the text. See the poem on p. 28.

The runner-up was *Tinteán*'s own poetry editor, Meg McNena, with 'Let us be up and doing', a fictionalised biography of a pioneering South Australian suffragette, whose desire for justice sprang from tragic personal circumstances in Ireland and the colonies.

The judging panel reported the strongest field yet for the competition. The brief is a tricky one: writers need to engage with the matter of Ireland or Irish-Australia, and potential contestants may be forgiven for trying to second-guess what kind of Irishness, among the varieties on offer, might be the go. The panel is keen to make clear that it has an open mind, but the only way this can be securely tested is to scrutinise the winning entries year by year. They do constitute a varied group of offerings. By way of making this plain, it is perhaps useful to run through the short list and the short, short list.

Apart from the winner and the runner-up, the other shortlisted entries for 2010 were:

- 'Captain Rock and the Abduction of Honorah Goold' by Kiera Lindsay, an academic historical article, which is also a compelling narrative.
- 'Roots' by Bob Morrow, a lyric poem about identity, which used the Omagh bomb as a central metaphor.
- 'Effects of Migration' by Curtis Quelle, a symbolic short story about an emigrant Irishman.
- 'If I lived in Galway' by Michelle Collins, a whimsical fantasy.
- 'Famine Grave – Roscommon' by Bob Morrow, an evocation of place, mood and memory.
- 'Past Imperfect' by Bernice Spark, a promising short story.

Frances Devlin-Glass,
for the Jageurs Award adjudication panel

What's on

Bloomsday 2010: Joyce's Carnival of Vice

Wednesday, 16 June 2010

1pm and 7.30pm: Carnivale of Night-town ($35)
Trades Hall, Corner of Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton

An outrageous burlesque, set in Dublin's red light district, is based on an ingenious adaptation of the Circe chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Aficionados will recognise every detail in the seemingly chaotic plot, while newcomers will be surprised by its exuberant humour. A gritty collision between moralists and sexologists, it is full of absurdist antics, playing out the protagonists' hallucinations.

This irreverent romp is pure Joyce – language of the alleyways, sound-effects, gibberish and bits of foreign languages included. It is a celebration of the unsurpassed richness of language that made *Ulysses* the greatest novel of its time.

Featuring Drew Tingwell as Bloom,
and Glenn van Oosterom as Stephen.
Directed by Brenda Addie.

Refreshments at bar prices.

3.30pm: Seminar: *Puritans vs Sexologists* ($20)
Trades Hall, Corner of Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton
Prof Joy Damousi: 'Freud and Modern Sex in Joyce's Dublin'
Dr Frances Devlin-Glass: 'Unpacking "Pornosophy" in Circe'

5.45 for 6pm: *Dinner and More Literary Sexology* ($45)
At La Notte, 140-6 Lygon Street, Carlton
Smorgasbord and Dessert
(Vegetarian option available; wineshop prices for bottles)

7.30pm: Reprise of show, ***Carnivale of Night-town*** ($35)

All three events $95

More details and bookings: Bob Glass 03 9898 2900

Lake School of Celtic Music, Song and Dance

Saturday, 3 July 2010
12noon: Lake School Winter Workshop, Crossley, Vic.

Fiddle, singing and Irish language workshops in the Crossley hall

6.30pm: *Launch of the 12th Lake School*, to be held 2-7 January 2011
Mickey Bourke's Hotel, Koroit, Vic.

Contact: Felix Meagher 0413 801 294
felix@bushwahzee.com
www.lakeschool.bushwahzee.com

National Celtic Festival 2010

11-14 June, Portarlington on the Bellarine Peninsula

Australia's biggest celebration of Celtic music and culture, with the music, dance, laughter and passion of the Celtic spirit.

Full-scale concerts, intimate jam sessions, special events, competitions, workshops and a Celtic market. Over 60 individual acts will represent the cream of Celtic musicians, singers, poets, dancers and storytellers.

The program features Eric Bogle, one of the world's best-loved singer/songwriters. The international talent includes the Irish group *Beoga*, John Spillane (Ireland), rebel singer/songwriter Gary Óg (Scotland) and *The Craic Hooers* from Dublin's Temple Bar.

The Australian contingent includes the *Bushwackers*, the traditional sounds of *Conundrum*, *The Borderers*, *Fiddler's Feast*, *The Go Set*, *Pearl, The Rumjacks*, *Cornerbrook*, and *Bhan Tre*.

The festival will conduct its own Golden Fiddle Awards, instrument-themed concerts for harpists, fiddle players, pipers and singers, and a large workshop program with tuition in Celtic instruments, Gaelic language and dancing. Scottish pipes bands will perform *en masse*, followed by expertly run workshops, competitions and a finale provided by *Claymore*, the lords of Celtic rock.

Contact: Rochelle Smith 0409 995 638
rochellejsmith@hotmail.com

Bookings: 03 5225 1200.
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**Contact: Dr Dan O'Connor 03 5978 6326
or Nell McGettigan 03 9419 6882**

Connolly Association Radio Program

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Delivers Irish nationalist and republican news, current affairs and comment. Charts the involvement of modern Melbourne's community in Irish politics and affairs. Examines local issues for their implications for the local Irish community, as well as the broader Melbourne community.

Contact: Jim Cusack 0407 521 432 www.3CR.org.au

Melbourne Irish Community Radio Program

11:00 every Saturday and 18:00 every Sunday – 3ZZZ [92.5 FM]
Supported by the Melbourne Irish community and coordinated by Eugene O'Rourke, the program covers Irish music, news, interviews and Irish language items

17th Australasian Irish Studies Conference

Transnational Ireland: migration, conflict, representations
1–4 July 2010, Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland

An interdisciplinary conference with contributions from areas of history, migration studies, sociology, politics, literature, the arts, gender, geography, anthropology and economics.

Papers are invited on topics especially relating to the Irish experience in Australia and New Zealand, influences and experiences of Australians / New Zealanders in Ireland, Irish and Australasian sports, and comparative experiences of emigration and conflict.

**Contact: Elaine McKay,
Irish Studies International Research Initiative,
Queen's University, 53-67 University Road, Belfast, NI, BT7 1NN
e.mckay@qub.ac.uk**

Irish in Australia Exhibition

Opening March 2011, National Museum of Australia, Canberra

The exhibition will portray the story of the Irish diaspora in Australia as one of its major overseas destinations. Many significant historical artefacts from all around Australia and from Ireland will be displayed.

The curator, Richard Reid, is most anxious to cover the Irish presence in detail in the rural areas of Koroit-Port Fairy (Victoria), Illawarra (NSW) and Clare (South Australia). The story of the Irish in Koroit, Killarney, Crossley and Port Fairy is a most significant chapter in the story of the Irish contribution to Australian culture and history.

Local people and others with attachment to the district are encouraged to ensure that the area's unique history is fully represented by offering items from family collections for display: agricultural, domestic, family history, titles, photographs.

The National Museum is keen to identify and collect these items as soon as possible.

**Contact: Teresa O'Brien 03 5568 7239 or 0437 363 572
or PO Box 102, Koroit, 3282
email: goanna@westvic.com.au
OR
Richard Reid at the National Museum, Canberra**

Australian Irish Heritage Network

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Irish Heritage Network will be held in the *Tinteán* office in the basement of the Celtic Club, 316 Queen St, Melbourne, on Sunday 29 August 2010 at 3 pm.

Agenda items will be confined to approval of previous minutes, receipt of reports, approval of applications for membership and election of office holders for the forthcoming year.

Nominations for the positions of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and two Committee members are to be submitted in writing by 23 August 2009 to the Secretary AIHN, PO Box 13095, Law Courts, Melbourne 8010, signed by two AIHN members and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. A pro forma for these nominations is available from the *Tinteán* office at the Celtic Club (info@tintean.org.au or 03 9670 8865).

Peter Kiernan, President, 13 May 2010

For inclusion in the *What's On* column, please submit items to editorial@tintean.org.au

What's in a name, unless it includes Celtic?

The word 'Celtic' has been a popular selling point for many musicians over the years. Here is a comparison of three boxed sets, all featuring Celt(ic) in the title, that come across very differently.

First up is an 8-CD set entitled simply *The Celts* from Owl records in Dublin. They can be purchased individually or together, and the catalogue numbers are OWL-904 to OWL-911 inclusive. The artists featured here include the bands Cruiskeen and Dadga as well as solo artists Reg Keating, Tom Donovan and Brendan Moriarty. Over the space of the 8 CDs they get to explore, along with quite few others, many musical styles. There's a CD of rock, one of tranquillity, one of lullaby and a couple made up of pub-style favourites. Then there's a traditional music CD and finally one each of male and female voices. Overlap exists in the styles selected, to be sure, but as a set it works quite well overall, and has been very carefully recorded and put together. A very good starting point for a music collection.

Next is a 3-CD boxed set from Sony/BMG and entitled *Best of the Celtic Circle*. Catalogue number is 82876 752282. The cover features swirling mists and a background picture of, wait for it ... Stonehenge. Now most know that Stonehenge was not built by Celts, but Sony/BMG are clearly above such minor irritations. The entire set of all original artists was compiled by their subsidiary in the Netherlands, while the artwork was printed in China.

The music itself does have good reasons to stay interested, even though most of this has been previously released under the artists' own names. We have Rory Gallagher performing an acoustic instrumental version of *She Moved Though the Fair*, followed by *Crann Úll*. Quite a moving performance, albeit brief, and one that I had never known about until now. Elsewhere you will hear artists of the calibre of Kate Bush, Clannad, Corrs, Secret Garden, James Galway, Brian Kennedy and many others. But if you are a fan of any of these there may not be much that is new to you. The main attraction is the odd unreleased gem, but is it enough? A final downside is the presence of typos in the artists' names and in the song titles, James Calway (sic) being one of the more obvious examples. If you are new to Celtic music and want to explore what the big names are doing, then this would a good place to start, but seasoned collectors will probably have much of it already.

Finally we have a 3-CD boxed set entitled *The Very Best of Celtic Chillout* from the DecaDance label in the UK (distributed by Universal). Do not confuse this with Decca, which is a different entity altogether. The catalogue number for the set is DECTV026, which probably gives a hint at how it was marketed. No artists are named until you get to the ultra small print at the bottom of the inside artwork on CD 3. Here we are calmly informed that everything was the work of a duo named Ryan and Rachel O'Donnell. So yes, these are all cover versions of well known songs including a fair swag of TV, film and radio hits, but the result is absolutely amazing. This is a truly outstanding collection. I was highly impressed on first listening and it still stands up well after repeated plays.

For cover versions there is often a pre-judged element to the hearing but I rated some of these tracks even better than the originals. *The Hands That Built America* (U2) and *Irish Heartbeat* (Van Morrison) are fine examples of how it is still possible to add something new to a song that everyone already knows. Over the 3 CDs, Ryan and Rachel cover a wide variety of styles and arrangements. The clincher for me was of my own personal favourite *Rose of Tralee*. The arrangement here can only be described as a work of art. Listen to the way the tune simply hangs in the air on the words 'it was not her beauty alone that won me'. All up I now have 10 versions of this song from different sources, including the other two boxed sets described above, and this one just knocks all the others sideways. A highly recommended set indeed and would make a great birthday present.

Footnote: some readers have asked for the ordering details of the *Irish Tenors*, a boxed set reviewed here recently. The company is called Madacy Entertainment and is based in Canada, but Rainbow Products distribute their output in Australia and New Zealand. Catalogue numbers are TCJ2 52840/1/2 for the three individual CDs but the boxed set itself is listed as TC2 52839 and includes the special booklet on Irish music, which is well worth reading.

Stuart Traill

I was Irish for four days...

Stuart Traill laments the inconsistent application of statistics by our national ethnic broadcaster.

On St Patrick's Day the national ethnic broadcaster (SBS) showed the usual scenes on the evening news with a commentary that '30 percent of the population is of Irish descent'. How amazing, I thought – that statement squares pretty well with what we all know, but how on earth did it get past the thought police down at TV headquarters? By Sunday the answer became clear. That night the SBS evening news featured an St Patrick's Day parade in Sydney and the commentary this time was much more restrained. 'One in ten Australians' was the new line. By my calculations that means that in the space of four days about 4.5 million people had been denied a legitimate part of their heritage.

Does this really matter? Well, in common with the other writers on this magazine, I am continually finding examples of where Irish-Australian history is being sanitised in the media to the point of exclusion. Keep a few iconic figures like Ned Kelly and John Curtin for public consumption but just forget the rest. We also seem to have blundered badly in giving our 'ethnic broadcaster' both the responsibilities to *serve* the population and also to *define* the population. Smacks of writing your own job description.

So to those half-million dispossessed I now have some simple words of advice – welcome aboard. Take out a subscription immediately to this magazine and in a year's time you can look back and reflect on what was one of the best investments you ever made. Discover yourself and your background, and enjoy some of the best music around these days into the bargain.

Stuart Traill

Dr Colm Padraig Kiernan (1931–2010)

Colm Padraig Kiernan, the distinguished academic and historian, died on 27 March 2010. Colm Kiernan was born in London on 24 November 1931, the only son of Irish diplomat Dr Thomas (T J) Kiernan and his wife Delia Murphy, during T J Kiernan's posting as Secretary to the Irish High Commissioner. In 1946 T J was appointed the first Irish Ambassador to Australia by Taoiseach Eamon de Valera and the family moved to Canberra.

Colm Kiernan's *Australia & Ireland, Bicentenary Essays* was published in 1986. The collection arose from an international conference entitled 'Australia and Ireland, 1788-1988' held in 1983. He edited a similar collection in 1983 from the Thomas Davis lectures on Radio Eireann. Both were published in Ireland and anticipated the interest in the bicentenary of Australia, being billed as 'the first modern synthesis which rescues from neglect the distinguished contribution of a unique people to the building of Australia'. Colm's essay examined the Irishness of Henry Handel Richardson's Dr Mahony in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. His two essays on Irish settlers in *The Australian People: an encyclopedia of the nation, its people and their origins* (Angus & Robertson, 1988) discussed contributions to the Australian character made by the Catholic church, individual clergymen and Irish immigrants, both Catholic and Protestant. He contributed the entry for Joseph E C Mitchell (1840-1897) in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Colm Kiernan's *Daniel Mannix and Ireland* (1984, Alella Books) is a study of the Irish nationalism which, the author claims, dominated Mannix's consciousness: '[Mannix] was the first Archbishop anywhere to support the 1916 rebellion ... the only Archbishop anywhere in the world to oppose the Irish Treaty ... [he] alone supported Eamon de Valera and the Irish Republican cause.' With its detailed study of Mannix's early career in Ireland, Kiernan's work differentiates itself from other Mannix biographies in its description of the subtle conversion of Mannix from conformist and constitutional home-ruler to radical prelate and rabid republican. Colm's historical works linking Ireland and Australia sang to those of us taking steps into this aspect of our combined history.

Colm's early Jesuit education set him for lifelong intellectual approach to faith and spirituality. Much of his life was spent abroad, but he remained a passionate advocate of Ireland and its culture. In Australia, Colm attended school and later university in Canberra, and at the University of Melbourne. In 1954 he married Joan McKay in Canberra and they moved to Cambridge, England, where he had won a university scholarship. In 1957 they returned with their two daughters to Australia where their son Matthew was born.

Life in Australia allowed Colm to step from the shadow of his famous Irish parents and find his own success, although he always identified himself as Irish Australian and much of his career as a historian focused on revealing the achievements of the Irish in Australia. He took up his first academic position in 1963, establishing the Department of History at a newly formed campus of the University of New South Wales. Beginning as a French historian, he later moved to Australian history when asked to write the biography of Labor leader, Arthur Calwell.

Between 1980 and 1988 Colm returned to Ireland to take up the Chair in Australian History at University College Dublin. Many will recall the Kiernan hospitality over fine dinners with Joan's cooking and Colm's incisive mind and acerbic wit. He was a true Renaissance man, entertaining with his unique analytical, didactic style. Their marriage was one of true partnership until Joan's untimely death in 1992.

Colm later married Susan Mayer and retired to raise their son, Ryan, enjoying a quieter, more domestic lifestyle. It was almost as if he lived two lives, both satisfying. Following his parents' tradition, Colm was a true cultural ambassador celebrating the unique contribution of the Irish internationally.

Colm died in Wollongong where he had served with distinction in the University as Professor of History and is survived by his wife Susan, by his children Ryan, Margaret, Carol and Matthew, and nine grandchildren. He will also be sorely missed by historians and friends in both Ireland and Australia.

Perry McIntyre, with the assistance of Colm's daughter, Carol

Dr Perry McIntyre is the archivist at St John's College within the University of Sydney. She writes on Irish-Australian emigration. Fair Game: Australia's first immigrant women*, her third book with Victorian historian, Dr Liz Rushen, will be published in May 2010. More information from www.anchorbooksaustralia.com.au*

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Irish economy

The emergence of Greece as a financial disaster zone has to some extent overshadowed Ireland's continuing difficulties. Just as in America, when the global financial crisis hit in 2008, Ireland's own real estate bubble exploded and the balance sheets of the major banks collapsed.

As in America and the UK, Irish politicians refused to allow the big banks to fail and therefore decided to let the taxpayer take the full brunt of the losses. It's hard to understand how people, entrusted with so much private and public money and credited with so much talent, could have miscalculated the situation so badly but so it was. Ireland's way of going about socialising loss and privatising profit was unique; the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) was created. NAMA was to be a 'bad bank' only existing to take the toxic assets accumulated by Ireland's large banks, in return for sovereign bonds issued by the Irish government (and funded by the Irish taxpayer). The theory was that, as a result, the nation's banks would return to health, while the taxpayer paid for the losses.

Even when first proposed the creation of NAMA had many critics. The taxpayers' funds were to be used to meet private losses in return for vague promises that this approach would deal with the national economic problems. As this solution had never previously been tried, there is no certainty about the outcome. Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics, personally expressed scepticism about this solution, but the Irish government pressed ahead, oblivious to all criticism.

The situation has now abruptly worsened and it has become clear that the Irish government was not well informed about the extent of the crisis; whether because the banks concealed the size of the problem or did not understand it themselves is unknown. When first proposed, the NAMA loans were to be discounted by 30% (the size of the gap to be met by the tax payers), now they will have to be discounted by 47%. According to Brian Lenihan, the Finance Minister, the Anglo-Irish Bank alone will receive €8.3 billion in the coming week and will probably need another €10 billion. The total cost is likely to be €32 billion, meaning that each man, woman and child in Ireland will need to pay €5,161 to defray the costs incurred by the banking 'experts'.

Little wonder then that Minister for Social Protection Éamon Ó Cuív called on Bank of Ireland chief executive, Richie Boucher to forego a €1.3 million top-up to his pension. Apparently, Mr. Boucher's contract has a clause in it to that effect, but the Minister commented '.. there is one thing that I don't understand, and it is one that nobody seems to consider in this country, and that is that somebody like Mr. Boucher, and other people like him who made such a mess, would not just say "I forgo this because of the present economic situation".' Brian Lenihan has been urged to intervene, despite his reluctance, if only because he had previously assured the Dail that bankers' salaries would be capped at €500,000. Furthermore, failure to intervene sends the message to the country that nothing has changed, undermining the commitment now needed to cope with ongoing financial problems.

Compiled from the **Irish Times**

Felicity Allen

Thousands of X-rays and referrals ignored

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has known since last April that patients' X-rays went unread, and that referral letters to Tallaght Hospital, Dublin, were being ignored. Trinity College public health specialist and GP Professor Tom O'Dowd wrote and advised them of the problem. No action was taken. As a result, at least two patients with cancer have had their diagnosis delayed; one died last summer and the other is now receiving treatment. Although the correspondence from Professor O'Dowd was stamped 'received', the hospital chairman has denied seeing it. The Tanaiste recently admitted in the Dail that, over a four year period, over 58,000 X-rays and referral letters had piled up unread, although she also said that the hospital disputed some of the claims made. The numbers of letters unread is a major point of dispute with Professor O'Dowd claiming that it was 30,000 and hospital representatives claiming that it was closer to 3,000.

The hospital's management problems stem partly from its unwieldy structure; it was formed by the amalgamation of three hospitals and its board remains divided along these lines. Senior management have poor morale and their authority is regularly undercut by decisions of the hospital board. According to a report by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, the board lobbies for the allocation of hospital resources to particular consultants. The report recommended that the 22-member board be reduced to 10 members with business and financial skills, rather than simply being doctors and employees of the hospital. The Board has accepted these proposals and agreed to create a new post of Director of Quality.

The hospital chairman, Lyndon McCann, was one of the most respected barristers in the State so that health experts wondered why he failed to realise the extent of the crisis. His effectiveness may have been impaired by the fact that he was embroiled in an affair. The 47 year old barrister - a close friend of Mary Harney (the Health Minister) - was involved with another lawyer, Claire Callanan. The marriages of both have now broken up. The Health Minister has refused to answer questions about whether her friendship with the chairman contributed to her decision not to 'meddle' in the debacle even after she learned there were problems in the management of the hospital.

Professor Tom O'Dowd, the GP who blew the whistle on the pile of unread X-rays, has suggested that the chairman should resign and he has been joined by the Fianna Fail TD for Tallaght - Charlie O'Connor. Mr. McCann may not be the only person affected by the scandal as a complete breakdown in communication between the hospital and HIQA has been exposed in letters obtained by the Irish Independent. There are mounting pressures for the Health Minister herself to resign over the incident and an independent investigation has been promised. Mary Harney has returned from a New Zealand trip complaining that she is the victim of a blame game and that she cannot be responsible for clinical decisions. Many observers find these claims ingenuous since she is merely being held to account for the political decisions which underlay such an inadequate health service. Mrs Harney was recently confirmed as the Health Minister for the fourth time.

From the **Irish Independent** *and the* **Irish Times**, *April 2010*

Raferty Mystery
Mistéir Uí Raifteirí

In the last edition of *Tinteán* (No 11) Patrick Morgan wrote about the surprise connection between Melburnian, Martin Hood, and the blind itinerant Gaelic poet and fiddler, Anthony Raftery – or *Antoine Raifteirí*. The young Hood met the poet shortly before Raftery's death in 1834, and long before he came to Australia.

Although Raftery was well known in his lifetime, none of the works ascribed to him were published until nearly seventy years after his death, having been preserved miraculously in the interim in the fading oral Gaelic tradition. In the article Patrick Morgan refers to the poem, 'Mise Raifteirí', as one of the poet's most famous works, and it is that claim that I would like to explore here.Like many other Irish people, I grew up believing that 'Mise Raifteirí' was indeed the work of the unfortunate poet. After all, the first four lines appeared on the Irish five *punt* (pound) note, written on a classroom blackboard. What higher authority could there be?

In addition, the poem is written as an autobiographical fragment, capturing the final desperate years of the poet's struggles to sustain himself in his increasingly impoverished west of Ireland. I seem to remember being taught that the life of *Raifteirí* was a sad parallel for the collapse of the Irish language, in severe decline during his lifetime, immediately before the coffin nails of *an Gorta Mór*, the Great Famine of the 1840s. Raifteirí was lauded as the last great poet in the Bardic tradition.

Imagine my surprise then when a decade or so ago I read in the notes accompanying Tadhg Mac Dhonnagáin's song 'Raifteirí san Underground', on his album 'Rogha Amhrán', or 'Selected Songs', that the poem was '…now generally believed to have been written in the late 19th century, in America, by one *Seán Ó Ceallaigh*.' I suppose some might question the jacket of an album as an authority, but Mac Dhonnagáin is a Gaelic scholar and celebrated folklorist as well as a singer-songwriter. He was born near Cill Aodáin, County Mayo, where Raifteirí was born and has made a particular study of the works ascribed to the poet.

More importantly, as soon as I read Mac Dhonnagáin's claim it struck me forcibly that 'Mise Raifteirí' seemed to have been written by someone highly influenced by, or operating within, the English language tradition of poetry. A quick examination of the poem below reveals that it is written in rhymed couplets, a distinctive feature of English verse, but not a feature of traditional Gaelic poetry.

> Mise Raifteirí an file, lán dóchais 's grá,
> Le súile gan solas, le ciúnas gan crá.
> Ag dul siar ar m'aistear le solas mo chroí
> Fann agus tuirseach go deireadh mo shlí.
> Féach anois mé, 's mo chúl le balla
> Ag seinm ceoil do phócaí folamh.

Below are the first four lines of Raifteirí's poem 'Cill Aodáin' (sometimes 'Cill Liadain') about his birth place.

> Anois teacht an earraigh beidh an lá ag dul chun síneadh,
> Is tar éis na féil Bríde ardóidh mé mo sheol.
> Ó chuir mé i mo cheann é ní chónóidh me choíche
> Go seasfaidh mé síos i lár Chondae Mhaigh Eo.

It is immediately obvious that there are no perfect rhymes, either at the end of lines or internally, as there are in 'Mise Raifteirí'. Instead the poem relies upon assonance for its 'poetical' effect, using both internal vowel rhyme and slant vowel rhyme, each a distinctive feature of traditional Gaelic poetry.

Every year Baile Locha Riach, or Loughrea, in County Galway, hosts *An Féile Raifteirí*, the Raftery Festival, in honour of the poet. I was in contact recently with the director, Pádraig Ó Baoill, who advised that 'Mise Raifteirí' was first published in 1882 in the American magazine, 'An Gaodhal', in a letter from Seán Ó Ceallaigh, using the pen name 'Baile Chraoch'. Ó Ceallaigh claimed that he had heard the verse from Raftery, but Ó Baoill believes that he may have written it himself, or that it was based upon a verse that was part of the *béaloideas*, or folklore.

Whatever the truth of the matter, there is no doubting the iconic status of the poem. Perhaps there are, amongst the readership of 'Tinteán', those who can shed further light on the mystery of the poem's authorship.

Bearnaí Ó Doibhlin

TINTEÁN INDEX

An updated index of *Tinteán* articles, authors and subject material appeared in the March 2010 issue of the magazine.

This index is updated every issue and is available now on the *Tinteán* website:
tintean.org.au

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Miscellany visits Enniscorthy

At Boolavogue as the sun was setting
Over the bright May meadows of Shelmalier,
A rebel hand set the heather blazing,
And brought the neighbours from far and near.
Then, Father Murphy from old Kilcormack,
Spurred up the rocks with a warning cry,
'Arm! Arm!' he cried, 'for I've come to lead you,
For Ireland's freedom we'll fight or die!'
(Air Traditional, Words P.J. Mc Call)

John Murphy was born in Tincurry in the parish of Ferns Co. Wexford in 1753, the youngest son of six children of Thomas Murphy and Johanna Whitty who were tenant farmers and bacon curers.

The Penal Laws enacted in the early 1800s denied education to Catholics to retain power in the hands of Protestants and loyalists. So, the Murphys, like many Catholics, were educated at a hedge school. One of John's teachers, Father Andrew Cassin, influenced his decision to become a priest. John was ordained in 1780. The Bishop of Ferns, Dr. Nicholas Sweetman, arranged for the newly ordained Fr John to study theology and philosophy for five years in Spain. On his return to Wexford, Fr John was posted to the parish of Boolavogue where he served as curate for the next twelve years.

Right across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries states defined loyalty in terms of religion. With some exceptions, Irish who refused to become Protestant were considered incapable of being loyal to the crown. Thus the rebellions and wars of the 17th century were followed by government confiscation of the losers' property and its transfer to the winners in reward for their services. This meant that more and more land passed out of 'disloyal' Catholic hands. In 1704 most of Ireland was Protestant owned and by 1776 the Penal Laws ensured that 95% of Ireland was owned by Protestants.

During the late 18th century a great tide of revolution swept through Europe and washed away much of the *ancien regime.* The American War of Independence (1775–1783), inspired uprisings in the Netherlands and elsewhere. These culminated in the French Revolution which encouraged other revolutionaries and unrest spread throughout Europe. Fear struck the hearts of the elite. The cry of *Liberty Equality and Fraternity* echoed across Europe as Hungary (1790), Poland (1791), Russia (1793) and Sardinia (1793) fought their own battles for the rights of man. Liberty Trees, dedicated to constitutional liberty, sprouted on village greens and town squares all over France during 1790.

In Dublin in 1791, a young Protestant lawyer Theobald Wolfe Tone helped to found a new society named the Society of the United Irishmen. His intent was to bring Irishmen of all persuasions into a movement for far reaching reform. Branches of the Society spread to most parts of Ireland and by 1796 it is estimated that the number of recruits had reached half a million.

Over the next two years, events on the Continent, in England and in Ireland pushed the country to the brink of insurrection and on 30th March 1798 the Government Viceroy, Lord Camden declared 'The country is in a state of rebellion.'Martial Law was declared. The atrocities committed by the yeomen in Wexford and Enniscorthy left Fr John with no choice other than to become a rebel leader. He fought at Vinegar Hill. Later captured at Tullow, he was beheaded and his remains were burnt.

At Vinegar Hill. o'er the pleasant Slaney,
Our heroes vainly stood back to back,
And the Yeos at Tullow took Father Murphy,
And burnt his body upon the rack.
God grant you glory brave Father Murphy,
And open heaven to all your men;
The cause that called you may call tomorrow,
In another fight for the Green again.
(Air Traditional, Words P.J. Mc Call)

The Irish losses County Wexford alone were shocking; in a four-week period, 20,000 lives were lost out of a population of 120,000. By comparison, in the first six years of the French Revolution 25,000 lives were lost out of thirty million. Although the rebellion failed, the seeds of modern democracy were sown. A Liberty Tree was planted in Enniscorthy in 1798.

The award winning National 1798 Rebellion Centre is located in the shadow of Vinegar Hill, beside the picturesque River Slaney 500 meters from Enniscorthy Town. The visitor approaches the Centre across The Bridge of Democracy. Engraved on the wooden planks of the bridge are the names of the places and the dates of the battles that were landmarks on the road to democracy from Athens in 592 BC to Wexford in 1798.

Over the reception desk in the entrance hall there is a legend surrounding the symbol of the United Irishmen that comes from the United Irish Catechism, Cork, 1798. It reads;

What is that in your hand? It is a branch.
Of What? Of the Tree of Liberty.
Where did it first grow? In America.
Where does it bloom? In France.
Where did the seeds fall? In Ireland.

The exhibition traces the seeds of rebellion from Pre-Revolutionary Europe to the events that occurred in Ireland, and particularly in Wexford. Storyboards, touch screen monitors and an audio visual presentation, using a curved screen to simulate the battle of Vinegar Hill, tell the story of the events leading up to the rebellion itself. Other battles around the country and the aftermath of the rebellion are documented.

One aspect of the exhibition of particular interest to readers of *Tinteán* is Wexford's link with Baulkham Hills Shire in Sydney. In 2002 the Shire Council and Wexford County signed a 'Sisters City' agreement building on the historical links and shared cultures that went back to the Battle of Vinegar Hill in Wexford in 1798 and the Castle Hill Rebellion in Baulkham Hills Shire in 1804.

In the short space of Miscellany, the complex series of events both in Ireland, England and on the Continent that led to the Rebellion of 1798 can only be touched on. I am very conscious that over- simplification can be misleading. With this in mind I refer those interested to the following resources which I also used as references in compiling this edition of Miscellany.

- The National 1798 Rebellion Centre website at www.1798centre.ie where there is a wealth of information covering, A Calendar of Events. The Leaders of 1798, The Women of 1978, The Flags of 1798. The

Weapons of 1798 and much more.

- Fr. John Murphy of Boolavogue 1753 – 1798 by Nicholas Furlong, published by Distillery Press, Kellystown, Drinagh, Wexford. ISBN 0 906602 18 1.
- Nicholas Furlong’s website www.nicholasfurlong.com gives full details and reviews of his best selling books and well repays a visit.
- Written in an engaging and readable style it is a goldmine of information on the life and times in 18th century Ireland and makes reading history an enjoyable experience.
- Rebellion by Daniel J Gahan, one of the foremost historians on the events of 1798, is the authorised book of the 1798 Visitor Centre, jointly published by The O’Brien Press, Wexford County Council and Comoradh ’98. ISBN 0 86278 548 0

My special thanks to the manager and the staff of the 1798 Visitor Centre for their generous help and for permission to quote abstracts from the exhibition story boards and other material and to Nicholas Furlong for permission to reproduce the photograph of the Portrait of Father John Murphy.

Sin a bhfuil go fóill ó Seósamh Ó Murchú. Slán agus beannacht. Nollag shóna libh go léir.

Happy Bloomsday everyone.

Joseph Murphy

Photograph of the Portrait of John Murphy is courtesy of Nicholas Furlong.

ADRIAN BOHM PRESENTS

Daniel O’Donnell

AUSTRALIAN TOUR 2010

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On Human Rights and Brehon Law

Australia does not have a Bill of Rights. The Federal Government is however currently investigating the question of bringing in legislation to enact a Bill of Rights and the Government is carrying out a consultation process with the people of Australia. The National Human Rights Consultation Chairman (Rev Fr Frank Brennan S.J.) has reported back to the Federal Government.

Victoria has the Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006 and the enactment of legislation recognising human rights means that Victoria has joined New Zealand, the Irish Republic, South Africa, Canada, the UK and the European community in bringing in such laws. The main point of the Victorian legislation is that human rights must be considered in all decision-making by public authorities. The central question at issue is whether the decision reflects human dignity, equality and freedom.

In ancient Ireland, the native legal system existed before the 9th century until it was abolished at the beginning of the 17th century simultaneously with the introduction of outrageous Penal Laws.

In Ireland, a judge was called a brehon and the native Irish law is commonly known as the 'Brehon Law'.

P W Joyce in his *A (Smaller) Social History of Ancient Ireland* writes on the Brehon Laws. He says the whole tenor of Irish literature, whether legendary, legal or historical shows that it was the same during that period as it was at the beginning of the 17th Century, when Sir John Davies – an Englishman – the Irish Attorney-General of James II testified: 'For there is no nation of people under the sunne that doth love equall and indifferent (i.e., impartial) justice better than the Irish; or will rest better satisfied with the execution thereof, although it bee against themselves so as they may have the protection and benefit of the law, when upon just cause they desire it.'

From earliest times, Brehon Law was distinguished by its egalitarianism and by its respect for fundamental rights and liberties.

The Irish Cultural Society of New York has an article on the web on the Brehon Law. It says 'in ancient Ireland, under Brehon Law, the lowest clansman stood on an equal footing with his chieftain. For example, it is recorded that when several Irish kings visited Richard II in Dublin, the Irish kings sat down to dinner with their minstrels and entire retinue as was their custom. The English were appalled by such a display of egalitarianism and soon re-arranged things so that the Irish royalty ate separately from the rest of the attendants. The Irish gave in to this demand of the English in order to be courteous guests even though it went very much against their inclination and custom.'

The article goes on to say that the Brehon Law 'applied to all areas of life and reflected the values of the people...... Under Brehon Law women were equal to men with regard to education and property........Because of their equality or near equality with men in other realms, women warriors frequently felt it was their duty to take up arms and march into battle with their husbands and brothers.'

According to Brehon Law, there was a statutory obligation to assist travellers with housing and meals. Is this where Ireland`s reputation for hospitality comes from? In the area of criminal law it is significant that there was no provision in the Brehon Law for corporal punishment or the death penalty. Another interesting aspect of Brehon Law was the tradition of fasting to prove the justice of your stance or legal position. The hunger strike as a means of drawing attention to the justice of your cause has been a common step taken in Ireland, particularly in the 20th century, up to the time of Bobby Sands and his Republican fellow prisoners in 1981.

A major work has been completed recording all the Irish law texts written on vellum manuscripts covering the period from the 7th Century to the 12th Century. University College Cork has a Brehon Law Project to index the work, publish it on the Internet and bring out a CD-ROM edition with an appropriate introduction, description of manuscripts, translations and a bibliography. The University is calling for funds to complete this project.

As a consequence of violations of human rights and civil liberties taking place in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, members of the Irish-American Bar Association in 1978 set up a Brehon Law Society in New York. Its objects, according to its charter, are 'to foster an awareness of the rich tradition of the Celtic legal heritage and through due inquiry, professional observation and fraternal discussion with concerned members of the Bar, evaluate the spirit, execution and effect of the existing justice system on the human and civil rights of the residents and émigrés of Northern Ireland.'

In response to the increasing violence surrounding Orange and other Loyal Order parades in Nationalist neighbourhoods of Northern Ireland, the New York Brehon Law Society has since 1997 co-ordinated international observers to serve as witnesses of the parades. The observers are volunteers, pay their own expenses and observe, record and report without taking an active role in events.

In 2005, the Brehon Law Society of Australia was set up in Sydney. It has similar objects to the New York Brehons in fostering an awareness of Celtic legal heritage and supporting the human and civil rights of the residents of the north-east of Ireland. Two of its committee members (Paul Lynch, MLA for Liverpool, NSW and the writer) have attended in Northern Ireland as international observers of the parades. I also attended as a member of the Society a conference in February 2009 in Dublin to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the death of Belfast human rights lawyer, Pat Finucane, murdered by loyalist paramilitaries. The Brehon Law Society (along with a large number of international human rights groups) has called for public independent inquiries into his death and that of another lawyer, Rosemary Nelson, also killed by loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. At issue is the question as to whether there was collusion between the paramilitaries and the Government security agencies.

It is unclear what form the proposed Federal Bill of Rights will take if it is enacted. However, throughout the Brehon legal tradition there is a common thread of concern for justice and fair dealing and the Irish are justifiably proud of this heritage. So too are we members of the Irish diaspora and we would therefore encourage the introduction of a Bill of Rights for Australia.

Bernie Brophy

Bernie is a practising solicitor and human rights advocate

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The Lalor brothers: hemispheres apart

Peter Lalor is a name with which all Australians, particularly those of Irish extraction, will empathise. But, to millions of Australians, the name of his older brother, James Fintan, is unknown. As if to reciprocate, few citizens of Ireland have heard of Peter Lalor while being quite conversant with his revolutionary brother.

Peter Lalor is an enigmatic figure today. The Kilkenny-born Franciscan priest, Thomas Fitzgerald, who spent many years in Sydney, writing of him some ninety years ago, described him as 'the founder of Australian democracy'. But was he? Did he deserve the plaudits bestowed on him by many left-wing analysts? At no time in his political career could he be described as a socialist. In his book *The Irish in Australia,* Patrick O'Farrell noted:

> In 1948 the then Labor government's decision to name an electorate after him called forth denunciations of him as a class traitor: as director of a goldmine at Clunes he had supported the introduction of Chinese strike-breakers. Everybody had it - and Lalor - wrong. He did not become, in Lynch's words, a 'smug Tory' after Eureka; he had always been one. And he had explained this to the Victorian parliament in 1856. Honourable members accused him of deserting (the diggers). The truth was he never belonged to them: they were a class which he always despised.

Despised is a strong word, which should make unmistakable the strength of Lalor's stratified view of society, of his belief in the paternal rule of the landed aristocracy, of his confidence in the appropriateness of his own right to rule. A Trinity graduate in engineering, his father an MP, his family one of the seven septs of Leix, Lalor was no democrat. Patrick O'Farrell is correct in his analysis of Peter Lalor's politics. Like his father and siblings, he deplored the revolutionary activities of his brother, James Fintan, and never mentioned them in his own Australian political career. He was, in every sense of the word, his father's son and the Eureka episode was the only time he deviated from his own privileged values.

The youngest of a family of twelve and a native of Co Laois, Peter Lalor was twenty years younger than his revolutionary brother, James Fintan. He died in 1889 at the age of 62.

James Fintan Lalor, too, has his place in Australian history. Even in his own day as a spokesperson for revolution, he influenced many Irish republicans and social reformers. The Land Leaguers hailed him as their true apostle. Idealised by Pearse who numbered him among his four evangelists of Irish revolutionary thought, he was praised by James Connolly in his book *Labour in Irish History*. If Peter, his brother, acted in accordance with his semi-aristocratic background, James Fintan's reaction against it ensured his immortality. Had family circumstances been different who knows what the outcome might have been.

The land and the country's natural resources for the people of Ireland to have and to hold forever, no less than the winning of national freedom, were the cornerstones of James Fintan Lalor's teachings. It was a far cry from the political views of his father, Patrick Lalor, himself a landlord, a disciple of Daniel O'Connell (whom James Fintan particularly abhorred) and, for three years, an MP at Westminster. Lalor senior saw the emancipation of Catholics and a return to the old parliament in College Green as the only legitimate goals for Irish people. No democrat, he at all times strongly supported the connection with Britain and deplored James Fintan's radical leanings. None of James Fintan's siblings sympathised with his political views. He ploughed a lone furrow.

Born with a serious physical disability, his political opponents scornfully referred to him as 'the hunchback of Tinnakill'. By distancing himself from his father's politics he consigned himself to deprivation and grinding poverty. Frequently banished from home, unable to procure steady employment, his impassioned voice and powerful pen were never silent. He was the social conscience of Young Ireland who invariably got to the root of the problem. His writings were a cry from the heart, evident in his much-quoted letter to John Martin (*The Irish Felon*, 24 June 1848). One passage in particular epitomises his teachings:

> A mightier question moves Ireland today than that of merely repealing the Act of Union. Not the constitution that Tone died to abolish, but the constitution that Tone died to obtain, independence, full and absolute independence for this island and for every man within this island. On a wider fighting field, with stronger positions and greater resources must we close for our final struggle with England, or sink and surrender. Ireland her own - and all therein, from the sod to the sky, the soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland, to have and to hold from God alone who gave it - to have and to hold to them and to their heirs forever, without suit or service, faith or fealty, rent or render, to any power under Heaven.

Among Lalor's other forceful writings, special mention must be made of his article 'Clearing the Decks', *The Irish Felon*, 22 July 1848. The following excerpt has been frequently quoted:

> Oh! Worse than the foreign tyrant is the native traitor; and worse than the open traitor in the enemy's ranks is the vile trickster and the base craven in our own. Away with them! They must quit or be quashed. For remark you this and recollect it, that somewhere, somehow, and by somebody, a beginning must be made; and that the first act of resistance is always, and must be ever premature, imprudent and dangerous. Lexington was premature, Bunker's Hill was imprudent, and even Trenton was dangerous.

Following the failure of the Young Ireland uprising of 1848, James Fintan Lalor, now in wretched health, continued to urge the men of Tipperary and neighbouring counties to rise. But the effects of the Famine had quenched the spirit of the people. Lalor died in Dublin on 27 December 1849 at the early age of 42. His efforts to rouse his countrymen may have failed but his writings continued to inspire.

Sean Ua Cearnaigh

Resident in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford, Seán Ua Cearnaigh has contributed for many years to newspapers and journals, in Irish and English, on history and other subjects. He is the editor and author of three books in Irish: B'iad a d'Adhain an Tine Bheo (It was they who kindled the living fire)*, a compilation of 13 essays on the theme of the 1798 rising;* Ministrí Misniúla 1798 (Courageous Ministers 1798)*, about Ulster Presbyterian clergymen active for Ireland in the 1798 rising; and* Riobeard Emmet agus 1803: A Comrádaithe agus a Chéastúnaigh (Robert Emmet and 1803: his Comrades and Executioners) *[Dublin, Coiscéim, 1998, 1998 and 2003 respectively]. Seán has also edited* Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, My years in English jails *[Tralee, Anvil, 1967]. In recent years he has written books in Irish for young people.*

Riverdance and the sluggish tick of the classroom clock

Irish dancing is easy for Ahmet. Normally he's breaking or popping to *Tupac,* so this straight up and down *Riverdance* stuff is easy for him. Not so for the six other kids in my Year 9 '*So, you think you can dance competition'*.

It started well enough – I had taught them the one, two, three, four, five, six, seven steps that Mrs O'Brien at Synge Street CBS beat into us as kids, and they grasped the concept easily enough – but the wheels have fallen off now. Melek has decided that the Irish form needs a sharp dose of Turkish belly dancing, while Sumera has opted for Bollywood. Ayden and Abdul have been fighting since recess over an iPod and have refused to participate at all. Nonetheless. it's a hoot and Ahmet steals the show. All week he's been studying Michael Flatley videos on Youtube and has even developed a bit of an Irish twang: 'Jaysus, sir, this stuff is massive.' He's now rewarded with high fives and wolf whistles from the students and staff in the audience. It's the last week of term and everyone has begun to decompress. My Year 12s have finished their coursework and some of the younger kids have begun skipping school for the beach. The teachers have been meeting to review the year and I've just realised that, for the first time in my life, I'm actually enjoying school.

Fun was not a word that I associated with education. I survived school by keeping my head down and losing myself in my imagination. I quickly learnt that I had to become my own best friend if I was to survive the excruciatingly sluggish tick of the classroom clock. The Irish Christian Brothers worked on pedagogy of control through fear and boredom. I suspect they believed young boys needed to be broken; any sign of adolescent enthusiasm was a sign of trouble. I learnt this the hard way.

Dublin 1976. I'm 11-years-old and too cheeky for my own good. Brother Kelleher, our dwarfish RE teacher is giving us *the talk*:

'Now boys', he inhales slowly for effect, 'this is a delicate matter and I won't tolerate immaturity'.

In a mean whisper he advises: 'Many of you will be having thoughts about girls.' He has our attention. 'You must be on your guard. The devil is an expert at tempting weak minds. It's important to know how to think and how to behave around young ladies.'

The 80-year-old Kerryman should have retired in the 50s, but he seems driven by an almost supernatural energy that defies his frail frame.

'There is a lot of talk about how people should *enjoy* sex, about free love and other sinful activities; take no heed of this filth. God created sex for no other reason than to create children. Females should be admired for their beauty, their grace, their elegance only,' he hisses through tight lips.

Brenner, one of Kelleher's cheer squad, pops his hand up – as usual.

'Sir is it OK to kiss a girl?'

'A peck on the cheek, to demonstrate your appreciation is acceptable.'

I whisper to Cullen, convinced I'm out of Kelleher's hearing range.

'I suppose that rules out slipping the tongue in.'

I shouldn't have underestimated the lunatic. With a swiftness that still baffles me, Kelleher travels the length of the classroom and lands behind my desk in a single move. I'm sure he can levitate.

Calmly, at first, his stale nicotine breath rasps into my ear:

'I know your kind – don't think I don't.'

Spittle rains on my cheek as he begins his rant:

'Don't think for one minute you can test me.'

He slaps the back of my head – one whack for each syllable. The final thump forces my face into the wooden desk, splattering blood over my bible.

In a sense I was lucky. My family often moved around the country because of my father's job, so I only spent a few years at Synge Street. My other schools weren't so brutal, but they still had a malevolent edge. Now I'm an Irishman teaching English to Australian Muslims. After a couple of decades in the media, my midlife reassessment led me to teaching. No one was more surprised than me – my schooldays were the stuff of Stephen King novels and I wondered at the time if the brothers had turned me into some sort of psychological masochist.

In 2008, I got my first post at Mt Hira College in Keysborough, an Islamic college with about 300 students. About 70% of students come from a Turkish background and the rest are a combination of Iraqi, Afghani, Egyptian and Bosnian kids. I knew very little about Islam and I fully expected to be working in a strict religious environment, similar to my own schooling experiences. I had had little exposure to other cultures growing up. My father's side of the family had been Church of Ireland somewhere along the line – which was pretty exotic – and apart from two Jewish boys, a Nigerian and an Indian kid, our school culture was nationalist, Catholic and white.

During the worst of the troubles we had a clear idea of our tribal loyalties. The 1916 Proclamation on every classroom wall, the tricolours, Easter lilies and our yearly pilgrimage to Pearse's school in Ballyboden were the symbols that pigeon-holed us. And should we momentarily waver, our teachers, priests and brothers swiftly kicked us back on track with tales of English atrocities. Our religious duties were also pretty clear. We should pity Jews, Protestants and Muslims – they're simply misguided, but we should have no sympathy for homosexuals and atheists, they're beyond God's help.

I suppose I expected to find similarly fundamentalist religious and tribal attitudes at my new school. After all, Islam is a culture experiencing the same pressures that the Irish, particularly the diaspora in Britain, faced during the 70s and 80s. So I approached my first few weeks with trepidation and diplomacy. But the kids soon tested me – they can smell fear. During the first week, when a cheeky Year 10 girl asked me: ‘Are you Muslim, sir?’ I was lost for words.

‘I was born a Christian.’ I answered.

She wasn’t going to be fobbed off though. ‘Don’t you believe in God now?’

I figured that being an atheist would be more damning, so I told her: ‘I go to church, but I believe that a person’s religious beliefs are private.’

She gave me that *whatever* look and we moved onto essay planning.

I probably wasn’t a very effective teacher in my first term, but the kids were giving me a fabulous education. I learnt that Muslims didn’t hate Jesus – after all he’s an Islamic prophet, but they find it extremely funny that Christians believe that someone can come back from the dead. I also learnt that Islam is as much about community as it is about religion. The school is part of a wider complex that includes a social centre, a mosque, and playing fields; it is a general meeting place where families gather to celebrate dozens of events every year. This focus on community is the most attractive part of my involvement with the school. I know most of my students’ parents – in some cases I know their grandparents, and the children’s welfare is the most prominent priority for every adult in the community.

In my childhood, I believe the Irish school system traded nurture for competition. I realise I’ve been seeking a definition for education ever since. Maybe I can let that question go now.

Ahmet takes a bow and the audience calls for an encore. He feigns embarrassment, but quickly finds his groove as Shakira’s *Hips Don’t Lie* rattles the auditorium’s windows. He drops a few pelvic thrusts in the teachers’ direction and the audience goes wild. Finally he finishes. He sits next to me and wipes the drops from his forehead. He turns to me and says: ‘that was the craic, sir. It must be great being Irish.’

Right now, it is.

Terry Cantwell

Terry is a Dubliner, a journalist and currently a teacher.

International success for Cumann Gaeilge na hÁstraile

In the 1960s, in a time of upheaval in the social history of Ireland, it appeared to Cumann na Sagart (established 1916) that action was required to create a positive focus in society. They established a competition to promote the Irish language. It became known as Glór na nGael (The Voice of the Gael), in memory of the voice of the people that Saint Patrick heard calling him to return to Ireland. The first competition was organised during the commemoration year of Patrick’s return, 1962. Every year over €150,000 worth of prizes are awarded to committees from around Ireland that best develop the language and culture.

The first worldwide Global Gaeilge competition began in 2005. Since then the competition has gone from strength to strength with 30 committees registered from 13 different countries. As a result Global Gaeilge is now sponsored by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.

For 2009, An Droichead, Deisceart Bhéal Feirste won first prize of €50,000 in the national competition and Cumann Gaeilge na hÁstraile (Irish Language Association of Australia), based in Melbourne, won first prize in the Global Gaeilge Competition. In 2010, three Cumann members, Deirdre Gillespie, Joan Moloney and Eamon Naughton attended the Awards Ceremony in Belfast to collect a prize of €5,000 plus two return airfares and a week’s tuition at a Gaeltacht. The dinner was held at Belfast City Hall and was preceded by a reception by the Australian Ambassador to Ireland, Bruce Davis.

An emotional and impartial tour of the Falls and Shankill Roads and other sites important in the political history of Belfast also occurred.

Members of Glór na nGael may visit Australia later in the year to conduct ‘Teach the Teacher’ workshops which will be of major benefit to the Cumann and its members. The Cumann would like to acknowledge the support of Glór na nGael and to thank it most sincerely choosing it as the Global Gaeilge Winner 2009.

Deirdre Gillespie

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Macabre, bizarre, grotesque and absurd

Tales of epic exaggeration and humour in the *Lives* of the early Irish saints

> A certain lascivious cleric entered the sister's monastery, and gazing upon a beautiful girl he fell in love. And that girl expended love in return to the lover. And he promised that he would go in advance to a nearby forest and the girl ought to follow him. Before he left he turned around to saint Samthann and he sought a prayer from her for his journey. When she asked where he wanted to go, he replied: "I wish to travel to Connaught". Then the virgin saint said to him "Whithersoever you may go, do not vex my sisters with enticing words or evil deeds." And he replied "Far be that from me, lady" And this having being said, he left. And when he reached the river and began to cross over, the water sprang up at every point to arrive at the level of his sword belt. And then an extraordinary eel of great size bit into his genitals and firmly encircled him. Once this happened, he was vehemently terrified and returned to the virgin of God. And falling to his knees sought pardon. Once she had given it, the eel immediately fell away from his genitals. And so, taking heed of his own fright he swore a promise to never come again to a monastery of virgins. (*Life of Saint Samthann,* §11)

The Irish have long been renowned for their sense of humour, but even knowing this in advance I was still dumbfounded when I first began to translate the early medieval *Lives* of the female Irish saints. The stories I uncovered seemed out of place for religious texts, and I had to ask myself what role these bizarre, macabre, and often grotesque episodes had played in the minds of their authors. To me, the humour inherent in a giant genital biting eel is palpable, but was the same true for the original audience? Humour is a social construct and each culture, sub-culture and individual has its own type of humour and it is rare to find a group that agrees on the value of a given joke. Despite this, there are certain concepts and practices that have been considered funny across disparate societies, and determining the function of these provides a valuable insight into the mentality of the period.

For some, these tales will seem revolting, for others they are examples of epic exaggeration. The label placed on the stories is relatively unimportant, but by using modern humour theories it is possible to propose some explanations for what these tales were doing in biographies of Irish saints. Given the sheer preponderance of these tales it is clear that they all played an important role in the development and exegesis of early Irish religious thought.

Modern humour theories are divided into three main groups - superiority theories, incongruity theories and relief or release theories. Superiority theories perceive humour as created when the audience feels superior to the victim of the punch line. For incongruity theories the humour derives from the difference between what one gets and what one expects, while release theories derive their humour from the abrupt sense of security created when a bad thing is demonstrated to be safe after all. Consistent across all the theories is the belief that for humour to be successful it must create an element of tension that turns out not to be directed at the audience - thus rendering it safe. Humour defuses potentially dangerous situations, and unpalatable truths can be safely insinuated into a discussion.

In early Irish hagiography humour served specific functions. It was a powerful tool not only in developing the charismatic qualities of individual saints, but also in asserting and affirming social hierarchies. The presence of this humour in these *Lives* made the stories more memorable and their protagonists more personable, while defining the authority of each saint. The two most common types of humour intersect in the tale of the eel: bawdy body humour that tends towards the macabre and nature humour, which is more about epic exaggeration.

Most humour in the Irish saints' *Lives* comes from seeing other people suffer – especially where the suffering is uniquely tailored to match the perceived sin. The superiority-relief pattern of humour was common in the Irish *Lives,* with the most frequent motif being the immobilised evildoer. Máedóc of Ferns and Mochuda both caused weapons to cleave to the hands of their attackers, leaving them frozen in place with weapons upraised, their crime plain to all who saw them. Unlike the burlesque graphic imagery of the giant eel, the humour in these miracles is more understated, and its main purpose was to make the incidents memorable, in turn making them easier to absorb for the audience.

Once nudity was introduced into Irish humour, however, gendered differences appear in the way it was used in the male and female *Lives.* Only in the *Lives* of the female saints were naked vulnerable males juxtaposed with confident female saints who had humiliated them. This is an example of social inversion, the contrast of a strong domineering woman with a submissive male figure, a common modern method of adding humour to an everyday situation. This juxtaposition underscored the authority of the female saint through the subjugation of the sinful male but it also separated these saintly women from their worldly sisters, placing them in a powerful position that ordinary women could not access. This miraculous juxtaposition was not needed in the stories of male saints as male authority over females did not need to be spelt out. Female authority over males, though, needed to be justified by the professional role of the saint, and with this her difference from ordinary women.

The other key difference is that male Irish saints were more likely to be depicted in a grotesque manner than female Irish saints.Vivian Mercier has demonstrated that the grotesque played a vital role in early Irish humour. This is apparent in a story from the *Life of Féichín.* There is a common medieval motif of Christ appearing as a leper and insisting on an act of generosity from a saint. In this instance, however, this leper-Christ demanded from the saint a queen to sleep with – surely an unusual demand in a Christian context. It was the final demand of the leper-Christ that really brought out the grotesque, however, when he instructed the queen to 'put my nostrils in your mouth then drag out the snot'. The sacred nature of the leper was finally revealed when the snot turned to gold. In an even more grotesque story, Munnu, having been cursed with leprosy as a punishment for excessive pride, came to Saint Mochua to be cured. While waiting, Munnu 'bald and leprous and horrible with ulcerous wounds,' took care to regularly sweep back in to his body the worms that had crawled out of it. To cure him, Mochua licked the Munnu's leprous body from the top of his head all the way down, culminating in sucking forth the snot from Munnu's sacred face.

This difference in portrayal of the grotesque may be due to the already liminal status of the female body. To avoid threatening the female saint's authority it was important to avoid emphasising her female nature rather than her sanctity. Unlike male saints, female saints could not afford to be placed in a position open to mockery. Based on the extant Irish hagiography, it would seem that while humour was an essential component in holding the attention of an early Irish audience, in the female *Lives* this was used to exalt the female figure above inferior males, while the male *Lives* encompassed a broader spectrum of the grotesque in line with the contemporary saga literature.

Grotesque and earthy humour played an important role in Irish hagiography, but almost as common was the humour that arose from the saints' incongruous interactions with wildlife and natural forces. This was also true of the medieval Irish saga literature, as Tom Peete Cross expressed very cautiously allowing that they 'abound in examples of epic exaggeration, some of which may have been intended as humorous'. It is of course understandable that God should award power over nature to saints but their use (or misuse) of this power often led to situations that are hard not to see as humorous such as the many animal resurrections performed by Irish saints, where the saint would first kill and eat the animal before returning it to its place in the natural world. By far the most endearing of these examples occurred in the *Life of Monenna*. This story concerns the resurrection of a dead piglet, which the swineherd 'had long loved while it was alive'. This rustic had butchered and offered the piglet to the saint and her companions, only to have it rejected, as their custom was to eat only wild animals. On hearing of the man's sorrow at the pointless loss of his beloved piglet, Monenna, 'arranged the fragments, by God's grace put together the severed limbs and… restored the piglet to life for him.' restoring happiness to the rustic.

Most commonly incongruous animal humour occurred where the saint caused a wild animal to behave in an unnatural manner. The saint's power over nature was best expressed by ability to subvert it. To save the life of the man who had killed the original, Brigit replaced the trained pet fox of a king with a wild one that showed the same docility and performed all the same tricks. The miraculously intelligent fox would be incongruous in itself outside of a fable or hagiography, but the humour in the chapter comes from the ending. Once the man had been freed the fox too departed, outwitting all the horsemen and dogs that pursued it. Not only could the saint defy and defeat the cruel and unreasonable king, but so too could her fox. Thus the king lost honour and prestige while all venerated the saint for her powers and exploits.

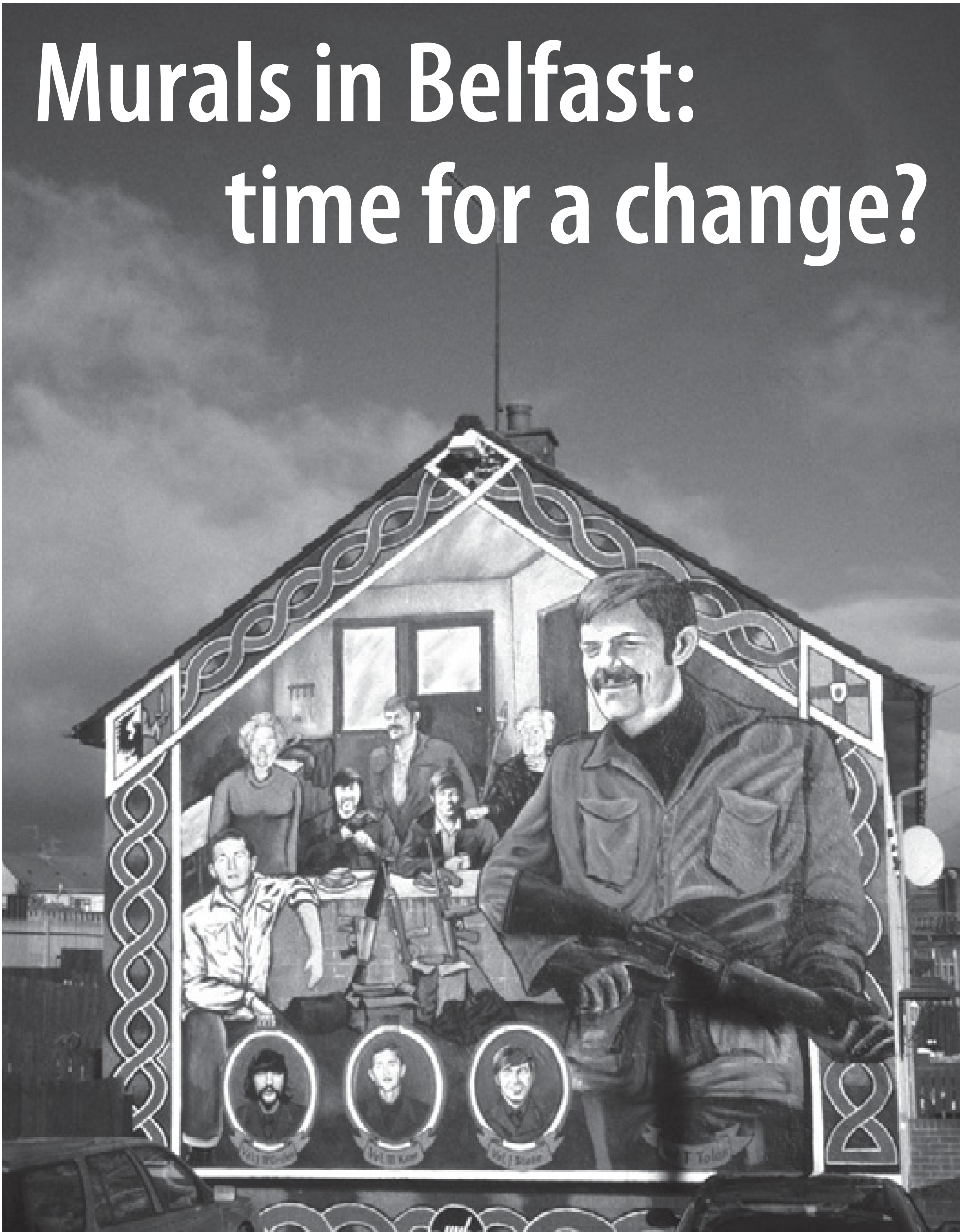
Although body humour was gendered in Irish hagiography, this was not the case with nature humour. Once the focus of the humour moved away from sexual boundaries, male and female Irish saints performed similarly. For example, both Monenna and Féichín ordered a wolf to act as a calf in order to keep the parent cow in milk. In each instance where a potentially dangerous animal was incorporated into the community, incongruous humour smoothed this transition and emphasised this display of power.

Humour was decidedly more prevalent in the Irish saints' *Lives* than in other European medieval saints' *Lives*. Modern humour theories demonstrate that humour in religious texts served invaluable functions. Relief and superiority humour underlined the saint's power and the community's security by showing the naïve foolishness of sinners and the rightness of their resulting punishments. The saints were portrayed as distant, untouchable and special, whilst still being accessible enough to fulfil their primary function as intercessor between heaven and earth. Humour provided this stability since it was open to such a wide range of meanings and interpretations.

The presence of humour did not detract from the seriousness of the message imparted by the saints' *Lives*. Rather it made the stories more accessible to their audience. It brought vibrancy to the stories as well as making them more personal. The humour in the Irish saints' *Lives* set them apart from other saints' stories and established the distinct nature of the early medieval Irish saint. In his book on *The Irish Comic Tradition*, Vivian Mercer argued that in Irish literature there is an unbroken comic tradition stretching from the ninth century through to the present day, concluding that in Irish literature, "no aspect of life is too sacred to escape the mockery of Irish laughter." The truth of the claim is certainly born out by the stories that surrounded Saint Brigit and her sister and brother saints.

Celia Scott

Murals in Belfast: time for a change?



There was a time, not so long ago, when the Shankill Road's unfortunately named Hopewell Crescent was firmly in the grip of one of the UDA's most egomaniacal warlords – Johnny Adair. Under his leadership, C Company ran drugs, murdered other UDA leaders and displayed their politics for all to see. Almost every wall in the area had a mural, some of Johnny himself, a unique occurrence in the long history of loyalist murals. Others showed the UDA posing menacingly with weapons (Figure 1), and still others were memorials to dead colleagues. Johnny was finally ousted and the new management set about rebranding the area. Among the first casualties were a number of the militaristic murals, but some still remain to this day.

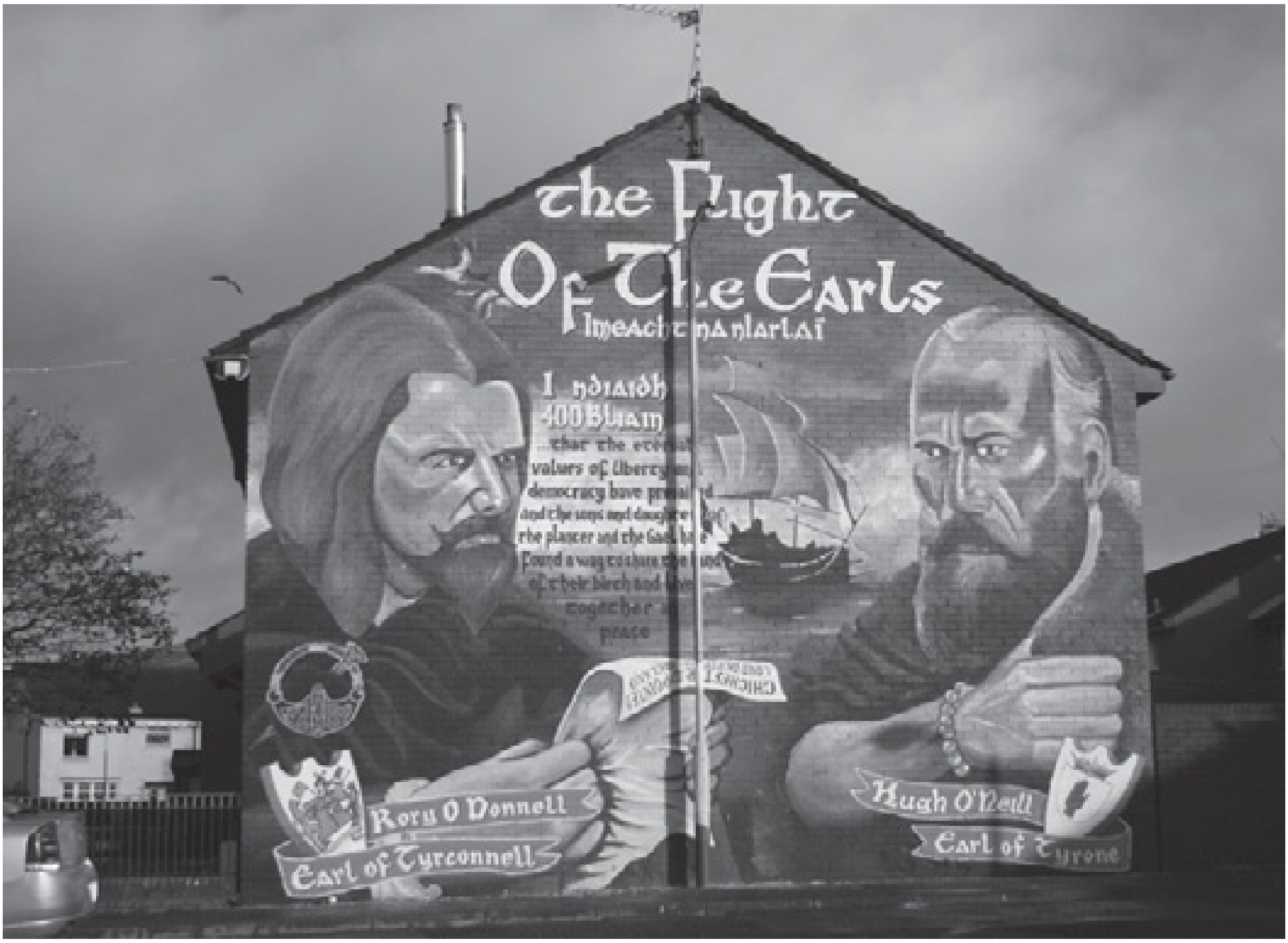
Something unusual has happened recently. With funding from the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, the Reimaging Communities Programme have painted ten new murals in the area. The new murals depict a broad range of themes: World War 1, the German bombing of Belfast in 1941, local boxing champions, and Martin Luther. The two most astonishing murals to my mind are those in support of human rights and of children's right to play (Figure 2). Most remarkable of all, in an area of inner city deprivation, the murals remain unvandalised a year later.

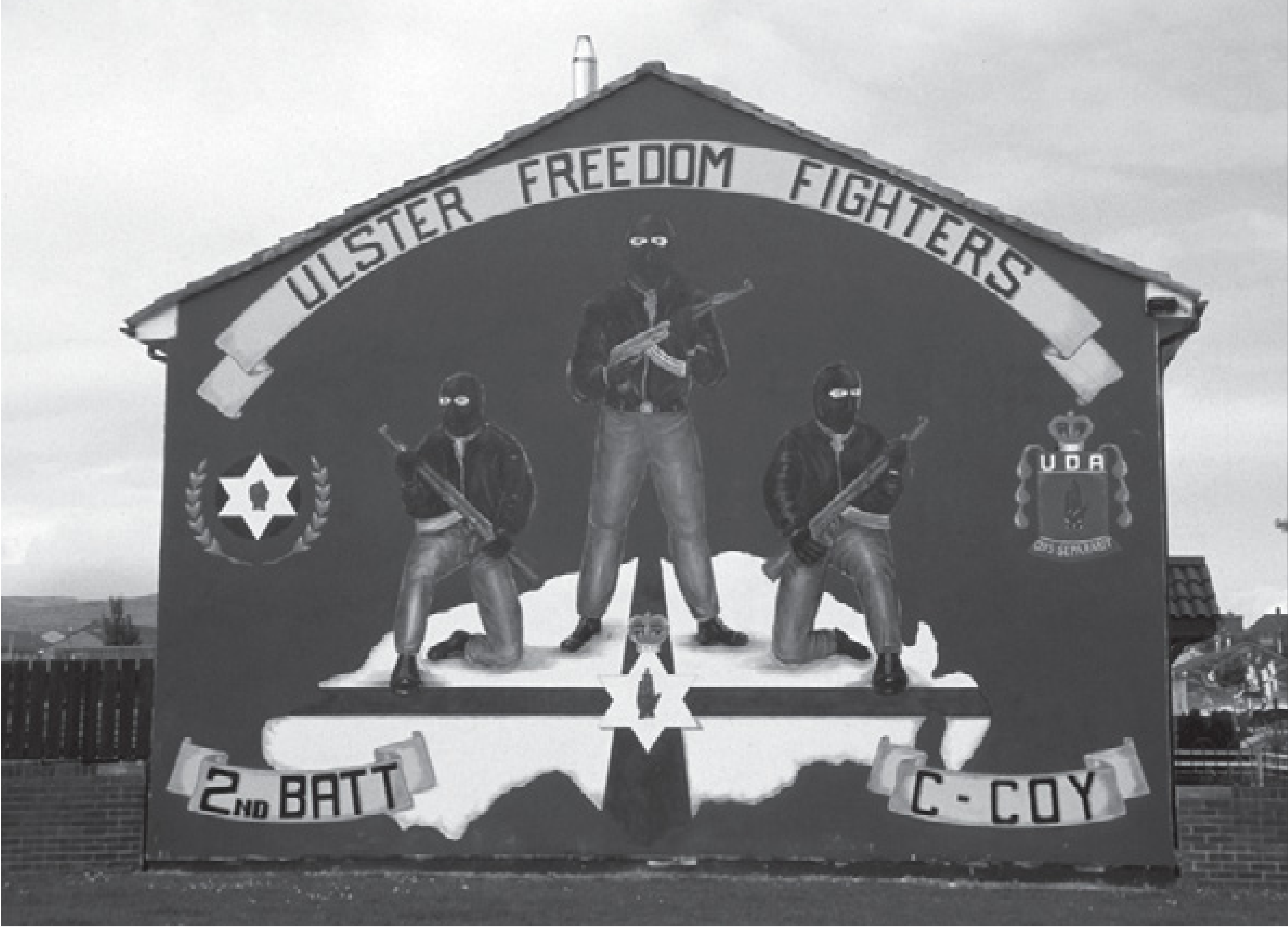
Two miles away in republican Ardoyne the Reimaging Communities Programme has also paid for a few murals. One depicts Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell as well as the ship that carried them to continental Europe in 1607 – the Flight of the Earls (Figure 3). In this area, as in the Lower Shankill, murals are usually treated with respect and rarely show signs of vandalism. But this mural, less than two years old, is covered with tags; a somewhat ignominious end for a mural that got off to a bad start. Originally Hugh O'Neill was painted carrying a sword, but the Arts Council objected, and the sword had to be removed.

Take one more geographical jump, this time to Donegall Pass in South Belfast, another loyalist area, traditionally controlled by the UVF. There the Reimaging Communities Programme paid for a mural symbolising World War 1 – poppies, the Thiepval Tower – all referencing the massacre of the 36th Ulster Division at the Somme and other battlefields (Figure 4). The 36th Ulster Division grew out of the illegal UVF, formed in 1912 to oppose Home Rule for Ireland. The original UVF was disbanded in 1921, but when Gusty Spence sought to revive loyalism in 1966, the new organisation was called the UVF. The current UVF sees itself as being directly descended from the original body, so they identify with the Donegall Pass mural as their history and so the mural remains pristine. More than that,

Left: Republican mural in Ballymurphy, 2001. Below: The Flight of the Earls in Ardoyne Avenue, 2008

All photos by Bill Rolston





Hopewell Crescent 2000: Johnny Adair's C Company

the UVF enhanced the completed mural by adding their own logos and a plaque with names of local UVF men who died in the recent conflict. The Arts Council has censored this addition.

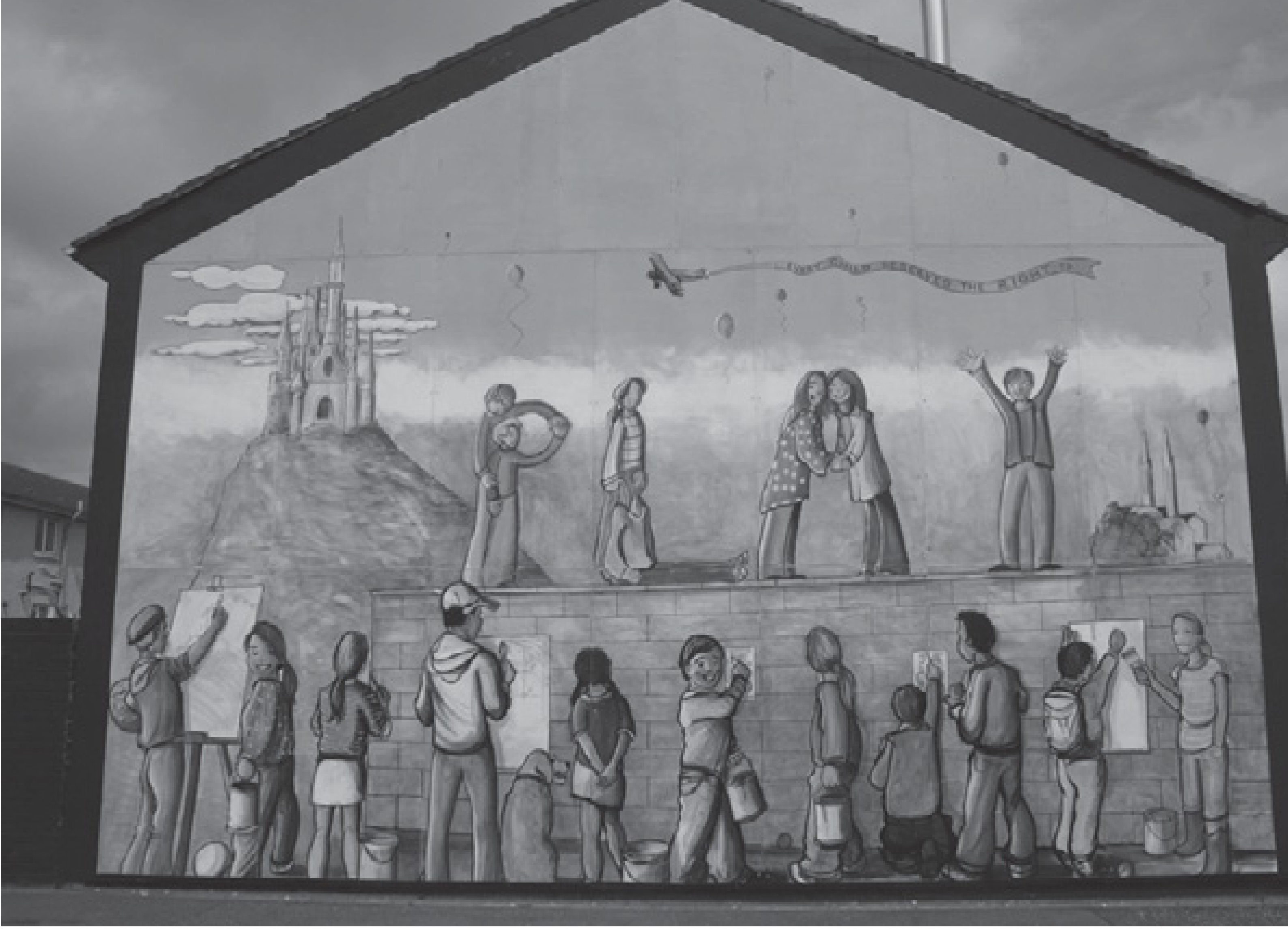
I am reminded of the muralist from California I heard speak at a conference. Her organisation received funding for murals from the city authorities, the police, official city youth organisations, etc. She was asked if there was anything she couldn't paint; without hesitation she answered: 'Yes, nudity, and black men with guns'. It seems that in our case it is nationalists with swords, even nationalists four centuries ago. Unionists with more recent guns seem to be less problematic.

Together these three examples give a sense of the mixed bag that is the Reimaging Communities Programme. The jury is still out on the extent to which it has managed to change hearts and minds, but the effect has varied between republican and loyalist areas. This was perhaps to be expected. At the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, republican muralists removed the guns and hooded warriors from their murals. This was both a sign of the developing peace process and a contribution to advancing that process. The only guns in new republican murals are in historical murals – such as an Easter Rising mural in Beechmount Avenue, West Belfast. The latter are portraits of actual people, not hooded, anonymous figures (Figure 5); they were the neighbours, relatives, acquaintances and comrades of the people who put together the money to pay for the painting of the murals.

Removing the more threatening images was easy for republicans. For a decade and a half they had painted from a broad palette. Their murals began with the hunger strike of 1981, and they elected to paint about Irish history and mythology, current events, and their identification with political struggles against repression elsewhere. Within that range, the military images never came to dominate their walls. So when they reimaged themselves from 1998, they still had a range of themes.

From 1986 loyalists had painted little but military images. In response to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, murals in unionist areas took a sudden lurch. From that point on, whichever paramilitary group controlled the area had a monopoly on painting murals. As paramilitary groups they painted what they knew best – advertisements for themselves. Politically, they painted themselves into a corner as the peace process developed. Many loyalists were ambivalent about the peace process, but even supporters had little experience of painting anything but armed men and little space for envisioning anything else. As the peace process advanced, their paramilitary iconography looked increasingly anachronistic and they came under pressure from outside, and to some extent from within, to change.

Into that debate stepped the Reimaging Communities Programme. Its purpose was to remove the most sinister murals. As these were overwhelmingly in loyalist areas, the Programme was targeted in one direction more than the other. Initially, in 2006, it was announced as for loyalist areas; but after protests, the Programme was re-announced in July 2006 as being available to all areas. That did not detract from the fact that it was in loyalist areas



Hopewell Crescent 2009: children's right to play

where it had the most work to do.

The Programme required the funders and muralists to work with the local community to design the replacement murals. This made sense; there was no way that the offensive murals were going to be removed furtively. At the same time, there was an almost missionary zeal in the way the Programme was announced. Artists were to bring art 'to areas not usually associated with them'. This was a blatant denial of a well established tradition of mural painting in the areas, and gave preference to external artists, not the indigenous muralists who had painted during the conflict with little or no financial reward and the potential of great personal danger. Moreover, it suggested that the art establishment which would hold sway in the transformation. In that view, murals are no match for fine art. Nor was the intervention confined to murals; sculpture and other forms of public art are supported, perhaps even preferred. More than one participating community activist has been asked by the funders if they can foresee the day when murals will disappear.

Censorship exists, sometimes obviously, as in Hugh O'Neill's sword, more often, less obviously, as when groups are advised that certain themes are unlikely to be funded. Perhaps the most obvious way in which the murals impose an outside view on the community is in the determination not to mention the war. Some reimaged murals, especially in the Markets area of Belfast, which indulge in a veritable nostalgia fest, with pictures of the area in the 'good old days' before the conflict. Yet this is to deny the collective memory of the residents of these areas. The murals were most powerful when they expressed the community politics. Some were offensive, and the sooner they go, the better, but they must disappear organically, because the community no longer want these images.

The danger of the Reimaging Communities Programme is that, to avoid offence, both baby and bathwater are thrown out. The more principled approach would be to try to encourage communities, including through funding, to explore ways to express a different politics. This would mean the difficult task for some communities of coming to terms with the new political dispensation in Northern Ireland and attempting to articulate in visual form what their current fears and aspirations are. The end result would simply be a reimaging of their walls and a reimagining of their identities.

In a world where many complain of political apathy, the undeniable fact about Northern Ireland has been that, as the murals have revealed, communities have been highly politically articulate. It would be a tragedy if peace and funding managed to do what the conflict never did, pull the sting in the tail of this marvellous art form.

Bill Rolston

Bill Rolston is Professor of Sociology at the University of Ulster in Jordanstown. He is author of three illustrated books on murals: Drawing Support: Murals in the North of Ireland*, revised edition 2010;* Drawing Support 2: Murals of War and Peace*, 1995;* Drawing Support 3: Murals and Transition in the North of Ireland*, 2003. All three books are published by Beyond the Pale Publications and available through Amazon.co.uk*

The meaning of missing

I think of the feeling around a person being missing as being a narrow thing. It has to be, in order to get into so many places. I told my husband this once and he laughed at me.

'Well if you can think of heartbreak as a thin piercing agony', I began again.

He said the turnips needed thinning, and he was away out to the garden. He didn't like talking about heartbreak, because he had once caused it to me by going off with his girlfriend for three months. It didn't work out because he turned up on my doorstep on Thursday, the sixth of June, twenty years ago. At ten past eight. Evening. He wasn't contrite, just chastened. He has been here since, but he never talks about that time. I don't mind too much because I never admitted that I had cried crossing every bridge in Dublin, the only way to get to know a city I was told by someone, who was trying to get me away from her doorstep I didn't have to, and he couldn't really ask me or hold me accountable.

Thinning turnips, hah! You'd think we had an acre out the back, and that he was going to have to tie old hot water bottles around his knees, because the time on the ground was going to be so hard on them. We have one drill of turnips, a half of cabbage and a half of broad beans. Although it's not strictly an economical use of the space, I insist on the broad beans, because of the feel of the inside fur. Only two drills. They could have waited. Of course he didn't like me talking about missing, either. It's about my sister.

'She's not missing', my husband insisted, 'you've just not heard from her'

I often replay my conversations with him as if he is standing right beside me. I bet I'll be able to do that if he dies before me.

'For a year!'

'Yes, for a year. But you know how time goes when you're away.'

I don't actually. I've never been away for a year.

When my sister said she was going to Australia there was a moment's silence between us, during which time a little lump came out of my heart and thumped into my stomach. We were having our second glass of Heineken. In deference to the scared part of our youth, when we were afraid to be too adventurous, she always drank Heineken when out with me. She didn't want to hold the predictability of my life up to the light. I know that she had gone through ten different favourite drinks since those days, none of them Heineken.

'Australia!', I squealed. I coughed my voice down.

'Australia?', I said, a second time, in a more harmonious tone. Strange how the same word can mean two different things when the pitch is changed. Béarla as Chinese. I must have hit the right note, because she smiled and said yes. Not only was she going, she had everything ready, tickets bought, visa got. It was the secret preparation that rankled most.

When my sister said she was going to Australia there was a moment's silence between us, during which time a little lump came out of my heart and thumped into my stomach.

How could she have done those things without telling me? If we were going to Waterford for a winter break I'd tell her weeks in advance.

The day she left was beautifully frosty. She stayed with us the night before, and after I had gone to bed I could hear her and my husband for hours mumbling and laughing. She was too excited to sleep, and he decided to get in on the act, not often having an excited woman to lead him into the small hours. The morning Radio News said that if there was an earthquake in the Canaries, Ireland might only have two hours to prepare for a tsunami. Brilliant, another thing to worry about, and us just after buying a house in Skerries. At the airport, my emotions spluttered, faded, then surged again, like a fire of Polish coal. The effort of not crying stiffened my face, yet it twitched, as if palsy had overcome every square inch from my forehead to my chin, but I was determined. I would keep my dignity, even if the effort was going to paralyse me. It would be essential to have, now that I was not going to have a sister. My husband touched my shoulder as we got back into the car, because he can do that sometimes, the right thing.

In the months that followed I mourned her in places that I had never noticed before, and in moods that I had not known existed.

First there is presence and then it has to grow into absence. There are all sorts of ways for it to do that, gently, unnoticeably, becoming a quiet rounded cloud that compliments the sun with its dashing about, making harmless shadows. Or the other way, darkly with thunder.

'It's not as if you saw her all the time', my husband said, unhelpfully.

'I did'

'What are you talking about, you only met every few months'

'But she was there.'

She wrote well, often referring to the minutiae of her journey over, but no matter how often she talked about cramped legs or the heat in Singapore, and despite the fact that I'd seen her off at the airport myself, I still imagined her queuing for a ship at Southampton, sailing the seas for a month, having dinner in pre-arranged sittings at the sound of a bell, because that's the way I would have done it.

Then she stopped writing. My letters went unanswered, her telephone was cut off. I'm afraid that was because my pride was so riled, the trail was completely cold by the time I took her real missing seriously. Still my husband insisted that there was nothing wrong with her, just absentmindedness.

I was in bed sick the day she rang. I love the trimmings of being sick, mainly the television at the bottom of the bed, although after two days I was getting a little TV'd out. I had just seen John Stalker, a former chief of English police, advertising garden awnings. I was puzzled as to why they gave his full title. Did the police thing have anything to do with awnings? I didn't like being confused by advertisements. If I'd had a remote control I could have switched the volume down occasionally and lip read the modern world. Then Countdown came on. Making up the words made me feel useful. I had seen the mathematician wearing that dress before. It was during the conundrum that the phone rang; it wasn't a crucial conundrum, because one of the fellows was streets ahead of the other, even I had beaten him hands down, and I had a temperature of 100 degrees rising.

'Hello'

There was her voice, brazen as all hell. I straightened myself against the headboard and thought, 'It's the temperature'. My heart thumped very hard. It sounded like someone rapping a door. I thought it would cut off my breathing.

'Hi' she said.

'Hello', I said, as best as I could manage. 'Oh my God it's been soooo long.'

The sentence sounded ridiculous.

'And I'm really sorry about that. But I'll make up for it. I'm on my way back for a couple of months. I'll be arriving on Saturday morning'

Back. Not home. Well Saturday didn't suit me, and even if it had up until this moment, it suddenly wasn't going to. I was speechless, truly. But my mind was working overtime dealing with silent words tumbling about. I could almost hear them cranking up, scurrying around looking for their place in the open. What would be the best way to get revenge? She must have finally noticed because she asked,

'Are you there?'

'Oh yes', I said.

Short as that, 'Oh yes.'

I don't think I said more than ten words before limping to a satisfactorily oblique fade out.

'See you. Then.'

I put the phone down, my hand shaking. How many people had I told about my worry? And would I have to tell them all that she was no longer missing? If a person turns up have they ever been missing? How could I possibly remember what conversations I had set up or slipped into casually, over the past year? I hoped that my sister would have a horrible flight, but that's as far as my bile could flower.

My husband went to the airport. He would, having no sense of the insult of missing. He fitted the journey in around the bits and pieces of a Saturday, not wanting to leave the house under the glare of my disapproval.

By evening I had mellowed a little because I had to. It was seeing her, the shape of her, the stance of her at doorways, the expressions of her. My sister had never giggled, even in the years that are set aside for that. She had always been too wry. On the third evening, by the time the ice in my chest had begun to melt, the three of us went out to our local.

'What's Wollongong like?', I asked.

'Just a normal Australian town', she shrugged.

Then she changed the subject. I had thought it would have jacaranda trees in bloom all year, sun flitting continuously on the sparkling windows of every house. A town rampant with light. I had thought it a place for rumination, with colour bouncing unforgettably off the congregation of gum trees.

'Are you sure it's just a normal town. Have you been there?'

'Yes, totally normal. Of course I've been there.'

I didn't believe her for one second.

'Why do you particularly want to know what Wollongong is like?'

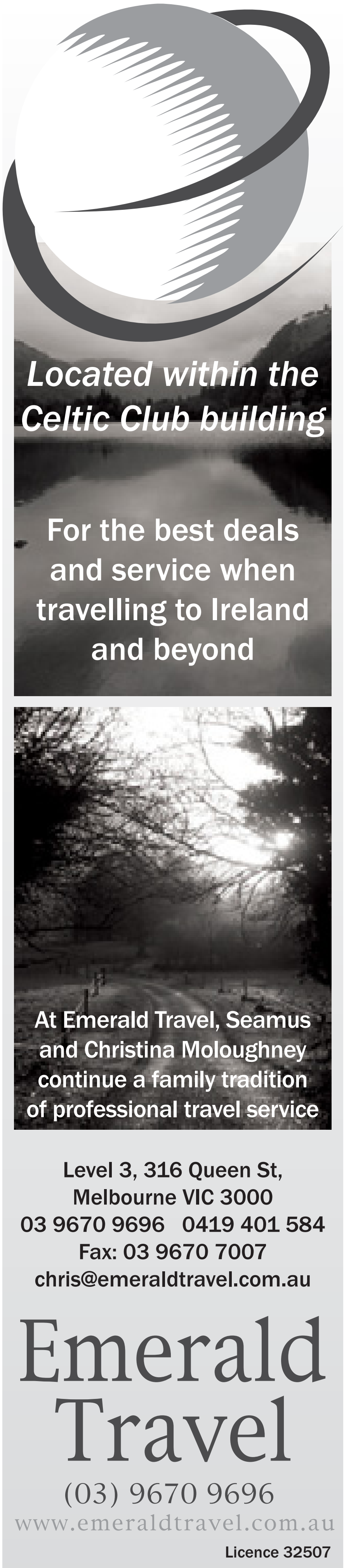
'The name', my husband said, as if he was my ventriloquist. But something in my demeanour made him hesitate, and he looked at me as if he had made some mistake.

'It's just that I met someone from there', I said.

'When?' they both asked. Normally my sister and my husband have a murmuring familiarity between them, born presumptuously of their relationship with me, but they were both suddenly quiet, each afraid to admit that they did not know when I, I of the dried up life, would have met someone from Wollongong. Damn, they would be thinking, now they each knew that the other didn't know. And me sitting there smiling away to myself. Smug, they would have been surmising. But it wasn't smug. I admit to a moment of glee but I was mostly thinking of Wollongong, and I swallowed the sliver of triumph because I am known for my capacity to forgive.

However, I didn't answer their question and went to the bar to buy my round, feeling like a racehorse, unexpectedly out in front, showing the rest of the field a clear set of hooves.

Evelyn Conlon



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Poetry

Definition

It was never mentioned.
Just as you take for granted the colour of trees
or the resurfacing of roads.
Unmentioned.

    I can tell that accent anywhere.
    It is pure Melbourne.

But on the outskirts of unmentionable,
as if it could throw up uncontainable subjects
like autism, or failure,
or the immaculate conception

Don’t say unless asked.
Even then, make it fast or oblique
the word in the line in the novel
with the secret,
the bridge in the song the singer
strives ever to perfect:
Irishness.

And if parents offered an explanation,
fill in the blank that is the summary of a great-grandmother,
it was put down to her Irish melancholy.
Or else grandmother’s outspoken opinions
were attributed instantly to her
    and you won’t get her to change her mind
her Irish attitude.

English could outline the shape of whole cities,
they infiltrated the edges of eucalypt forests.
Irish was the adjective to finalise some mystery.
It was a censor.
Now we can forget,
forget what could not be learnt.
How they left on sailing ships
to promises half-fulfilled, half-betrayed.
As if people exit suddenly
as they do in a saga,
once they have handed down the inheritance
and their status is defined.
Prayerful bodies, they stared down the Southern Ocean,
selected new blocks up on Clifton Hill,
staged time and never knew hunger.

The fateful collusions of colonies
led to respectable conclusions,
not Irishness nor Englishness
but survival of the proper kind,
a show of security and upward mobility.
Leave behind the parts that don’t fit.

The young Edwardian world of St. Mark’s Fitzroy.
New orchards on the slopes of Ivanhoe.

The War got in the way, the way
the Irish would not go to the trenches.
Saying, war is about trade.
The War was another reason
to forget that you might be Irish,
everyone was blaming everyone.
The waste left no ground for reason.

The silences in the close of St. Finbar’s Cathedral.
The patterns of back roads in the County Down.

Clues that other centuries left behind.
But then, do we find it in ourselves?
Reborn in a questioning temper?
Irishness, as though the genome traces us
to places we only visit on long service leave.
As if you could find it in a book!

Rejection of it seems futile.
Denial is that curious British habit,
like an intractable bureaucracy
and an insensitivity to difference
that are the remains of the pretensions of Empire.
The Irish joke is beyond the pale.

Stubbornly we put the silence into words
and the unbelievable language
    tough and turbulent
is enjoyed in silence, perfecting its form.

Philip Harvey

Identity politics and genealogy

Catherine Nash: ***Of Irish Descent:***
Origin stories, genealogy and the politics of belonging,
Syracuse University Press,
Syracuse, 2008.
ISBN 978-0-8156-3159-0; US $29.95

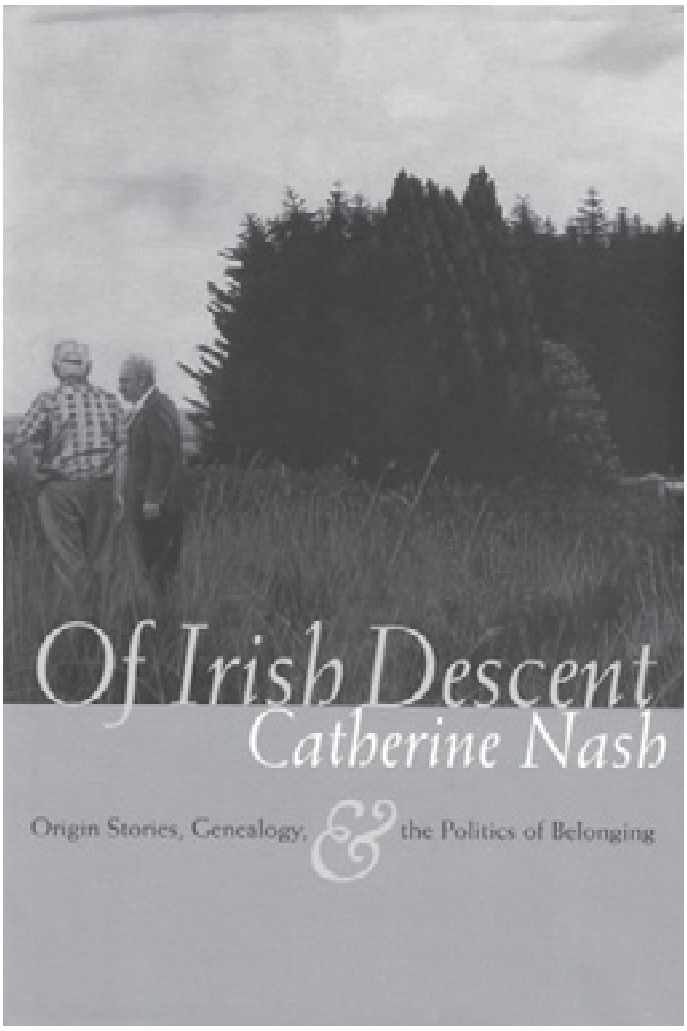
I have often wondered why we are all so interested in family history, especially the Irish lines of our families. What makes having Irish forebears special to us, here, now, in 21st century Australia?

Catherine Nash is a geographer who has asked these and many more searching questions in this book from the Irish Studies Series published by Syracuse University Press. What happens when descendents find their 'relatives' in Ireland and visit? What do people living in Ireland think about family history? What do the new DNA technologies *really* tell us about identity and where we belong? And at the heart of all this is the key question – what does it mean to claim to be Irish today – in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, the United States and Australia? How can we make 'connections through shared ancestry and origins across a geography shaped by the history of emigration from Ireland'? (p. 264).

In this book Catherine Nash has looked at a huge variety of material – nineteenth century pedigree books, internet chat lists and blogs, novels, scientific journals and family history magazines – in her search for what meaning people place on 'being Irish'. The book is about why we claim one ethnic identity among many available to most of us who are a century or more removed from arrival in Australia or the United States. While many of the examples are from the United States, the international nature of the material she uses – electronic as well as printed material – means that there are many connections with Australia.

One of the most interesting chapters is on the ways that people in Northern Ireland negotiate the discovery that their family histories reveal unexpected Protestant or Catholic ancestors. The fraught fault lines between the contemporary meanings of 'native Irish' and 'settler' and the expectations of family historians from the diaspora are explored in delicate detail. She also sensitively analyses the difficulties that local history societies face in engaging with the past within 'mixed or cross-community' organizations, where expectations of the meaning and significance of historical events can be very different. What she concludes is that the 'doing' of family history challenges the 'absolutes of identity and belonging' (p. 165).

Nash then turns her attention to genetics and goes exploring deep into the realms of both science and those who use genetics to claim membership of particular ancestry groups. Her two chapters on genetics are fascinating because she brings a critical historical eye to the research. For example she demonstrates that a genetics project that linked types of the Y chromosome with specific surname groups in Ireland did not fully take into account the historical instability of these surnames. (p. 198). She also brings out very clearly how the complex and often qualified conclusions of scientists are over-simplified by popular media reporting and so pass into popular understandings. Her final chapter looks closely at how diasporic groups are taking on DNA evidence as ways of 'proving' membership of kin groups. She challenges the wide applicability of these methods by clearly demonstrating their limitations. She also critically surveys the claims made particularly about native or pure Gaelic ancestry concluding that clinging to such an exclusive vision of ancestry ignores much of the rich fluidity of the way that people lived and moved about in historical Ireland. Irish identity and belonging in the past was never solely about genetics or physical inheritance, but mostly about politics, expediency and real social needs.



Nash's examples are nicely explained throughout her book and although some of the analysis is complex, her writing is clear. Her questioning of some of the seemingly ever-present ways of understanding 'being Irish' brings out many different strands of the fascination that we in the Irish diaspora feel towards Ireland, from the most general to the most restrictive.

Di Hall

Di Hall is a research fellow in Irish History at the University of Melbourne

Reclaiming Joyce for Dublin

***Ulysses and Us : the Art of Everyday Life in Joyce's Masterpiece*, by Declan Kiberd, published by Faber (UK) and W. W. Norton (USA), 2009**
ISBN-10: 0571242545; RRP £9.99

The Irish proclivity for writing books inside other books is not only the preserve of fiction-makers like Flann O'Brien and James Joyce. The critic and academic Declan Kiberd has produced just such a creature. The first book is the opening chapters of his rich and rare new title, *Ulysses and Us*. In this first book Kiberd makes some strong arguments for reclaiming Joyce's masterpiece for the common man, and presents a revisionist portrait of the artist as an ordinary grown adult, just like one of Us, i.e. the Us of the title, perhaps. The second book consists of the 18 central chapters, in which Kiberd systematically revisits the Homeric episodes of *Ulysses*. Each chapter is given an active verb for a heading, so Proteus for example is 'Walking', Nausikaa is 'Ogling', and Penelope, 'Loving'. Kiberd is cleverly reminding the reader that all of *Ulysses* happens in the present continuous, so that even though the novel is set on some utterly forgettable date back at the turn of the 20th-century, it is by implication happening on the utterably unforgettable day we are experiencing in real time right now. One astounding thing about these first two books of Kiberd's, is how the second is a patent disproval of the assertions in the first. Although this sounds like a dismissal of Kiberd's thesis, actually the contradiction inherent here is quite in keeping with the massive contradictions that *Ulysses* throws up for all of those who want to say something definitive about it. For every interpreter who sails past this siren of a book, there are numerous believers who finish up uttering fatefully, 'Oh Rocks!' The third book consists of *Ulysses*'s relationship to four of the main literary facts of Western civilization: Homer, the Bible, Dante, and Shakespeare. The work is lively, inspired, and jargon-free.

A central clue, I think, to Kiberd's original sentiment in writing *Ulysses and Us* can be found on page 5, where he introduces his father. 'My father loved *Ulysses* as the fullest account ever given of the city in which he lived. There were parts that baffled or bored him, and these he skipped, much as today we fast-forward over the duller tracks on beloved music albums. But there were entire passages which he knew almost by heart.' Kiberd makes much of the oedipal struggle between Simon and Stephen Dedalus, a reimagining of Joyce's titanic relationship with his own father. So here the critic Kiberd decides he'll do the same and introduce his father, and he goes on. 'In 1982, the centenary of Joyce's birth, I enticed him to attend a Joyce symposium at Trinity College, but as we walked through the hallway, a passer-by said, "I think I'll go into 'The Consciousness of Stephen'," at which the old man baulked and bolted for the nearest door.' This anecdote is telling, on at least two counts.

The first is that although Kiberd argues persistently for an everyman Joyce who wanted to share the common experience of urban people with those same urban people, he knows that 'Joyce himself blended high theory with a respect for everyday practices,' and it is precisely 'high theory' that can turn off the average reader, like his father. *Ulysses* is equally erudite and populist. Secondly, Kiberd, a professor of Anglo-Irish literature at University College Dublin, not only knows all about such stuff as the consciousness of Stephen, his book is packed out with multiple opinions about his and other characters' consciousnesses. This is all great fun, Kiberd is never less than exciting to read, but this perpetual contradiction between the learned and the knowing, between the university and the pub, places Kiberd at odds with his father's expectations. At the same time as he represents his father's ideal reader, Kiberd shows himself that any simple or naive reading of *Ulysses* is impossible.

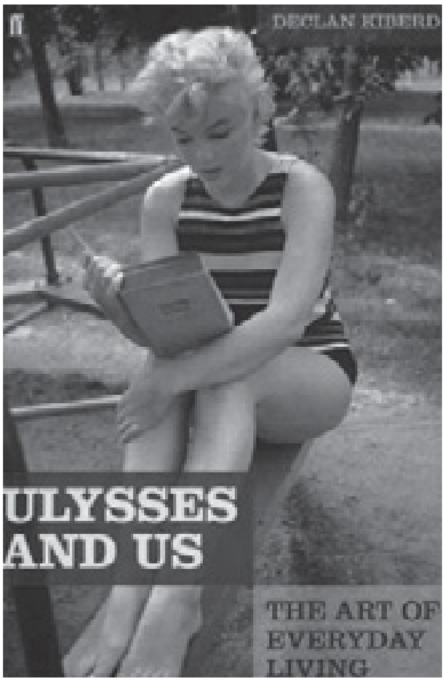
Just as generations of Christians repeat the desire to get back to a reading of the Gospels free of the 'baggage' of centuries of tradition, only to add to those traditions their own interpretation, so Kiberd at times wants to get back to a *Ulysses* that is pure and unadorned. It cannot be done and he shows this by his own example, in every chapter drawing on the ninety years of readerly reception to help with his ideas. He knows his Ellmann well, also in some detail the literary opinions of every man and his dog since 1922. Although Kiberd says he wants to hand the book back to the people it was intended for, the common readers, *Ulysses and Us* proves that once caught up in the world of Joyce, *Ulysses* is not just *Ulysses* but everything that has ever been said about it since, for good or ill.

There are some fascinating themes running through *Ulysses and Us*. One of my favourites is the very original and challenging idea that *Ulysses* is a species of wisdom book. Kiberd must have in mind those sections of the Hebrew Bible known as Wisdom Literature. For example, he takes seriously the author's identification of Bloom with Jesus. Most readers are more used to seeing these parallels as ironic, parodic, or purely comic. Kiberd wouldn't deny those readings, but believes that Joyce is positioning Bloom as a moral 'hero' of the everyday, one who experiences the minor indignities and dignities of an anonymous city person, as close as the modern world get to wisdom through experience. Indeed, many moments in *Ulysses* are singled out for examination as moral situations, fraught with the small decision-making that we experience ourselves each day. This interpretation pushes beyond the comfortable attitude many of us enjoy, that *Ulysses* is to be understood primarily as a comic novel, an entertainment.

Another creative theme is the proposition that *Ulysses* is a counter-newspaper. Newspapers cannot catch the everyday, but seize upon events and dramatise them, whether deserving of dramatisation or not. *Ulysses*, by comparison, goes into minute detail about the minutes of the hours, and renders insignificant the major news stories of the day. Just like in ordinary life. And, while newspapers are read once and then never referred to again, *Ulysses* is read over and over again by thousands, even though it seems on the surface to be no more than a description of mundane events on one summer day.

Participants in Bloomsday in Melbourne 2010 may be interested in his views of the brothel scenes, known as Circe and which he titles 'Dreaming'. Kiberd calls this episode 'this expressionist play about hidden impulses,' which is ‘an examination of some of the sicknesses (and more positive yearnings) which lay behind the monologues.’ The expressionist work Kiberd has particularly in mind is August Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* (*Ett Dromspel*), well-known also as the play within a play in Ingmar Bergman’s film *Fanny and Alexander*. Strindberg wrote of this work: ‘the characters are split, doubled, multiplied; they evaporate and are condensed; are diffused and concentrated; but a single consciousness holds sway over them all – that of the dreamer.’ This is at the same time the real theatre of Ireland, taking place a few hundred yards from the steps of the Abbey Theatre – rude, crude and vulgar in Monto. Kiberd believes that Circe is Joyce’s response to the US censorship of parts of Nausikaa – in his confidence, Joyce becomes absolutely obscene. Kiberd makes the acute observation that it is only after Bloom’s humilation and embarrassment in this scene that he is able to imagine the bedroom scene with Boylan and Molly. He can now admit his own complicity in the affair. Bloom is also ‘ratified’ in the role of father in this episode, taking control of the situation both in the brothel and in the street outside; he recognises the filial connections with Stephen. ‘He is freed to be more virile, precisely because ... he “dared” to give expression to his own femininity.’ Kiberd’s fondness for Bloom is endearing. Nearly every page brings out some respectful opinion about Bloom, whatever the circumstances of the plot itself. This endearment is refreshing in Joyce criticism. Kiberd also shows the reader that Circe is a brutal reminder of the British presence in Dublin, though it needs to be noted that as usual Joyce does not make overt political capital in his art. As usual, his real enemy is violence. Kiberd also has some helpful things to say about the expansion of time and space in this episode. Everything loses ‘normality’.

Throughout the reading of *Ulysses and Us* I kept asking who Us is. The naive reader would assume that Kiberd means anyone who reads *Ulysses*, even Marilyn Monroe who is pictured on the cover of the Faber edition, well into what looks like Molly’s monologue, and clearly rivetted. And aren’t we all?



But a closer analysis of Kiberd’s arguments shows that he possesses a keen nose for conflicts and distinctions. Anyone British is dismissed as simply not in on the game that *Ulysses* is about. The bohemians have been wrongfully ascribed with making *Ulysses* a by-word for obscenity; they have taken the book away from its rightful place amongst the bourgeoisie. Being bourgeois is some kind of ultimate good, in the eyes of Kiberd. After a time we can hear Kiberd commiserating with Joyce that no-one understands him and never will. Only, on whose behalf is Kiberd making all of these efforts to reclaim *Ulysses*, I kept asking myself. The answer rests in the identity of the author himself, a Dublin insider who, while proud of its international reputation and permanence in the English canon, wants to make special claims for *Ulysses* on behalf of not just the Irish, but Dubliners. There is an almost chauvinist pride at times in the way Kiberd reminds us that *Ulysses* is Dublin’s own, and this voice of reclamation is also something original and new. It has taken a long time for a local to make such fierce boasts about the novel that made the city a famous literary location. And about time, some would say. If my hunch about Kiberd’s ultimate critical purposes is correct, then we are finally seeing the novel *Ulysses* coming home to its Ithaca.

Philip Harvey

Philip is a Melbourne poet whose Jageurs prize-winning poem is published in this issue of Tinteán. *He is also Poetry Editor of* Eureka Street.

A photographic essay

John Hall: *A Tale of Two Cities*
Currach Press, Dublin, 2009
128 pages
ISBN: 978-1-85607-976-1
RRP $47.95

The first 18 pages of this publication are taken up with an introduction and short history of the cities of Dublin and Cork, following which the author attempts to capture the spirit of these two cities by way of his excellent (mono) photographs. However, the legends accompanying the photographs are not restricted to a few words of description and amplify concisely the subjects illustrated. Readers who are not familiar with these cities may take a little while to realise that the photographs on the left hand pages are of Dublin and the opposing ones of Cork. There is no forewarning of this arrangement in the introductory remarks.

The author was born in Cork and grew up there, moving to Dublin in early adulthood and residing there ever since. This provides him with a very good insight into his original and adopted homes. There is some attempt to ‘pair’ photographs – bank with bank, brewery with brewery and so on – but the connections within pairings are not always obvious. There is a feeling that a collection of photographs were chosen on merit and then arranged rather than photographs being commissioned in accordance with some pre-ordained plan for the book. There is no reluctance to feature more than one illustration of a particular place if the photographs are considered worthy and, for example, we have two different photographs of Dublin’s Guinness brewery and two of the Republican plots in St Finbarr’s Cemetery in Cork.

The book will appeal to those with an interest in either or both of these two cities and will take up little space in crowded library shelves. Hall has undertaken a simple project in utilising his photographs to capture the features of these two cities and has succeeded well in his objective.

Robert J F Butler

A keen reader and enthusiastic, but not very competent, photographer

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Who were the Gaelic Leaguers? Crunching numbers

Timothy G McMahon: *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8156-3184-2; RRP: US$ Paper $22.95.

This book, another in the wonderful series of Irish Studies publications from Syracuse University Press, opens with a compelling scene from Dublin in 1903, when Fr Eoghan O'Growney's coffin was followed by a procession of over 6,000 people through the streets. He was the author of *Simple Steps in Irish*, the primer that the Gaelic League used to teach Irish to so many people throughout the country. Timothy McMahon uses this scene to begin his book on the social history of the League, whose objective was to keep the Irish language alive and spoken in Ireland. Many of the later founders of the Irish Free State were members of the Gaelic League when young and, after 1915, the League itself abandoned its original non-political stance and became vehemently political.

Unlike other accounts on the 'high-end' literary and political influence of the League, McMahon concentrates on the nitty gritty of the early organisation and its day-to-day work. In particular, he examined material such as membership lists and branch minutes to establish the numbers and social standing of members of individual branches through Ireland. This sort of exhaustive examination of the minutiae of the organisation reveals that while the League was very important in promoting Irish culture in the early years of the twentieth century, in many ways it did not succeed in some of its foremost objectives – teaching and promoting the Irish language. So although O'Growney was a popular figure, and many people knew his name and were acquainted with his text books, not nearly as many had the proficiency in Irish that he and many others worked so hard to promote. Yet McMahon concludes that there was much of value in the work of the League.

McMahon details the strategies that were used to form branches, many of which grew out of existing social clubs. He also establishes that there was much wider membership across classes than previously thought. Many members in the cities and towns were 'young men and girls of the shop assistant and factory hand class' (p. 112) while in the rural branches membership ebbed and flowed when there was seasonal migration for the harvest in Britain. His use of sources from the branch level means that he is able to detect different attitudes to the League's activities – some members were indeed interested in learning the language, while for many others the League primarily meant welcome socialising in otherwise quiet rural villages and communities. McMahon also highlights the efforts that some organisers made to include Protestant groups in language classes and cultural events – for example, through classes in Anglican schools in Kilskeery and Presbyterian schools in Dromore.

The dates that McMahon sets himself seem designed to exclude the overt politicisation of the League. While he does include discussion of the way that Nationalist politics was taken up enthusiastically by many members, his concluding date means that he shies away from the events immediately preceding 1916. His approach though does mean I was left wondering what his take would be on the events after 1910. Perhaps he is planning another book!

What is interesting in McMahon's analysis is his conclusion that the Gaelic League gave young people in particular a means of self-improvement and that they shaped this to their own needs and interests. The activities of the League developed beyond language classes to include *feis* competitions and processions that embraced contemporary culture in English as well as Irish. While the purists at the time lamented that many Irish learners did not go beyond *cupla focail,* McMahon argues that members' engagement at multiple levels with the attempts to promote, preserve and extend Irish culture was important in the trajectory of developing Irish identity. His book is packed with many fascinating details of ordinary Irish men's and women's lives at the turn of the century and really does allow us to delve deeper into their daily concerns.

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The Fate of Prophets – St Mary's and its Priests

Martin Flanagan, Michele Gierck et al.,
***Peter Kennedy: The Man Who Threatened Rome*,**
one day hill, [Camberwell East, Victoria], Australia, 2009.
ISBN 978-0-9805643-6-5; RRP $29.95.

Peter Kennedy: The Man Who Threatened Rome, is an uneven book, which neither poses nor answers some of the fundamental questions related to the community of believers known as St Mary's, South Brisbane. This will not surprise, given that the very title distorts and trivialises the central issue of an articulate and inclusive catholic community struggling to find its expression in the post Vatican II Catholic Church.

Interviews with Peter Kennedy (by Martin Flanagan) frame the two longer sections. In the first of these, Michelle Gierck introduces 11 of the regular participants at St Mary's as well as sharing her own faith journey and experience. Set beside these interviews are 21 intriguing essays by an eclectic group of writers. Some of these are written for the book; others are reprinted for their presumed relevance to the central issues.

This should be an insightful and deeply satisfying book. The debacle (St Mary's versus the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane) raises pivotal questions for anyone trying to live out a personally fulfilling spirituality within the Catholic tradition. With its mix of intellectual comment and empathetic personal stories, this book provides a range of perspectives on many of these significant issues but few make the link with Peter Kennedy or St Mary's faith community.

Ross Fitzgerald states the need for an attempt to situate the 'battle between the institutional Church on the one hand, and Fr Kennedy and his many followers on the other, within the wider Queensland, Australian and global context.' It is unclear whether this book is an attempt to do that.

Martin Flanagan's approach does not provide the framework for exploring the issues surrounding St Mary's and Peter Kennedy's pastoral role within this community. The articles continue the media hype which seeks to portray Peter as somehow remarkable, as *the rebel priest*, when he is more typical than acknowledged. The focus on Kennedy as an individual distracts from the issues which St Mary's, including its priests, stood for. Part of the richness of the St Mary's community was the capacity of its priests to lead from within, to allow the people to exercise their ministry, as encouraged by Vatican II. The structure of the book encourages the reader to skate over the really significant issue of how and why this faith community and its place within the broader structure of the Catholic Church came to be reduced to a very public fight between two men of the church.

As a 20 year old University student, I experienced the excitement of Vatican II. This opened the way for lay participation and leadership, which has continued in small but significant ways in many parishes. My daughter's marriage to her Jewish husband in a regular Catholic Church, incorporated Jewish customs into the ceremony. Likewise, the baptisms of their children were carried out with a reverence for the faiths of both parents and used blessings which were more inclusive. The church roof did not fall in on any of these occasions and family and friends, many non-regulars in church attendance but equally as many solid, every-Sunday-Catholics, liked these adjustments to the prescribed ritual. My own marriage in 1968 was a very Catholic affair but we wrote the ceremony, changed wording and included secular as well as Old and New Testament readings. Questions were asked by the hierarchy but no one suggested our changes had left us without a sacramental marriage.

So how have we and many others like us, escaped the fate that has befallen St Mary's and Peter Kennedy and Terry Fitzpatrick? We are scattered through many parishes, which on the whole, still conform to the older image of what a Catholic parish looks like. Maybe we have just been lucky that the self appointed custodians of the letter of the law have not been aware of us. Maybe, we have not been forced into the limelight to answer loaded questions posed in an inappropriate forum. St Mary's was different, not in any particular act but because it attracted and held so many people seeking the same vitality in their faith life. It was well known throughout the Archdiocese for the consistency of its social justice vision and its inclusive approach. A number of my friends made it their parish of choice when visiting Brisbane. They found its liturgies vital and invigorating.

The St Mary's debacle is a sad and unnecessary chapter in the life of the Catholic Church. The polarisation of two erstwhile friends should not have happened. St Mary's existed for many years within the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese without local authorities feeling the need to intervene. Part of the explanation lies in the lack of genuine understanding of the Australian Catholic Church by Rome and the credibility given to small, reactionary groups who seek to wind back Vatican II initiatives. St Mary's community member, Karyn Walsh, highlights a key issue when she expresses disappointment that the Church hierarchy and the media saw the conflict as between a priest and his bishop. She laments the fact that

> …this whole conflict has bypassed the community. It has reduced St Mary's to the priest – when it is so much more. This really disappoints me because our faith and strength as a community has been ignored and reduced to 'being a flock'.

Importantly, a gleam of hope is provided by the historical link between St Mary's and Mary McKillop. The impending canonisation of one who clashed with the hierarchy of her time may point to a very different reading of the prophetic role of St Mary's and its priests in years to come.

This book is well worth reading but the reader is left with a lot of work to do, in formulating the real questions and applying the book's contents to answering these questions.

Mary Condon

Mary is a Catholic Secondary teacher with an interest in Catholic theology and Social Justice since school days. The Newman Society at University of Queensland shaped her understanding of Church matters. Not surprisingly, she struggled to find personal meaning within her provincial parish, dominated by a priest who refused Communion to people who did not send their children to the Catholic school. Active involvement in Adult Education, Liturgy, Marriage Encounter and Enneagram contributed to her personal growth and kept her in the Church. She has been a leader in seeking inclusion for people with a disability in education and the wider community and active in projects in East Timor to provide work for women, education for children and clean water for villages.

Matters ghostly

Paul Fennell: ***Real Irish Ghost Stories*****,**
Currach Press, Dublin, 2009.
ISBN: 978-1-856-60798-6; RRP €12.99.

It was the splendidly oxymoronic title that drew me to this book, indeed led me to insist on reviewing it over the protests of the Reviews Editor, who warned me against it. *Real* Irish ghost stories, eh? Not your typical 'scare you to death in thunderstorms' variety, as told by unreliable witnesses such as myself and your Uncle Jimmy, but the real McCoy – who could resist? Indeed Ireland's turbulent history offers many opportunities for ghosts – the '98 rebels perhaps, or the brooding figures of dark-robed clergy 'doomed for a certain time to fast in fires' for their savagery to children. The ancient Celts gave us the concept 'ghost fence', by surrounding sacred places with their enemies' heads on sticks. Real Irish ghost stories – let's have at them!

Unfortunately, the most interesting stories were Fennell's own experiences. A sickly child, his mother was told to 'enjoy the short time she would have with me as I had only a few weeks to live.' (p. 10), but they were visited by a ghostly brown-clad monk who blessed him in his cot. Fennell survived to healthy adult life. His teenage years were enlivened by a more sinister figure who whispered his name though he knew he was alone in the house. These experiences led him to develop an interest in the paranormal and ultimately to write the book.

Fennell provides a brief prologue about matters spiritual and ghostly in which he distinguishes between poltergeists and demonic possession, warning us all against 'foolish dabbling in the occult and untrained participation in Ouija board sessions' (p. 19) as he does so. The book then moves into its main section called simply 'Your Stories'; apparently told to the author under unspecified conditions.

Lack of background robs the accounts of suspense. They are introduced simply as 'Dave, Sligo' or 'Kathy, Dublin'. While no one expects tellers of ghost stories to consider alternative explanations, I was surprised that the prologue omitted that well known phenomenon 'hallucinations of bereavement'. Many people have had the dreadful experience of losing a loved one and then seeing that person in the days immediately after the death. No matter how much you tell yourself that your relative or friend is dead, you cannot help running up to the person, only to realise with a shock that there is virtually no resemblance to your lost one. Australians may seek medical advice or counselling about this – worrying that bereavement has affected their mental balance. Several of the stories here sound very like hallucinations of bereavement, but this is not considered. A ghost accepting culture can be comforting in dealing with these hallucinations as it offers a ready explanation.

Other stories hardly sounded like hauntings at all. 'Dominic, County Kildare' commented:

> We have had the usual stuff: things that I put down go missing and turn up days later; a spate of light bulbs blowing; and the occasional barely audible voice. (p. 140)

Add to those the dog barking madly for no apparent reason, the cupboards going clunk, and the cats careering up and down the hall, and you have life as we know it without anyone thinking it's ghosts.

The experiences of 'Emily, County Meath' seemed more phantasmagorical, with footsteps running up and down the stairs and then entering her bedroom without bothering to open the door. Others in the house saw a black cloud in the room and her nephew began talking about 'his playmate upstairs' (p. 155), insisting that a little girl lived in Emily's bedroom. Indeed it's a common feature of these tales of haunting that resident children claim the ghosts as playmates. Fortunately, these relationships do not develop any further.

As for centuries, the indications of hauntings involve unexplained noises and accidents, but ghosts have kept up with technology and now switch electric lights on and off or change radio stations. Pets continue to show signs of disturbance, and a sense of being watched is common as well. Some participants reported seeing actual figures, usually on staircases or sitting on the end of the bed, while others only sensed them. Not everyone felt threatened; 'Nicola, Dublin' said that her family '... feel very special that she has chosen to show herself to us.' (p. 166). For those who did feel worried, exorcism was uniformly effective, with none of the horrors sometimes associated with it. The Irish clergy may have lost influence in many spheres of life, but they are clearly still more capable of putting unwanted phantoms to flight than their American counterparts.

Felicity Allen

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Shipwrecked Tiger

**Fintan O'Toole: *Ship of Fools: How stupidity and corruption sank the Celtic Tiger*,
Faber and Faber, London, 2009.
ISBN: 978-0-571-25268-8; RRP £12.99**

Fintan O'Toole has written a lucid history of the Irish economy. Who else would describe shonky accountancy as 'book-cookery'? O'Toole contends that Ireland was not the hapless victim of greater economic forces, but an accomplice in her own downfall.

While politicians and bankers clearly bear a large share of the blame for much of that activity (or lack of it), the people who re-elected them also bear some responsibility. O'Toole describes Ahern as 'openly appealing to a culture of cronyism that he seemed to regard simply as the way things were done' (p. 41). One of his chapters, 'Ethitical Banking,' is taken from a report written by the Irish Central Bank. 'Ethitical' is not a subtle financial term, but a misspelling by the Irish Central Bank. Given the massive collusion of the Irish banking system with white collar crime, this lapse was understandable.

O'Toole begins before the Celtic Tiger days and questions the morality allowing those with tax liabilities to ignore poverty and distress. Many people evaded paying Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) by claiming to be non-residents, although it was challenging to complete the forms when their occupation was 'farmer', but the state authorities allowed it. State inaction made it impossible for individual banks to act legally. The Bank of Ireland levied DIRT for a year after the law was passed, but lost IR£120 million in 'non-resident deposits' by asking for evidence of non-residence and customers moved their accounts to less 'ethitical' bankers. The Bank of Ireland simply stopped asking for proof.

State inaction made it impossible for individual banks to act legally

O'Toole refers to the move to a celebrity culture in which the celebrity can be everyone's friend. His analyses of Ahern and Haughey's behaviour during the 1980s and 1990s are savage, showing how the leaders' examples corroded public responsibility. These practices culminated in a society characterised by extreme concentration of wealth so a developer couple flew round the country in 'his-and-hers Sikorskys' (p.81) while the opportunity to end poverty for millions of Irish people was lost. Even before the financial crash, 44% of Irish people agreed with the statement 'I worry sometimes about how much money I have borrowed and whether I'll be able to pay it back' (p.93), but they were the lucky ones. Meanwhile one in ten (7.5%) of Irish children were in persistent poverty and hospital provision was squalid .

O'Toole points to unfinished business from Ireland's 19th century as driving the development of a new feudalism. He argues that land hunger fuelled the property boom, encouraging people to borrow more than they could afford to have their own little piece of land secure from eviction:

> If the control of land is left out of the equation, the sheer scale of the Irish property bubble is almost impossible to fathom. In most of the developed world, house prices generally rose [...] but the Irish boom was certainly the loudest in Europe. (p. 101)

Between 1985 and 2006, house prices in Finland and Italy rose by 50% but in Ireland by almost 250%. Fortunes were made when farmland was zoned, at public expense, for housing development even when such development was never intended.

This book is valuable to read because many aspects of the society that O'Toole describes sound ominously familiar. Take the chapter 'Off-line Ireland', describing the privatisation of the Irish telephone company EirCom and the resulting inability/unwillingness of the privatised corporation to supply high speed broadband infrastructure to make Ireland an information society.

> A computerised integrated ticketing system for Dublin's various modes of public transport was first announced by the government in November 2000. At the time of writing, the most optimistic expectations were that it might happen at the end of 2009. (p. 154) [Ed.: It still has not happened.]

The slow uptake of computing in the Irish educational system resonates with an academic constantly confronted by tertiary students who have virtually no familiarity with software. Poor computing skills reduce interest in maths and physics and O'Toole comments that Ireland has '... failed completely to create a culture in which science and technology are really valued' (p. 160). He argues that part of this failure is due to the Catholic middle class wanting their children to enter the traditional professions rather than becoming IT whizz kids. How can we explain very similar trends in Australian society?

O'Toole comments that the six years of the Celtic Tiger would have been the only time Irish people felt free of the pain of forced emigration, enduring poverty and ethnic and religious conflict, so naturally freedom went to people's heads. It was assumed that the new state would simply evolve effective governance systems as Ireland tried to move to a post-modern society without ever creating the structures of a modern democracy. He appeals to the Irish public to engage in '...some old-fashioned exercises in nation building.' (p. 215). He suggests nothing less than refounding the Republic by accepting three propositions: firstly that the current crisis is moral as well as economic; secondly, that a thoroughgoing reform of the government system is essential; and thirdly, a social vision for Ireland be articulated before the country loses the best of this generation to the ancient curse of emigration.

A brilliant read! If there were more books like this, there would be more economically literate people.

Felicity Allen

Nostalgia for Kavanagh's Ireland

P J Browne (ed.), with photographs by David Maher:
***Kavanagh Country*, Currach Press, 2009**
ISBN: 9781856079693; RRP: $47.95

This is a welcome volume celebrating the life of one of Ireland's finest modern writers. Patrick Kavanagh (1904 – 1967) – a "poet lost to potato fields" – was born in County Monaghan and died in Dublin . Coming after Yeats, Kavanagh's original voice gave "something new, authentic and liberating" to the writing of Seamus Heaney, and a major inspiration to Irish readers and writers everywhere. For someone who is familiar with the life and work of Kavanagh the introductions to this book will tell little more than is already known about this man's sensibility and life story. The hold on the myth of Patrick Kavanagh's life is still tightly clenched in his brother Peter's hand. While this is so, opportunity for a grand reappraisal of the poet remains stifled.

The cover on this book features a black and white photo of the now famous statue of Patrick Kavanagh sitting on a seat by the Grand Canal in Dublin. When you are walking along the Canal Bank and encounter this statue, it's an invitation to sit down beside this awkward, intense figure, and look at the water and just spend some time thinking.

O commemorate me with no hero-courageous
Tomb – just a canal-bank seat for the passer-by.

To have this photo on the cover is an invitation as upfront and forward as Kavanagh's writing itself: the book you are about to open and read will be a frank and outspoken account of one man's perception of both Irish country and Dublin life, and Irish sensibility.

In this handsomely presented coffee table book one encounters photos of Ireland that perhaps the photographer imagined Kavanagh would have encountered growing in County Monaghan, and eventually in the streets of Dublin in the 'fifties. The book is distinctive because of these photos. All of them are black and white, and interestingly, most of them devoid of human life. They evoke an older Ireland, a certain place and time: a row of Dublin Georgian houses, a battered country gate, a churchyard, an open field, Grafton Street, an old pub bar. At first they seem sentimental – nostalgic for another place and time, romanticising the 'fifties, idealising the tractor prints on a muddy landscape or the gloomy rain outside Trinity College. The postman on his bike by the street sign Raglan Road has an otherworldly expression on his face.

However, when these photos are put alongside the snippets of prose and poetry of some of Kavanagh's classic writing something happens to them and the poetry. They are as stark and clear and poignant as Kavanagh's writing itself. They are also uniquely Irish as the words themselves.

Spaciously set out on fine paper and set beside these photos, Kavanagh's words are brought to life. A photo depicts an old country road, across it lies a half broken picket gate. Kavanagh's poem falls neatly on the opposite page:

Battered by time and weather, scarcely fit
For firewood; there's not a single bit
Of paint to hide those wrinkles, and such scringes
Break hoarsely on the silence – rusty hinges:
A barbed wire claps around one withered arm
Replaces the old latch, with evil charm.
…
How can I love the iron gates which guard
The fields of wealthy farmers? They are hard,
Unlovely things, a-swing on concrete piers –
Their finger-tips are pointed like old spears.
But you and I are kindred, Ruined Gate,
For both of us have met the self-same fate.
from 'Address to an Old Wooden Gate'

Here there is an immediacy and presentness to life itself that engages the reader. Although his poetry refers to a specific time and place, Kavanagh's ability to crack open the present moment is one of his writing's most enduring traits. With the poet we stand on the road and face this old wooden gate. Similarly, as Kavanagh recuperates from major surgery in Dublin in 1955, the waters of the Grand Canal in Dublin become our own deliverance:

Leafy-with-love banks and the green waters of the canal
Pouring redemption for me, that I do
The will of God, wallow in the habitual, the banal,
Grow with nature again as before I grew.
…
For this soul needs to be honoured with a new dress woven
From green and blue things and arguments that cannot be proven
'Canal Bank Walk'

Carol O'Connor

Carol is a reviewer.

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- 6pm: **Dinner & More Literary Sexology** at La Notte, 140-46 Lygon St. ($45)

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