

Issues of Globalisation and Secularisation in France
and Ireland

Studies in Franco-Irish Relations
Volume 3

Edited by:

Yann Bévant, Eamon Maher, Grace Neville and
Eugene O'Brien

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Table of Contents

Introduction (Editors)	7
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Part I

Poets and Fiction Writers on Globalisation and Secularisation

Chapter 1	Eamon Maher	15
“Ma paroisse est dévorée par l’ennui”: Secularisation in George-Bernanos’ <i>Journal d’un curé de campagne</i> and John McGahern’s <i>That They May Face the Rising Sun</i>		
Chapter 2	Brian Walsh	31
The Place of the Present in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon		
Chapter 3	Paula Murphy	49
From Ferry to Flight: Globalising and Secularising Irish Women		
Chapter 4	Peter D. T. Guy	63
McGahern, Proust and the Universality of Memory		
Chapter 5	Wacław Grzybowski	79
<i>Lux ex Armorica</i> : The Celtic Contemplative Consciousness versus Secularisation in Thomas McGreevy’s <i>Breton Oracles</i>		
Chapter 6	Brigitte Bastiat	91
<i>The Hostage</i> by Brendan Behan: A Tolerant and Secular Representation of Irish Society		

Chapter 7	Jean Brihault	101
	Dermot Bolger, romancier de la mondialisation ?	

Part II

Society on the Wave of Secularisation and Globalisation

Chapter 8	Catherine Maignant	123
	Strategies to 'save' Globalised Secular Society: A Critical Assessment	
Chapter 9	Mary Pierce	147
	In Careful and Carefree Secular Engagements: Towards Understanding the <i>Saecula</i>	
Chapter 10	Jean-Christophe Penet	163
	Ultramodernity and the Redefinition of Secularisation as the Restructuration of Belief in Contemporary France and Ireland	
Chapter 11	Véronique Gauthier	185
	Religion, économie et mondialisation : une analyse institutionnaliste	
Chapter 12	Patrick Claffey	195
	Masters and Servants: Joseph Pagnol, Brian McMahon and the Primary School	
Chapter 13	Anne Goarzin	219
	Faith, Hope and Debris: Globalisation and Secularisation in the Work of Paul Durcan and John Kindness	
Chapter 14	Catherine Fravallo and Angela Feeney	233
	La Laïcité à la française peut-elle apporter des solutions aux défis que pose à l'enseignement en Irlande le multiculturalisme ?	
Chapter 15	Eugene O'Brien	249
	'The Humanities of Tomorrow': Negotiating Globalisation and Secularisation	
	Notes on Contributors	271
	Index	277

Introduction

Yann Bévant, Eamon Maher, Grace Neville and
Eugene O'Brien

On October 5th 2006, some members of the Party of European Socialists (PES), among them François Hollande, the then General Secretary of the French Socialist Party and Jean Glavany, a Socialist member the French National Assembly and a specialist in the area of secularism (or *laïcité* in French), gathered at the European Parliament in Brussels for a conference on secularism in Europe. The conference followed a significant debate about the centenary of the 1905 French law on the separation of Church and State and the European Constitutional Treaty, and it was an opportunity to compare the relationships between Church and State within the 25 Member States. Is there a common European religious heritage, was the main question on everyone's lips? The preamble of the Constitutional Treaty led to many strong reactions from the governments of different member states. In his introduction, Bernard Poignant, President of the French Socialist delegation to the European Parliament, stressed that secularism French-style does not necessarily apply to the 24 other members of the Union: '*la laïcité à la française n'est pas la règle automatique des 24 autres pays membres de l'Union.*'¹

The word *laïcité* itself cannot even be adequately translated into every European language. In its long evolution, Republican ideology in France has been open to compromise and to the tensions that arise from internal incoherence, yet some key features are identifiable: a distinctive conception of the appropriate political institutions grounded upon democracy and the sovereignty of the nation; a commitment to emancipation through a secular educational system; a concern for individual rights combined with a desire to further social justice, and a distinctive conception of citizenship.

¹ <http://hebdo.parti-socialiste.fr/2006/10/05/110/#more-110>.

Cécile Laborde (School of Public Policy, University College London), in a paper delivered at a conference entitled “The Future of Republicanism: Confronting Theory and Practice in Contemporary Ireland” (University College Dublin, 7 May 2004), delved deeper into the issue by examining the ban on Muslim headscarves in French schools that was approved by the French Parliament on 3 March 2004, and the threefold argument put forward by advocates of the ban in the name of *laïcité* (secularism) – *laïcité*-as-neutrality, *laïcité*-as-autonomy, and *laïcité*-as-community – arguing that this type of *laïcité* need not be jettisoned in favour of either a liberal or a multicultural conception of citizenship. In other words, if the concept of secularism has grown out of a specific historical, social and political context in France, so has its status as a model form of governance.

Indeed, according to Jean Baubérot, Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, in countries like Ireland, Poland or Greece, religion is still part of the national identity, whereas countries such as Germany or Italy were Christian before the State was established.² National boundaries, however, might no longer be relevant. In his books *L’Islam mondialisé*³ et *La Sainte Ignorance, le temps de la religion sans culture*,⁴ Olivier Roy, Director of Research at the CNRS, argues that globalisation has created a market of religions that expands worldwide, irrespective of ideological territories. Besides, the notion of secularism is mentioned in very few national Constitutions. The Irish example is comparatively of interest, because the 1937 Constitution, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, established a very tenuous separation of Church and State by acknowledging ‘the special position of the Roman Catholic Church.’ What would have been unacceptable to many French people imbued with the values inherited from the first and third Republics was logical for a majority of Irish Catholics whose religion was felt to be part and parcel of their national identity, even though this entailed antagonising a large number of Irish Protestants in the North.

² Jean Baubérot, *Religions et laïcité dans l’Europe des Douze* (Paris : Syros, 1994).

³ Olivier Roy, *L’Islam mondialisé* (Paris : Seuil, 2002).

⁴ Olivier Roy, *La Sainte Ignorance, le temps de la religion sans culture* (Paris : Seuil, 2008).

However, the enlargement of the European Union and the spread of globalisation have accompanied a general process of secularisation in Europe. Today the separation of Church and State is a common feature of the Western world, although some counter examples such as the British Monarchy still persist. Such a trend has often been described as an inevitable consequence of the spread of human rights, seen as the rights of individuals protected by a State which has become neutral in religious matters. George Rupp gives a concise definition of this trend in the first chapter of his book, *Globalization Challenged*, when he writes:

We see fervent convictions in the headlines. The perpetrators of the horrific tragedy of September 11, 2001, are an extreme example [...] but there is an ample supply of others [...]. In the light of this awful carnage, we cannot but sympathize with the call of Western secular liberalism for religious and other ideological views to be tolerated as long as they remain private convictions that do not shape public outcomes. Put bluntly, in this secular liberal view religion and its ideological equivalents must be kept in the closet.⁵

In this regard globalisation presents a formidable challenge to local communities and cultures. It is often described as a process, steadily progressing over time and clearly inexorable in its development, but it is also a world revolution, one of the most profound revolutions civilisation has ever known, and it often appears, to quote Ian Burruma (*The New York Review of Books*, 11 April 2002) as ‘another word for “US imperialism.”’⁶ Again here, comparisons between the French and the Irish experience of globalisation may well prove fruitful. In spite of the fact that the French and the American Revolutions were often seen as sisters born out the Enlightenment, they bore fundamental differences, the main one being that the French Revolution was secular, while the American Revolution had a strong theological background. Today the French are defensive about their perceived identity in the face of Hollywood, Microsoft, MacDonaldis and religious sects. The *exception culturelle* claim, as well as Claude Hagege’s stand on language, are signs of a serious suspicion as to the real impact of globalisation. Today the American-Irish connection

⁵ George Rupp, *Globalization Challenged* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.22.

⁶ Ian Buruma, “The Blood Lust of Identity”, in *The New York Review of Books*, April 11, 2002. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15241>.

is very strong, and a long history of emigration has played a major part in the process, but one must not forget that for a long time Irish Catholicism considered American culture as yet another Anglo-Protestant threat.

In short, Protestant values were instrumental in the emergence of what George Rupp calls ‘western secular liberalism.’ The fundamental elements of that secular creed are free markets and equal opportunity, free elections and liberal democracy, constitutional politics and the rule of law. Although such values were not theological, they are clearly the product of a Protestant culture. It could then be argued that the American ideology – what James Kurth calls ‘the American creed’⁷ – is a kind of secularised version of Protestantism. In a global world dominated by the United States, religious issues must therefore not be underestimated, as they help us to challenge long-established constructions of religious or secular identities. Given their particular historical heritage, the French and Irish examples should provide food for thought in the debate. If old-style French secularism is being challenged by American-style multiculturalism, Irish Catholicism today has to face the challenge of a deep and rapid transformation of mentalities in Ireland: changes that would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the 1980s actually occurred even before the end of the millennium. This was the case for instance with the end of the ban on divorce in the Republic following the 1999 referendum. The rise of the Celtic Tiger also coincided with the emergence of more individualistic and materialistic values and behaviours. As a consequence, old teachings and community ties have ceased to be the norm in an increasingly individualistic and work-driven environment.

According to James Kurth, Professor of Political Science at Swarthmore College, there could be three paradigms or perspectives from which one may view the role of religion in the globalisation process: (1) the modernist, (2) the post-modernist, and (3) the pre-modernist.⁸

The Modernist Perspective: The modernist perspective will seem the most familiar. It is the perspective of most intellectuals and academics. The mod-

⁷ James Kurth, “The Real Clash”, in *National Interest*, Fall 1994.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2751/is_n37?tag=content;coll Accessed 4 January 2009.

⁸ James Kurth, “Religion and Globalization”, in *The Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs*, FRPI, Vol.7, n°7, 1999, p.13.

ernist perspective has had a particular and peculiar view of secularisation. Beginning with the Enlightenment, modernists have entertained the prospect that all processes of secularisation would eventually look alike; the different religions would all end up sharing the same secular and 'rational' philosophy. At a somewhat more sophisticated level, the modernist perspective sometimes views religious revivals as a reaction to the Enlightenment and modernisation.

The Post-Modernist Perspective: The post-Enlightenment, post-modernist perspective joins with the Enlightenment, modernist one in rejecting traditional, pre-modern religions. But this perspective also rejects the Enlightenment, modernist values of rationalism, empiricism, and science, along with the Enlightenment, modernist structures of capitalism, bureaucracy, and even liberalism. The core value of post-modernism is expressive individualism.

The Pre-Modernist Perspective: There is an alternative perspective, one which is post-modern in its occurrence but pre-modern in its sensibility. It has been best represented and articulated by the Roman Catholic Church, especially by the late Pope John Paul II. The Pope's understanding obviously drew from his experiences in Communist Poland, but it encompasses events in other countries as well.

Now, at the beginning of the third Christian millennium, we are not only in the globalisation revolution, but also in the post-modern era. What will now be the responses of people to the deep insecurities produced by globalisation? Is it possible they then may be more theological and religious than ideological and secular? What alternatives exist? If we follow Olivier Roy's analysis, new religious fundamentalisms want to get rid of culture, as they perceive it as an obstacle to the true faith which is only to be found in the original Scriptures. This is what Roy calls 'la Sainte Ignorance.' But he acknowledges that ignorance is a two-way street: '*parallèlement, la culture profane n'a plus de savoir religieux [...] faute de comprendre les croyants, l'ignorance profane a tendance à voir dans le religieux une folie; elle l'envisage comme un phénomène à réduire et, ce faisant, elle contribue à réduire l'espace de la démocratie.*'⁹

In such a context, the aim of this study is to examine and compare various aspects of the French and the Irish experiences of these phenomena, and to assess what understanding and perspectives the two countries may have to offer to the debate. The book is composed of a selection of papers delivered at the highly successful 4th AFIS Conference which was

⁹ Claude Roy, « Les religions à l'épreuve de la mondialisation », in *Le Monde*, December 21-22, 2008, p.14.

held at the University of Rennes 2 in May 2008. The first section provides comparative chapters on poets and fiction writers such as Bernanos, McGahern, Heaney, Mahon, Bolger, Proust, with a view to examining how secular and/or religious representations may have influenced their works. Jean Brihault concludes the section with an assessment of how post-modern writing – taking Dermot Bolger as his example – may well be in harmony with the spirit of globalisation. The second section is dedicated to the changes affecting the notions of secularisation and belief in what are increasingly globalised French and Irish societies. Starting with a critical assessment by Catherine Maignant, there are also studies of the ‘redefinition of secularisation and restructuring of belief’ in both countries by Jean-Christophe Penet, before Eugene O’Brien concludes with how there is a need for a negotiation between the twin forces of globalisation and secularisation.

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Yann Bévant, Eamon Maher, Grace Neville and Eugene O’Brien (editors)

Part I

Poets and Fiction Writers on Globalisation and Secularisation

Eamon Maher

“Ma paroisse est dévorée par l’ennui”: Secularisation in Georges Bernanos’ *Journal d’un curé de campagne* and John McGahern’s *That They May Face the Rising Sun*

Georges Bernanos (1888-1948) is a notable figure in the genre commonly referred to as the ‘roman catholique’ in France. He is generally known as a writer with a fascination for the supernatural and the mystical. Several of his novels feature priests as their main characters and many possess saintly qualities. He also displayed a nostalgic attachment to the French monarchical system in which the Catholic Church had a powerful role in civic governance and he bemoaned the decadence of the ‘entre-deux-guerres’ period, dominated to a large extent by secular values. In his excellent *Préface* to the Pléiade edition of Bernanos’s novels, Gaëton Picon notes how in his polemical essays written between 1937 and his death in 1948, Bernanos railed against events like the capitulation of the Munich Agreement, the second World War, the armistice, and French collaboration during the German Occupation. In all of these essays there is an underlying denunciation of what Picon describes as ‘*la décadence française, la perte du sens de l’honneur, la barbarie technocratique et totalitaire.*’¹

Never one to mince his words, Bernanos’ novels convey a feeling of despair at how easily people slip into spiritual apathy, as well as an exhortation to his readers to be aware of the dangers of unthinking and unbridled secularism. Picon states that he was a man destined for one of two specific vocations:

¹ Gaëton Picon, “Bernanos Romancier”, *Préface, Bernanos Œuvres romanesques* (Paris : NRF/Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1961), p.ix. All references to Bernanos and his works will be from this edition, with the page numbers in brackets.

Il ne pouvait être que prêtre ou romancier, celui pour qui l'âme du prochain est sinon Dieu, du moins la médiation par laquelle Dieu se manifeste. Il a su très tôt que sa vocation n'était pas de devenir prêtre : il a su très tôt qu'il serait romancier. (xii)

In the difficult choice he faced between two vocations, he resembles the Irish writer John McGahern, who promised his dying mother he would one day become a priest, only to end up a writer. He wrote in *Memoir*: 'Instead of being a priest of God, I would be the God of a small, vivid world':² the world of which he spoke was, of course, a literary one. As a young boy, as a result of his mother's devotion to the Catholic faith, McGahern had no doubts as to what the future held for him: 'One day I would become a priest. After the Ordination Mass, I would place my freshly anointed hands in blessing on my mother's head. We'd live together in the priest's house and she'd attend each morning Mass and take communion from my hands.' (*M*, 62-63) Given such a background, it is understandable that his novels are shot through with references to Catholic rituals and practices. He ceased practicing his religion during his early twenties and although in 1965 he controversially lost his job as a primary school teacher in Clontarf, due mainly to his marriage to a Finnish divorcee in a registry office in London and the banning of his second novel, *The Dark* – the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, was very instrumental in this decision – he remained positively disposed to Catholicism, as expressed towards the end of *Memoir*: 'It [the Church] was the sacred weather of my early life, and I could no more turn against it than I could turn on any deep part of myself.' (*M*, 222)

McGahern's problems with religion stemmed from what he viewed as the excessive interference by priests and religious into the private (for this one can more often than not read sexual) lives of their flock. By 1950, he considered the Irish Free State had become a theocracy in all but name. His death in 2006 heralded in a way the end of a generation of Irish writers for whom a religious awareness was by dint of upbringing and education almost a given. Unlike their immediate predecessors Frank O'Connor and Seán Ó Faoláin, for whom political and social engagement were a prerequisite, writers like McGahern, Aidan Higgins, Brian Moore, John Broderick and Edna O'Brien placed much more emphasis on what

² John McGahern, *Memoir* (London: Faber&Faber, 2005), p.205. Subsequent quotations from this text will be indicated by *M*, followed by the page number.

Maurice Harmon refers to as ‘the private graph of feeling within the individual person.’³

In this paper, I will deal with the ever-increasing level of secularisation and dechristianisation in one novel by both Georges Bernanos and John McGahern. Although sixty six years separate their publication (*Journal* was published in 1936 and *That They May Face the Rising Sun* in 2002) and even though the social context is quite different in the two novels, there are enough similarities to allow for a fruitful comparative study. One should bear in mind also that the ‘entre-deux-guerres’ period in French history, although it saw the emergence of a rich crop of talented writers who placed the Catholic faith at the centre of their literary preoccupations, was a time when, generally speaking, Catholicism was at a low ebb in France. *They May Face the Rising Sun*, as we shall see, captures in an elegiac manner the lives of an elderly community living around a lake in rural Ireland. This community is almost frozen in time and very little about their lives has changed in the past forty odd years. They still go to Mass and observe their religious duties, but one gets the distinct impression that they are the last of their ilk.

Bernanos’ *Journal d’un curé de campagne* provides a wonderful insight into a rural French parish that appears to have little or no meaningful engagement with the Catholic religion. The inhabitants of the ‘diseased’ parish are much more concerned with making money and living hedonistic lives than they are with ensuring eternal salvation. The young curé, who is regularly tricked by local traders and rebuked by his superiors for not displaying sufficient authority, wonders how his parish could be so completely in the throes of evil. On the first page of the *Journal* we read:

Ma paroisse est dévorée par l’ennui, voilà le mot. Comme tant d’autres paroisses ! L’ennui les dévore sous nos yeux et nous n’y pouvons rien. Quelque jour peut-être la contagion nous gagnera, nous découvrirons en nous ce cancer. (1031)

Ironically, the priest will fall victim in a real sense to the metaphorical ‘cancer’ he describes, in a process that suggests that he takes the disease

³ Maurice Harmon, “Generations Apart: 1925-1975”, in *The Irish Novel in Our Time*, edited by Maurice Harmon and Patrick Raffroidi (Lille: Publications de l’Université de Lille 3, 1976), pp.49-65, p.54.

that is corroding his parish into himself and dies from it. For him, the ambient cancer is akin to moral decay or ‘ennui’:

Mais je me demande si les hommes ont jamais connu cette contagion de l'ennui, cette lèpre ? Un désespoir avorté, une forme turpide du désespoir, qui est sans doute comme la fermentation d'un christianisme décomposé.
(1032)

Although a poor administrator – he is made fun of by his catechism class, looked down on by the local aristocracy and fails in his efforts to rejuvenate his parish – this man possesses a spiritual quality that has an impact on many of those with whom he comes into contact. One of his few friends, le curé de Torcy, is as effective in running his parish as the younger priest is ineffective in his. He decries the lack of toughness in the young priests emerging from the seminaries: “*De mon temps, on formait des hommes d'Église [...], oui, des hommes d'Église [...], des chefs de paroisse, des maîtres, quoi, des hommes de gouvernement.*” (1037) But he senses in his young confrere a humble sincerity that appeals to him. He says: “*Je te traite de va-nu-pieds, mais je t'estime. Prends le mot pour ce qu'il vaut, c'est un grand mot.*” Many of the other priests in the novel go about their work as if they are simply ‘fonctionnaires’ whose business is about coming up with the right kind of formulae in their sermons, the correct tone when addressing people, the ability to keep as many of their parishioners, especially the wealthy influential ones, reasonably happy. At a workshop he attends, Ambricourt notes: ‘*Aucun de ces hommes ne saurait croire l'Église en péril, pour quelque raison que ce soit. Et certes ma confiance n'est pas moindre, mais probablement d'une autre espèce. Leur sécurité m'épouvante.*’ (1054)

Unlike his brother priests, the curé d'Ambricourt feels no complacency about the future of the Church. All around him he detects evidence of slippage. In the local château, it becomes apparent that M. le Comte is having an affair with his daughter Chantal's tutor, Mlle Louise. Chantal tells the curé all the sordid details of her father's adultery and he feels her pain and the anger she directs at her mother for doing nothing about what is happening under her nose. She is a young woman in revolt against the world and God. She has a morbid fascination with the priest, searches for his prurience by describing how her father and Mlle Louise don't even attempt to hide their affair any more: ‘*Je les ai entendus cette nuit. J'étais juste sous leur fenêtre, dans le parc. Ils ne prennent même plus la peine de fermer les rideaux.*’ (1134) Ambricourt possesses a gift for read-

ing into souls and in a moment of illumination asks Chantal to give him the letter that is in her bag. Mesmerised, she hands him a piece of paper on which she had written a harsh note to her father. She cannot comprehend how the priest could have known about the letter: “*Vous êtes donc le diable !*”, she says, unable to come up with any other explanation for the discovery.

If Chantal is deeply unhappy, she shares that condition with her mother. The most famous episode in the novel is the famous interview between the curé and Mme la Comtesse in the course of which it transpires that she has never forgiven God for the tragic death of her infant son. She still fulfilled her religious duties and seemed a dutiful wife and mother, but she was dead of heart. The priest tells her that she risks being separated for all eternity from her son if she doesn’t change her ways. “*Dieu vous brisera*”, he shouts angrily, in a moment of unusual animation. She retorts furiously: “*Me briser ? Il m’a déjà brisée. Que peut-il désormais contre moi ? Il m’a pris mon fils.*” According to the curé, however, in one of the most quoted lines in all of Bernanos’ work: “*L’enfer, c’est de ne plus aimer.*” By ignoring the needs of her remaining child, Chantal, and her husband, the comtesse is jeopardising her own salvation and that of her family. She had never really considered them or their grief in all the years since her son’s passing. She was simply waiting for the joyous moment when they would be reunited in eternity.

The exchange between the young priest and the comtesse, two individuals separated by social standing, age and experience, is remarkable for putting the issue of salvation at the heart of their discussion. Slowly but inexorably, the priest breaks down the comtesse’s resistance, her revolt, as he outlines the path to a peace about which he can only dream himself. As he leaves the château, he is drained from the intensity of what has occurred (he has been living on a diet of bread and wine, symbols of the Eucharist, for quite some time and is clearly unwell). Later that evening, the comtesse sends him a note of thanks: “*Que vous dire ? Le souvenir désespéré d’un petit enfant me tenait éloignée de tout, dans une solitude effrayante, et il me semble qu’un autre enfant m’a tirée de cette solitude.*” She informs him that she is going to confession later that evening and will say that she has sinned against ‘*l’espérance*’ every day for eleven years.

One might have imagined that this episode would have marked a change of fortunes in the life and career of the curé d’Ambricourt, but circumstances dictate otherwise. The comtesse dies in her sleep that night and Chantal, who had been spying on part of the interview, maintains

that the priest had caused her mother great agitation and may have been responsible for her death. The comte's uncle, M. le chanoine de la Motte-Beuvron, attempts to discover what exactly happened the previous afternoon which, given the confidential nature of the exchange, the younger man refuses to reveal. The canon also warns him about Chantal and the malicious rumours she is spreading about him. Upset at what is happening, the curé asks Torcy what people have against him, to which his friend replies: "*D'être ce que vous êtes, il n'y a pas de remède à cela. Que voulez-vous, mon enfant, ces gens ne haïssent pas votre simplicité, ils s'en défendent, elle est comme une espèce de feu qui les brûle.*" (1174) The curé d'Ambricourt lives his life by a different set of rules to those observed by others. For him, what matters is his relationship with God, making people aware of the divine presence in their lives, the importance of self-sacrifice and unconditional love for anyone wishing to live a satisfying life. He is an agent of grace for suffering souls like the comtesse, and yet he remains a '*prisonnier de la Sainte Agonie.*' (1187)

The point Bernanos seeks to make in this novel is that in the midst of what is the most hostile and apathetic circumstances, grace can win out. The curé has to cope with unenviable odds. The parish to which he is assigned is far from well-disposed to what he represents and to the message he brings. He considers himself a lamentable failure and is perceived as such by many of those to whom he ministers. Dechristianisation and the dominance of secular values mean that Ambricourt will always be swimming against the tide. His poor health further accentuates the difficulties he experiences. Towards the end of the novel, he finds himself in Lille, where a consultant informs him that he has terminal cancer and has not long to live. His first reaction is a very human one: '*J'étais seul, inexprimablement seul, en face de ma mort, et cette mort n'était que la privation de l'être – rien de plus.*' (1241)

As the awareness of his condition seeps in, however, he reaches an acceptance of his fate. What surprises him most is just how attached he was to this world, a world that seemed to bring him nothing but suffering. His last hours are spent in the apartment of his former acquaintance from the seminary, Louis Dufréty, now living with a woman who worked in the sanatorium he was sent to when suffering from tuberculosis. Dufréty is anxious to hide the true nature of his relationship with this woman. Ambricourt, impatient at his dissimulation, says to him: "*Si j'avais le malheur un jour de manquer aux promesses de mon ordination, je préférerais que ce fût pour l'amour d'une femme plutôt qu'à la suite de ce que tu appelles ton évolution intellectuelle.*" (1248) When he meets

the woman, he knows instinctively that she is the victim of her lover's self-absorption, his inability to decide once and for all that he will never become a priest. In this dilapidated apartment, inhabited by two lost souls, the priest faces up to the prospect of eternity. The final words he utters, as related by Dufréty are: "*Qu'est-ce que cela fait ? Tout est grâce.*" The crucifixion is over. Grace has prevailed. A seemingly insignificant and inept man overcomes the huge obstacles that are sent his way by calmly accepting his lot. The good he has done is only known to the few whom he has touched and yet the readers who have access to his inner thoughts are left with the impression that they have been placed in the presence of a saintly man whose humility and self-effacement tended to occlude a vibrant inner life of prayer and sacrifice.

With McGahern's last novel, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, the dramatic side of Catholicism is not a central concern. The local priest, Fr. Conroy, is not engaged in a desperate struggle to save the souls of his parishioners. Mostly, he leaves them to their own devices unless something serious occurs and he has no option other than to intervene. But the inhabitants of the community around the lake are elderly for the most part and thus less likely to rebel against a priest whom they recognise as one of their own. Fr. Conroy has a small farm on which he keeps some stock: he can be seen at the local marts where he is quite indistinguishable from the other farmers. The community is still attached to religion, but only because it is part of an immutable whole. They dislike change and the narrative follows a circular path in which season follows season and the religious festivals punctuate the calendar year. There is very little by way of plot and you have the impression that you are living as much as reading: you become totally absorbed in the rituals of the people as they go about their daily tasks and repeat the same formulaic verbal exchanges that they have been doing for years.

Most of the action – what there is of it – revolves around the house of Joe and Kate Ruttledge, returned emigrants, who settle on a small farm in a setting that is strikingly similar to where McGahern and his second wife, Madeline, returned to live in the 1970s. Although viewed as quaint in their farming methods – their liking for their animals elicits the following comment from the handyman, Patrick Ryan: "There's an old Short-horn they milk for the house that would nearly sit in an armchair and put specs on to read the *Observer*"⁴ – the Ruttledges are nevertheless well

⁴ John McGahern, *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (London: Faber&Faber,

accepted in the community. They are especially close to Jamesie, a sensitive, good-natured man with a love of gossip. In the opening pages of the novel, Jamesie inquires as to why they Joe and Kate do not go to Mass. When Joe, a former seminarian, says he would like to go but that he does not believe, Jamesie retorts: “None of us believes and we go. That’s no bar.” (*TRS*, 2)

This is a revealing comment when one examines the mentality that lies behind it. For Jamesie and the other people living in this area, the Mass is more a social occasion than a serious spiritual experience. Joe Ruttledge abandoned his studies for the priesthood when he discovered that he could not buy into all the fundamentals of Catholicism. He feels that it would be hypocritical for him to attend Mass in such circumstances. Jamesie goes to church, in his own words, “to see the whole performance... We go to see all the other hypocrites” (*TRS*, 2), which, if we are to believe him, reduces the Mass to a spectacle bereft of any genuinely spiritual dimension. Such an attitude would have been very alien to Bernanos’ curé, and yet plenty of the parishioners in Ambricourt, possibly because of the official separation of Church and State in France in 1905, would have had a rather sceptical opinion of the clergy who for too long ruled rural France in particular with an iron hand. Whereas a certain ‘laïcité’ had been strong in France since the Enlightenment, and manifested itself spectacularly during the French Revolution, in Ireland there was not the same tendency to resist clerical influence. Instead, what seems to have happened is that, with the arrival of increased prosperity, people have begun to find comfort in things other than religion. Hence attendance at religious ceremonies has fallen sharply – due to a multiplicity of reasons, that are well captured by Tom Inglis in his book *Global Ireland: Same Difference*: ‘In the past 50 years, Ireland changed from being a very isolated, insular, Catholic rural society revolving around agriculture, to a more open, liberal-individualist, secular urban society revolving around business, commerce and high-tech, transnational corporations.’⁵

The community in McGahern’s novel, because of their peripheral location, are sheltered somewhat from many of these developments. Patrick Ryan, a bachelor with no children, is conscious that they are the last

2002), p.76. Subsequent quotations from this text will be indicated by *TRS*, followed by the page number.

⁵ Tom Inglis, *Global Ireland: Same Difference* (London: Routledge, 2008), p.7.

of their kind: "After us there'll be nothing but the water hen and the swan." (*TRS*, 45) The elegiac tone is reinforced with other similar observations throughout the novel. In the course of a few months, Patrick loses his brother as well as a close friend, Johnny, and this is possibly what prompts him to observe that when he and his generation pass away there will be nobody to replace them. People might be relocated from Dublin and elsewhere to live in this rural setting, but they will not be the same sort of people; they will not share the same customs and beliefs. For example, when they are digging Johnny's grave, they make sure that his head is facing the west. When Ruttledge asks why they do this, Ryan tells him: "He sleeps with his head to the west... so that when he wakes he may face the rising sun." (*TRS*, 282) Such practices were (and sometimes still are) commonplace among Irish people who, although outwardly in conformity with the dictates of the Catholic Church, still follow their individual belief system. As McGahern observed in *Memoir*: 'Most people went about their sensible pagan lives as they had done for centuries, seeing this conformity as just another veneer they had to pretend to wear like all the others they had worn since the time of the Druids.' (*M*, 211)

We have noted how Fr. Conroy is portrayed in a largely positive light. The novel is set in the 1980s and already the waning influence of the Catholic Church in rural Ireland is noticeable. Fr. Conroy is embarrassed to have to visit the Ruttledges on behalf of the Bishop who is anxious to know why Joe decided to pack in his studies for the priesthood. Joe recognizes that Fr. Conroy is essentially a decent man who is fighting a losing battle against the diminishing levels of belief in his parish, even though he encounters none of the aggressive anti-clericalism that Ambri-court endures. Joe is struck, for example, by how few people wear ashes on their forehead on Ash Wednesday, something that would have been unthinkable a couple of decades previously. Joe and Fr. Conroy work together to ensure that Bill Evans, an unpaid labourer on a local farm, gets accommodation in the new housing scheme that is being built in the village. Bill is a stark reminder of the harsh treatment meted out to many young Irish people, male and female, who found themselves in the notorious industrial schools or Magdalene laundries during the middle decades of the last century. He is fortunate to find people who are sympathetic to his plight and give him food and cigarettes. When Ruttledge interrogates him about certain traumatic events in his life, he is promptly told to stop torturing him. Ruttledge then realises: 'Bill Evans could no more look forward than he could look back. He existed in a small closed

circle of the present. Remembrance of things past and dreams of things to come were instruments of torture.’ (*TRS*, 167)

We have already noted how John McGahern exposed himself to the full rigour of the Censorship of Publications Board when, in his second novel, *The Dark* (1965), he dared to write of masturbation, sexual abuse by a father on his son, and suspected clerical sex abuse. Irish society was not ready to deal with such taboo subjects at that time, but McGahern was always someone who felt compelled to portray life as he saw it, and not in the idealised, sanitised version promulgated by both Church and State in the 1940s and 50s when he was growing up. There were several children like Bill Evans who were sent to Industrial Schools, often simply for having the misfortune to come from a deprived background or to be born out of wedlock. McGahern felt strongly about social issues and, while he was always careful to draw a clear distinction between journalism and fiction, there is a sense in which his novels supply a canvas on which the social history of a nation is inscribed. Take the disturbing opening to *The Dark* as an example. Young Mahoney, the protagonist, is the victim of an simulated beating by his father who has heard him utter an oath under his breath. Forced to remove his trousers and underpants and to bend over a chair, the boy winces as the belt strikes the leather of the seat and he is horrified when he cannot prevent himself from urinating on the floor. The father is clearly aroused by this feeling of power: ‘He didn’t lift a hand, as if the stripping compelled by his will alone gave him pleasure.’⁶ The son, totally humiliated by this episode, which takes place in full view of his sisters, is damaged emotionally by what can only be described as a problematic relationship with his widowed father.

Worse than the beatings is the sexual abuse, after which always comes a feeling of wretchedness and guilt at what he refers to as ‘the dirty rags of intimacy.’ (*TD*, 19) The father strokes his son’s stomach and slowly goes down to caress his genitalia. The stark description below illustrates just how daring McGahern was, given that he was writing this in the Ireland of four decades ago:

The words drummed softly as the stroking hands moved on his belly, down and up, touched with the fingers the thighs again, and came again on the back.

⁶ John McGahern, *The Dark* (London: Faber&Faber, 1965), p.8. Subsequent quotations from this text will be indicated by *TD*, followed by the page number.

“You like that. It’s good for you”, the voice breathed jerkily now to the stroking hands.

“I like that.”

There was nothing else to say, it was better not to think or care. (*TD*, 20)

What makes passages like this all the more horrendous is the fact that Mahoney senior is not portrayed in a completely negative light. He is seen in some ways as a pitiful, lonely figure, dissatisfied with his life as a small farmer and ultimately powerless to control his unhappy destiny. In many ways, the Catholic Church, in the way in which it bolstered and supported paternal authority, could be held some way responsible for a domestic life governed by fear and loathing. I am making this brief digression in order to demonstrate that McGahern’s view of the Church and Irish society had mellowed somewhat between the publication of his second and final novel. A certain amount of anger is palpable in *The Dark* in relation to the type of hypocrisy that characterised religious practice in Ireland in the past. Mahoney senior is one example of an outwardly devout Catholic who feels no compunction about beating and abusing his children.

However badly he may be perceived (his son is reconciled with him at the end of the novel), he compares favourably with the lecherous Mr Ryan, whose lascivious attentions cause Joan Mahoney to ask her brother to arrange for her departure from the position set up for her in this house by their cousin, Fr Gerald. Mr Ryan is considered one of his most up-standing parishioners by the priest. This all happens the summer before Mahoney’s Leaving Certificate when he visits Fr Gerald in order to explore his interest in becoming a priest. The visit starts badly when his sister, during their stop off at the Ryans’, tells Mahoney: “It’s worse than home.” (*TD*, 63) Late that night, Fr Gerald enters the boy’s room on the pretext of discussing his vocation with him:

[...] you stiffened when his arm went around your shoulder, was this to be another of the midnight horrors with your father. His hand closed on your arm. You wanted to curse or wrench yourself free but you had to lie stiff as a board, stare straight ahead at the wall, afraid before anything of meeting the eyes you knew were searching your face. (*TD*, 70-71)

Fr Gerald then asks his cousin if he has made any decision about the priesthood and proceeds to ask a series of leading questions, as if they are in the confessional: Has he ever desired to kiss a girl? Did he excite himself at the thought? Cause seed to spill in the excitement? Mahoney an-

swers the questions truthfully and proceeds to ask the priest if he ever had to fight the sin of masturbation himself when he was younger. Fr Gerald does not reply, however: 'There was such silence that you winced.' (TD, 73) The boy feels awful at having revealed his peccadilloes without any reciprocal admission from the priest. Then comes anger:

What right had he to come and lie with you in bed, his body hot against yours, his arm around your shoulders. Almost as the cursed nights when you father used to stroke your thighs. (TD, 74)

There is a sense in which this unsavory incident with his cousin confirms Mahoney's decision to abandon his vocation for the priesthood. It also strengthens his resolve to no longer passively accept the abuse which his father has inflicted on him. Nothing untoward actually happens with his cousin, but it is clear that he is potentially under threat from this quarter also. The following day, in a rare manifestation of defiance, he frees his sister from the clutches of the Ryans and announces to his cousin that he is leaving sooner than expected. He also explains how Joan is being interfered with by Mr Ryan but realises that Fr Gerald will not do anything that would potentially alienate one of his most influential parishioners. The priest then seeks to regain the lost ground by talking more honestly to his cousin about the pitfalls of the priesthood:

A priest who ministers to the *bourgeoisie* becomes more a builder of churches, bigger and more comfortable churches, and schools than a preacher of the Word of God. The Society influences the Word far more than the Word influences the Society. (TD, 99-100)

But it is now too late to make such pronouncements: the young boy has already made up his mind that the priesthood is not for him. Fr Gerald's comments above would chime with the views of the curé d'Ambricourt, who conspires to place himself at a remove from the local aristocracy, but not in a way that gains him favour with the merchant classes or the labourers. He is in no doubt that his commitment has to be to the Word. In that respect, a discussion he has with Dr Delbende, a friend of Torcy's, is revealing. Delbende resents the fact that the Church does nothing to prevent the spread of injustice. His agnosticism has its roots in what he views as the elitism that lies at the heart of religion:

Reste qu'un pauvre, un vrai pauvre, un honnête pauvre ira de lui-même se coller aux dernières places dans la maison du seigneur, la sienne, et qu'on

n'a jamais vu, qu'on ne verra jamais un suisse, empanaché comme un corbillard, le venire chercher au fond de l'église pour l'amener dans le cœur, avec les égards dus à un Prince – un Prince du sang chrétien. (1095)

The curé d'Ambricourt senses a '*blessure profonde de l'âme*' in Delbende and is aware that such wounds seem to attract him to people: '*Une douleur vraie qui sort de l'homme appartient d'abord à Dieu, il me semble. J'essaie de la recevoir humblement dans mon cœur, telle quelle, je m'efforce de l'y faire mienne, de l'aimer. Et je comprends tout le sens caché de l'expression devenue banale « communier avec », car il est vraie que cette douleur, je la communie.*' (1096) Perhaps this is the type of approach that is needed if the Catholic Church is ever going to successfully combat secularism: priests with the ability to 'commune with' suffering, to make it their own. An identification with the poor (in the spiritual more than in the material sense) is also essential, as is an ability to provide prophetic witness rather than triumphal demonstrations. Delbende dies in a shooting accident (that bears all the hallmarks of a suicide) and Ambricourt reflects on what he should have said to the doctor:

J'aurais dû dire au docteur Delbende que l'Église n'est pas seulement ce qu'il imagine, une espèce d'État souverain avec ses lois, ses fonctionnaires, ses armées – un moment, si glorieux qu'on voudra, de l'histoire des hommes. Elle marche à travers le temps comme une troupe de soldats à travers des pays inconnus où tout ravitaillement normal est impossible. (1103-1104)

Bernanos was a firm believer in an evangelising, democratic Church which would value its least significant member as much as the wealthiest and the most famous. In the curé d'Ambricourt, we have a man whose heredity is somewhat dubious (he was born into a family containing hopeless alcoholics and unsuccessful businessmen), but who places his trust in a religion where only God is fit to judge one's actions; only He can determine whether a person is saved or damned. The spectacular moments when the curé is granted insights into others' souls are counterbalanced by the drudgery of his daily routine, which is marked by embarrassing rejections, repeated proof of his inadequacy. We sense he may well be a saint but, like Graham Greene's whiskey-priest in *The Power and the Glory*, he is ministering to people who are in general incapable of a strong interior life. They are far more concerned with saving money than saving their souls. And yet he perseveres, in the hope that one day perhaps God's glory will illuminate the earth.

There is much more that could be written about the manner in which Bernanos and McGahern, albeit in very different ways, delineate two communities dominated by a secular *'ennui'*. Whereas Bernanos, in the person of Ambricourt, sets about combating the 'cancer' of secularism, McGahern, like his alter ego Ruttledge, conveys a sense of a peaceful dying out of local Catholic beliefs and customs. For McGahern, there were no certainties when it came to contemplating eternity. Ruttledge's reply to Jamesie who asks him if he believes in an afterlife is revealing in this regard: "I don't know from what source life comes, other than out of nature, or for what purpose. I suppose it's not unreasonable to think that we go back to whatever meaning we came from." (*TRS*, 294) Such an answer would not have sat easily with Ambricourt who faces into eternity with definite convictions: *'Pourquoi m'inquiéter ? Pourquoi prévoir ? Si j'ai peur, je dirai : j'ai peur, sans honte. Que le premier regard du Seigneur, lorsque m'apparaîtra sa Sainte Face, soit donc un regard qui rassure !'* (1256)

Both writers wrote movingly about death. In Bernanos' case, there was the consolation that the afterlife would bring his characters into personal contact with the Divine Presence. With McGahern, there was no such conviction. One should not read too much into his decision to organise a traditional funeral Mass, concluding with a decade of the Rosary at his graveside in Aughawillan cemetery. Patsy McGarry wrote a year after the writer's death: 'Maybe it was this desire to avoid any shadow being cast on his mother's deep trust in God which prompted him – and unbeliever – to allow the funeral Mass to be said and his Christian burial beside her afterwards.'⁷ A great upholder of local tradition, McGahern would also have been keenly aware of what family and friends might have expected from a funeral. So long a victim of religious and moral intolerance, McGahern had the ability to differentiate between the Church as institution and as a manifestation of the People of God. The rampant secularisation of Ireland would not have filled him with any joy and he retained, though in a different way to Bernanos, a nostalgic attachment to the riches the Catholic Church brought him, as well as an awareness of the pharisaic attitude it instilled in many people. This supplies adequate explanation, if such were needed, for the type of funeral service he or-

⁷ Patsy McGarry, "Writer's Funeral Was Triumph of Compassion", in *The Irish Times*, 28 March 2007.

ganised. One final quote from *Memoir* demonstrates the attachment the writer always retained for religious rituals:

The church ceremonies always gave me pleasure, and I miss them even now. In an impoverished time they were my first introduction to an indoor beauty, of luxury and ornament, ceremony and sacrament and mystery. I remember still the texture of the plain, brown, flat cardboard boxes in which the red and white and yellow tulips came on the bus when there were no flowers anywhere. (*M*, 202)

Brian Walsh

The Place of the Present in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon

In this chapter, I wish to show how a poetics of the present, discernible in the work of Heaney and Mahon, suggests a keen awareness of the terms by which we can begin to adjust to global cultural connections with our local environment. Globalisation demands that we understand the phenomenological terms of this relationship. Mahon has prompted one critic to comment that it is 'the very condition of rootlessness that informs his poetry'.¹ We can observe in Heaney also how the poetry impresses the fundamentally paradoxical terms that constitute experience, the curious deictics of being that Heaney describes in 'Postscript',² Where a subject rendered contingent by an unpredictable world is described in the poem: 'You are neither here nor there./ A hurry through which known and strange things pass.'³ These poets' contrasting treatment of the themes that centre around the paradoxical condition of the present makes their common interest all the more useful. It provides a qualifying ground informing our idea of the contemporary Irish poet as he relates to the theme of postmodernity and the subject.

¹ Bruce Stewart, "'Solving Ambiguity": The Secular Mysticism of Derek Mahon', in Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon*, (London: Colin Smythe Limited), p.62.

² Heaney's earlier poetry also intimates this condition of ontological ambiguity using the local bogland to symbolise a potentially abysmal depth of paradigmatic substitution. Layers of history are 'camped on' through which the human image returns in the archaeological finds of preserved bodies in *North* and *Wintering Out*. These foundations are susceptible to the 'seepage' of waters that render them infirm: 'This ground itself is kind, black butter/ Melting and opening underfoot.' Seamus Heaney *Door into the Dark* (London, Faber, 1969), p.55.

³ Heaney, *The Spirit Level*, p.70.

I: Going from Grip to Give

Derek Mahon has considered his poetry in relation to a place that ‘is not a geographical location; it’s a community of imagined readership’,⁴ and has commented on the more traditional treatment of this topic by Seamus Heaney. Despite distinct signatures, however, both poets implicate an ontology of embodied rather than transcendental consciousness. Their poetry is favourable to postmodern conceptions of the subject displaced from the centre of his or her world by the terms of what Heaney describes as a ‘continuous/ Present.’⁵ While, as Mahon observes, Heaney is a poet who is ‘very sure of his place’,⁶ the terms of the relationship stressed in the poetry between the local and elsewhere, by which this sense of place is won, emerge between ‘the imagined and most real.’⁷ They are maintained by our abiding desire for the actualisation of a final word where our *grip* is to have no more *give*. We desire an end to wayward desire but meanwhile relish the moments of its play. Heaney describes experience in ‘Crossings xxviii’ as going from ‘grip to give.’⁸ In a poem (‘The Diviner’) from his first book of 1966, a hazel rod lays in the ‘grasp’ of the hand and the wrists of bystanders are ‘gripped’⁹ by the diviner as they each attempt to find the presence of water. The theme in these poems of the actual and its relationship to possibilities beyond its finite register, is a vital lever in Heaney’s poetic phenomenology of language and experience. In ‘The Ash Plant’, the poet’s ailing father returns to a meaningful life through the ‘grasp’ of his walking stick. It is a ‘phantom limb’ that extends the spirit into the world: ‘now he has found his touch he can stand his/ground.’¹⁰ The physical terms of life are being correlated with how the *grip* and *give* of poetic form return to language the possibility of art’s ‘triumph over death’¹¹ that we find Heaney correlating in ‘Wheels within Wheels’ with his recollection of moments of childhood play. As a determining factor of its epistemological terms, the poetry

⁴ Willie Kelly, “Each poem for me is a New Beginning.” Interview with Derek Mahon, in *Cork Review*, 2 (1981), p.11.

⁵ Seamus Heaney, *Electric Light* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p.3.

⁶ “Each poem for me is a New Beginning”, p. 11.

⁷ Seamus Heaney, *The Spirit Level* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p.47.

⁸ Seamus Heaney, *Seeing Things* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p.86.

⁹ Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p.25.

¹⁰ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.19.

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p.144.

suggests an exchange between an ultimately irreducible present and the transience of experience where the known place registers with relative rather than absolute univocality. There, poetry appeals to a coherent sense of an immediate world that Heaney's formal palpabilities vividly textualise. But this is a fullness or 'brim' available within the temporality of experience through the access given there to the perpetually renewed *possibility* of univocality. In 'Settings xxiv', the 'air and ocean' are 'in apposition with/ Omnipresence, equilibrium, brim.'¹² This relates to the symbolic composition of the perceiver as a relationship to Being, a harmony of subject and object and a sense of fullness (brim) through the immediate language of perception.

Jacques Derrida refers us to such possibility of semantic closure in terms of the *pharmakon*, the Greek term that ambiguates in meaning between *poison* and *remedy*, and which he describes as 'invisible interior of the soul'.¹³ The irreducibility of difference to identity is the 'medium' between such opposed terms through which experience and language travel. In his descriptive phenomenology Maurice Merleau-Ponty similarly refers us to the primacy of a pre-reflective '*relationship of being*' which he clarifies as distinct from that of the subject of knowledge or '*a relationship of knowing*'.¹⁴ A middle term opens experience on that double horizon where the present becomes an exchange between the 'I am' and the 'I can'. We find Heaney intimating this in synaesthetic descriptions of moments where subject and object share one space of a self-reflexive medium. We will note one of these moments of ambiguity and exchange in section III that for Merleau-Ponty has ontological significance in terms of their 'reversibility'.¹⁵ The subject shares experience with an intimate

¹² Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.80.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*. Translated Barbara Johnson.(London: Athlone Press, 2000), p.127.

¹⁴ Merleau-Ponty was interested to suspend indefinitely the dialectic between being and knowing. He conceives of reality accordingly: 'The relationship between the subject and object is no longer that *relationship of knowing* postulated by classical idealism, wherein the object always seems the construction of the subject, but a *relationship of being* in which, paradoxically, the subject is his body, his world, and his situation, by a sort of exchange.' Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. Translated by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.96.

¹⁵ There is Merleau-Ponty observes 'a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact' binding body and subject into an ontological ambiguity which in

other registered within experience (in Merleau-Ponty's terms) as 'a suspicion of unreality', motivated as Heaney observes by our desire for 'conditions where the longed-for and the actual might be allowed to coincide.'¹⁶ But it is in the medium they make *before* their coincidence that we find the terms of experience bound across the irreducible temporality of a continuous present. Merleau-Ponty observes that 'the transcendence of remote experiences encroaches upon my present and brings a suspicion of unreality even into those which I believe to be coincident with my present self'. The subject is haunted by this unreality of the 'elsewhere'¹⁷ that Merleau-Ponty refers us to and which Mahon has been noted as being preoccupied with.¹⁸

Essential to Heaney's poetics of experience is that there is another self of immediate embodied consciousness from which the subject is divided by the continuity of the present. There is as, Merleau-Ponty puts it, 'another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here'.¹⁹ This paradigmatic self lies always outside the *grip* of the Cartesian subject. It is the self-presence promised by the opening to possibility that becomes for the interpretive subject the *telos* of its experience. It is felt in the motivation to become other than contingent to a world of infinite possibility. Symbolically, it occupies within the text the moment when interpretation is finally exhausted and goes beyond 'the movement of recontextualisation'²⁰ that transcends the subject of knowledge by pre-

his phenomenology he considered ultimate. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.147.

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney, *Finders Keepers* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.56.

¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2005), p.387.

¹⁸ Hugh Haughton compares Mahon to the existentialist writer Albert Camus: 'You are always aware of an elsewhere, or a universalist's cold and rueful sense of *anywhere* in Mahon's work. Like Camus, he is a kind of unhoused universalist for whom the local detail, the detailed locality, is always an instance of a larger condition.' Hugh Haughton, "'Even now there are places where a thought might grow": Place and Displacement in the Poetry of Derek Mahon', in Neil Corcoran (ed.) *The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland* (Bridgend, Seren Books, 1992), p.93.

¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 296.

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* Translated by Samuel Weber (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.136.

ceding it as the condition of difference out of which it emerges. For Derrida, and I would say Heaney and Mahon as well, the disjunction between subject and object is conceived by way of a medium of ambivalence or difference (the condition of the *pharmakon*) that precedes the reduction of reality to either side of any number of oppositions principle among which is that of body and subject. Heaney uses the poetics of play to express a transcendence of the *telos* of such a reduction to either side of the real/ideal dialectic exchange between body and subject that composes the medium and becomes its own object in the aesthetic dimensions of experience. The priority of the Cartesian subject is brought into some *equilibrium* (an important motif in *Seeing Things*) with the self of the present continuous “place” of this medium. A relationship of being is balanced with a relationship of knowledge. This concedes to the terms of a postmodern subject expressed in the game of football in ‘Markings’ played literally between the imagined and most real terms of experience. Boys play as the light fades and they enter a threshold space where the game is described as one ‘that never need/ Be played out’.²¹

I will refer to Mahon’s title poem below in some depth in section IV and will highlight both poets’ understanding of the value of their work as it submits knowledge to the demands of a paradox of a continuous present at the heart of language and experience.

Somewhere The Wave

Once more the window and a furious fly
 shifting position, niftier on the pane
 than the slow liner or tiny plane.
 Dazzled by the sun, dazed by the rain,
 today this frantic speck against the sky,
 so desperate to get out in the open air
 and cruise among the roses, starts to know
 not all transparency is come and go.

But the window opens like an opened door
 so the wild fly escapes to the airstream,
 the raw crescendo of the crashing shore
 and ‘a radical astonishment at existence’ –
 a voice, not quite a voice, in the sea distance

²¹ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.8.

listening to its own thin cetaceous whistle,
 sea music gasp and sigh, slow wash and rustle.
 Somewhere the wave is forming which in time...²²

Mahon proffers a relation to a subject who is orientated always to the *elsewhere* toward which the poem wistfully trails out in resignation, but also in some comfort. This ambiguity of tone is, I would suggest, quintessentially postmodern. It resists the resolutely inconclusive register of a modernist lyric. It impresses in terms of how Heaney describes we can be 'in two places at once.' He discusses the terms of a 'poetic discovery'²³ that has as its essential component a crossing beyond the confines of one's local territory. Mahon acknowledges the authority external to the subject, where an anonymous desire takes hold of the lowest to the highest forms of life indifferently (from fly to whale to man), and is constantly preparing for its transparency to knowledge. The subject of a relationship of knowledge is *given* by the paradigmatic self, the locus of this desire to which the subject is bound through the object. In this we find a global state of consciousness attaching the local symbolically to an infinite place of possibility with which, for Mahon and Heaney, it coincides at least momentarily in art and life's moments of poetic discovery. Heaney recollects such moments that implicate a resolution of the subject/ object disjunction within the medium of a playful indulgence. In this way poetry as Heaney considers it becomes 'its own reality'.²⁴ We can briefly observe this also in 'Sunlight' where the 'space' described is replaced by 'love' in a present that is continuous since available as a renewed 'here' to the human significance of actions and their perceived events:

here is a space
 again, the scone rising
 to the tick of two clocks.

And here is love
 like a tinsmith's scoop

²² Derek Mahon, *Somewhere the Wave*, (Meath: The Gallery Press), p.17.

²³ Seamus Heaney, 'Something to Write Home About', in Seamus Heaney, *Finders Keepers* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.52.

²⁴ Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue. Selected Prose 1978-1987* (USA : Noonday Press, 1995), p.101.

sunk past its gleam
in the meal-bin.²⁵

As in ‘Wheels within Wheels’ (section III), this ‘here’ binds the *telos* of objectivity (the baked scone) with the ‘here’ of its event of anticipation into one present manifesting the depth of its resource as, in this case, ‘love’. The poet’s aunt actualises across the whole event in the created object what is ‘sunk’ from visibility. Her baking is an act of faith in the resources of a paradigmatic self. The sunlight illuminates a time-space of absence (the poem opens with ‘There was a sunlit absence’), in which to bring a timeless but anonymous source of human significance to the surface, where it is given articulate form as something felt that proves the local value of that anonymous and global ‘here’. The poem suggests that traditional activities construct, out of their paradigmatic depth, a human value cohering within perceivable events. An anonymous desire is given articulate form in the sharing of a tradition in which the baking of scones is one small part. The ‘sunlit absence’ of the poem signifies the ‘here’ of a continuous present, celebrated in this sounding of deep resources that actualise human possibility syntagmatically. But it has to be a space of absence, a local event open to all possibility, so that it can sound this deep with such significance as ‘love’ might suggest. Heaney values place in terms of the activities of the culture that secures such possibility through traditional practices. The particularism of the local is important then, not in terms of any essentialist claims to that place, but rather in how it preserves its own possibility of giving articulate form to a continuous present. Poetry for Heaney aims to symbolically release these stirrings in the same way into language, divining the depth of the paradigm of the Self. A brief consideration of the phenomenology of the perceived object justifies these orientations in Heaney’s poetry toward what he calls ‘a system of reality beyond the visible realities.’²⁶

II: First Vision

A seemingly innocent act of perception sustains the circumstance of a world that becomes for the subject an articulation of an otherwise anonymous desire. The subject is maintained in relation to a world be-

²⁵ Seamus Heaney, *North*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p.x.

²⁶ Seamus Heaney, ‘A Sense of Place,’ in Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p.132.

cause this articulation in the perceived object allows it to assume the position of self-presence apparently independent of a world that can then be assumed to be a pre-linguistically significant. The centre holds for the subject as long as this assumption holds through a perceptual faculty which gains immediate access to the whole object through its *visible and invisible* aspects rather than just its two-dimensional appearance. Merleau-Ponty designates that we achieve ‘an imperception of nothingness’;²⁷ that what is given in perception is accompanied by the invisible side of the object which is also grasped as ‘present.’²⁸ The object is ‘real’ in that ‘it is given as the infinite sum of an indefinite series of perspectival views in each of which the object is given but in none of which is it given exhaustively.’²⁹ There is always a ‘suspicion of unreality’³⁰ attending the object which makes its perception the actualisation of the subject’s future. My experience of any object is always through to a future place and time of this potential future exhaustion of perspectives which is opening between perceiver and perceived and is not *in* the object. Rather the object in its intentionality (how it is *for* the subject) *is* this connection between subject and the paradigmatic self located “there” (in relation to the present “here”) at a future end of desire, or somewhere in the past imagined at the origin of the intention of consciousness. Mahon’s subject in a flattened world emptied of “the radical astonishment of existence” (a reference to Heidegger perhaps) is reduced to the absurdity that equates fly, man and sea-creature in terms of one anonymous desire, because the paradigmatic self is composed of a semiotic of pre-reflective being-in-the-world. The depth into which the subject goes (a third dimensional depth “seen” in the object) by transcending this appearance of the world in perception, is opened by the discrepancy that haunts the subject between the perception of the object which must be to some extent contrived (since some of its sides must remain hidden) and the object as it is in-itself, in its unreality. Perception then perpetuates as subjectivity, the focus of desire in the object, because the terms by which the subject is made aware of its own contingency (in the perception of a transcendent

²⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.65.

²⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (USA: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.14.

²⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p.15.

³⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 386.

world) are the terms by which consciousness opens toward the possibility of its self-sufficiency, its self-presence.

Through the object, symbolically, the subject maintains a connection with the paradigmatic self lost to the other side of reality. The subject seeks to make transparent this self but composes a felt moment in the connection to its absence. This self is always present to us invisibly because we are always perceiving through what Merleau-Ponty describes as a 'knowing-body',³¹ so that the subject's future is maintained in the immediacy of the palpabilities of the world. "Here" and then "here" again this self, as an on-going synergy of the senses, is projected by intentional consciousness across the subject/object disjunction. There is a future registered immediately within consciousness because the object is inexhaustible and so too the paradigmatic self at the 'nexus of living meanings'³² of this synergy that is contingent upon the perception of the general external object. Our entry into the symbolic world, Merleau-Ponty observes, 'with the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure', is described as 'the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed.'³³ The contingency of the subject in turn is maintained and with it the vision of its future resolution. It is *because of* rather than *despite* this disjunction or gap that we can relate to an outside world. It is the invisible medium of consciousness. There can be no final gain on a relationship of being that the subject of a relationship of knowing could be adequate to since the former precedes the latter in the opening of a new present registered continuously at a synergy of the senses in the 'total body image'³⁴ and over which the subject has no control. In Heaney's 'Wheels within Wheels' however, we note the entry into the medium of the disjunction as a reality in itself through belief where the aesthetic makes a virtue of this tragic circumstance of human being.

III: Heaney's Belief

Something about the way those pedal treads
Worked very palpably at first against you
And then began to sweep your hand ahead

³¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 360.

³² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 175.

³³ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p.151.

³⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 175.

Into a new momentum - that all entered me
 Like an access of free power, as if belief
 Caught up and spun the objects of belief
 In an orbit coterminous with longing.³⁵

Heaney recollects how as a child found in the space between actuality and possibility, there was ‘an access of free power’. We can consider this access as the resource of the aesthetic experience, the epistemological terms of poetic language informed by a relationship of supplementarity between the subject and the paradigmatic self. These are resolved into an ‘orbit’ at a point of *reversibility* that the poet describes in the poem when the pedals of a bicycle answer back against the will, bringing subject and external world into what Mahon called a ‘solving ambiguity.’³⁶ The finite *grip* of actuality gives way to the vision that is the future in a register of the paradigmatic self, the tenor for which the objects of experience are the vehicle, as outlined in our phenomenology previously. Where an act of faith can be indulged, the subject of desire can be reconciled with a transcendent world by entering into a ‘belief’ in its objects as they are within his experience, rather than in themselves as transcendent objects or as they escape into unreality from our grip. Ironically then, Heaney recalls ‘the first real grip’ he ever got on things as a boy at the start of the poem. Turning the pedals of an upturned bicycle he observed ‘the disappearance of the spokes’, one of the ‘marvels’³⁷ that he credits in *Seeing Things*. He describes the moment of exchange between an anonymous external force and his own and identifies a space in time where there is something significant taking place, which can be alluded to and described but not quite identified. Ambiguity is raised by play to a status that transcends the *telos* of objective thought.

Derrida described the work of deconstruction as an attempt to ‘take this limitless context into account’ and pay due attention to ‘an incessant movement of recontextualisation.’³⁸ At play, the subject indulges an infinitely circular and self-fulfilling rather than linear and teleological way in relation to the object. Within the temporality of the meaning-event (im-

³⁵ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.46.

³⁶ Bruce Stewart discusses Mahon’s ‘secular mysticism’ in relation to this paradox. Bruce Stewart, “‘Solving Ambiguity’”, pp.57-81.

³⁷ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.50.

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, p.136.

pressed in the image of the *orbit*) the object exchanges its intractable transcendence through the subject's addition to the reality of its appearance, given within the limits of his perceptual facility. It is 'belief' because it goes beyond the visible. Perceiver and perceived, therefore, become inseparable within the event since it is no longer a time in which the object transcends the subject whose contingency is alleviated. Paradoxically, the subject ceases to be exclusively or finally contingent in relation to the transcendent object 'caught up' in the intentionality of the perceiver that is an act of 'belief' for Heaney. There is that 'triumph over death',³⁹ which he has assigned to the achievement of art, since death symbolically comes at the end of desire or longing here allowed to be meaningful or an end in itself in play.

Play is a term Derrida uses in the context of the general principles of deconstructive theory. He replaces the transcendental ego which is the ideal subject affirmed by natural language. There is rather the 'dialectic' he seeks to describe in post-metaphysical terms, observing before the *telos* of objectivity an infinite possibility since *différance* as the 'play [of differences]...is no longer simply a concept, but the possibility of conceptuality.' This '*divergence*' which admits 'the other into the self-identity of the *Augenblick*',⁴⁰ precedes any signification: 'this trace or *différance* is always older than presence and procures for it its openness.'⁴¹ There is a 'continuity of the now and the not-now, perception and non-perception' rather than the 'radical difference Husserl wanted between perception and non-perception.'⁴² These observations corroborate an understanding of poetic language, where the meaning of the register of significant form is found in how it displaces the subject from the non-contingent place in which it rests assured in the natural attitude. In its naturalised relationship to a world assumed to be significant pre-linguistically we can imagine ourselves as self-sufficient subjects by way of our knowledge of the whole object. Our experience of the whole object however, as Merleau-Ponty would stress, precedes this disjunction of

³⁹ Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry*, p.144.

⁴⁰ Derrida is using Husserl's term here, 'the blink of an eye', in a deconstruction of Husserl's conceptualisation of internal time-consciousness where he claimed there to be an 'undivided unity of a temporal present.' Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.60.

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, pp. 68-69.

⁴² Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 65.

subject and object. Perception already submits the subject to the unknowable. But Heaney intimates the connection made with the paradigmatic self in this pre-reflective origin of consciousness.

The 'orbit' spins the limit infinitely between the subject of belief and the objects of belief into an access along a bending of linear time into the infinite form of a circle so that desire is momentarily satisfied by a belief in the paradigmatic self implicit in Heaney's synaesthetic description. Its primacy is registered where sight and sound are inseparably bound (the wheel 'hummed with transparency') at a pre-reflective synergy of the senses. The child's play is an act of belief in this self of the present of the moment. Its marvels are uncontaminated by the interest of a relationship of knowledge. His act of faith gathers up its objects into its own will, such that, within the experience, precedence is given to this self, or the anonymity of a perceptual being that produces the world for the boy, and which can only surface from beneath the Cartesian subject by these uncommon phenomena. Here, within the ambiguity of body and subject in the medium of their exchange, this self is composed and sustained at a continuous present within the register of the event perceptually or in the total body image maintained by the constant synergy of the senses that centres perception there. When desire is indulged in things 'beyond measure'⁴³ at the limit of the subject of knowledge, it creates marvels that open into synaesthetic perceptual moments such as the sight and sound of the spinning wheel. The addition of the subject's perceptual impressionism displaces the transcendence of the object, and with it, the subject's own Cartesian privilege as the immanence of experience is seen to originate in a pre-reflection towards which the child offers his 'belief'. The ordered, finite and empirical world presents the starting point for a subject to reach beyond by transgressing its own complacency by a 'letting go'⁴⁴ observed in the play of children in 'Crossings xxviii'. And of course, poetry is such a transgression in linguistic terms. Ambiguity becomes the 'Ground of being' and the poem intimates a deeper pre-reflective self that obeys its laws: 'Body's deep obedience/ To all its shifting tenses.'⁴⁵

⁴³ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.106.

⁴⁴ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.86.

⁴⁵ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.100.

The poet as a child could inhabit two places at once and we see him recollect one of his formative experiences from infancy. These places are referred to in 'Poet's Chair' as 'the imagined and most real.'⁴⁶ Their coupling describes, for the poet, our manner of seeing things in a synergy that composes out of perception and imperception alike. The poetry textualises experience by seeking to strike a balance between these orders that constitute experience. The poet seeks equilibrium in the text between the *parole* of the meaning-event and the world, ordered through the universal system of meanings or *langue*, to represent the terms of a subject of the paradoxical continuous present. There is here, then, a conception all the more important for postmodern cultural criticism for its implication of a subject displaced from the present/ presence by desire, a conception that governs the ultimate terms of a relationship between the local and the global, a present of the simultaneously here and there. *Parole*, or the new present of the meaning-event of the text, is struck in balance with our propensity to indulge the comforts of *langue*, whereby we can assume the privileged position of a coherent subject referring transparently to a pre-linguistically significant world.

Merleau-Ponty describes how, 'paradoxically, the subject is his body, his world, and his situation, by a sort of exchange.'⁴⁷ Derrida focuses our attention on such an exchange in his analysis of the semantic space of undecidability that he explores in the figure of the *pharmakon*. Derrida seeks to apply this ambivalence to the priority of speech over writing that can not be made fast. In a more general sense it becomes a term of the same currency as Merleau-Ponty's *reversibility*, applied to the exchange between body and subject that constitutes the relationship of being that we can interpret using Derrida's description of the Greek term. The indulgence of play alters our orientation, directing us away from the identification of terms at the end of a medium of opposition toward the medium of their exchange. The *pharmakon*, Derrida writes:

constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side

⁴⁶ Heaney, *The Spirit Level*, p.47.

⁴⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*. Translated by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.72.

cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.)⁴⁸

The subject enters into the terms of the origin of experience in the continuous present, a “place” beyond its finite determination as a place of the world, a place where the ‘true subject’⁴⁹ of an ever-renewing origin or continuous present is primary. This paradigmatic self lies beneath any cultural identification of place and to prioritise it alone would be in Derrida’s observation ‘the Nietzschean *affirmation*, that is the joyous affirmation of play and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of the world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation.’ The poet acknowledges in it the displacement of the Cartesian subject of anthropocentric man that Derrida sees as that of ‘broken immediacy...the saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of thinking of play.’⁵⁰ This displacement is a fundamental condition of longing, and is for Heaney, the ‘ground of being.’ It precedes the culturally centred subject in the new present of the movement of recontextualisation of the knowing-body. In its shifting tenses the individual identifies his equality with others through the anonymity of the freedom given there where experience will reduce to neither the longed-for nor the actual.

IV : Mahon’s Astonishment at Existence

In terms of place and its treatment, Derek Mahon provides an interesting contrast with Heaney. He writes in ‘*Glengormley*’ that ‘By / Necessity, if not choice, I live here too.’⁵¹ But Mahon also can be seen to be interested in lending poetic treatment to the terms of a poetic discovery that attends our experience. His encounters with the curious deictics of being in two places at once by being bound from present to future, lends to the theme of modernity and its crisis, a tension that is an expression of our fundamental compulsion beyond local boundaries toward the unknown that we have seen Heaney intimate as a structural aspect of the aesthetic dimen-

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson (Great Britain : The Athlone Press, 2000)p.127.

⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 360.

⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* Translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.292.

⁵¹ Derek Mahon, *Collected Poems* (Meath: The Gallery Press), p.14.

sions of experience. Accordingly, in the title poem of 'Somewhere the Wave', he presents a dialectic between a sense of the immanence of things and a scepticism that preserves the boundaries of a modern sensibility. The experience of this tension compels him to seek some resolution in art, for it by making its language correspond to the unities of perception that defy the paradox of transcendence and immanence, the kinds of unities we have seen in Heaney's synaesthetic image. In 'Somewhere the Wave' this nearness to speech in 'a voice, not quite a voice' provides the image of arts transient compensation for the contingency of consciousness at the edge of symbolic life in the trace of a musical note that prolongs our sense of a paradigmatic self brought to the surface like Heaney's 'love' in 'Sunlight'.

Where Heaney seeks poetic discovery in the preservation of practices that balance the relationship between local and global, Mahon laments a loss of the 'value of self-definition' that we may have learned of too late in a world compelled toward an excessive disregard for boundaries. In 'The Apotheosis of Tins', he slights the place of postmodernity:

This is the terminal democracy of hatbox and crab,
Of wine and Windolene; it is always rush-hour.⁵²

Mahon's mysteries are contemplated in the formal perfection of his art that correspond to Heaney's vivid linguistic *grip* on the world so often reproduced in rhythms and onomatopoeic correspondences. In both ways there is unity, not despite but because of, the disjunction of subject and object and this, as in the examples from Heaney, is allegorised in 'Somewhere the Wave'. Let us look at the poem in some detail.

We see that on the pane covering vertical and horizontal axes of space and time man's global reach is reduced to the terms of the 'frantic speck'. The poet understands that he is equal to the fly at a place of an anonymous desire that effects the authority of a *deus absconditus* in terms of all life. Progress, liberty and rationality are trivialised by the fly conceit. The symbolic ends which these Enlightenment values seek are overwhelmed by a "radical astonishment" that the voice of stanza one presents against the *possibility* of an essence of Man and God. This is reopened here in Mahon's poem when knowledge is allowed to proceed by

⁵² Mahon, *Collected Poems*, p.69.

being compelled beyond the paradox of immanence and transcendence that worries Cartesian clarity, and which was also transcended in Heaney's poem through play. The authority of the anonymous source of desire that we saw in Heaney at the centre of experience in the exchange of primacy between subject and object, becomes accessible again in an open relationship with the unknown. Its question is observed to be momentarily resolved in the exchange of form with content in the *whistle*, *gasp* and general *music* and rhythms of the world in stanza two. This musical ambiguity of form and content represents a synthesis in transition that temporally resolves the gap between present and future, known and unknown, man and absent God. The same resolution between subject and object was achieved through 'belief' in Heaney's poem, but primarily by way of a perceptual ambiguity of the imagined and most real. There is a healing compromise between closure and non-closure, the 'agnostic spirit'⁵³ (to use Harold Bloom's term) that Heaney assigns to belief and where art places the subject between the longed-for and the actual, where they are allowed to coincide. This is art's momentary compensation, a triumph over death for Heaney. It is where language, or symbolic consciousness, finds meaning by meeting with felt experience in poetic discovery at the limits of self-knowledge contained within one's familiar territory and in Mahon's poem literally a transparent window on the world which however distorts proportions because it is reduced there to two dimensions excluding the invisible or unreal.

This modernity cannot maintain its closure against its origins opening and renewed outside itself. The fly 'starts to know' suggesting a knowledge that is indebted indefinitely to the future, but which in Heaney is transcended by a faith in the paradigmatic Self, and from the surface, a faith in traditional practices. This somewhere is connected to an equally elusive present like the wave as it forms in preparation for a coincidence within the subject/ object relation. This resolves the disjunction between them by there being a gap that is simultaneously bridged by the existential condition whereby we are perpetually withdrawn across the gap itself from the future. The source of desire that precedes the Cartesian subject is given in the near content of the 'thin cetaceous whistle' that in turn has as its source the 'voice, not quite a voice', and its recep-

⁵³ Harold Bloom, 'The Breaking of Form', in *Bloom, de Man, Derrida, Hartman, Miller. Deconstruction and Criticism*, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.4.

tion a self-reflexivity equal in ontological import, as Heaney's act of belief gathering its object into a solving ambiguity through its act. The fly becomes lost in stanza two amongst the roses, and its symbolic value is translated into these unities of perceiver and perceived in the imagery associated with the mysterious synthesis available in the experience of music to which Heaney alludes: 'a music of binding and of loosing'.⁵⁴ Here, something like love stirs on the surface. The reference point to the subject of stanza one is maintained but there is now a felt human connection which makes these objects of experience of the same order as Heaney's 'love' which was also observed by the poet at a distance from the event, the symbolic distance between subject and object and the medium of experience characteristic of the *pharmakon*.

The exchange between the realms of knowledge, and an unsayable origin in being that is fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's ontology, is beautifully captured by Mahon. 'Gasp and sigh' lends a sense of the rhythms of the sea to the language which is infused with humanity. 'Slow wash and rustle' sympathises also but from the other side of the subject-object divide. Its content is less specific in human terms but is drawing language through the senses from content toward the immediate values of the sensory register, which of course is human too, and is how we inhabit the world we perceive pre-reflectively in what Merleau-Ponty terms a nexus of living meanings. The caesura of the line reminds us that the medium of this connection is the gap itself between immanence and transcendence, inside and outside. It reminds us that the starting point of this knowledge is the 'scepticism'⁵⁵ that suspends the poet from a mystical insight into existence, a suspicion of unreality haunting the edges of what appears and an enticing of the imagination to enter into in acts of faith that in both poets are secular acts.

I would suggest that the caesura in this line is a punctuation or indeed a replacement of the full stop that never arrives to end the poem's interpretive scope. It punctuates a postmodern moment of self-conscious irony, the connection with the paradigmatic self given through the defini-

⁵⁴ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.87.

⁵⁵ "The Mayo Tao" reads as follows through the eyes of a mystic reading a 'literature of the spirit' in the things of the world:
 'There is an immanence in these things which drives me,
 despite my scepticism,
 almost to the point of speech'. Mahon, *Collected Poems*, p. 68.

tion of a limit between a two dimensional word of the rational subject that is crossed in a symbolic transcendence of the life/death boundary. It presents formally Heaney's a point of equilibrium between subject and paradigmatic self. The 'messianic structure'⁵⁶ that Derrida argues is the structure of existence brings the soul into a fullness ironically in its nearness to a Being or God. It is not a definition of the soul to be rewarded after the crossing of a literal life/death boundary, but is secular and pre-reflective and therefore a compulsion toward presence. Heaney refers us to the 'commanded journey'⁵⁷ in 'Lightenings i.' The caesura reminds us that the gap between form and content, signifier and signified, is our medium of transcendence coming into its own by a playful indulgence in things beyond measure. It is the limit we require to live and find in the transient music of art and experience our compensations for our persistent desire for being and knowledge to become one.

Love in Heaney's poem is one vehicle for an unsayable but 'definite/ Presence sensed withdrawing first time round'⁵⁸ referred to in *Seeing Things*. It is a vehicle for the tenor of experience taking form syntagmatically in observable events as its human coefficient. It gives metaphoric value to the environment in which that tenor is felt to happen but remains outside any ideological authority. It names what stirs in us through the divination given from the surface of experience. The value for Heaney of preserving the local environment of ordinary life would seem to be of a spiritual dimension which we could designate as mystical, if by that we mean, as Derek Mahon puts it in 'Ovid in Tomis', a sense of 'The infinity/ Under our very noses'⁵⁹ (SP, 119). Globalisation in terms of these profound values of the local is obviously a concern.

⁵⁶ 'The "messianic,"' John Caputo explains '...has to do with the absolute structure of the promise, of an absolutely indeterminate, let us say, a structural future, a future always to-come, à venir...The messianic is the structure of the to-come that exposes the contingency and deconstructibility of the present, exposing the alterability of what we like to call in English the 'powers that be,' the powers that are present, the prestigious power of the present.' John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell. A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*. (USA : Fordham University Press, 1997), pp. 161-162.

⁵⁷ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.55.

⁵⁸ Heaney, *Seeing Things*, p.69.

⁵⁹ Mahon, *Collected Poems*, p. 162.

Paula Murphy

From Ferry to Flight: Globalising and Secularising Irish Women

In this essay, I will put two short stories from different eras in Irish literary history side by side: James Joyce's "Eveline" from the collection *Dubliners*, published in 1914, and Claire Keegan's "The Parting Gift" from the collection *Walk the Blue Fields*, published 93 years later, in 2007. It is generally agreed that the movement from modernism to postmodernism signalled increasing secularism and globalisation in Irish society and Irish literature. In this essay, I hope to map this trajectory by showing how each story is an exemplar of its literary era, modernist and postmodernist, and will suggest that from these particular examples we can draw wider hypotheses about the changing representations of subjectivity, values and religion in the 20th century. Further, I will propose that the cultural reference points for Irish modernism and postmodernism are France and America, respectively.

All three of the major Irish modernists, Yeats, Beckett and Joyce, spent time in Paris. Joyce first arrived in Paris in 1902, travelled there again in 1903 and returned with Nora Barnacle by his side in 1904. W.B. Yeats travelled there often in his youth and even went to the French Riviera at the end of his life to compose his last poems and actually died there in 1939. Beckett left for Paris after graduating from college, remaining there for most of his life, even embracing the language for his literary works. And yet, the source of this fascination is oblique, even for the literary minds that experienced it. With Joyce, it seems, his passion for Paris was not literary in origin. J. M. Synge reported home that Joyce was 'spending his studious moments in the National Library reading Ben Jonson. French literature I understand is beneath him!'.¹ Yeats' description of Paris is perhaps more revealing. In 1924, he wrote:

¹ Synge qtd. in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.125.

Thirty years ago I visited Paris for the first time. The Cabbalist MacGregor Mathers said, 'Write your impressions at once, for you will never see Paris clearly again. I can remember I pleased him by certain deductions from the way a woman at the other end of the café moved her hands over the dominoes. I might have seen that woman in London or Dublin, but it would not have occurred to me to discover in her every kind of rapacity.'²

In Yeats' view, the lure of Paris seemed to emanate from its atmosphere, which alone was enough to arouse the imagination. If Paris was the fulcrum of Irish modernists, then it is America which is its equivalent for Irish writers in the postmodern era. Emma O'Donoghue, John Connolly, Ken Bruen and Claire Keegan have all lived in America for significant periods. But aside from a dwelling-place, in the postmodern era which is defined by spatial fluidity, freedom of travel and floating subjects, it is America as it inspires the *imagination* that makes it an anchoring point for contemporary Irish writers. *Sex and the City* style chick-lit, Patrick McCabe's novels of Hollywood terror, Billy Roche's evocation of American popular culture, Irish crime fiction in the American hard-boiled mode, Paul Howard's American-accented Dubliners, all of these and more locate America as the reference point for current Irish writing. This phenomenon is not specific to Ireland. According to Fredric Jameson, 'this whole global, *yet American*, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world.'³ In other words, America's monetary authority on a global scale is filtering into global cultures too, including literature.

Both Joyce and Keegan emigrated as young adults, he to France and she to America, both of them to study. Joyce initially hoped to study medicine in Paris and Keegan actually did study at the Loyola University, New Orleans. In the short stories I have selected, each protagonist is also preparing for an emigrant's journey. If the postmodern subject is de-centered, the modernist subject is, to a degree, centered by grand narratives that Lyotard describes as having lost their authority in postmodernism. It is possibly these grand narratives that create that deadening 'pa-

² Yeats qtd. in R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life, II. The Arch Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.247-8.

³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York, London: Verso, 1991), p.5. My italics.

ralysis' that Joyce wished to record in his collection. For Eveline, these are the interconnected narratives of family and Catholicism. She is a centered subject, an elusive and perhaps desirable state in the postmodern world, but being bound to ideologies is precisely what traps her. Perhaps this is why, at the beginning of the story, Eveline is described as passive and the evening about her as active: 'She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue'.⁴ Eveline's sense of being defined by her family and subsumed under the authority of her parents is suggested by her description of her childhood playmates: 'there used to be a field there in which they used to play with other people's children' (D29). The children are thought of as the property of parents, not as individuals. Eveline is alienated, certainly, but she is alienated from stable social structures and she knows her place in relation to them.

Postmodern identity, on the other hand, is characterised by de-centredness (not being defined by one's place in relation to social structures) and fragmentation of self. According to Jameson, from modernism to postmodernism 'the alienation of the subject is displaced by the latter's fragmentation', and this is accompanied by 'the decentering of that formerly centered subject'.⁵ Thus, Keegan's protagonist at the story's opening is active: she has an autonomous identity and can manoeuvre her way around social structures like family without being defined by them. The story begins: 'When sunlight reaches the foot of the dressing table, you get up and look through the suitcase again...All morning the bantam cocks have crowed. It's not something you'll miss.'⁶ Her decision to leave has already been made before the story begins and is immediately related to the reader, along with her lack of regret. Eveline on the other hand, leaves with reluctance: her surroundings remind her of her loyalty to the family: 'Now that she was about to leave she did not find it a wholly undesirable life' (D31). Interestingly, "Eveline" begins at dusk,

⁴ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (London: Penguin, 1993), p.29. All subsequent references to this text will be to this edition and will be denoted in brackets by D, followed by the page number.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York, London: Verso, 1991), p.14, 15.

⁶ Claire Keegan, *Walk the Blue Fields* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.3. All subsequent references to this text will be to this edition and will be denoted in brackets by W, followed by the page number.

and “The Parting Gift” at dawn. The setting echoes the prevailing mood of each – regret and ending in “Eveline”; lack of regret and beginning in “The Parting Gift”.

Another immediately obvious contrast between the stories is that “Eveline” is written in the third person and “The Parting Gift” in the second person. The character is described as ‘you’, but ‘you’ also reads as a direct address to the reader. For example: ‘You open it... You look at his shoes and socks beside the bed. You feel sick’ (W8). The de-centered nature of the protagonist’s character is imbedded in the personal pronouns used to describe her. The meaning of ‘you’ can shift from reader to character, de-centering the protagonist from the fictional world of the story. This ambiguity is heightened by the fact that the reader never learns the protagonist’s name. With “Eveline” on the other hand, there can be no doubt about who the ‘she’ refers to; there is no attempted rupture of the barrier between fiction and reality. Just as Eveline knows what defines her, her family, her religion, so too does the reader know Eveline’s place in the fictional world. The sense of fragmentation that Jameson speaks of is rendered in the reaction of Keegan’s protagonist to a photograph of herself: ‘You look strange in the photograph. Lost’ (W4). She does not recognise herself: her image is unfamiliar, bespeaking the fragmentation of her identity, broken into objective image and subjective felt experience.

For Jameson, the modernist subject, rooted in ‘classical capitalism and the nuclear family’⁷ has dissolved in the postmodern sphere in which individuals are increasingly removed from the tangible products of their work; now producers in a system of which the end result is unknown.⁸ Moreover, the ‘nuclear family’ that Jameson refers to has lost its potency as a grounding force in identity. This is made evident in the contrasting attitude of the protagonists to their fathers and mothers. Joyce’s Eveline, like Keegan’s protagonist, has an abusive father. She remembers as children how he would ‘hunt them out of the field with his blackthorn stick’ (D29), and more worryingly, refers to how even now ‘she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father’s violence. She knew it was that that had

⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.15.

⁸ The film *American Beauty* provides a good example of this postmodern de-centeredness when the central character leaves his corporate office job for the hands-on work of cooking burgers.

given her the palpitations' (D30). In spite of living in fear of her father, her loyalty to him is obvious in her efforts to remember positive aspects of their relationship. Reflecting on her childhood, she asserts that 'Her father was not so bad then' (D29). She focuses on the pleasant memories: 'Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when her mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth' (D32). The period of time between these memories suggests that these are isolated incidences in spite of Eveline's upbeat reading of them.

Like Eveline, the protagonist of "The Parting Gift" also makes an effort to remember something good about her father, but hers is neither as sustained nor as important to her: 'You stand on the landing trying to remember happiness, a good day, a kind word. It seems apt to search for something happy to make the parting harder but nothing comes to mind' (W7). She too has suffered at the hands of her father, in a more extreme way than Eveline: 'Your father moved into the other room but your mother gave him sex on his birthday...And then that too stopped and you were sent instead, to sleep with your father. It happened once a month or so, and always when Eugene [her brother] was out' (W6). The nature of this abuse is subsequently described in appalling detail, without emotion or comment, by the narrator. Whereas Eveline clearly feels a loyalty towards her father, this woman does not. The relationship with fathers in the stories, characterised by a feeling of daughter responsibility in Joyce's story and lack of responsibility in Keegan's, may be seen as indicative of the declining significance of family, in the move from modern to postmodern. Postmodernism was heralded in the 1960s by waning respect for traditional sources of authority, such as religion, patriarchy and marriage, and this is reflected in Keegan's story. Her attitude to family is symbolised when, while the protagonist is mulling over the fact that she has nothing to say to her mother, she sees a bird outside: 'A sparrow swoops down onto the window ledge and pecks at his reflection, his beak striking the glass. You watch him until you can't watch him any longer and he flies away' (W5). She, too, is metaphorically on the other side of the glass when it comes to her relationship with home. She has already left, psychologically, and her final hours describe her observing, unemotionally, what her place in this family used to be.

The relationship of both characters with their mothers deepens the division between the stories in terms of duty to family. Eveline is cogni-

sant of her social and religious duty as woman of the house after her mother's death. She remembers 'the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could' (D33). However, Joyce indicates the consequences for women of being bound to home in this way, particularly in relation to the pattern that Mrs Hill has set up for her daughter; the pattern of living 'a life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness' (D33). By the end of her life, her mother appears mentally deranged. Eveline recalls 'her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence: – Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!' (D33). Joyce's famous cryptic phrase has given rise to several different interpretations, the most common being that it is a form of corrupted Irish. I suggest, however, that the meaning of Mrs Hill's cry matters little: what is significant is that it is unintelligible. As a mother and wife in a poor family, with a belligerent husband, struggling with the day-to-day trials of life, she might as well be voiceless. Eugene O'Brien reaches a similar conclusion saying: 'what is important is the inability of Eveline's mother to communicate the pain her life as a woman has brought her.'⁹ In death, as in life, her plight escapes the understanding of those around her. Eveline is aware that this may be the future that awaits her too, if she stays in Dublin. The memory brings her 'a sudden impulse of terror' and she thinks of 'Escape! She must escape!' (D33). The final scene of the story, however, suggests that Eveline, like her mother, cannot escape her duty, when we see her mimicking her mother's inability to communicate. At the station, 'she knew that he [Frank] was speaking to her' but does not fully hear what he is saying (D33). Like her mother, she cannot give voice to her feelings as Frank moves away from her, calling to her to follow. She is 'passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition' (D34).

Although the reason for Eveline's apparent change of mind about her emigration is ambiguous, left unnarrated in an ellipsis before the final scene, from the remainder of the story it seems that her sense of duty to her family is the likely motivation. This dutifulness is absent in Keegan's story. On the first page, the character considers the effects of her departure on her mother: 'You wonder what it will be like for her when you

⁹ Eugene O'Brien, "'You Can Never Know Women': Framing Female Identity in *Dubliners*", in *A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce's Dubliners*, edited by Oona Frawley (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), p.217.

leave. Part of you doesn't care' (W3). Like Eveline, she too has had to take on the burden of her mother's 'duties', in her case, the sexual gratification of her husband. But, unlike Eveline, she is more than content to abandon these duties and leave the family home. When she drives away, her mother's farewell is described: 'She waves a little cowardly wave, and you wonder if she will ever forgive you for leaving her there with her husband' (W10). However, these thoughts are expressed as distanced curiosity rather than guilt. Like Eveline's mother, Keegan's character is portrayed as that of a woman who endures in the face of pain and hardship, and a woman who sacrifices herself (and her daughter) for her family. Trying to make conversation at the breakfast table, her mother's reactions are revealing: 'Your mother makes some small animal sound in her throat. You turn to look at her. She wipes her eyes with the back of her hand. She's never made any allowance for tears' (W4). Her mother does not allow herself to express her anguish, either at her daughter's departure, or, we suspect, at the pain she has suffered in her family life. Still, traces of emotion remain. As with Mrs Hill, the reader is encouraged to look beyond the burden she put on her daughter, and imagine the circumstances that necessitated it for her: 'You put your arms around your mother. You don't know why. She changes when you do this. You can feel her getting soft in your arms' (W9). Although the mothers are similar in both stories, as are their expectations of their daughters, the difference lies in the daughters' responses: the actions of one prescribed by family duty; the actions of the other, free.

What can account for the disparity between these responses? I suggest that it is the difference between modern and postmodern values, manifested in the specific desires of each protagonist. Eveline feels that she needs marriage, a man, to escape; Keegan's protagonist needs money. That Eveline has interpellated gender roles is obvious in the story. She takes on the traditional womanly duties around the house, making reference to the fact that she has dusted the objects in her home once a week for many years (D29), that she does the grocery shopping each week, and that she has become surrogate mother to her two younger siblings: 'She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly' (D31). Although Eveline works in a shop, she has no financial independence. She gives over her entire wages to her father each Saturday, and has difficulty getting any of it back to buy provisions for the household. This lack of financial independence does not seem in

itself to cause Eveline angst. It is a concern only insofar as it prevents her from carrying out her domestic duties. Her disinterest in money and her acquiescence to patriarchal authority is further concretised by her willingness to replace the authority of her father with that of Frank: 'Frank would save her. Her would give her life, perhaps love, too...Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her' (D33). Moreover, she does not want to be only Frank's girlfriend or partner; she seeks refuge in marriage, the primary unit of the traditional family, affirming that family is Eveline's core value: 'Then she would be married – she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then' (D30).

In *Dubliners*, the value of family is interrogated and questioned, particularly in "The Dead", "The Sisters" and "Counterparts", but it is present, and formidably so, as an important force in the lives of characters. Jean Michel Rabaté suggests that *Dubliners* makes 'manifest the mutism of a world condemned to silence by the destruction of centered values.'¹⁰ The sense of loyalty to family is implicitly seen to be eroding but it is not possible to fully break away from it; hence the pained silence of Eveline at the end of the story. Garry Leonard discusses this view of *Dubliners* not only in relation to family, but patriarchal authority in general, which is 'teetering on the edge of the void', but never abolished, never escaped. It is, as he says, 'a dissolution of the masculine subject that is followed by a strenuous res-erection.'¹¹ Modernism as a whole can be defined by its adherence to stable structures, like patriarchy, like family, even in its efforts to break away from them. The modernist subject is firmly rooted; often in family, as is the case with Leopold and Molly Bloom, despite their marital problems; sometimes in a place, such as the city of Eliot's wasteland. Narratively, modernism is also rooted in some stable unifying structure. This has taken the form of myth, such as Joyce's Homeric parallels which literally structure *Ulysses*; it has taken the form of parody, such as Virginia Woolf's pseudo-biographical *Orlando*; it has taken the form of a conceptual structure, such as Yeats' theory of the gyres.

¹⁰ Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Silence in *Dubliners*", in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, edited by Colin MacCabe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p.47.

¹¹ Garry M. Leonard, *Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p.11.

Postmodernism on the other hand is characterised by lack of stability, lack of grounding, in terms of subjectivity, society and narrative. The subject has more liberty to move, geographically and ideologically. In postmodernism, the 'respect' that Eveline desires is conferred by money rather than marital status or morality. This is the shift in values evident between "Eveline" and "The Parting Gift." Jean Baudrillard suggests that consumption and consumerism define the postmodern era, even arguing that postmodern consumption posits a new phrase of evolution. He states 'We have reached the point where "consumption" has grasped the whole of life...In the phenomenology of consumption, the general climatization of life, of good, objects, services, behaviours, and social relations represents the perfect "consummated" stage of evolution'.¹² In French, the word *consommer* has two meanings: to consume and to consummate.¹³ Interestingly, Baudrillard describes this shift in values (and consequently, society) by alluding to the terminology of marriage, which is arguably a founding element of social organisation for modernism, as consumerism is for postmodernism.

Money does play a significant role in Keegan's story. Like Eveline, the protagonist's father has the economic power. She, just out of school, has no money of her own, nor has her mother any to give her. Instead, her mother ushers her up to her father's room, warning her 'Don't leave empty-handed' (W8). Her father uses his economic power to manipulate her and she is helpless to prevent him. When he puts out his hand, the reader is made aware of her feelings: 'You don't want to touch him but maybe the money is in his hand. In desperation you extend yours, and he shakes it' (W8). As she leaves the room, he calls her back, and she thinks 'This is his way. He'll give it to you now that he knows you thought you'd get nothing' (W8). But she leaves disappointed, and lies to her mother about it, trying, perhaps, to protect her from guilt. In the end, it is another man, her brother, who gives her twenty pounds before she leaves. While Eveline is unperturbed by her unfair financial dependence, Keegan's protagonist is not. She does not let either family loyalty or lack of money prevent her from emigrating to America where she will be able

¹² Jean Baudrillard, "Consumer Society", in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp.32-59, p.36.

¹³ Jean Baudrillard, "Consumer Society", p.30.

to earn her own money.¹⁴ Moreover, she does not need a man to protect her or to save her, to book her passage or be at her side in her new country, nor does she need the respectability of marriage. She is escaping from economic domination and from patriarchal domination too. That the reader is not told her name can be interpreted as symbolic of the fact that this postmodern character is not defined by the forename her parents gave her, or the surname of her father. Symbolically, she is free to choose her own identity in a way that Eveline could not be.

The movement from modernism to postmodernism evident in the two stories is also manifested by the contrasting attitudes to religion. Religion is another stabilizing, grounding force in individual identity and society in the modernist period. This defining structure is rendered impotent for some in postmodern culture. In “Eveline”, the reader is introduced to the presence of religion in the life of the protagonist through the reference to the ‘priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall’ alongside ‘the coloured print of the promises to Blessed Mary Margaret Alacoque.’ (D30) Eveline does not know the name of the priest on the wall, perhaps symbolising her exclusion from knowledge of the patriarchal systems that structure her world. That the priest was an old friend of her father’s further emphasises Eveline’s subordination to religious and domestic phallogentrism. Eveline’s feeling of duty towards her father and siblings is perhaps heightened by her experience of being a Catholic whose purpose to serve, assist, but not to shape or lead. While she is being torn between staying at home and going with Frank, she relies on her faith to guide her towards the correct decision: ‘out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty’ (D33). As her anxiety builds, she cannot communicate with Frank, but she mimes a prayer: ‘Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.’ (D34)

Keegan’s postmodern story shows, expectedly, an entirely different attitude to religion. Jameson writes that ‘theological modernism emerges from the desperate requirement to preserve or rewrite the meaning of an ancient precapitalist text within a situation of triumphant modernisa-

¹⁴ It is impossible to be completely certain about Eveline’s motives for emigrating, but the time period of the story suggests that she is an economic migrant. The only clue of the story’s date is a reference to Eugene’s Cortina, which was manufactured between 1962 and 1982. It is unlikely that Eugene could afford to have a new car, relying on his father for money, so the story is probably set in the 70s or 80s.

tion',¹⁵ as the urbanised upper working and lower middle classes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could not identify with the rural, agrarian Old Testament. Thus, a fashion emerged to read the biblical narratives, including the New Testament, 'figuratively or allegorically'.¹⁶ This is consistent with the view of modernism I have outlined: new, radical experimentations grounded in pre-existing structures. In postmodernism, however, which is 'more effortlessly secular than any modernism could have wished, such religious traditionalism seems to have melted away without a trace'.¹⁷ This is evident in the dearth of references to religion in 'The Parting Gift'. Its sole mention is in relation to the protagonist's mother, who shakes holy water on her daughter before she leaves the house to travel to the airport. The only comment made about her daughter's response is 'Some of it gets in your eyes' (W7-8). For the young woman of this postmodern generation, holy water is just liquid that is irritatingly shaken on her.

This essay has highlighted the contrasting modernity and postmodernity of Joyce and Keegan's short stories in terms of identity, values and religion and in doing so, shed some light on the effects of increasing globalisation and secularism in the movement between the two. On first reading, the stories appear to be quite similar. The central character of each is a young woman: Eveline is nineteen, and Keegan's protagonist presumably seventeen or eighteen, having just completed her Leaving Certificate. Both women are on the brink of leaving their family home to emigrate, and both stories are set on what is to be their last day in Ireland. Both stories deal with the relationships between these women and their fathers and mothers, the former domineering, the latter long-suffering. The ending of each story is ambiguous. At the station, Eveline is in a daze; she stands rigid giving Frank 'no sign of love or farewell or recognition.' (D34) In "The Parting Gift" the proposed emigrant is also

¹⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.289.

¹⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.390.

¹⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.387. Jameson also notes that postmodernism is notable for the rise of fundamentalisms of various kinds, which he regards as also a 'postmodern phenomenon.' (p.388) This is justifiable if fundamentalisms are thought of as micro-narratives or as individual responses to the secularisation of postmodernism. His thoughts are similar to those of Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism* in which he regards terrorism as a product of Western capitalism; and, it could be argued, a product of postmodernism.

in a daze as she rushes through duty-free to try to find a toilet: ‘It is all getting hazy but you keep on going, because you must...Someone asks are you alright – such a stupid question – but you do not cry until you have opened an closed another door, until you have safely locked yourself inside your stall.’ (W13) We are not completely certain whether either woman will leave or stay; the narrative of each is frustratingly arrested at the crucial moment.

And yet, on closer reading, there are fundamental differences that set these stories apart. Eveline is a centred subject; situated in ideological discourses of family and religion, while Keegan’s protagonist is de-centered. This shift in subjectivity gives rise to several other contrasts: Eveline is passive, Keegan’s protagonist is active, which may be why the former is written in the third person and the latter in the second. Eveline evinces loyalty to her family; her counterpart none. Eveline wants and needs a man; the character in “The Parting Gift” does not. Eveline’s primary value is family; in Keegan’s story it is money. Eveline embraces Catholicism; in “The Parting Gift”, religion is irrelevant.

The contrasts between the modernism and postmodernism of these stories can be contextualised in the contrasting cultural reference points of Irish modernism and postmodernism: France and America. According to Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, ‘France is clearly identified as the source from which Anglo-American modernism took strength’,¹⁸ particularly the work of Valéry, Mallarmé and Flaubert. This is probably true of Irish modernism too. Michael Holmes and Alan Roughley phrase it concisely, saying ‘it would be wrong to say that Dubliners are becoming Europeans, for the simple reason that they have always been Europeans.’¹⁹ France’s significance is more than literary though. It offered an ideal location for those who had a vexed relationship with Catholicism, such as Joyce, Yeats and Beckett. Historically, Catholicism was bound up with the French state. After Napoleon’s Concordat with Pope Pius VII in 1801, it lost its status as the official religion of France, but was still the religion of the majority. The big change came in 1905 with the *Loi de Séparation des Églises et de l’État* after which France became an offi-

¹⁸ Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, *Modernism: 1890-1930* (London: Penguin, 1991), p.31.

¹⁹ Michael Holmes and Alan Roughley, “From Dubliners to Europeans? Political Change and Political Paralysis”, in *A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce’s Dubliners*, edited by Oona Frawley (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), p.43.

cially secular society. According to Kay Chadwick, this meant that ‘no religion is either publicly recognised or subsidised by the state but...freedom of religious expression is guaranteed provided this occurs as a private act.’²⁰ If, as I have argued, modernism is defined by experimentation grounded in extant structures, then France was an ideal cultural locus for Irish writers, as the separation of Catholicism from the state and the later declaration of secularism accommodated their religious views, and meant that they were, theoretically at least, artistically unfettered. Crucially though, its Catholic history provided familiarity; the something old on which the something new could be built.

With Ireland moving towards secularism, tentatively coming to terms with religious and racial plurality, and becoming globalised in a peculiarly Americanised way, it is no surprise that America is the imaginative nexus for Irish postmodernists. It has experienced racial variety since its initial colonisation, although it has not always dealt with this well. It has presented itself as a champion for democracy, espousing values of ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’. The concept of America as the ultimate free-market economy and the seat of capitalism resonates with Ireland’s increasing prosperity, business success and consumerism stemming from the economic boom of the 1990s. The American dream of needing only hard work and intelligence to become materially successful is perhaps echoed by the new ‘Irish dream’, for immigrants and natives alike. Of course, the accessibility of America, particularly in popular music, film and television, means that is easy, even natural, for Irish writers to identify with it, to imbibe it into their imaginations. If this America is unrealistic or inaccurate, it does not matter. As Keegan says, ‘the imagination is more powerful than reality’,²¹ an apt way of describing “The Parting Gift” in its exposition of the secularisation and globalisation of the Irish woman, in the movement from modernism to post-modernism; ferry to flight.

²⁰ Kay Chadwick, “Introduction”, in *Catholicism, Politics and Society in Twentieth Century France*, edited by Kay Chadwick (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp.1-17, p.1.

²¹ Claire Keegan, “Claire Keegan in Conversation with Declan Meade”, in *The Stinging Fly*, Issue 8, 2000: www.stingingfly.org/issue8/keegan.html.

Peter D.T. Guy

McGahern, Proust and the Universality of Memory

‘The Greek word for ‘return’ is *nostos*. *Algos* means ‘suffering.’ So nostalgia is the suffering caused by unappeased yearning to return.’¹ This quotation, from the opening pages of Milan Kundera’s novel *Ignorance* (2000), conceptualizes in some way our understanding of the word ‘nostalgia.’ The author goes on to say:

The Germans rarely use the Greek-derived term *Nostalgie*, and tend to say *Sehnsucht* in speaking of the desire of an absent thing. But *Sehnsucht* can refer both to something that has existed and to do with something that has never existed... to include in *Sehnsucht* the obsession with returning would require adding a complementary phrase: *Sehnsucht nach der Vergangenheit, nach der verlorenen Kindheit, nach der ersten Liebe* – longing for the past, for lost childhood, for first love...²

The word ‘nostalgia’ is a rather loaded word and in literature has often come to mean something that is mawkish or overly sentimental. The purpose of this essay is to approach John McGahern’s final novel, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, and to question whether his use of nostalgia adds to or detracts from the novel. I wish to contrast McGahern’s use of memory and nostalgia with that of Marcel Proust, a writer with whom he shares a certain concomitant style, in that they both exhibit, in Kundera’s words, ‘a longing for the past.’ I also wish to question the premise that McGahern is a writer whose work measures ‘from the local to the universal.’ Can such a deeply personal account of the past have true resonance with the modern world? In contrast to his earlier work, a more critical observation would be this: McGahern, by composing such an introspective novel, has implicitly loaded the text with maudlin sentimentalism

¹ Milan Kundera, *Ignorance*, translated by Linda Asher (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), p.5.

² *Ignorance.*, pp.6-7.

and a tiresome repetitiveness that a writer, more aloof from the material, would surely have altered.

Though McGahern draws correlations with a writer like Proust, his form and style, for most critics, remain contentious – at times they were obfuscated by the author himself. David Coad, one of McGahern's most forceful critics, argues: 'I think one should be careful about using philosophical terms for a writer who is as unphilosophical as McGahern.'³ Eamon Maher interrogates this view by stating:

Whereas I can see a reason for the reservations he expresses when comparing McGahern to some of the giants of modern literature, as Sampson does, I can find no justification whatever for the criticism of McGahern's style.⁴

David Malcolm's assessment is noteworthy:

Most critics see McGahern as an intensely particular and local writer, deeply interested in individual existential experiences while, at the same time, pointing beyond the particular and individual to a more general level of reference.⁵

Denis Sampson's view is also of relevance to this chapter:

McGahern will hardly be accused of nostalgia, but he has frequently been found deficient of a related version of self-congratulation, of failing to take Ireland's progress into account, of writing only of the forties and fifties and sixties, of being out of date in his personal obsessions and social observations.⁶

I am not exactly sure what it means to be 'deficient of a related version of self-congratulation', but Sampson wrote this prior to the publication of *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, and would argue that the Proustian

³ David Coad, "One God, One Disciple: The Case of John McGahern", in *Études Britanniques Contemporaines* (Université de Paul Valéry, Janvier 1995), p.61.

⁴ Eamon Maher, "Disintegration and Despair in the Early Fiction of John McGahern", in *Studies*, Vol. 90, No.357 (Spring 2001), pp.84-91, p.85.

⁵ David Malcolm, *Understanding John McGahern* (Columbia: South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), p.6.

⁶ Denis Sampson "The Lost Image: Some Notes on McGahern and Proust", in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), pp.57-68, p.57.

cliché is too often a cover for autobiographical nostalgia, which I will partly dispute in this paper.

How then does McGahern truly reflect his image of pastoral life? In an interview with Eamon Maher, McGahern comes close to delineating his own definition of art:

One of my favourite definitions of art is that it abolishes time and establishes memory and, if you reflect on it, you couldn't have the image without memory. The image is at the base of the imagination and it's the basic language of writing.⁷

What then is this image? McGahern establishes a definition in his Prologue to a reading at the Rockefeller University:

When I reflect on the image two things from which it cannot be separated come: The rhythm and the vision. The vision, that still and private world which each of us possesses and which others cannot see, is brought to life in rhythm.⁸

The 'still and private world' that McGahern refers to draws similarities with the Proustian *moi profond*. Indeed, this last statement merely rehashes a statement made by Marcel Proust in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*:

Style is not at all a prettification as certain people think, but is not even a matter of technique, it is – like colours with painters – a quality of vision, the revelation of the private universe that each one of us can see and which others cannot see.⁹

The self is not the social self, which is largely superficial. Rather it is the profound self – *le moi profond* – 'that individualizes work and makes them last.'¹⁰ What Proust is referring to here is the solitary artist in society who transforms the subjective world of the imagination into the ob-

⁷ Eamon Maher, *From the Local to the Universal* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2003), p.146.

⁸ John McGahern, "The Image", in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), p.12.

⁹ Marcel Proust, "Swann explained by Proust", in *Against Saint-Beuve and Other Essays*. Translated by John Sturrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p.236.

¹⁰ Marcel Proust, "Les Eblouissements", in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p.537.

jective world of social identity and form. Implicitly, McGahern's vision of that 'private world which each of us possesses and which others cannot see' is echoed in *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*: 'The life of all various lives we lead concurrently, is the most episodic, the most full of vicissitudes, I mean the life of the mind.'¹¹ McGahern continues:

Art is an attempt to create a world in which we can live if not for long or forever, still a world of the imagination over which we can reign, and by reign I mean to reflect purely on our situation through this created world of ours, this Medusa's mirror, allowing us to see and to celebrate even the totally intolerable.¹²

In a separate interview with James Whyte, he elaborated further:

I think everybody has a private world which is coloured by their own personality and also furnished by memory. Memory is selective as well: what we forget is as revealing as what we remember... these involuntary memories are more true because they surprise us, evading will and habit.¹³

The famous incident of the 'petite madeleine' in *Search* revealed to Proust a past lying dormant within him, ready to be called back to consciousness. This is what McGahern is referring to in his reference to 'involuntary memory.' Proust was able to retrieve 'a feeling of inexplicable happiness' when his mother offered him the plump little cake. He was illuminated by a childhood memory where his Aunt Leone on Sunday mornings used to give him a madeleine, dipping it first in her own cup of tea. It 'all sprang into being, town and garden alike, from my cup of tea!'¹⁴

Proust thus uncovered a form of memory, beyond the control of our consciousness. Recollection is suggested by some unexpected physical sensation such as a faint scent, taste, or sound. But that sensation has in the past been associated with a number of definite impressions and when by chance the identical sensation recurs years afterwards, all the impres-

¹¹ Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way – Remembrance of Things Past*. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Vintage, 1989), p.23.

¹² John McGahern, "The Image", p.12.

¹³ James Whyte, *History, Myth and Ritual in the Fiction of John McGahern* (Lewiston/New York: Edwin Mellen, 2002), p.231.

¹⁴ Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, p.19.

sions (associated with it) also rush back, en masse. Our perception of time throughout *Search* is a fluid, flexible one, rather than a fixed state where past and present remain firmly divided and one event clearly succeeds another. The fragmented narrative itself reflects this disjointed nature of experience and subverts the linear temporality of the traditional narrative discourse. This is symbolised by the jerky projection of the magic lantern in the child narrator's bedroom, depicting legends *comme un vitrail vacillant et momentané*. This image forms a key illustration of the complex and disconnected nature of perception, suggesting a Cubist combining of several perspectives, angles and times within the same work of art and implying a multi-layering of perception, a fluidity often transferred to Proust's imagery.

There are other such episodes of the past springing into being – in the episode where he attends the reception at the Guermantes mansion, the sound of a spoon on a plate transports him to a railway carriage where, years before, workmen had made a similar sound fixing the wheels of a train stopped for repairs. A servant brings him a napkin and he is transported to the Channel coast and the sensation of a towel he used to dry himself with during his stay at Balbec.¹⁵ There are four interchangeable expressions which are used by Proust to denote these episodes: involuntary memory, reminiscences, resurrections and *moments bienheureux*. A *moment bienheureux* for Proust is a happy moment whose occurrence is no more in our control than the grace of salvation.

Other critics have suggested that it is not the recovery of the past per se that is significant for the Narrator, but rather the happiness produced by his recognition of the past in a present moment. Maurice Blanchot, in *Le Livre à venir*, maintains that involuntary memory is epiphanic and pointed and cannot effectively support a sustained narrative. He notes that the difference between Proust's uncompleted *Jean Santeuil* and *In Search of Lost Time* is the moments of voluntary memory that provide the connective tissue between such moments and make up the vast bulk of the narrative of the later novel. Nostalgia, however, has nothing to do with Proust. For one thing, nostalgia, unlike the *moment bienheureux*, is, or can be, voluntary; it can be called up. Nostalgia can also be for something which never existed, not in the sense of longing for

¹⁵ Marcel Proust, *The Past Recaptured – Remembrance of Things Past*. Translated by Frederick Blossom (New York: Random House, 1981), pp.189-95.

what might come, but for what never was. Proust's involuntary moment is always related to the real, to presence, not absence, to knowledge, not ignorance. In the words of Denis Sampson:

The quest for an authentic "way of looking" is a quest for the spiritual essence of selfhood, and for McGahern as for Proust, it is rooted in memory and in the symbol-making capacity of the self seen most clearly in art.¹⁶

Direct apprehension is especially emphasized in Proust's *moment bien-heureux*. In *Contre Saint-Beuve* he describes the effort to recall the experience of a pastoral scene from a train: 'Since then, calling to mind those trees streaked with light and that little churchyard, I have often tried to conjure up that day, that day itself, I mean, not its pallid ghost.'¹⁷ The effort fails, as it must, because it is a voluntary, intellectual effort on his part. Proust's assertion that only involuntary recall can recover the soul of our past experiences makes such an experience practically unique to the individual. But memory is collective. When McGahern depicted involuntary moments, such as in the short story "The Wine Breath", he uses the technique to great effect – the chips of beechwood take the priest in the story back to the day of Michael Breen's funeral, and conjure up the drifts of snow that fell upon the funeral cortege:

Suddenly, as he was about to rattle the gate loudly to see if this would penetrate the sawing, he felt himself (bathed in a dream) in an incredible sweetness of light...the gate on which he had his hand had vanished...he was in another day, the lost day of Michael Bruen's funeral nearly thirty years before.¹⁸

Denis Sampson says of this passage:

¹⁶ Denis Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye – The Fiction of John McGahern* (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1993), p.17.

¹⁷ Marcel Proust, *On Art and Literature: 1896 – 1919*. Translated by S.T. Warner (New York: Dell, 1958), p.19.

¹⁸ John McGahern, *The Collected Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p.178.

The association of involuntary memory and images of death should not be overlooked in this passage, especially because the triggered recollection is interwoven with premonitions of his own death.¹⁹

Other Proustian influences in the story include the priest's communication with the dead which he associated with the death of his own mother: 'Ever since his mother's death he found himself stumbling into those dead days.'²⁰ There is also an allusion to spiritual regeneration – the way in which evening becomes morning – to art, time and the ritual of return.

Compare this scene with an episode from *That They May Face the Rising Sun* where Ruttledge conjures up the past after visiting the disused railway station owned by the Shah:

As a child, Ruttledge used to travel on the train with his mother to town. The low-grade Agrina coal the train burned during the war gave so little power that on the steepest-hills the passengers had to dismount from the carriages and walk to the top of the slope where they climbed aboard again. In his mind he could see the white railway gates clearly, the high white signal box, the three stunted fir trees beside the rails, the big house that extended from the water tank and hung like an elephant's trunk over the entrance to the boiler shed.²¹

The image captured here appears entirely nostalgic, an image voluntarily forced from the imagination of the author. In an interview with Denis Sampson, McGahern stated:

I have found that the most serious mistakes I have made were when I don't know if you can use the analogy between painting and writing – when I have drawn from life, when I have actually stuck close to the way things happen. Very seldom have I done that, but I have found that that's when the prose is dead.²²

¹⁹ Denis Sampson, "The Lost Image: Some Notes on McGahern and Proust", in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), p.60.

²⁰ John McGahern, *The Collected Stories*, p.180.

²¹ John McGahern, *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (London: Faber, 2002), p.240. All further references to this book will be noted in parenthesis as *TRS*.

²² Denis Sampson, "A Conversation With John McGahern", in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), pp.13-18, p.14.

The paragraph which I quoted from *That They May Face the Rising Sun* does sound 'dead', lifeless in comparison to McGahern's earlier work. Samuel Beckett's *Proust* made reference to the three intertwined themes that he identifies in Proust: Time, Habit and Memory. For Proust, Beckett argues, time means death, its very passing makes death not only inevitable, but also makes the thought of it intolerable. Habit stands in for a kind of comfort, the comfort of the ordinary and boring, the chain of day-to-day events that makes it seem as if death can be forestalled. Memory, which understandably gets the most attention, is the moment of surprise that undoes both time and habit and reasserts the life of the individual.

What's most striking about Beckett's reading of Proust is Beckett's understanding of memory's role. Beckett dismisses voluntary memory, calling it worse than useless as an indicator of the self. Beckett calls voluntary memory: 'the memory that is not memory but the application of a concordance to the Old Testament of the individual.'²³ In the eschatology that Beckett ascribes to Proust, but which he also clearly favours himself, this Old Testament of the individual not only lacks in revelation, it also risks setting itself up as a false idol. Real memory, the residue of inattention, is involuntary. It steals upon a person when least expected, and brings with it the past to mingle with the present. Time is therefore undone, because the real secret of involuntary memory is the capacity that makes us actually relive the past.

So what occurred in *That They May Face the Rising Sun*? I would argue that McGahern jettisoned his Proustian approach to memory in an attempt to recreate the quasi-Homeric style of the Blasket Island writer Tomás Ó Criomhthain. In a revised paper he wrote on language and Ó Criomhthain's *The Islandman*, McGahern said of the novel:

If the strong sense of the day, the endless recurring day, gives to the work its timeless quality, it is deepened more by the fact that the people and place seem to stand outside history.²⁴

Again, in reference to *The Islandman*, he states:

²³ Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), p.19.

²⁴ John McGahern, "What is my Language", in *The Irish University Review*, 35:1 (2005), pp.1-12, p.6.

So free is all the action of everything that is not essential that it could as easily have taken place on the shores of Brittany and Greece as on the Dingle peninsula... There is a haunting phrase that echoes like a refrain throughout the book – *lá dár saol é...* [It] conveys the whole life of a person as being formed by a succession of single days...[t]hroughout the book the basic unit of time is the day.²⁵

The similarities between *The Islandman* and *That They May Face the Rising Sun* are obvious. For example, the local handyman Patrick Ryan states: ‘The country was walking with people then. After us there’ll be nothing but the water hen and the swan’, (*TRS*, 48) and later: ‘What the fuck matter whose round it is? – all we are on is a day out of our lives. We’ll never be round again.’ (*TRS*, 241) The narrator himself states: ‘His kind was now almost as extinct as the cornrake.’ (*TRS*, 9) The sense of a community on the edge of extinction echoes through *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, in the same way that Ó Crionhthain wrote of setting ‘down the character of the people about me so that some record of us might live after us, for the like of us will never be seen again.’²⁶

In an interview with Gerd Kampen, McGahern spoke of Ó Crionhthain’s *An tOileánach* as portraying ‘a world more complete than our world, since our world is more complicated and fractured.’²⁷ If *That They May Face the Rising Sun* is an attempt to recreate the authenticity of Ó Crionhthain’s prose, then the novel may be deemed an honourable failure. McGahern situates his timeless characters in the immediate present and rather than blending in with the landscape they become people out of time. While the inhabitants of the Blaskets at the turn of the twentieth century have a composite but compelling dignity, the characters in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* simply do not convince in the same way. McGahern’s ‘image’ of reality, and the way in which he expresses this through his novels, is frequently irreconcilable with the ‘mimetic’ reality, particularly when he attempts to bring the social into his work. It is for this reason we fail to connect with the characters of Joe and Kate Rutledge. We appear to have walked in on a play half way through and

²⁵ John McGahern, “What is my Language”, pp.4-5.

²⁶ Tomás Ó Crionhthain, *The Islandman*. Translated by Robin Flower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.5.

²⁷ Gerd Kampen, *Zwischen Welt und Text. Narratologische Studien zum irischen Gegenwartsroman am Beispiel von John McGahern und John Banville* (PhD. Dissertation, University of Münster, 2000), p.283.

never fully appreciate their motivations, their desires and, more to the point, why they even bothered to return home in the first place; we may empathise with them but never grasp their reasoning, or why they choose to be part of a community on the verge of extinction.

Yet Rutledge stands for the apotheosis of this community, in which he plays no small part. None of McGahern's other characters assumed this quality, and though characters such as young Mahoney in *The Dark* ultimately chose conformity over unconventionality, he did not choose to embellish his decision. The ESB or the farm back home is simply a retreat from the responsibility of making any choice at all. In *The Dark*, the youthful protagonist displays all the characteristics of institutionalisation when faced with the potential freedom a University education may grant him. Standing outside the Quad on the night of the Jib's dance, he cannot bring himself to enter, not so much the dance itself, but the ebb and flow of university life in general. Feeling like an impostor, or at best, an anomalous specimen from the dark heart of rural Ireland, young Mahoney retreats to the sanctity of the familiar, where anonymity in the ESB is preferable to thwarted ambition in the professional sphere. In *The Leavetaking*, Patrick Moran's plight seems to confirm this notion – the breaking down of certain monolithic structures in Irish society was merely a false dawn: to get ahead was possible only through assimilation and therefore one did not so much rally against the State as conform meekly and therefore become part of the machinery itself.

The outsider in McGahern's novels makes us aware of the absurdity of ritual. In *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, we are expected to deify it. This is perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of the novel – McGahern's *volte-face* from absurdist tragedian to unassuming pragmatist. Mass has become a 'performance' (*TRS*, 2) the winning of a field a side-show, the routines of society no longer offer 'vacancy' but pious self-gratification.²⁸ True, McGahern would maintain that there was an overarching narrative to which each of us could relate:

All human life is essentially in the same fix...we find that we are no longer reading books for the story and that all stories are more or less the same story; and we begin to come on books that act like mirrors. What they reflect

²⁸ John McGahern, *The Dark* (London: Panther, 1969), p.26.

is something dangerously close to our own life and the society in which we live.²⁹

But the 'society in which we live' bears scant resemblance to McGahern's image in *That They May Face the Rising Sun*. On one level, the following passage is significant:

'Did you see the telephone poles?' Ruttledge asked. 'Saw them, saw them early this morning,' he stretched out his great hand. 'They all went up today. They have machines, diggers, everything. It'll be all done in a matter of weeks. The men are from Cork. Everybody has a telephone in Cork.' (*TRS*, 304)

Everybody has a telephone in Cork? McGahern may regard it as 'vulgar' to 'make subject matter more important than the writing' but that is no excuse when the subject matter is as clichéd as this.³⁰ The inhabitants who reside around the lake may be on the verge of extinction, their world a timeless one, but why make a mockery of their backwardness? On the one hand, Jamesie watches *Blind Date* and speaks of a woman's genitalia as 'the boggy hollow', on the other hand, he makes a sweeping statement that 'everybody has a telephone in Cork.' This is the early nineteen nineties and while he is capable of remembering the War of Independence, his elder brother 'wasn't old' (*TRS*, 285). His age appears timeless also, so he is a metaphor then, like Bill Evans, his kind 'almost as extinct as the corncrake' (*TRS*, 9).

The primary mode in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* is a form of self-mockery. The only reason that Jamesie goes to church is 'To look at the girls. To see the whole performance We go to see all the other hypocrites' (*TRS*, 2). The collapse of Church authority is neither mourned nor elaborated upon. The shadowy cleric, who skulked on the periphery of McGahern's earliest work, has become a somewhat sedate figure:

²⁹ John McGahern, "Reading and Writing", in *Irish Writers and the Creative Process*. Edited by Jacqueline Genet & Wynne Hellegouarc'h (Gerrards Cross, London: Colin Smythe, 1996), p.106.

³⁰ Eamon Maher, "An Interview with John McGahern", in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly*, 90:1 (2001), pp.70-83, p.80.

He spoke with warmth of his mother and father, who had been a farmer and small cattle dealer. 'They believed and brought me into life. What was good enough for them will do for me. That is all the reason I need'. (TRS, 227)

Compare this with the advice given by Father Gerald from *The Dark*:

A priest who ministers to the bourgeoisie becomes more a builder of churches, bigger and more comfortable churches, and schools than a preacher of the Word of God. The Society influences the Word far more than the Word influences the Society. If you are a good priest you have to walk a dangerous plank between communities on one hand and Truth or Justice on the other.³¹

Canon Reilly in McGahern's short story "The Recruiting Officer" may stand at one extreme, Father Conroy at another. The compromising of the Church as an agent motivated by material interests is alluded to, then promptly ignored. The priest disappears from McGahern's novels after *The Leavetaking*, only to reappear in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* as an enervated relic of a time when the country was 'abulling with religion.' (TRS, 86) In an interview with Julia Carlson, McGahern noted 'I think while the Church influences society, in a way, a society get whatever Church and politicians it deserves.'³² McGahern would later state:

Before the printed word, churches have been described as the Bibles of the poor, and the Church was my first book. In an impoverished time, it was my introduction to ceremony, to grace and sacrament, to symbol and ritual, even to luxury.³³

He follows up this statement with a quotation from Proust, in a letter he wrote to his friend George de Lauris:

It doesn't seem to me right that the old curé should no longer be invited to the distribution of the prizes, as representative of something in the village more difficult to define than the social function symbolised by the pharmacist, the retired tobacco-inspector, and the optician, but something which is,

³¹ John McGahern, *The Dark*, pp.73-74.

³² Julia Carlson, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.64.

³³ John McGahern, "Saving Grace", in *The Guardian Review*, Saturday 8 April (2006) p.7.

nevertheless, not unworthy of respect, were it only for the perception of the meaning of the spiritualised beauty of the church spire – pointing upward into the sunset where it loses itself so lovingly in the rose-coloured clouds; and which, all the same, at first sight, to a stranger alighting in the village, looks somehow better, nobler, more dignified, with more meaning behind it, and with, what we all need, more love than the other buildings, however sanctioned they may be under the latest laws.³⁴

Marcel Proust was the son of a Christian father and a Jewish mother. He himself was baptised and later confirmed as a Catholic, but he never practised that faith and as an adult could best be described as a mystical atheist, someone imbued with spirituality who nonetheless did not believe in a personal God, much less in a Saviour. Proust tended to posit religion as the debt to be paid in return for the gift of life. Courtesy is the religion of the socialite; the perfection of the work of art is the religion of the artist. The artist may well be an atheist; he nonetheless obeys an imperative that takes priority over all others when he is practising his art. The work of art is accomplished in a space cut off from the world – not cut off from the pleasures to be savoured in it, but only from its obligations. The experience of the narrator in *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* is religious in the sociological sense of the term, because it brings about a change in the totality of his obligations.

With McGahern, religion seems to serve a separate function. There appears to be a genuine nostalgia creeping into his words here when he states:

When a long abuse of power is corrected, it is generally replaced by an opposite violence. In the new dispensations, all that was good in what went before is tarred indiscriminately with the bad. This is, to some extent, what is happening in Ireland.³⁵

In his “Prologue” McGahern argues that artistic creation and religious faith are analogous: ‘Religion, in return for the imitation of its formal pattern, promises us the Eternal Kingdom’ and ‘The long and complicated journey of art betrays the simple religious nature of its activity.’³⁶ While Proust makes explicit that his work is a quest for ‘resurrection’

³⁴ “Saving Grace”, p.7.

³⁵ “Saving Grace”, p.7.

³⁶ John McGahern, “The Image”, p.12.

through art, McGahern appears to have withdrawn from such preoccupations on a grand scale to concentrate on the microcosm of a society in decline. In doing so, he appears to jettison this quest and the search for the “lost image” is abandoned. It is a jarring *volte-face*. His characters also appear to lose their objectivity. Rutledge has correlations with any number of McGahern’s literary outsiders, most closely with Patrick Moran in *The Leavetaking*, just as Kate is congruent with the character of Isobel. Proust was homosexual, half-Jewish, isolated by his invalidism and decidedly bourgeois in his origins, but he lusted after heterosexual Catholic aristocrats. He wanted to be like them, yet, at the same time, his status as an outsider was the wellspring of his great artistic sensitivity and the source for his wicked satire of high society in his novel. On Albert Camus’s seminal text *The Outsider*, Colin Wilson writes:

The Outsider’s case against society is very clear. All men and women have these dangerous, unnameable impulses, yet they keep up a pretence, to themselves, to others; their respectability, their philosophy, their religion, are all attempts to gloss over, to make look civilized and rational something that is savage, unorganised, irrational. He is an Outsider because he stands for the Truth.³⁷

Does the protagonist in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* stand for the truth? Does the entire novel? Not if we hold the novel in comparison with the other novels in the McGahern oeuvre – nostalgia seems to have coloured his vision, and the truth he sought now appears to be towards embracing that which he rejected his entire life. The *dramatis personae* in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* all follow a similar pattern. Behind John Quinn there lies something of a sexual sadist, behind the Shah, a furtive misogynist, and even in Jamesie, there is revealed a quasi-religious hypocrite. And yet these characters are made endearing to us in a way that was avoided in the previous novels of McGahern. What can this be but mere nostalgia?

Can we thus consider McGahern’s last novel in a global context? Comparatively, Proust’s concerns about ‘the passage of time’ speak to all of us: Where has it gone? How much is left? What shall we do with it? He focuses on how we live, and communicates a way of ‘living in time.’ A study of French society from 1880-1919, Proust’s novel bears witness

³⁷ Colin Wilson, *The Outsider* (London: Indigo, 1997), p.13.

to the oceanic transformations that changed the horse-and-buggy world to one of aviation, cubism, and modern hygiene. The book is the record of one man's experience, but it is not just autobiographical as the narrator, in investigating his past, looks beyond his own experience. However, those who profess to mourn this passing age have rarely understood the true dichotomy at the heart of McGahern's work. In one way, in *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, he presented a stagnant society characterised by emigration, thankless toil, bittersweet recompense, patriarchal dominance, and a mordant repetition of the seasons. Conversely, the security and compassion of neighbours and friends, the simple knowledge gleaned from the elements, the assiduous rewards of nature and the even succession of the days have their own guerdon. We cannot, however, accept one image, one impression of this passing age, without accepting and understanding the other. At the very last, McGahern seems to have embraced the latter attitude and in doing so, I would question whether such a novel represents the true, universal heart of the border country and wider world he seemed to know so well.

Wacław Grzybowski

Lux ex Armorica : The Celtic Contemplative Consciousness versus Secularisation in Thomas MacGreevy's *Breton Oracles*

French connection

The underlying reasons for the attachment of Irish poet Thomas MacGreevy to French literature and French Catholicism are apparent in a comparison he drew between Corneille and Shakespeare. MacGreevy held that Corneille, not Shakespeare, had a vision of the City of God and that:

eternelle clarté with which the French dramatist stated the divine vision of the universe is more heartening in itself and more congenial to the Irish mind than the despairing cynicism of the phrase which is so frequently accepted as summing up the great William's view of existence, 'A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing.'¹

Although the case of the English dramatist is not as simple as MacGreevy portrays it, his identification with French literature and French Catholicism could not be stated more clearly. His empathy and association would continue to be evident. His emphasis on the spiritual values in classical French literature is striking as also is his attribution of its presence to the influence of St Francis de Sales. Once more using Shakespeare as comparison, MacGreevy sees a parting of the literary ways in the sixteenth century at which point England:

ceased to move in harmony with the mind of Catholic Europe [. . .] England opted for mundane preoccupations, whereas French culture produced Francis de Sales to state an attitude, which, though purely religious, was yet found to

¹ Thomas MacGreevy, "Art and the City of God," in *Father Mathew Record*, May 1942, pp.3-4. (All the articles by MacGreevy are taken from the internet archive of Thomas MacGreevy edited by Susan Schreibman).

be so universally acceptable that a veritable army of great geniuses arose to apply it to every phase of human activity.²

The Oracle

MacGreevy's preoccupation with such spiritual values takes various forms. The poem "Breton Oracles," written in 1960, seems to be based on the poet's memories of his trip to Brittany. At first sight it seems to merely describe a journey. However, the poetic narration fuses the physical geography with the space of consciousness. That geography emphasises and gradually cedes pre-eminence to the spiritual dimension of the journey, and the poem assumes the role of oracle, voicing a prophecy about the fate of Celtic Christianity. Although the theme seems archaic, the very approach to journey is modernist; in fact, it mirrors T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock," where a journey through a modern city turns into a trip through the maze of the speaker's consciousness. However, in "Breton Oracles," the imaginative trip through Brittany evokes the consciousness of spiritual reality: it is concealed in the notion-symbol of the 'Kingdom within the heart' that is elsewhere named by MacGreevy as 'the City of God.' In fact, "Breton Oracles" seems close in its culmination, to Eliot's Christological allusions in the closing parts of *The Waste Land* ("Fire Sermon" and "What the Thunder Said").

MacGreevy's use of the word 'oracle' must be read as having particular significance. Standing for a supra-rational wisdom of an ancient prophetism, whether Greek or Hebrew, it immediately evokes associations both with Socrates' question to the Apollonian oracle and with the succinct paradoxes of Augur in the Bible. 'Oracle' might also suggest a contemplative state of consciousness wherein is achieved a synthesis of understanding that surpasses the fruits of discursive analysis. With these associations, MacGreevy's poem aims at arousing the vivid awareness of mystery that underlies the pan-Celtic *poiesis*:

From Solitude, for all her comprehension,
She of the Second Gift spoke again:
Sadoc could not, nor may Marx prevent
The resurrection of resurrection;

² Thomas MacGreevy, "Saint Francis de Sales," in *Father Mathew Record*, June 1943, p.2.

And perfected in her, Pythia murmured addendum:
 Nor Ostrogoth, nor Neo-Goth,
 The renaissance of renaissance.³

It could be said that what MacGreevy does in this poem is to draw an intuitive message of hope and rebirth from the message of Christ's Resurrection, as well as from the tangible evidence of history. In the passage quoted, as elsewhere in the poem, he intimates the contemplative work that conveys the gift of understanding, the second gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift is defined by the American Trappist Thomas Merton as an intuitive and 'simple and discriminative judgement in matters of faith', one that makes the human mind delve into 'the invisible spiritual realities conveyed to it under sensible images and concepts.'⁴

MacGreevy ascribes this spiritual discernment to the one whom he calls 'She of the Second Gift.' In the context of this poem – and in MacGreevy's output as a whole – it is easy to decode her identity. Catholic piety would suggest an allusion to the Virgin Mary, who is presented as the most perfect mystic and thus the one who possesses the fullness of spiritual gifts. However, such an allusion is not confirmed. It is possible too that 'She of the Second Gift' anticipates the image of a mythic feminine figure embodying beauty and creative intuition, who will later appear in the poems of MacGreevy's more successful contemporaries, Denis Devlin and Brian Coffey. The reference to Pythia, a pagan prophetess, binds the Catholic allusion to the classical one, suggesting the feminine personification of the Second Gift of the Holy Ghost in the form of a Christian Muse. For MacGreevy, however, the Catholic cannot be separated from the Celtic and the reference to Celtic Catholicism is intertwined with focus on the personal and the national:

Lingering thoughts of the columns at Nîmes
 Might no longer, it seemed, be entertained
 On entering Brittany.

Then, one was there

³ Thomas MacGreevy, *Collected Poems* (Dublin: New Writers' Press, 1971), p.62. Subsequent quotations from this text will be indicated by *CPM*, followed by the page number.

⁴ Thomas Merton, *The Ascent to Truth* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1981), p.214.

And it was you,
The Brittany of the tender legends.

Over years, and from farther and nearer,
I had thought I knew you -
in spirit – I am of Ireland.

Now, here, in your presence,
There was awareness,
Deeper, more intimate,
Of triumph and of defeat,
And today's as well as yesterday's. (*CPM* 62)

In MacGreevy's phraseology, 'Brittany of the tender legends' has a specific meaning. In an essay on Eliot, he alludes to the Celtic traditions, shared by Ireland and Brittany, ones which 'have provided poetry with some of its greatest spiritual themes and with practically all of its most unselfish lovers; the Grail legend took shape in a Breton monastery, Isolde and Deirdre and Naoise were Irish, Tristan and Abélard were Breton.'⁵ Thus, Brittany is a notion-symbol that embodies the consciousness of particular values which touch the sensitive strings of the mind and emotion. Such values are integrated by MacGreevy into the local history and landscapes:

At La Latte, the grave soldiers,
At Kerjean, the timid young girls,
Slept in eternal peace.

From Ploumanach,
By Tregastel,
And as far as Treberdeun,
The monstrous rocks,
Red, somnolent in the hot sunlight,
Brought thoughts of cataclysm
At the world's first morning -
A young world that was still to know:
Then fears of other cataclysm
And the world's last twilight -
An old world known only too well. (*CPM* 62)

⁵ Thomas MacGreevy, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: A Study* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p.20.

The image of eternal sleep may be seen as alluding to the paradoxical link between history, time and eternity. If reference to eternity points to the dimension beyond space and time, it is, nevertheless, intuited as somehow present here and now. The characteristic severe coastal landscape with its giant rugged boulders is redolent of primaevial forces of nature, and reminiscent of the Biblical cosmogony. But why should those rocks make the poem's speaker ponder on spiritual cataclysm at the dawn of mankind? A possible answer is contained in their resemblance to debris scattered after an enormous explosion, their intimation of catastrophe, both of which suggest the cataclysm of World War I to the poet. In his mind, that traumatic memory has forever linked the dreadfulness of war with the sense of moral evil. In "Cron Tráth Na nDéithe" ("The Twilight of Gods"), published in 1932, MacGreevy recalls the horror: 'Remember Belgium! / You cannot pick up the pieces ...' (CPM 25). Hence the fear that the ultimate global catastrophe is merely anticipated by its first prelude in World War I.

The accretion of metaphorical meanings causes the personified presence of Armorica to acquire a universal quality. As both a concrete location and symbol, Brittany becomes the crossroads of the universe where the local and the universal intersect. But, in addition, the witness of its Christian past in its religious architecture and art, especially the characteristic Breton *calvaire* in Guimiliau, make Brittany a privileged stage for the encounter between God and man:

But at Guimiliau,
Lighted, at night, to the sky,
I was near to the Son of Man,
Living,
Risen from His Sufferings.

What rare artist spirit created that image,
With tender mastery recalling the heart
To the truth of the Kingdom within it?
It prevails against all cerebration,
That truth:

As, after Good Friday, comes Easter Sunday,
So, Red Seas have Arabian shores. (CPM 63)

If the Gift of Understanding presupposes an intuitive judgement, it also furnishes a particular aesthetic sense, by which, according to St. Francis

de Sales, the human mind is united with God through the discovery and penetration of His infinite beauty.⁶ MacGreevy also allies this notion of beauty and aesthetic appreciation with the religious. He defines 'the Kingdom within the heart' as the 'classical trinity of the true, the good and the beautiful.' He goes on to say: 'That trinity constitutes the part of the Kingdom of God that even profane philosophers allow to be within us. *Le vrai*, one of them has said, *qui est le père et qui engendre le bon qui est le fils, d'où procède le beau qui est le saint esprit.*'⁷

MacGreevy's notion-symbol 'The Kingdom within the heart' points to the common Christian roots of Breton and Irish history. At the same time, it constitutes a particular case of the pneumatological consciousness (that is, referring to the Holy Spirit) that intuits, focuses on, and contemplates spiritual presences. Starting with the Gift of Understanding that is personified as 'She of the Second Gift' but who may be seen as standing for the subtle illumination and presence of the Holy Ghost, MacGreevy then proceeds to the personification of Brittany as the accumulated presence of historical, religious and aesthetic values and thence to a sense of presence of the 'Son of Man, risen from His sufferings.' This latter presence is not personified but is depicted as the very essence of the Gospel. In a way, MacGreevy's poetic Christology alludes also to Eliot's vision of 'the third one' in *The Waste Land* referring to the encounter on the road to Emaus between the resurrected Christ and two of his disciples, who were escaping from Jerusalem. While in Eliot's poetry the presence of Christ remains forever veiled and hidden, MacGreevy's vision is more vivid, perhaps more liturgical and Eucharistic. It is definitely more tangible as it derives from the concrete image of the risen Christ found in the famous calvary at Guimiliau. The physical construction of the characteristic 17th century Breton *calvaires* presents the stages of Christ's way of the Cross, from the Last Supper to the Resurrection, and seems to combine Renaissance realism with a style of presentation and ornamentation which has surprising associations with the ancient Celtic art that somehow survives in the Breton folk imagination. For MacGreevy, this must have been a significant sign, the importance of which is partly reflected

⁶ Claude Morel, *Św. Franciszek Salezy*. Translated by Fr. Tadeusz Jania (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1999), p.125.

⁷ Thomas MacGreevy, *Jack B. Yeats. An Appreciation and an Interpretation* (Dublin: Victor Waddington, 1945), p.6.

in his initial metaphors of '*the resurrection of resurrection*' and '*the renaissance of renaissance*,' meaning the recurring rebirth of the Celtic spirituality and art in the light of the encounter with the risen Christ, the source of life. This facilitates the metaphoric conclusion with the oracle, with the reference to 'the Easter Sunday' and 'Arabian shores' as the reward for the passage through the suffering of 'Good Friday' and 'Red seas.' In fact, the link between Celtic Christianity and the Breton religious art suggests the hidden, but continuous action of Christ's Spirit, in that the Gift of Understanding shapes from within the spiritual imagination and history of Armorica. Here, the poet's allegorical projection of the 'She of the Second Gift' is the integral element. The same light that informed the 'rare artist spirit' to create the artful image of Christ's suffering and resurrection, now embraces the speaker's consciousness, allowing him oracular pronouncement and, through the same power of the contemplative Gift of Understanding, to discover what is truly spiritual, the light of absolute truth, mercy and beauty.

However, the continuity of the spiritual history does not allow the narrator to remain within the consoling light of the Resurrection. It makes the narrator return to his contemporary situation. Christ has already passed through suffering and death but the speaker, and arguably the poet, must yet go through a purgatorial nightmare:

In that vast emptiness,
 Between Roc Trevezel and Braspart,
 I felt defeat,
 Shout out, like you, in mournful solitude.
 It was nightmare.
 Yet, through the nightmare
 You were there,
 Still in your solitude,
 But knowing, of your own solitude,
 Where brightness might flicker
 And sharing your knowledge.

And it ended,
 Slowly, as at daybreak, dark night,
 And you were still there,
 In shadow,
 But were there.

You were there;
 And, in the half-light,

The dark green, touched with gold,
 Of leaves;
 The light green, touched with gold,
 of clusters of grapes;
 And, crouching at the foot of a renaissance wall,
 A little cupid, in whitening stone,
 Weeping over a lost poetry. (*CPM* 64)

According to the medieval author, John of Saint Thomas, a forerunner of the St. John of the Cross, ‘the Holy Spirit sharpens, the intelligence,’ through the Gift of Understanding, ‘and makes it more subtle and enables it to press forward in light, not in darkness, even though it advances in the divine Night, that is to say when its course leads it through the obscurity of negation.’⁸ The mystical theology of the dark night is another important point of reference in MacGreevy’s poem. However, for all his contemplative passion, his passage ‘through the obscurity of negation’ is not mystical. The sense of darkness, ‘defeat’ and ‘mournful solitude’ seem to be feelings caused by his own loneliness and by the difficulty of communicating the spiritual values of orthodoxy to the modern secular consciousness. MacGreevy lives in between two worlds that are drifting apart: one is that of the Irish Catholic community and the other is the society of the cultural and literary elite. He identifies with the Church while being critical about the remnants of the puritan infection in Irish Catholicism as evidenced by Irish literary censorship. On the one hand, European culture is no longer mainstream Catholic; on the other, the Irish literary world moves away from the religious art and contemplative fascinations of Catholicism. The historical alienation of spiritual Armorica by the forces of Enlightenment continues into the period of modern Europe. Thus, Brittany personified seems to ‘shout out in the mournful solitude’. This symbolic lamentation resonates with the cry of Christ suffering the approaching darkness in Gethsemane and entering the dark night of agony on the Cross. It suggests also MacGreevy’s poignant awareness of Irish losses, one of which he identifies elsewhere as ‘We are Anglicised.’

MacGreevy’s view of Irishness is not simple. On the one hand, he seems to view the form of Irishness promulgated by Corkery as a provincial and illusory project, since the prevailing Gaelic dominion had al-

⁸ Quoted in: Thomas Merton, *The Ascent to Truth*, p.214.

ready vanished with the Flight of the Irish Earls three centuries earlier. On the other hand, a text of an intensely autobiographical nature, “The Sea-Divided Gael,” testifies to his own obsessive attraction to that historic Gaeldom. Using the third person ‘he,’ MacGreevy gives an account of his own chase after the ‘ghosts’ of Irishness throughout Europe. During World War I, risking suspicion of involvement in espionage, he visits Poix:

But even if he had been arrested, he would hardly have cared. For he had seen Poix, had stood on the steps of the Mairie at Poix and peopled the little street before him with ghosts from Ireland. For it was at Poix that the Earls in their famous Flight had received word from Henri Quatre that he was not just then in a position to offend James I of England — ‘the wisest fool in Christendom’ as Henri called him — by giving them asylum in Paris as he had hoped to do. There at Poix they had had to change their course and make for Brussels. Poor ghosts. . . . A few years after the war ended he met them again at the Devil’s Bridge below the towering St. Gothard — a depleted party of them, for at Brussels there had been deaths in such circumstances as raised suspicions of poisoning. When he drove over that sinister Alpine bridge it was a summer day of thunder, lightning and drenching rain, but the Swiss driver negotiated it with almost complete unconcern. Whereas the flying earls . . . ! It was still winter when they crossed, there was a terrible storm, the pack mules were drowned, all the baggage was lost and the heroes of Tir-conaill and Tyrone barely escaped with their lives.⁹

Some further elucidation of MacGreevy’s poetic position with regard to the Gaelic heritage may be found in the example of a Polish poet, Zbigniew Herbert. In his “Report from the Besieged City”, Herbert describes the nightmare of the communist siege of Poland under Martial Law, and also alludes to the dramatic history of his country that was earmarked for annihilation by successive invaders. Poland is symbolically presented as ‘the City,’ and it is besieged now, as it was in the past. The siege lasts so long that it is ‘truly inconceivable that the City is still defending itself.’¹⁰ But if it ‘falls / but a single man escapes / he will carry the City within himself on the roads of exile / he will be the city.’¹¹ The parallels with

⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, “The Sea Divided Gael,” *Father Matthew Record*, March 1945, p.5.

¹⁰ Zbigniew Herbert, *Selected Poems* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000), p.151.

¹¹ Zbigniew Herbert, *Selected Poems*, p.151.

MacGreevy and his views are apparent: MacGreevy's city of the Gael and Gaelic world is a ghost of the past. Connected with it, the city raised by the spiritual Gift of Understanding becomes more and more universally incommunicable, enclosed within the catacombs of private piety. Similarly, in "Breton Oracles" the link between contemplation and the historic passion turns the narrator into the remnant-reminder of Celtic spiritual consciousness. In the community of the Church, the poet is not lonely but, in the literary world, he is one of the few who fully identify themselves with Catholicism.

Conclusion

"Breton Oracles" offers little hope for any growth in theological globalism. It seems to imply that the Pan-European and global community will not grow rich spiritually. The fate of religious orthodoxy is to create a community of the marginalized, the solitary and the speechless. However, in MacGreevy's view, their isolation and suffering is not in vain: it constitutes repentance, purgation and sacrifice, a hard toil that ultimately paves the way to faith in, and vision of, Christ for those who are deprived of the luxury of faith and contemplation.

The interlinking of MacGreevy's major interests – in visual art, Catholicism, and nationalism – emerges in the lines of 'Breton Oracles'. As John Goodby has noted, it is typical of MacGreevy that the poem's 'last moving lines so economically and unobtrusively bring together the major concerns of this poetry, from visual art ('renaissance') to Catholicism and modernist classicism ('A little cupid'), and – in the colours of the Irish tricolour ('dark green, touched with gold' and 'whitening stone') – Nationalism.'¹² However, it must be said that MacGreevy's attitude cannot be defined as solely and exclusively nationalistic, for his attachment to Irishness is significantly modified by the vital link with the Celtic-Breton and by his contemplative quest. Even a passion for, or an obsession with, the nation's cultural values cannot amount to an ideology. In the strict political sense, nationalism is often a making absolute of the so-called nation, a process that focuses not on the nation as a community of persons of flesh and blood, but on an abstract idea that is open to manipulation. Since MacGreevy's attachment to Irish history is inextricably

¹² John Goodby, *Irish Poetry Since 1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.50.

bound up with relationship to people and to their values, this quality should rather be described as contemplative personalism, or solidarity, or 'patriotism of light.' Paradoxically, and at the same time realistically, it is to be found in the darkness of desolation, in communion with the defeated.

Brigitte Bastiat

The Hostage by Brendan Behan: A Tolerant and Secular Representation of Irish Society

It is reported that the new revised edition of *Modern Irish Drama* will no longer include Brendan Behan. His name will not be found beside those of Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge, Shaw, O'Casey, Beckett or Friel. Of course such publications are all about choices, but why drop Behan? John P. Harrington, editor of the 1991 edition, had chosen Behan's *The Quare Fellow* as being worthy of presentation and review in his book. That 1954 play, the story of a man who murdered his brother and is to be executed at Mountjoy prison, was rejected by the Abbey Theatre, and subsequently performed at The Pike in the same year. I propose that such an incredibly well-crafted play deserves a place in the Irish dramatic pantheon. Equally deserving of ongoing respect is Behan's 1958 play *The Hostage*, first written in Irish as *An Giall*, which 'is the only Irish-language play to be consistently performed throughout the world.'¹ This play was written with the help of Moya Carmody because of Behan's alcohol dependency problem. In this paper I will try to show that Brendan Behan, although heavily criticized for having 'sold out' by providing the English-language version of *An Giall* for English, French and American audiences, is a playwright who through this very play, undertook a crucial role in the representation of a more tolerant and secular society in Ireland. Moreover, thanks to his international success, Behan also contributed to the globalisation of Irish drama.

Literature, and drama in particular, can participate in the construction of social identities by representing an imaginary world that could one day become real. In fact, the theatre is a representational space in which, through language, imagery, sets, costumes and poses, the grounding of identities and culture is subject to questioning, resistance and fab-

¹ Christopher Fitz-Simon, *The Abbey Theatre* (London:Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.87.

rication. Outraged at the process by which the nation-state attempted to dictate and delimit the meaning of Irishness, Behan tried to dismantle it in his writings. He disagreed with the phoney Gaelic League's cultural project, which aimed at defining some cultural expressions as native and natural and others as foreign and corrupt. He claimed such an approach was based on exclusion and fabrication. In *The Hostage*, Behan stages a tolerant society based on inclusion rather than exclusion, on negotiation rather than fabrication of meaning. Like O'Casey before him, he also re-introduced the urban, English-speaking working-class as an ingredient of Irish social identity. This was in opposition to what he perceived as de Valera's invention of a pure Gaelic, rural, Catholic and male-dominated one. In so doing, he looked for and found the common points between the English and Irish working classes. As he writes in *Borstal Boy*: 'I had the same rearing as most of them, Dublin, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, London.'² Indeed, *The Hostage* employs the techniques and stratagems of the early 20th century musical hall, all familiar to Dublin and London audiences. Thus, under the superficial aspects of the play lie deeper layers of meaning. In order to question the Irish society of his time and also imagine a more tolerant and less bigoted one, Behan uses a certain number of devices and tackles taboo themes. Eschewing any realism in style, he draws on humour, music-hall songs and dance, and parodies as he spotlights dropouts, draws attention to homosexuality, sex and alcohol abuse, denounces racism, attacks religion and undermines and destabilises the nationalist discourse.

Indeed, *The Hostage* foregrounds a group of 'sinners': prostitutes, homosexuals, debauched religious people, but also people who may have killed, albeit during a war. They all live in a Dublin brothel kept by a former IRA fighter and owned by an Anglo-Irish man who is not 'right in the head' and who thinks the War of Independence is still going on. The plot revolves around a retaliation process: a young English soldier, Leslie, has been captured by the IRA in order to be executed in case an IRA boy held in a Belfast jail is hanged. The English soldier is held in the brothel and his meeting with Irish people prompts various kinds of behaviour and questions about Anglo-Irish relationships.

² Brendan Behan, *Borstal Boy* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), p.241.

According to Nicholas Grene,³ Brendan Behan was the first to bring gays to the stage, whereas, in *The Plough and the Stars*, O'Casey had set a precedent with the prostitute character. Equally, and especially in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde may have intimated the existence of a gay world, but before Behan did so in *The Hostage*, nobody in Ireland had dared to put gays openly on stage. Indeed, the Wolfenden Report is mentioned in a song in the play.⁴ This report published in the UK on 3/9/57, recommended that 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence.' However, it must be remembered here that Ireland was to wait more than 35 years after this report and the first staging of *The Hostage* for male homosexuality to be decriminalized (1993).

On 14th October 1958, the play had its premiere, not at the Abbey Theatre, but at the Theatre Royal in London under the direction of Joan Littlewood. It is interesting to note that quite recently, in January 2007, The Abbey was perceived as trying to make up for its lack of interest in gay politics by hosting events under the theme of transgression. The cross-dressing performer Shirley Temple Bar was chosen to lead this initiative. However, in an article published in *Irish Theatre International* Fintan Walsh argued:

[...] as much as the Abbey wanted to coopt Temple Bar as an icon for a progressive Abbey Theatre and contemporary Ireland, it could neither physically nor conceptually territorialize her and all that she represented for queer culture.⁵

Although one could argue that *The Hostage* has a fairly outdated treatment of homosexuality, one can nevertheless find traces of a modern discourse in the way that Behan challenges the representation of masculinities. First, he plays with dress codes: one of the 'queers', Princess Grace, who in general is dressed as a woman, also appears 'in boxing kit with gloves on.'⁶ At the end of the play, the two IRA men appear dressed as

³ Nicholas Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama, Plays in Context from Bouicault to Friel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.219.

⁴ Brendan Behan, *The Hostage* (London: Methuen Drama, 1962 (1958), p.98.

⁵ Fintan Walsh, *Irish Theatre International*, Vol.1, Number1 (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2008), p.68.

⁶ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.19.

nuns. Of course, the disguise is employed so as to escape the police, but Behan seems to imply that Irish society is hypocritical in the sense that clothes fail to show what people really are. By changing clothes, one can easily change identity. Challengingly, the two 'queers' are seen to display physical courage when, at the end of the play, they join with the police to rescue Leslie.

Behan uses gender confusion as well: the name Leslie could be that of a man or a woman and ultimately Leslie is almost persuaded to change sexual orientation. When Meg asks Rio Rita what sort of a woman he saw upstairs in Mulleady's room, he answers 'a female woman', implying that sex is not necessarily related to gender. Moreover, Behan sketches an imagined new society based on love and tolerance. For example, Mulleady, the policeman who discovers his own homosexuality, marks his coming out by singing a song with the other 'queers':

The highest people in the land
Are for or they're against,
It's all the same in the end,
A piece of sentiment.⁷

The song suggests that homosexuality is as much about love as is heterosexuality. In addition, Behan indicates in a stage direction that 'the whores and queers sort themselves out into a dance for the outcasts of the world', thus suggesting a more inclusive society. But he is not being naive about it because he adds 'there is jealousy and comfort in the dance',⁸ thus admitting that human relationships, whether homosexual or heterosexual, are complex, not always easy, but still capable of providing the life-enhancing comfort of solidarity.

Given that the play is set in a brothel with a bar, repeated alcohol consumption is inevitable. It is a pastime, a comfort and a social and economic activity. Theatre critics have often argued that to show Irish people drinking is to perpetuate a stereotype that prevails among foreign audiences, it is how they imagine the Irish. However, the pub maintains a central place in Irish social life. What is interesting in the play, though, is

⁷ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.97.

⁸ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.98.

how Behan mocks the teetotal IRA Officer, going as far as making him wear a badge that says he doesn't drink alcohol.⁹

As far as sex is concerned, it is the central activity of a brothel. However, one cannot find any deep questioning of the prostitution trade in the play, it all sounds as if it were a job like any other. The atmosphere of sexual freedom created by Behan is especially shown in the relationship between Leslie and Teresa, the skivvy. At the end of their duet in which Leslie sings "But first I think we should see if we fit each other",¹⁰ they run to the bed and the lights black out. Not only are they unmarried but Leslie is English and Teresa Irish. The author encourages fraternization between the coloniser and the colonised because he wants the audience to identify with this young couple and reflect on notions of hate and nations. We also learn that Teresa has had a religious upbringing and the nuns were not tolerant in matters pertaining to boys. When Teresa starts telling the lovely story about the mixed infants of the convent, about little boys and girls under five years of age who were educated together, Leslie is quite taken by this idea and asks Teresa to tell him more about it. Here Behan provides a vision of an innocent society where boys and girls – and why not men and women? – live together harmoniously, just like in paradise. Parallel to this free-love relationship, Behan places the guilty relationship between Mulleady, the civil servant, and Miss Gilchrist, the social worker. Their discourse, and the stage directions, make it clear that theirs is a sexual liaison:

Mulleady: Let us say a prayer, Miss Gilchrist, and we will be forgiven [Mr Mulleady's hand strays and gooses Miss Gilchrist].

Miss Gilchrist: In nomine – please, Mr Mulleady let us not fall from grace again.

Mulleady: I'm very sorry, Miss Gilchrist, let not the right hand know what the left hand is doing. Miss Gilchrist, can you [The hand strays again and strokes Miss Gilchrist's tail].

Meg: Mr Mulleady.

Mulleady: – feel our souls together?¹¹

In these lines, Behan denounces the hypocrisy of so-called religious people, and simultaneously conveys the pervasiveness of religious discourse

⁹ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.28.

¹⁰ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.71.

¹¹ Behan, *The Hostage*, pp.20-21.

in what might be seen as an unlikely place. It becomes even funnier when Miss Gilchrist and Mulleady, who want to justify their being together in a brothel room, start singing ‘Our souls. Our souls. Our souls’, slowly slurring to ‘arseholes’.¹² If the Catholic Church did not have such a dominant position, be it in education or the organisation of society, Irish citizens might enjoy a less guilty and frustrated sex life. Although the play was written at a period when clerical sex scandals were not covered in the media (or indeed talked about in polite society, if at all), Behan already expresses mistrust through the character Meg, who declares about her father ‘Mine was the parish priest’,¹³ though this was, of course, well known and more widely admitted in an earlier era – as attested to by the Irish surnames that mean priest’s son, or bishop’s son (Mac an tsagairt/MacEntaggart and Mac an easpaigh/McEnaspey).

There are other ironic comments upon religion in the play and it is interesting to note how the characters relate to this. For example, the prostitute Colette is more worried about having taken a communist client than about being a prostitute: ‘it’s against my religion to have anything to do with the likes of him’,¹⁴ and she does not want to err again because she has been ‘to confession three times already’.¹⁵ Religious heroes are compared to the Royal family, whom Miss Gilchrist worships, and the Bible to sensationalist newspapers.¹⁶ Talking about the Bible, Leslie even says ‘it’s blue’¹⁷ and Mulleady sings ‘it’s all a lot of nonsense, about as true as leprechaun or elf’.¹⁸ The very last scene of the play is a reflection on the choice of religions and the tiny things that sometimes differentiate them. At this point, Leslie is dead and is found wearing a Catholic medal with the Virgin Mary on it. Rio Rita expresses his surprise and says he didn’t know he was a Catholic boy.¹⁹ Again appearances are deceptive: Leslie is taken for a Catholic but of course the audience knows that Teresa gave the medal to him as a token of her love. In addition, Leslie

¹² Behan, *The Hostage*, p.24.

¹³ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.73.

¹⁴ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.8.

¹⁵ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.9.

¹⁶ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.54.

¹⁷ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.54.

¹⁸ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.55.

¹⁹ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.108.

had earlier confessed that he never thought about being a Protestant.²⁰ Here Behan suggests that we should not allow any religion to hold us hostage, and that religion may even not matter at all.

At first glance, the play may appear to be racist in places, but if Behan chose to create racist characters, it is in order to point out that this may be a law that should be highlighted. The treatment of the Russian sailor in Act I is a case in point: Rio Rita interrupts him with a sharp ‘Oh shut up, you dirty foreign bastard’,²¹ later, the IRA Officer refers to him as ‘that’ and ‘this’.²² In Act II, Monsewer sings a colonialist song which is reminiscent of Kipling’s poems and which ends with ‘praise God that we are white and better still we’re English’.²³ It is echoed by Leslie’s song at the end of the same act: ‘But I wish the Irish and the niggers and the wogs were kicked out and sent back home’.²⁴ Since he wants the audience to reflect and react, Behan attracts attention to the fact that racism is a cross-cultural and cross-class sentiment shared equally by men and women, heterosexual and homosexual. At the same time, he gives hints as to what he thinks Irish society could become: Rio Rita has a black lover, called ironically Princess Grace, an allusion to Grace Kelly, Princess of Monaco in the 1950s. In Act II, Behan even makes Princess Grace parade through the room carrying a large banner inscribed ‘KEEP IRELAND BLACK’,²⁵ while Miss Gilchrist sings ‘Land of Hope and Glory’, the IRA Officer sings ‘the Soldier’s Song’ and the Russian sailor the Soviet national anthem! This is an extremely confused moment in the play where everybody demands something different. The variety would indicate Behan’s acceptance of diversity, his rejection of any notion of a monolithic culture, and his obvious desire for freedom of speech and opinion.

John Brannigan has postulated that Behan’s writings participate in the emergence of revisionist and postcolonial critiques of modern nationalism.²⁶ Indeed, Behan does deconstruct the Irish identity that was de-

²⁰ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.68.

²¹ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.5.

²² Behan, *The Hostage*, p.29.

²³ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.65.

²⁴ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.78.

²⁵ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.76.

²⁶ John Brannigan, “Belated Behan : Brendan Behan and the cultural politics of memory”, in *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, Fall-Winter 2002, pp.1-9.

picted, within a nationalist discourse, as honest, pure, Catholic and heterosexual. On the one hand, in *The Hostage* he presents a population that does not correspond to the standards of honesty and purity usually ascribed to the Irish people by nationalist politicians, activists and the Catholic Church. For instance, the male and virile IRA volunteers are ridiculed: the IRA Officer is ignorant of the history of his own non-monolithic Republican movement and he is proud of being a non-communist, good Catholic teetotaler. Pat, the tenant of the brothel, tells him: 'you're a shocking decent person'.²⁷ The other volunteer is also made fun of: he is guarding the young English prisoner but he desperately needs to go to the toilet. When he is denied the right to go and relieve himself by the Officer, he simply obeys but he keeps hobbling until he goes, looking much more like a little boy than a die-hard soldier. He is also found asleep at Leslie's table in Act III,²⁸ can be easily persuaded to drink beer, and could also be persuaded to use the services of one of the prostitutes; in sum, he is patently unreliable and does not have the high moral standards that IRA members are supposed to have.

Women in the play are demonstrably creatures of flesh and blood and are not pure either. Thus they do not resemble the idealised and symbolic representations of Ireland that were peddled by some nationalists. Meg, Pat's girlfriend, is an ex-prostitute, the other girls are prostitutes too; the skivvy Teresa, although – or because – she was brought up in a convent, is very flirtatious with Leslie; Miss Gilchrist, who is a mistress, if not a past-master, of double entendre, is more interested in sex than the rules of her religion would allow. On the other hand, the nationalist discourse is not only elaborated by male political leaders but mainly discussed by the ex-prostitute Meg, the brothel keeper Pat, and the 'queer' Rio Rita. As Brannigan has noted: '[...] in Behan's pub scenes, the living do nothing but talk of the 1916 Rising and, more importantly, their various highly fictionalized roles in it. Behan's sketch acknowledges the 1916 Rising as a potent mythical event, a piece of pure theatre.'²⁹

I would go so far as to add that Behan 'de-essentializes' the nationalist discourse; this can be summed up by Meg's cue when she talks about the Anglo-Irish Monsewer in Act I: 'I'm with you he wasn't born

²⁷ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.33.

²⁸ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.99.

²⁹ Brannigan, 'Belated Behan', p.4.

an Irishman. He became one.³⁰ Is Behan paraphrasing Simone de Beauvoir, ‘*On ne naît pas femme, on le devient*’ (One is not born a woman, one becomes one). *The Second Sex* was published in English in 1953, a few years before *The Hostage*. Could Behan have been aware of the book and interested in its contents? If he was not, Moya Carmody, who had helped him to transcribe the play, was definitely familiar with the text.³¹ To add some weight to this theory, Boris Vian may have introduced Brendan Behan to Simone de Beauvoir, since *The Quare Fellow* was translated into French by Vian and Jacqueline Sundstrom in 1959, and *The Hostage* translated solely by Jacqueline Sundstrom. Whether or not there is substance to this supposition, Behan implies in this calque that the whole Irish nationalist discourse is a construction, a fabricated myth.

Behan can be seen to convey similar doubts about the position of the Irish language. He had learned Irish partly in prison and although he wrote the first version of the play in Irish, the majority of his work was written in English. Some critics said the Irish version was superior to the English one, but Behan, encouraged by the director Joan Littlewood of the Theatre Royal in London, was also practical and wanted to make the play more accessible and more successful in the English-speaking world. He is not sectarian about the language; he has the opposite attitude to the critics who accused him of having sold out. In the play, he is quite ironic about the use of the language. For example, when Pat says, ‘That’s Irish. That’s a great thing, an Oxford University education! Me I’m a poor ignorant Dublin man. I wouldn’t understand a word of it’,³² he refers to Monsewer, who has learned the language at school in an artificial way. Here Behan injects the humour of paradox because it would be expected that an Irishman would understand Irish better than would an Englishman. In fact, it seems that the higher up people were in society, the more attached they were to the Irish language: the joke about de Valera who is supposed to speak seven languages relies on Pat’s answer: ‘it’s a terrible pity that English or Irish are not among them, so we’d know what he was saying at odd times’.³³ In both examples, we understand that Pat is also class conscious and knows that people like Monsewer or de Valera do

³⁰ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.15.

³¹ Conversation with Mary Pierse, 4th AFIS Conference, University of Rennes 2, 23-24 May 2008.

³² Behan, *The Hostage*, p.6.

³³ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.35.

not belong to his down-to-earth working-class world. He actually says earlier to the IRA Officer ‘[...] the only bit of Irish I know would get us both prosecuted’.³⁴ In this phrase, the author tells us that Irish can be coarse and thus deconstructs the myth of an Irish language that is beautiful, pure, close to nature and represents the essence of the Irish people because it was spoken before Ireland was colonised by the English. Finally, Leslie calls Gaelic ‘garlic’,³⁵ an easy pun probably intended to make English audiences laugh, but which can also be interpreted as a hidden insult as it is well known that few English people were interested in foreign languages.

Thanks to its international success, *The Hostage* also participated in the globalisation of Irish theatre. Yet, this recognition was sometimes distorted by questionable choices. For example, in France, the play was staged at the Théâtre de l’Odéon on the 14th February 1962 by Georges Wilson, but in an adaptation by Jean Paris, who gave it a more camp tone than was needed by emphasising the gayness of the male characters. Their voices, gestures, costumes and attitudes were exaggerated in such a way as to provoke the laughter of the audience. Indeed, during the 1950s it was still difficult to tackle the subject of homosexuality without shocking people or provoking embarrassed laughter.

However, although partly caricatural and farcical, I think that *The Hostage* is an important step in the portrayal of a more tolerant and secular society in Irish drama. In fact, Behan did want to create a more inclusive society, in that he strove to make Ireland more accepting of homosexuals, prostitutes, non-religious people, all groups who were marginalised at the time. He was also keen to get Ireland and Britain to acknowledge their common heritage. He wrote in 1965: ‘The two nations are inextricably mixed up and little in the way of national characteristics divide them.’³⁶ In the play, the relationship between the Irish woman Teresa and her English boyfriend Leslie is a symbol for a possible accommodation between the two nations.

³⁴ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.28.

³⁵ Behan, *The Hostage*, p.62.

³⁶ Brendan Behan, *Brendan Behan’s Island* (London: Corgi, 1965), p.75.

Jean Brihault

Dermot Bolger, romancier de la mondialisation ?

Le terme ‘mondialisation’ désigne le développement de liens d’interdépendance entre hommes et femmes, activités humaines et systèmes politiques à l’échelle du monde. Ce phénomène touche la plupart des domaines avec des effets et une temporalité propres à chacun. Il évoque aussi parfois les transferts internationaux de main d’œuvre ou de connaissances. (*Wikipédia*)

Cette définition s’applique de manière flagrante au roman de Dermot Bolger intitulé *The Family on Paradise Pier*,¹ publié en 2005.

Ce roman a constitué une sorte de ‘cas de conscience’ pour Dermot Bolger, ‘cas de conscience’ qu’il expose dans une *Author’s Note* placée à la fin du roman. La première phrase du second paragraphe de cette note donne une idée des scrupules du romancier au cours de sa composition : ‘To write a book like this is to feel yourself being judged not just by the living but by the dead.’ (547) Suit une tentative de description de la stratégie adoptée dans laquelle, comme dans la phrase précédemment citée, on observe une claire réticence à utiliser le terme ‘novel’ :

Rather than pretend to be able to tell the full truth, this book deliberately plays with many aspects of reality. I changed the first names to show that Eva, Maud, Thomas, Art and Brendan are re-creations shaped by my own imagination. I retained the family name because the Goold Verschoyle children were too unique to be any other family. My wilful blurring of reality [...] may frustrate historians.

On perçoit ici ce qu’il faut entendre par ‘cas de conscience’. Il y a scrupule à l’égard des êtres de chair et de sang dont les vies ont fourni la substance du roman, mais il y a également scrupule à l’égard de l’acte

¹ Les indications de pages fournies à la fin des citations renvoient à Dermot Bolger, *The Family on Paradise Pier* (Londres & New York, Fourth Estate, 2005).

d'écriture lui-même, à l'égard de cette relation toujours équivoque entre fiction et réalité telle que mise en valeur, également, dans le roman de Jonathan Littel, *Les Bienveillantes*.

UN PROLOGUE PARADIGMATIQUE

Dès le début, le lecteur est invité à entrer dans la logique qui sera celle du roman. Une première séquence présente Brendan Goold Verschoyle dans le wagon qui le transporte avec les autres *Zeks* d'un lieu inconnu, vers un autre lieu inconnu, quelque part en Union soviétique comme nous l'apprendrons dans la troisième partie, au chapitre 30 très exactement. Ce chapitre 30 colorera *a posteriori* le prologue puisque il en reprendra des fragments selon un agencement modifié et en articulation avec des fragments textuels neufs. On observe donc, dès ces deux premières pages du prologue (avant l'ouverture du 'vrai' récit donc), l'incomplétude du texte et une démarche selon laquelle l'indéfinition de l'espace géographique est rendue par l'incomplétude de l'espace-texte dans un jeu de miroirs tout à fait remarquable.

Survient alors le rêve auquel se laisse aller Brendan et qui le renvoie à son enfance irlandaise, à Paradise Pier et à sa famille. Sur le plan textuel, c'est bien évidemment au titre, encore inexpliqué à ce stade précoce de l'œuvre, que se trouve renvoyé le lecteur. L'espace onirique s'imisce dans l'espace réel ou, plus exactement (n'oublions pas que nous sommes dans un roman et non dans la vraie vie), une fiction de rêve envahit une fiction de réel. De manière frappante, à l'indéfinition de l'espace 'réel' répond une hyper-définition de l'espace onirique. Alors que celui-là donne lieu à une évocation telle que :

But more often those stops occurred for no obvious reason. There would be no sound outside after the wheels came to a rusty halt, no footsteps, no safety catches unleashed, no orders screamed... (1),

celui-ci débute ainsi :

The four Goold Verschoyle children were home from boarding school for Easter, reunited with their sister Eva who was considered too delicate to send away. They were bathing at Bruckless Pier in Donegal Bay. At sixteen, Brendan's eldest brother, Art, raced hand in hand with seventeen-year-old Eva... (3).

Suivra une présentation complète de la fratrie avec prénoms et âges. Ce rêve enchâssé est alors mis à mal par un arrêt du train dans lequel se trouve Brendan.

La deuxième section du prologue transporte le lecteur vers le Mayo où Eva, la sœur de Brendan, désormais mariée mais dont le mari se trouve à Londres, demeure avec ses deux enfants. Ici encore, l'espace physique envahit l'écriture, à tel point que, à une demi-page de distance on trouve ces deux phrases : 'The hazel, with its coppery-brown bark and dangling yellow catkins, was called *Corylus avellana*' (6) et 'Hazel emerged from the stables where she had been brushing down her pony and went to fill a bucket with water as the pump handle creaked in rusty protest.' (7) On aura remarqué, bien-sûr, le jeu sur 'hazel', mais également la remise en cause de la dénomination puisque le 'vrai' nom du noisetier est *Corylus avellana*. Point n'est besoin de souligner non plus la manière dont le 'rusty' de la seconde citation renvoie au 'coppery-brown' de la première mais, également, dans une logique de rétro-lecture, aux arrêts du train, quelque part en Union soviétique, 'after the wheels came to a rusty halt.' (1)

La troisième section du prologue emmène le lecteur à Oxford. Nous comprendrons, plus tard, ce que signifient tous ces lieux ainsi que la nature de leur relation entre eux d'une part et aux personnages et à leur histoire, d'autre part. Mais ce qui est intéressant pour notre propos, c'est que Mrs Goold Verschoyle, à l'automne de sa vie, se remémore le rêve qu'elle vient de faire:

She lay on for a moment, recalling her dream about Donegal. She could still see Mr and Mrs Ffrench crossing their lawn from Bruckless House down to the stone pier with trays of homemade lemonade for the visiting swimmers. Brendan had loved their lemonade, often prolonging his thirst so as to savour the taste. (8)

Non seulement Mrs Goold Verschoyle fait un rêve qui, comme celui de son fils, la ramène à Donegal Pier, mais le détail saillant concerne la manière dont Brendan enfant prolongeait l'attente de la limonade pourtant disponible pour mieux s'en délecter. Comment de pas rapprocher cette anecdote de la précision apportée page 3, reprise page 443 :

He was hungry now but would wait until the apex of this starvation before starting to slowly chew the last chunk of black bread. To be able to control when he briefly relieved his hunger gave him a sense of power. (3)

La quatrième section du prologue nous ramène dans le Mayo. Mais, cette fois, la demeure ancestrale de la famille du mari de Eva prend une nouvelle coloration qui est celle que l'on retrouve dans tant de 'Big House novels' :

Glanmire House had undoubtedly gone to seed. Cracked windowpanes had not been replaced, loose tiles let rainwater into disused rooms with walls covered in a seaweed-like vegetation. (9)

Dans la logique de lecture choisie, nous voyons ici tous les indices d'instabilité et de non permanence du lieu, le tout étant couronné par cette référence à cette 'seaweed-like vegetation' qui ne peut que renvoyer au rêve de Mrs Goold Verschoyle à Oxford : 'Brendan, her youngest, had been like a fish in her dream.' (8) et au rêve de Brendan dans son train soviétique : 'Brendan saw himself, nine years of age and sleek as a silvery fish, flitting through green water.' (4) Cette quatrième section présente en outre l'intérêt de rendre palpable la notion d'espace culturel. Le mari d'Eva s'étant engagé dans l'armée britannique, nous apprenons que 'For Protestant neighbours the fact that Freddie had joined the British army was sufficient to reinstate respectability after the debacle of their bankruptcy.' (10) Mais ceci est, dans un certain sens, contrebalancé par le rappel que

The Irish preferred to receive news of the tightening Nazi noose by listening to Lord Haw-Haw's bragging tones on German radio. Even then she suspected that most locals only listened because Haw-Haw was a fellow Connaught man and they took pride to see a local do well for himself in any walk of life. (11)

Mais même cette dichotomie ne fonctionne pas puisque William Joyce, alias Lord Haw-Haw, était un catholique farouchement unioniste, fier d'avoir aidé les *Black and Tans* et ayant échappé de justesse à une tentative d'assassinat de la part de l'IRA.

Dans la cinquième section, la première phrase présente Art Goold (et non plus Goold Verschoyle) 'in the wooden dormitory hut of the Curragh Internment Camp for subversives'. (12) De manière intéressante, on observe ici comment l'espace, jusqu'à présent essentiellement physique et géographique, devient également arbitraire et identitaire. Arbitraire dans la mesure où il est défini par des barbelés dont le positionnement ne répond à aucune donnée géographique, historique ou logique. Ceci ren-

voie le lecteur à la première section de ce prologue évoquant Brendan Goold Verschoyle et les autres prisonniers entassés dans le train qui les mène de nulle part à nulle part : ‘their first task would be to erect barbed-wire fences around themselves’ (2), démarche aberrante et dérisoire d’auto-enfermement qui trouve donc son écho dans l’espace irlandais à la cinquième section, mais également dans le comportement des deux principaux personnages, Art et Brendan, qui, en érigeant autour d’eux les barbelés d’une idéologie intransigeante se coupent de leurs proches et de leurs racines. Arbitraire et identitaire à la fois, dans la mesure où ceux qui se retrouvent enfermés le sont du fait de leur identité telle que définie par ceux qui décident de leur enfermement : ‘subversives’ (12), ‘foreigners or had been contaminated by contact with foreigners.’ (3) Strictement identitaire, enfin, dans la mesure où Art se voit amputé d’une partie de lui-même pour ne plus être que Art Goold.

Dans la logique de renvois et de correspondances qui va caractériser l’ensemble du roman et dont le lecteur prend progressivement conscience au cours du prologue, les barbelés qui restreignent les mouvements de Art renvoient non seulement à ceux qui ont enfermé et enfermeront son frère, Brendan, en Union soviétique, mais également à ceux, métaphoriques, de la public school anglaise qu’il a fréquentée au cours de son adolescence : ‘The discipline of the camp suited him. It was the sole advantage gleaned from having attended Malborough College’ (12 & 431 avec légère variante). Cette analogie se confirmera au chapitre XX qui verra Brendan, le jeune frère, ‘s’évader’ de l’école le jour de ses seize ans, mais également, dans cette cinquième section du prologue où Art, entendant pleurer un jeune prisonnier membre de l’IRA, se remémore ‘dormitories of boys abducted at an early age to be brainwashed and brutalised into managing an Empire’ (12), ce qui ramène au concept d’espace géographique et de sa maîtrise.

Cette cinquième section est également celle de l’ouverture de l’espace idéologique et spirituel comme une seule citation permet de le montrer :

Not that all IRA men had open minds: some made a hurried sign of the cross when spying him. Art was used to such superstition, but most internees had grown relaxed with him, especially as he knelt alongside them at night while they recited their rosary. They knew Art did not pray, but he considered it essential to camp morale to show respect for their beliefs. (12)

Enfin, dans cette riche cinquième section, c'est l'espace linguistique qui commence à être évoqué dans sa fonction de masque de l'espace idéologique :

having emanated from the Byvshie Liudi, Art could look down on no one. Stalin had coined that term well: the former people – remnants of the despised tsarist class who refused to play their part in the revolution. (13)

De plus en plus dans ce si riche prologue, on voit émerger la logique d'articulation des espaces qui va caractériser l'ensemble du roman. Les espaces, quelque soit leur nature, sont interchangeable, s'opposent et se ressemblent, se renforcent les uns les autres et se détruisent également. Enfin, leur définition et leurs jalons sont mouvants et contribuent davantage à une perte de repères chez le lecteur qu'à son information. C'est cette caractéristique qui autorise à évoquer le côté mondialiste du roman de Bolger. Il n'est pas mondialiste parce qu'il traite de la mondialisation, il peut être considéré comme mondialiste parce qu'il est le roman de la perte de repères des personnages et des lecteurs du fait de la logique de collision et de collusion des espaces qui le caractérise.

Les deux dernières sections du prologue ramènent à des espaces déjà évoqués et n'ajoutent rien au regard du parti pris de lecture ici adopté.

Comme cela a déjà été suggéré, ce prologue n'est d'aucune signification sur le plan informatif. Toutes les informations qu'il contient seront ultérieurement fournies dans une organisation où chronologie des événements et chronologie du récit se correspondront. Le roman propose donc une organisation du temps narratif en boucle du prologue au chapitre trente où le temps du chapitre trente correspond à celui du prologue, puis une espèce de prolongation linéaire de huit chapitres. La mise en balance sur le plan narratif du relatif chaos du prologue et du confortable ordonnancement du reste du récit constitue donc une invitation à considérer que l'auteur utilise le prologue pour présenter son paradigme d'écriture. Ce paradigme serait alors calé sur le jeu complexe des espaces entre eux tant sur le plan des événements faisant l'objet du récit que sur le plan narratif, un jeu dans lequel les espaces entrent tantôt en collision, tantôt en collusion, remettant en cause les repérages traditionnels et encourageant, dans le cadre du récit, les réponses structurantes simples, voire simplistes de la part des personnages et invitant, par voie de conséquence, le lecteur à s'interroger face à la technique narrative mise en œuvre.

NATURE DES ESPACES

Les espaces, dans ce roman de Bolger, sont d'abord physiques. Trente et un des trente-huit chapitres fournissent dans leur titre une indication de lieu, les plus fréquentes occurrences concernant le Donegal (9), Londres (5) et le Comté de Mayo (5). Nous avons, par ailleurs, déjà évoqué la manière dont le prologue s'ouvre sur une indéfinition géographique. Le train dans lequel roulent les prisonniers (n'oublions pas que le prologue est sous-titré '1941') fait d'abord songer à ceux qui emmenaient les victimes de la barbarie nazie vers les camps de concentration du 3^{ème} Reich. Ce n'est qu'à la seconde page que le mot 'gulag' laisse envisager une autre possibilité.

L'indication géographique fournie en sous-titre du chapitre 30 (qui, comme nous l'avons signalé, fait référence aux événements déjà évoqués dans le prologue) donne pour seule indication de lieu 'The Soviet Union'. On peut, par ailleurs, se demander pourquoi cette indication, aussi vague soit-elle, n'a pas été fournie à l'ouverture du prologue alors que l'indication de date l'était.

Cet incipit culmine avec cette référence déjà évoquée à des 'zeks who were foreigners or had been contaminated by contact with foreigners' (3): c'est bien le caractère 'étranger' de l'être, donc de l'espace dont il provient, qui le définit comme dangereux, et qui, de ce fait, va également le désigner comme victime et va, enfin et de manière paradoxale, parfois lui conférer une fonction prototypale pour celui-là même qui voit en lui son ennemi.

Le pôle indissociable de celui-ci est celui de 'home', déjà présent avec une valeur ambigüe dans le titre du troisième roman de Dermot Bolger (*The Journey Home*, 1990). Il est ici mis en valeur dans l'évocation du rêve de Brendan par la poétique du texte bouclant la première phrase sur un 'away' par définition antinomique de 'home' : 'The four Goid Verschoyle children were *home* from boarding school for Easter, reunited with their sister Eva who was considered too delicate to send *away*.' (3, c'est moi qui souligne)

Ces deux notions de 'home' et 'away' peuvent donc désormais nous servir de repères pour organiser notre lecture. Il pourrait être tentant de les considérer comme équivalentes des notions d'irlandais et d'étranger. Après tout, c'est bien ce contraste que propose le rêve de Brendan dans le prologue. Toutefois, cette proposition ne fonctionne pas comme le démontre la relation d'Eva à sa nouvelle maison, celle du Comté Mayo déjà

évoquée dans le prologue. Par ailleurs, ‘home’ est un bien dont la transmission, bien que théoriquement réglée par la loi, ne fonctionne pas comme prévu. Le premier chapitre signale que ‘Eva might be Grandpappy’s favourite but in time Art would be his heir after Father, with the Manor House perpetually indentured by law to be passed in trust to the eldest son of the eldest son.’ (35). Mais cet héritage ne sera nullement assumé. Non seulement Art portera cette relation de propriété comme une pierre au cou, mais sa tentative de partage avec les nécessiteux de Dublin sera un fiasco métonymique de son échec à gérer son héritage également hors du champ de la matérialité.

On peut considérer qu’il existe dans le roman trois échelles pour ce qui concerne l’espace physique. La première est celle du continent européen avec comme dimension essentielle un axe Irlande-Union soviétique. Il faut, toutefois, également tenir compte, dans cette logique de l’Espagne de la guerre civile qui apparaît au chapitre 20 (‘The Volunteer ; Barcelona, January 1937’). Le déplacement Donegal-Union soviétique concerne quatre des personnages : Mr et Mrs Ffrench d’une part, Art et Brendan Goold Verschoyle, d’autre part. L’Espagne n’implique que Brendan Goold Verschoyle, mais également des Soviétiques connaissant, surveillant et contrôlant son frère, Art. La seconde échelle est celle des îles dites britanniques, C’est le périmètre d’action et de vie normal (et attendu) des personnages étant donné leur milieu social. La troisième est celle de l’intimité, des espaces restreints, soit pour le meilleur (Paradise Pier), soit pour le pire (la chambre de ‘tenement’ à Dublin, l’appartement collectif à Moscou ou bien encore les wagons ou navires surpeuplés et infestés de vermine qui transportent Brendan d’un point indéfini à un autre à l’intérieur de l’Union soviétique, mais également la chambre d’Oxford où mourra Mrs Goold Verschoyle).

L’espace large (première échelle) semble essentiellement gouverné par l’idéologie, mais également par le mensonge, la trahison et l’imposition de la douleur physique. Lorsque Mr Ffrench effectue, pour la première fois, le voyage de la Russie en pleine révolution bolchévique, c’est en tant qu’officier de marine britannique. Revenu dans le Donegal depuis un couple d’heures, il entre en conversation avec un sergent de l’armée britannique. De ce dialogue, on peut extraire deux échanges révélateurs du sentiment de trahison qui habite le sergent britannique en entendant le propos de Mr Ffrench, mais également de la fragilité des lignes de démarcation idéologiques et de leur nature arbitraire :

‘Damned hard luck about the withdrawal of the expeditionary force from Russia, sir,’ the sergeant addressed Mr Ffrench. ‘I hear the Bolsheviks are savages.’

‘On the contrary,’ Mr Ffrench replied, the Bolsheviks are men of principle, which is more than can be said for the White Russians we were shoring up [...]

The sergeant searched Mr Ffrench’s face as if this was a black joke that he was missing. His tone stiffened. (74-75)

The soldiers raised their rifles, then lowered them, sensing Mr Ffrench’s military bearing as he stood beside Dr O’Donnell. The sergeant saluted.

[...]

And don’t salute me, I’m a civilian.’ (74)

Le sentiment de trahison ressenti par le sergent est palpable, ceci d’autant plus qu’il précise qu’il a perdu, dans cette campagne de Mourmansk, un cousin père de deux enfants.

La trahison est également celle de Mrs Ffrench, plus tard dans le roman, lorsqu’elle sera bien obligée de s’avouer à elle-même qu’elle exècre cette vie soviétique misérable que son mari lui a imposée. Plus encore, elle sera celle de Ffrench lui-même à l’égard de l’idéal communiste qu’il prétend servir et de l’Union soviétique qu’il présente comme le paradis sur terre.

L’espace le plus étroit (troisième échelle) est celui de l’affectif et de l’intime ce terme n’étant certainement pas ici à considérer comme connoté de façon positive comme le prouve cette citation du chapitre 30 reprenant le prologue : ‘In the stampede to relieve themselves, dignity would be forgotten as men and women squatted together under the gaze of the guards and their dogs’ (440) ou bien encore le chapitre 27 décrivant l’horreur de la vie dans les cales du bateau de transport de prisonniers vers le grand nord soviétique.

L’espace intermédiaire est le moins riche, mais demeure essentiel dans la mesure où il constitue le lien entre les deux autres.

Les espaces du roman sont également idéologiques. Les premières paroles rapportées au style direct dans le roman se trouvent à la seconde page du premier chapitre et elles sont celles d’une prière qui vient spontanément à l’esprit d’Eva au matin d’un jour de bonheur : ‘O Lord whom I cannot hope to understand or see, maker of song thrush and skylark and linnet. Do with my life what you will. Bring me whatever love or torment will unleash my heart. Just let me be the person I could if my soul was stretched to its limits.’ (24) Suit une longue méditation religieuse se con-

cluant sur cette adresse à Dieu (mais lequel?): ‘Can you see your child, Lord, dancing her way back to you?’ Cette rêverie définit bien les Eglises comme des territoires dont le seul avantage est sans doute qu’ils sont bornés contrairement à celui de la spiritualité :

But if Eva did not belong with her family in the reserved top pew in Killaghtee church, where did she belong ? Neither in the Roman Catholic chapel which Cook and Nurse attended nor with the Methodists in their meeting hall next door to her home. (24-25)

Cette manière de définir les Eglises au moyen d’un repérage socio-politique commence à introduire ce qui sera l’une des caractéristiques du roman, à savoir, l’idéologie comme obstacle entre moi et l’Autre. C’est également un moyen de mettre sur un pied d’égalité toutes les idéologies quelque soit leur nature. La religion établie se trouve d’ailleurs clairement égratignée lors de la description du cousin George :

Cousin George was a wise chameleon, secretly in tune with Mother when discussing the occult and yet indistinguishable from any other Church of Ireland curate when a guest preacher in the pulpit at Killaghtee church before their neighbours. (29)

On aura remarqué, au passage, que “Mother” est une occultiste. Quant aux Ffrenches, les nouveaux voisins qui mèneront Art et Brendan sur le chemin du bolchévisme et de l’anéantissement personnel, ils sont définis comme ‘being of a religious persuasion, the Baha’is – that not even mother had heard of.’ (29) Ne serait-ce finalement pas le grand père qui prononcerait le jugement définitif sur toutes les religions ? Faisant référence aux Ffrenches, il déclare en effet que ‘no such religion existed except among a handful of demented Arabs driven from Iran, and the Ffrenches would forget such nonsense once they began to procreate like decent Christians.’ (29) Au bout du compte la religion ne serait-elle pas seulement un label de conformité ?

Dans le domaine des espaces idéologiques, on observe, à côté du champ de la religion, celui de la politique. Au premier chapitre Eva et Art Goold Verschoyle sont successivement mis en présence d’enfants sans chaussures. Ce sont leur *alter ego*, ce qu’ils auraient pu être s’ils étaient nés dans une autre famille irlandaise. Leur intense intérêt pour ces autres eux-mêmes se situe en contraste avec l’attitude de leur famille. ‘Why does he have no shoes?’ demande Art à son grand père (35). “What

would he need shoes for?”, lui répond celui-ci, “His feet are as hard as the hob.” A quoi l’enfant rétorque “He wasn’t born with hard feet.” (36) L’une des données du roman est le caractère pré-établi des espaces ou plutôt la remise en cause de cette donnée. La comtesse Markievicz, qui est la cousine de Mr Goold Verschoyle, est définie comme ‘a traitor to her class, [...] consorting with dockers and slum revolutionaries.’ (42)

L’espace est également sexué. Le premier chapitre fournit une étrange clef à la dichotomie masculin/féminin :

Mother’s pleasure arose from holding any baby in her arms. Eva was the only baby she ever rejected, just for a brief moment after Eva was born. Take her away, (encore cet “away”) she had ordered Nurse because – having already borne one daughter – she was convinced that she had been carrying that all-important son and heir. Mother herself had told Eva this story and though Eva never sensed any trace of rejection within Mother’s unequivocal love since then, it still caused unease. (27)

Le terme ‘all-important son and heir’ prendra sa pleine signification ultérieurement lorsque le lecteur apprendra que du fait d’une clause testamentaire, la propriété des Goold Verschoyle ne peut se transmettre qu’au fils aîné. Plus tard, Eva, encore enfant, médite sur son statut de fille lors du retour du pique-nique évoqué au chapitre premier : ‘Eva envied Art his place on Grandpappy’s knee, like she envied him the status she would have enjoyed if born a boy.’ (37) Cette dichotomie trouve cependant rapidement ses limites et se voit remplacée par une catégorisation plus subtile semblant distinguer les ‘rêveurs’ des ‘réalistes.’ Une forme de résolution se fait jour à la fin du roman lorsqu’est révélée l’homosexualité du dernier-né des Goold Verschoyle, mais il est vrai qu’il ne porte déjà plus ce nom puisqu’il est le fils d’UNE et non d’UN Goold Verschoyle.

Autre élément intéressant nous ramenant au concept de mondialisation, la relation de l’individu à l’espace semble être considérée comme ce qui fait son identité :

Father laughed off this comment, saying that the Goold Verschoyle lacked one drop of English blood. They were Dutch nobles who came over with William of Orange and later married into ancient Irish clans whose ancestry he had personally traced back to Niall of the Nine Hostages. (34)

Cette identité familiale sera remise en question ultérieurement, mais le critère établissant l’identité, c’est-à-dire la relation à l’espace, ne le sera pas.

DYNAMIQUE DES ESPACES

Les rapports entre espaces sont caractérisés par la collision et la collusion. Ce double phénomène est observable pour toutes les natures d'espaces précédemment évoqués, mais également, à l'intérieur de chaque catégorie. Prenons pour exemple les espaces physiques où trois échelles ont été définies. Celle de l'intime et du privé peut fournir une illustration de notre propos. C'est au chapitre huit qu'est évoqué le logement moscovite du couple Ffrench par le biais d'un flash-back qui nous fait entrer dans la méditation de Mrs Ffrench juste rentrée en Irlande:

Every comrade citizen had been heroic even when they did not appear to be so and violent squabbles broke out between families trying to commandeer every inch of space in the room where they all ate and slept.

[...] she had wished to cry on many nights when the noise and cold and hard floor kept her awake, when she was forced to overhear strangers break wind or furtively make love despite having too many children already huddled like rats beneath piles of rags. When she had watched a husband beat his wife while other families ate super as if this monstrous behaviour was unworthy of comment or intervention. When the secret police came to take one father away for reasons that nobody knew and were careful not to speculate about. When she woke some nights longing to be back in her old bed in Ireland with clean sheets and the other decadent bourgeois trappings they had rejected. (110-111)

Cette collusion des espaces est non seulement le fait de l'identité des logements collectifs d'Union soviétique et des tenements de Dublin (soulignée par le titre de chapitre 'Crumlin Kremlin'), mais elle est également due à des attitudes similaires. Le tendre rapport entre mère et fille au premier chapitre ("We don't have secrets, you and I" (39)) ne fait qu'annoncer le faux rapport de confiance que les agents du NKVD instaurent avec ceux qu'ils souhaitent piéger, tel Brendan en Espagne.

Ces espaces sont le champ d'intrusions permanentes ce qui nous amène au concept de collision. Cet envahissement atteint à partir d'un certain moment le Donegal qui semblait pourtant jusque là épargné par cette logique. Dans le chapitre dix, ce sont Art et Mr Ffrench qui se rendent dans les tourbières et tentent d'inculquer aux ouvriers agricoles qui y travaillent les principes révolutionnaires qui sont les leurs. Le dialogue qui s'ensuit est particulièrement instructif, démontrant simultanément l'accord et le désaccord, la collusion et la collision entre les travailleurs misérables, exploités et objectivement conservateurs d'une part et les aristocrates révolutionnaires d'autre part :

One man who still held a turf sod dropped it with a shake of his head. [...] They came at us from nowhere with rigmarole and blasphemy. We were only trying to protect our souls.' [...]

'Aragh, we were up to nothing beyond mischief,' a sandy-haired young man interrupted. 'And what were they saying – only what we're never done blathering about ourselves? That we are paid lousy, that Henderson is a bag of guts who treats his cattle better than us, that after a life of work all that will await us is the County Home.'

'That's enough,' the old man with the pitchfork said.

'You've said it yourself often enough, Seanie.'

'What we say amongst ourselves is a different class of matter, entirely to what we have to listen to.' (147-148)

On voit bien ici de quelle manière intrusion de l'espace physique et intrusion de l'espace idéologique vont de pair et comment les lignes de démarcation traditionnelles ne sont pas prêtes à s'effacer. Le coup de grâce est asséné à Art lorsque l'un des ouvriers lui dit "My grandfather worked this same land for your great-grandfather [...] and he made Henderson look like a decent Christian." (148).

Le même processus sera observable lorsque Art, toujours mû par son idéalisme communiste, décidera d'ouvrir la maison familiale dont il est désormais propriétaire aux déshérités de Dublin, dans une logique toute soviétique, pour qu'ils viennent y prendre un temps de repos. Préparant le lieu pour les nouveaux arrivants, il remplace le portrait de Martin Luther par celui de Staline au mur de l'ancien bureau de son père et une photographie de famille par une citation de Andrei Zhdanov :

'We demand that our comrades be guided by the vital force of the Soviet order – its politics. Only thus can our youth be reared, not in a devil-may-care attitude but in a strong and vigorous revolutionary spirit.' (501)

A l'arrivée des familles, Art est confronté à une vague de protestation face à l'absence de 'entertainment', 'chips', et autres caractéristiques d'endroits tels que Bray, prototype du lieu de villégiature pour ces populations dublinoises défavorisées. Lorsque finalement il rétorque "there are books" à l'homme qui lui reproche de ne rien offrir comme distraction, il est interrompu sans ménagement :

'Fuck your books,' another man interrupted. 'You'd want a few amusements. Somewhere like Bray. I mean is there even a bookie's in this kip?' (504)

Ce mécanisme de l’envahissement, de l’intrusion est observable de bout en bout du roman. Il est caractéristique de cette logique de collision-collusion comme le montre l’interprétation positive cette fois du phénomène :

The front door was open and several local people had wandered in, attracted by the sound of the piano. Eva liked how people always spilled into the Manor House. (44)

Dans ce cas, néanmoins, il n’y a pas échange, contact ou interaction. Les uns sont acteurs, les autres sont spectateurs. Pour revenir au phénomène de mondialisation, nous pourrions dire qu’il y a ici démarche de type ‘touristique’.

LES ESPACES ABSENTS

Paradise Pier est bien entendu tout d’abord le lieu de l’innocence et donc du parfait bonheur. Il est celui que l’on ne cesse de contempler dans les moments de détresse. Il est celui qui appartient au passé. Il est donc, par définition, celui qui a été perdu, celui qui n’existe plus s’il a jamais existé dans toute sa perfection hors de l’imagination et du souvenir de ceux qui en ont besoin pour survivre. Et pourtant, il est le pivot et la référence tant de la vie des personnages que de l’architecture textuelle. Serait-il cette Irlande rêvée par opposition à cette Irlande réelle impliquée dans les affaires du monde, mondialisée en quelque sorte ? ‘Real Ireland’ correspond-elle au premier ou au second paradigme ? L’Irlande, dans ce roman est, d’une certaine manière, remise à sa place. Le second chapitre est intitulé ‘The News – Easter 1916’ et ses deux premières pages sont, comme s’y attend tout lecteur un tant soit peu au fait de l’histoire irlandaise, consacrées (si l’on peut dire) à la rébellion dublinoise. Cependant, dès le troisième paragraphe, c’est le conflit mondial qui envahit l’espace textuel et qui annihile les repères historiques que le lecteur avait déjà établis. Cette manipulation colore la suite du chapitre. Les rebelles conduits par Pearse et Connolly sont appelés ‘the pro-German traitors fighting in Dublin’ (51), certes pas par l’un des personnages du roman, mais par ceux que Maud, l’aînée des enfants Goold Verschoyl appelle ‘the family I was staying with.’ Mais n’est-ce pas là une autre indication qu’aucune vérité n’est jamais définitive et que l’événement ne vaut que par la manière dont on le regarde ? Le clou ne manque pas d’être un peu plus enfoncé

lorsque Mr Goold Verschoyle rappelle que ‘every second Dublin family has a son in France.’ (51)

Au chapitre trois, c’est la vision romantique de la rébellion de Pâques qui est mise à mal par le rappel de la réalité historique :

The Dublin rebels – booted off the streets last Easter, with James Connolly and the other leaders executed – had recently been welcomed home from the internment camps like returning heroes instead of hooligans who had levelled their own city. (57)

Ceci pourrait nous suggérer la définition d’un nouvel espace absent se définissant comme ‘l’espace de loyauté.’

L’autre espace absent est l’espace américain. Tous les va et vient du roman s’effectuent entre l’Irlande et l’Est. Même l’Espagne où se rend Brendan se repère dans cette logique puisque c’est d’Union soviétique qu’il y arrive et c’est pour l’Union soviétique qu’il en repartira après avoir été piégé par ceux à qui il avait accordé sa confiance et du fait d’une ‘fraternisation’ avec des Irlandais de rencontre. Comme souvent chez Bolger, la donnée significative est soulignée par le dialogue et la référence à ‘a Russian wake’ constitue un clair soulignage de l’absence de la référence américaine.

Ce sont donc les pôles stables du repérage traditionnel irlandais qui sont remis en cause provoquant la perte de repères et donc l’inquiétude et par voie de conséquence le recours à des idéologies rassurantes parce que simples : l’idéologie catholique, l’idéologie communiste et l’idéologie baha’i. C’est parce qu’elles jouent un rôle protecteur qu’elles ne peuvent en aucune manière être contestées ou remises en cause. C’est pour cette raison que ni Ffrench ni Art ne peuvent admettre la situation désastreuse de l’Union soviétique, que les travailleurs agricoles ne peuvent admettre que le discours crypto-révolutionnaire qu’ils tiennent entre eux soit repris par les aristocrates bolchéviques, c’est enfin la raison pour laquelle Mrs Ffrench s’efforce d’allumer quatre mille chandelles sur une année selon les instructions du maître Abdul-Baha. La futilité de ce recours à des remèdes illusoire est soulignée par leur mise en parallèle effectuée par le biais d’un dialogue entre Lizzy, la servante, et Mrs Ffrench :

‘Have you the lamps lit, mam?’

‘Yes, Lizzy.’

‘We do the same for you, mam.’

‘What do you mean?’ Mrs Ffrench was puzzled.

‘If we’re passing the church, the other maids and me always light a candle for you. That’s what us Catholics do for special intentions. All of us are praying that when the Commodore comes home things will go well for you and it will be a boy.’

Mrs Ffrench was momentarily too shocked to speak.

Suddenly aware that she had been too forward, the maid went to apologise, then realised that this could only make matters worse.

‘I light my lamps for a different reason,’ Mrs Ffrench replied icily.

‘Yes, mam. I wouldn’t know, mam.’

‘Your Master and I ...’ Mrs Ffrench stopped in time, shocked that she was explaining herself in front of a servant.

‘That will be all, Lizzy.’

‘Yes, mam.’ (62-63)

L’ESPACE TEXTUEL

Divers signaux sont fournis au lecteur pour l’inviter à entrer dans le système textuel en oubliant ses repères acquis. Il s’agit, bien-sûr du titre du chapitre vingt-trois, ‘The Crumlin Kremlin’, ou de la réponse du petit Brendan lorsque sa sœur lui demande ce qu’il sera dans la vie : ‘A world famous traveller. Foreign correspondent for *The Dunkeneely News*, sending dispatches from Killybegs and Kilimanjaro.’ (90). Mais c’est également le titre du chapitre onze, ‘The Two Fredericks’ et tout le récit des ‘amours’ et du mariage d’Eva, pour ce qui est de l’espace identitaire.

Au-delà de ces signaux, on observe que l’espace textuel est un espace labyrinthique. Tout d’abord, l’acte de représentation artistique est mis en abyme dans la mesure où Madame Goold Verschoyle, sa fille Eva et sa petite fille Hazel passent une bonne partie de leur temps à dessiner. Non sans peine d’ailleurs puisque Eva perdra cette capacité avant de la retrouver une fois libérée des chaînes du mariage, puis d’essayer de la transmettre sur le mode de l’apprentissage de la liberté. Ceci ne peut manquer de ramener à la notion d’espace politique à l’intérieur duquel son frère communiste, Art, se bat pour l’égalité au détriment de la liberté. La mère, par le biais du propos tenu à sa fille mobilise l’attention du lecteur à l’égard des prolepses et des analepses : ‘It could be the memory of unfinished business from another life or a vision of something to come.’ (40)

La structure affichée du roman propose un repérage spatio-temporel strict. L’ensemble se compose d’un prologue et de trente-huit chapitres. Le prologue ainsi que vingt-cinq chapitres sont repérés par une date allant de l’année au jour près (chapitres 10, 11, 24, 25, 26, 37). Le même

jour peut même correspondre à plusieurs chapitres (24,25, 26) et la plupart des chapitres proposent un repérage spatial (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, soit 31 sur 38). A ceci il convient d'ajouter un repérage référentiel par le biais de l' *author's note* déjà mentionnée, sorte de post-face ramenant la fiction à la réalité. Miroir des collisions et collusions déjà évoquées, le texte propose de place en place une sorte de mise en garde implicite à l'égard du repérage affiché comme le montre le titre du chapitre 23 : 'The Crumlin Kremlin – Dublin, Autumn 1938.' Le texte s'enroule sur lui-même et casse la logique linéaire proposée par les titres de chapitres respectant parfaitement la chronologie. La première page du chapitre 30 ('The Plane – The Soviet Union, July 1941', 440) est la reprise de la première page du prologue. Mais, cette fois, une indication précise de lieu est fournie, ce qui n'était pas le cas au moment où le lecteur en aurait eu le plus besoin :

A parched twilight began to close in around the unlit prisoner train. For over a week the zeks in Brendan Goold Verschoyle's wagon had jolted across a landscape they rarely glimpsed, crushed together in putrid darkness. (1)

Une légère modification du texte est introduite page 440 :

A parched twilight began to close in around the unlit prisoner train. For over a week the zeks in 'Brendan's wagon' had jolted across 'an arid' landscape they rarely glimpsed, crushed together in putrid darkness. (C'est moi qui souligne).

Suivant une démarche identique, le parfum qui envahit la fin du premier chapitre ('a faint fragrance filled the air. It emanated from the hand lotion Mother always rubbed into her palms after gardening,' 46) se retrouve 500 pages plus loin, au terme du dernier. Enfin, les figures de style contribuent à cette architecture labyrinthique. Ainsi Mr Ffrench chante-t-il une chanson de Percy French (*Abdullah Bulbul Amir*, 45) dont les paroles renvoient à la notion de territoire.

Dans le premier chapitre, Eva, après avoir vu son frère embrasser Beatrice Hawkins, une jeune visiteuse, éprouve deux sentiments successifs. Le premier est celui de la perte: 'Eva suddenly sensed that she was losing her brother.' (43) Le second n'est possible que du fait de l'attention que son frère lui porte et qui lui fait oublier le premier, mais c'est ici la formulation qui est particulièrement intéressante: "There was

something comforting about seeing her world there, exactly as it should be” (43). L’armature de la composition est clairement donnée dans cette page quarante-trois. L’œuvre concernera les espaces de toutes natures, les repères qui permettent de les définir et la souffrance induite par leur disparition. Cette première indication s’accompagne d’une seconde qui, pour sa part, ne pourra être totalement élucidée qu’au terme de l’acte de lecture. Elle concerne la manière de voir la différence, c’est à dire la manière d’observer la relation entre les espaces. A la question posée par Art, page quarante : “What is a communist, father ?”, deux réponses sont proposées : “A thief,” Mr Hawkins retorted, “who would murder you in your bed and divide your possessions among every passing peasant.” / “Somebody who thinks differently from us,” father interjected quietly.’ Ne sont-elles pas le miroir des comportements quotidiens face à l’incertitude qui caractérise le monde contemporain ?

Sans doute, le roman de Bolger doit-il, au bout du compte, être considéré comme proposant le principe qui doit régler toute vie face à la perte de repères dont on fait souvent la caractéristique de la mondialisation :

‘Find your own path and stick to it’
dit Tim Goold Verschoyle à son fils.
‘What if you don’t like my path?’
Mr Tim stared at the brooding portrait of Martin Luther. ‘The one thing I wish to give all of you is a conscience. If you trust to your heart you will not go wrong, no matter how others may judge you.’ (54)

Il est possible de lire *The Family on Paradise Pier* comme une fable un peu sombre de la mondialisation. Une fable montrant la chute des frontières de toutes natures avec les pertes de repères que cela entraîne, les désorientations qui s’ensuivent et la douleur et la souffrance induites. Avec également tous les comportements de résistance et de protection qui caractérisent les phases de bouleversement majeur. C’est un roman sans dénouement comme il convient que cela soit le cas si l’on accepte l’interprétation métaphorique proposée car la mondialisation est un processus en cours, mais c’est un roman avec une fin :

Eva’s eyes were closed and she did not remark upon the scent, knowing that the words did not need to be said. Because she knew that the other could smell the familiar hand lotion, the cream that Mother had used after gardening on those evenings when they lay in bed awaiting her step on the stairs

and knowing, as they still knew, that they were truly and unconditionally loved. (546-547)

Le jeu sur le temps et sur la voie passive confère toute son ambiguïté à cette ultime phrase qui, de plus, se trouve inévitablement remise en cause par la note ajoutée par Dermot Bolger au terme de sa composition littéraire.

Part II

Society in the Grip of Secularisation and Globalisation

Catherine Maignant

Strategies to 'save' Globalised Secular Society: A Critical Assessment

In his 2007 Integritas lecture about the future of the Church,¹ Dr William Walsh, bishop of the diocese of Killaloe, notes that when he was ordained in 1959, the Catholic community of Ireland was 'confident' and 'secure in its own rightness.' It was a time when the very hierarchical and clerical Church could answer all questions. It has become commonplace to say that the 1960s ushered in a time of change in all areas of life. To Bishop Walsh, however, the real turning point was the publication of Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which confirmed the traditional Catholic teaching about the regulation of births. Up to that time, he comments, people accepted the Church's approach to social issues. For the first time some people – including priests and even bishops – started questioning the position of the Pope. 'Could the Church be wrong?', they asked themselves. This, Dr Walsh feels, was the starting point of a time of uncertainty. Decade after decade, controversies multiplied to reach a peak with revelations that priests and religious had been involved in sex scandals – in particular, appalling child abuse.

In the final part of his lecture, the Bishop of Killaloe states very honestly that in his opinion the future is uncertain. He believes that the message of Christ will endure, but that the position of the institution is unclear. Ours is a time of contrasts, he argues. On the one hand, there are 'signs of darkness': the diminishing Mass attendance, the near disappearance of penance, the disastrous decline in vocations and the growth of religious indifference, to name but a few. On the other hand, however, there are also signs of hope: for instance, the obvious need for spirituality, the increasing stress on community and human dignity, the realisation that consumerism does not bring happiness and the subsequent quest

¹ Bishop William Walsh, "The Emergent Church", The Third Integritas Annual Lecture, 22 September 2007. Available on CD (Integritas).

for a deeper meaning in life. Some good may hence come out of the darkness.

Bishop Walsh's position reflects the current concerns of the Church as it daily faces the formidable challenges induced by secularisation and globalisation. His honest, matter-of-fact analysis and suggestions also bear witness to the puzzlement of a man of faith caught in the maelstrom of late modernity. The extreme polarisation of today's Church testifies to what appears to many as a threat to the very survival of the institution. In the 1980's and 90's Pope John Paul launched a new evangelisation movement, calling all baptised Christians to take up the mission of spreading the Good News of the Gospel. Today, Benedict XVI is following a similar course as he lays the stress on the necessity of 'a new evangelisation, capable of being heard by that world that does not find access to 'classic' evangelisation.'² In his New York homily, delivered in St Patrick's on 19 April 2008, he insisted on the fact that 'the proclamation of life, life in abundance, must be at the heart of the new evangelisation. For true life', he said, '— our salvation — can only be found in the reconciliation, freedom and love which are God's gracious gifts.'³

This paper will examine the nature of this new evangelisation and its connection with salvation in the western world, and more particularly in Ireland and France. It will focus on the central issues of truth, good and evil and will seek to assess strategies to 'save' society. It will finally raise the issue of whether or not we have come to the end of an era. It will argue that even if little is radically new in the contemporary events, we may have come to a breaking point as concerns the aptitude of a hierarchical Church to attract the support of the masses.

As early as 1983, Archbishop Dermot Ryan, addressing a distinguished audience at Notre-Dame de Fourviere in Lyons, lamented 'the loss of ancestral wisdom'⁴ in Dublin. To him, his homeland no longer de-

² Cardinal Ratzinger, "The New Evangelisation : Building the Civilisation of Love", 2000, http://www.ewtn.com/new_evangelization/ratzinger.htm. Paul VI's 1975 encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* concerned the evangelizing mission of the Church: "The Church exists to evangelize".

³ "Text: Pope Benedict's Homily", New York Times online, 20 April 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/nyregion/20homily.html>.

⁴ Dermot Ryan, "Utter Mysteries from of Old", in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Godfried Cardinal Danneels, Franciszek Cardinal Macharski and Archbishop Dermot Ryan, *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief* (San Francisco: Ignatius

served to be called the ‘island of saints and scholars.’ Its geographical situation had often protected it from ‘pernicious influences from without’ but by the 1980’s things had dramatically changed:

Now, as a result of the pervasive and aggressive mass media and the ease of transportation, we have to confront the same polluted tidal wave that is submerging more highly developed centres with information of all sorts and is threatening the heritage of our faith.⁵

He continued to say that materialism, alcoholism, drug use, premarital and extra marital relations, the weakening of the home, dishonest business practice and violence at all levels ensued. It is quite striking that the then archbishop of Dublin should have discerned such trends in a decade when conservative attitudes frequently prevailed in Ireland. To the Church, however, worrying changes were already under way. They were to accelerate further after 1990, as a consequence of the phenomena linked to the Celtic Tiger, which transformed Ireland beyond recognition. The Irish society is now often referred to as ‘soulless’ –John Lonergan even calls it ‘soulless and heartless’⁶ – and there is a call ‘to put the soul back in society.’⁷ Such was, for instance, the ambition of the first Céifin conference entitled ‘Are we forgetting something?’ Céifin, the Irish based International Institute for Values-Led Change was actually created in 1998 to hold debates and initiate action in the field of social change issues, while ‘identify[ing] and nurtur[ing] principles of enduring value.’⁸ The association has now gained national and international recognition, since its 2005 venue was attended by President McAleese and the Pontifical Council for Culture in the Vatican recently published a piece on its ongoing work.⁹

The ambition of Céifin was European from the start and the first part of the first book ever published by the Centre, the proceedings of its

Press, (1983) 2006), p.85.

⁵ *Handing on the Faith*, p.86.

⁶ John Lonergan, “Arresting the Symptoms of a Soulless Society”, in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy (eds), *Are we Forgetting Something ?* (Dublin: Veritas, 1999), p.53.

⁷ Kate O’Dubhchair, “From Paper to Practice”, in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy (eds), *Is the Future my Responsibility?* (Dublin: Veritas, 2002), p.120.

⁸ <http://www.ceifin.com/3/aboutus.html>.

⁹ http://www.ceifin.com/media_update/23/newsDetail.html.

first conference, is significantly entitled ‘A Soul for Ireland, a Soul for Europe.’ One of the contributors to this section, Mark Hederman, comments on the responsibility of European development for people’s loss of faith and suggests that Ireland’s role in Europe in the new century ‘could be to act as another Ariadne to Europe’s grandchildren.’¹⁰ Commentators more frequently recall St Columban’s mission to Europe and call Ireland to contribute to the spiritual rescue of the old continent. To Bishop Donal Murray, the contemporary Church should draw its inspiration from the 6th century Irish saint to win the new continent of the new world to Christ.¹¹ A mission to the continent is indeed sorely needed, perhaps especially in France, which has upheld secular values for over a century.

Experts of early Christian Irish history generally assume that Columban devoted a lot of his energy restoring the true faith in Merovingian Gaul. Hence, it is no surprise that in his above-quoted 1983 lecture, Archbishop Ryan should have mentioned his evangelizing mission to France. In this address, he also underlined the ‘extensive history of cooperation between the Church of France and that of Ireland.’¹² Yet it is clear that not only did France lose its soul long before Ireland, but it can partly be held responsible for the secularisation of Europe from the 18th century onwards. For, if it was once ‘the eldest daughter of the Church’, it is certainly more relevant today to see her as the mother of the Enlightenment and a key European agent of emancipation from Church control. To Pope Benedict ‘the modern concept of democracy seems indissolubly linked to that of relativism’;¹³ freedom as understood by liberals is thus in essence incompatible with truth interpreted by the Church as the eternal Truth of God. It is significant in that respect that *la laïcité* should be so much a part of French democracy and political identity as Catholicism is of Irish traditional identity. France is therefore arguably a good example of what could be termed a soulless country.

The documents which best summarise the Church’s position on the question of the ‘soullessness’ of contemporary society are two reports re-

¹⁰ Mark Hederman, “Climbing into our Proper Dark – Ireland’s Place in Europe”, in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy (eds), *Are we forgetting Something?*, p.38.

¹¹ Donal Murray, *Secularism and the New Europe* (Dublin, Veritas, 1990), p.26.

¹² Archbishop Dermot Ryan, “Utter Mysteries from of Old”, in *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, p.87.

¹³ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), p.55.

spectively issued in 1999 and 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Culture and entitled “Towards a pastoral Approach to Culture”¹⁴ and “Where is your God? Responding to the Challenge of Unbelief and Religious Indifference Today.”¹⁵ They both note that, as was feared by Paul VI in his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, secularisation has transformed into secularism and religious indifference has considerably grown. Atheism and unbelief have a new face since ‘a large part of secularised societies live with no reference to religious authorities or values. For *homo indifferens*, perhaps God does not exist, it doesn’t matter, anyway we don’t miss him.’ It seems in fact that both militant atheism and traditional Catholic practice and faith are losing ground as a result. The causes, old and new, are many. ‘The all-encompassing presumptions of modern science’ are mentioned first as having led to ‘the absolutisation of man as the centre of the universe.’ Dissatisfaction with the Church comes next, in particular ‘the apparent absence of a spiritual life in some priests and religious’, leading to ‘an immoral lifestyle’. The crisis has in recent years also been fed by ‘a rupture in the process of handing on the faith’ and the globalisation of behaviour. If we are to believe the Pontifical Council for Culture, ‘The culture of globalisation considers men and women an object to be evaluated according to exclusively material, economic and hedonistic criteria.’ Consumerism, moral and material relativism, religious syncretism and the development of new religious movements are viewed as a side effect of the globalisation process. Media and information technology have contributed to this evolution. Indeed, ‘the mass media can serve good and bad alike’ but in the recent past, they seem to have behaved as enemies rather than allies of the Church. The two Vatican reports finally express the Church’s condemnation of contemporary lifestyle characterized by what appears as immorality in the eyes of their authors: ‘pansexualism’¹⁶, sexual promiscuity, feminism, the breakdown of the traditional family, tolerance of divorce and abortion all contribute to the marginalisation of Church teaching and seem to have resulted in a split between the Gospel and culture. The Church itself is divided over these issues.

¹⁴ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_03061999_pastoral_en.html.

¹⁵ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_200440313_where-is-your-god_en.html.

¹⁶ All quotes in this paragraph are taken from “Where is your God?”

Rome's position is that a true enculturation of the Catholic faith is sorely needed in today's world.

All these signs of the time can now be read in Ireland as well as on the continent, much to the dismay of the defenders of Catholic orthodoxy. To Kate O'Dubhair, one of the Céifin activists, 'traditional Ireland bound conformity and belonging close together. Much of our disconnecting has come from the rejection of conformity'.¹⁷ Most commentators note that the cultural transformation or revolution has led to a feeling of emptiness, 'aching loss, void and a sense of homelessness' as well as 'impoverishment of spirit'.¹⁸ This seems to be linked to the loss of a sense of community. Father Bohan agrees when he writes: 'We no longer identify with the people, places or structures which gave previous generations an identity and a feeling of belonging. There is a vacuum'.¹⁹ The Church is called to seize the opportunity created by contemporary disarray and hunger to belong. According to some, these symptoms show that a rebirth may be possible. A return of religion in different guises and the obvious longing for some form of spirituality have been widely commented on. The prospect for the new evangelisation may therefore not be as bleak as it might seem to be at first sight.

Its advocates also have every reason to feel encouraged by a new mood in the western world, which tends to favour the re-introduction of the Christian ethos in public life. That a self-professed atheist of Jürgen Habermas' calibre should support such a trend is an unexpected sign of change. In the course of an encounter with the then Cardinal Ratzinger in 2004, Habermas justified this bewildering position by expressing concern for the sense of solidarity which stood at the core of democracy, thus echoing what Christians express in different terms when referring to the lost sense of community:

If the modernisation of society as a whole went off the rails, it could well slacken the democratic bond and exhaust the kind of solidarity that the democratic state needs but cannot impose by law. This would lead to (...) the transformation of the citizens of prosperous and peaceful liberal societies into isolated monads acting on the basis of their own self-interest, persons

¹⁷ Kate O'Dubhair, "From Paper to Practice. An Overview of the Céifin Process", in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy (eds), *Is the Future my Responsibility?*, p.122.

¹⁸ Ron Turner, "Céifin: An International Perspective", in *Is The Future?*, p.131.

¹⁹ Harry Bohan, "Conference Introduction", in *Is The Future?*, p.9.

who used their subjective rights only as weapons against each other. We can also see evidence of a crumbling citizens' solidarity in the larger context, where there is no political control over the dynamic of the global economy and the global society.²⁰

Habermas then calls Christians and secularists to talk to each other, to reflect on the limits of their respective world views and contribute to the building of a common post-secular society based on mutual understanding. Indeed, to him, 'it is in the interest of the constitutional state to deal carefully with all the cultural sources that nourish its citizens' consciousness of norms and their solidarity.'²¹ Cardinal Ratzinger significantly agreed with this proposal: 'I am in broad agreement with Jürgen Habermas' remarks about a post-secular society, about the willingness to learn from each other and about the self-limitations on both sides', he said.²² He also acknowledged the responsibility of both the Christian faith and Western secular rationality for building the future. Faith and reason, he concluded, are complementary and 'they are called to purify and help one another.'²³

George Bush's United States could thus certainly be called post-secular in the sense that politics and religion have been closely associated throughout the President's two mandates. Closer to us, hints of renewed friendship between Church and State have recently been made clear in both Ireland and, more surprisingly, France. Both Bertie Ahern and Nicolas Sarkozy have indeed engaged in talks with major churches and both have acknowledged the contribution of religion to the respective cultures of their countries. In an oft-quoted speech delivered at the inauguration of the structured dialogue with churches, faith communities and non-confessional bodies in February 2007, Bertie Ahern condemned the 'aggressive secularism which would have the state and state institutions ignore the importance of [the] religious dimension. Ireland shares in the inheritance of over two thousand years of Christianity', he said, 'this heritage has indelibly shaped our country, our culture and our course for the future.' It is not true to say, he added, that religious belief, religious iden-

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas, Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularisation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (2005) 2006), p.35.

²¹ *Dialectics*, p.46.

²² *Dialectics*, p.77.

²³ *Dialectics*, p.78.

tity and the role for religion have been shrinking. Consequently, ‘governments which refuse or fail to engage with religious communities and religious identities, risk failing in their fundamental duties to their citizens’.²⁴ Bertie Ahern recently reiterated his commitment to the structured dialogue with organised churches, expressing the view that ‘it is fundamentally illiberal and anti-democratic to silence opinions and views, and marginalise institutions and communities which draw their identity and ethical positions from a background of religious belief’.²⁵

French president Nicolas Sarkozy, for his part, has repeatedly stressed the importance of religion and praised God in recent years. In the course of his state visit to the Vatican in December 2007, he said:

Les racines de la France sont essentiellement chrétiennes (...) La laïcité ne saurait être la négation du passé. Elle n’a pas le pouvoir de couper la France de ses racines chrétiennes. Elle a tenté de le faire. Elle n’aurait pas dû. Comme Benoît XVI, je considère qu’une nation qui ignore l’héritage éthique, spirituel, religieux de son histoire commet un crime contre sa culture (...). Arracher la racine, c’est perdre la signification, c’est affaiblir le ciment de l’identité nationale, et dessécher davantage encore les rapports sociaux qui ont tant besoin de symboles de mémoire. C’est pourquoi nous devons tenir ensemble les deux bouts de la chaîne : assumer les racines chrétiennes de la France, et même les valoriser, tout en défendant la laïcité enfin parvenue à maturité.²⁶

Both the French and Irish states thus share in the contemporary post-secular mood. Both Bertie Ahern and Nicolas Sarkozy have also publicly acknowledged their own commitment to the Catholic faith. In putting forward the religious dimension of their personal and national identity, the Taoiseach and the French President have also echoed European pre-occupations.

Indeed the preamble and article 1.52 of the European Constitution mentioned the importance of the religious heritage of Europe and the re-

²⁴ All quotes of this paragraph are taken from the speech by an Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern T.D., 26 February 2007:

<http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/index.asp?locID=558&docID=3257>.

²⁵ “Address by an Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern T.D. at a Reception for Churches and Faith Communities in the Structured Dialogue, Tuesday 22nd April, 2008”: <http://www.gov.ie/index.asp?locID=582&docID=3845>.

²⁶ “Nicolas Sarkozy, Discours au Latran, 20 décembre 2007” : http://eucharistiemisericord.free.fr/index.php?page=2012074_sarkozy.

spect owed to the different organised Churches. Article 1.52 read: ‘Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.’²⁷ Today, Article 16.C of the Lisbon Treaty confirms these provisions.²⁸ For all their anti-secular stance, which is badly resented by secularists across Europe, in France in particular, these sections of the constitutional treaties show how neutral the states wish to remain. Shortly before the election of Pope Benedict, the refusal to mention both God and the Christian roots of the European Union in the preamble to the Constitution was denounced by Cardinal Ratzinger. In his opinion, it was the proof ‘Europe has developed a culture that, in a manner hitherto unknown to mankind, excludes God from public awareness.’²⁹ Besides, he complained, ‘the churches are assigned their place on the level of day-to-day political compromises; but their message is not allowed to make an impact on the level of the foundations on which Europe rests.’³⁰ What’s more, non-Christians and atheists are valued just in the same way as Christians.

This understanding of post-secularism is therefore incompatible with the domination of one Church or even one cultural tradition. Bertie Ahern made it clear in 2007 that the Irish government did not wish ‘to recreate a special or privileged relationship with any denomination or creed.’ It simply meant to deal with the ‘multicultural reality’ of contemporary Ireland.³¹ As for Nicolas Sarkozy, his intention is primarily to favour the integration of large non-Christian immigrant communities and particularly the Muslim community. Such was his motivation when he created Le Conseil français du culte musulman during his time of office as Ministre des Cultes (2002-2004). Securing civic peace in today’s world implies taking account of religious developments in other parts of the globe, as he notes in his book, published in 2004, *La République, les religions, l’espérance*.³² In both countries, non-believers are also in-

²⁷ European Constitution, art 1.52:

http://www.uniz.es/euroconstitucion/Treaties/Treaty_const.htm.

²⁸ Traité de Lisbonne: http://www.traite-de-lisbonne.fr/Traite_de_Lisbonne.php.

²⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, (2005) 2006), p.30.

³⁰ *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, p.32.

³¹ Speech by an Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern T.D., 26 February 2007.

³² Nicolas Sarkozy, *La République, les religions, l’espérance* (Paris : Cerf, 2004).

volved in the multilateral talks. What the Catholic Church would call pluralism and relativism thus stand at the core of the two governments' initiatives and of the Lisbon Treaty. Besides, democracy remains the central justification, which brings us back to Benedict XVI's denunciation of democracy as the mother of relativism. To him, we live in a system in which 'the decision of the majority occupies the position of truth.'³³

In France, the controversy over the question of the suggested changes in the 1905 law, once nicknamed 'le monument inviolable' by former President Jacques Chirac, left Nicolas Sarkozy no option but to leave it unchanged. In Ireland, even though secularism is recent, it is significant that voices should have been raised to denounce Church-State collusion in the context of the sex abuse scandals, particularly when the *Ferns Report* was released in 2005. Democracy is vibrant in both countries and, to a certain extent, succeeds in holding governments in check whatever the personal religious commitment of their members. To conclude on this point, it could also be argued that neither the recent resignation of Bertie Ahern on charges of corruption nor Nicolas Sarkozy's extravagant and ostentatious lifestyle convincingly qualify either of the two men as being opponents of consumerism and self-interest. These late modern embodiments of the 'Gombeen Men' denounced by Connolly over a century ago certainly feature as unlikely apostles of the new evangelisation.

In the event, post secular attitudes only marginally benefit the Catholic Church and the only language and values it seems to share with states are those which reflect the Christian origin of the Enlightenment. Many recent developments – notably in the area of human rights and personal freedoms – have been rejected by the institution, on grounds that they are incompatible with the eternal truth of Christ. In fact, according to both John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the real problem is that evil – in the strong sense of the term – is present in the world and must be confronted. In his address to the Roman Curia dated 22 December 2005, Benedict XVI recalled the career of his recently departed predecessor, insisting on the fact that he had been 'deeply touched by the spectacle of the power of evil.' To John Paul II, it was 'an evil of gigantic propor-

³³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p.54.

tions, an evil which availed itself of state structures in order to accomplish its evil work, an evil built up into a system.³⁴

As early as 1994, the Irish Theological Commission analysed new age tendencies as one expression of such evil. In the report its members issued on the question, the dangerous effects of relativism and pluralism were, in that perspective, vehemently denounced:

The problem is that everything is relative because you create both your own reality and your own morality, so who is to say that your actions are evil? By what standards do you measure them? (...) There are therefore no guidelines to one's behaviour, including one's sexual life, nor is any education accepted to inform the conscience.³⁵

To the authors of the report, the new idolatry was the worship of self. 'We have become so impressed by our own progress', they argued, 'that we feel that we can save ourselves also', which means refusing the saving relationship with God.³⁶ This is only possible because people do not acknowledge that God is the source of moral truth and deny the very existence of good and evil. In the same way, the new evangelising movement is clearly based on the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church in relation to morality. Benedict XVI denounces what he calls the 'new moralism' of our age, resting on such values as justice, peace and the conservation of creation. He brands them as vague and 'confined to the sphere of political parties.' He believes that, by upholding these values, politicians even block the way to real morality because they forget God.³⁷

In the foreword to a recent book by an English sociologist, which can be read as a manual for new evangelisers, French Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture recalled the fundamentally counter-cultural nature of the Church and 'wished the author and reader new courage as they cast out into the Deep',³⁸ castigating the

³⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Address to the Roman Curia', December 22, 2005 : www.vatican.va/.../benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html.

³⁵ Irish Theological Commission, "A Catholic Response to the New Age Phenomenon":1994, <http://www.spiritual-wholeness.org/churchte/newage/ctfmoral.htm>.

³⁶ Ibid. <http://www.spiritual-wholeness.org/churchte/newage/idolatry.htm>.

³⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, p.27.

³⁸ Dudley Plunkett, *Saving Secular Society* (Stoke-on-Trent: Alive Publishing, 2007),

late modern age. This book seeks, among other things, ‘to expose moral relativism’ as part of the spiritual war between light and darkness.³⁹ Its English author, Dudley Plunkett, defines this war as one opposing Jesus to the Devil, whom, quoting Cardinal Ratzinger, he sees as ‘a powerful reality, ‘the prince of this world.’’ He understands abortion ‘as a sacrifice that is being offered to Satan from which he derives enormous power over the affairs of the world’; to him, it is also the devil who promotes ‘sexual degeneration, financial corruption and violent warfare.’⁴⁰ Benedictan monk Benedict Heron, who has been involved in the charismatic movement from its early days, also sees Satan at work in today’s world and he believes the second coming, as defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is close at hand.⁴¹ He is not alone in reading the signs of the time in such a way. It is significant that the hierarchy should support such extremism. Indeed, both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have repeatedly expressed their belief that the devil was threatening our world, and in the context, there can be no compromise with the truth.

In the homage he paid to Karl Rahner, Declan Marmion warned against such excesses. Commenting on ‘the strong proselytising thrust’ that some call for ‘in a hostile and dechristianised culture’, he noted that such ‘muscular Christianity’ might result in ‘sectarianism (...) the ghettoisation of Christianity, the development of sect-like characteristics and an elitist outlook.’⁴² In Ireland, new evangelisation most often avoids mentioning the forces of darkness and presents the movement as bringing people to a new life. Smiling faces thus welcome the visitor on the webpage of the Irish School of Evangelisation⁴³ and Alpha Ireland presents its course as ‘relaxing, non-threatening, low-key, friendly and fun.’⁴⁴ In the same way, Bishop Donal Murray advises caution as he doesn’t want to alienate good people by showing too much rigidity. However, liberal-

p.viii.

³⁹ *Saving Secular Society*, p.85-96.

⁴⁰ *Saving Secular Society*, p.149.

⁴¹ Benedict Heron, OSB, “Is Jesus coming soon?”:
<http://www.ccr.org.uk/archive/gn0411/01.htm>.

⁴² Declan Marmion, “Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age: a View from Rahner”, in Declan Marmion (ed), *Cristianity in a Postmodern Age* (Dublin: Veritas, 2005), p.171.

⁴³ <http://www.esatclear.ie/~isoe/vision.htm>.

⁴⁴ <http://www.alphacourse.ie/whatisit.htm>.

ism, feminism and pluralism are identified as ‘cultural realities to be deepened, enlightened, and, where necessary purified in the light of the Gospel.’⁴⁵ Besides, Bishop Murray stresses the importance of respecting eternal moral laws, and condemns permissiveness: ‘To seek to impose all moral values by law would be a failure to respect freedom’, he writes, ‘to seek to impose none would be a failure to respect truth.’⁴⁶ In the same way, ‘happiness cannot be divorced from the individual’s responsibility in relation to God and to neighbour. It cannot, in other words, be divorced from morality.’⁴⁷ When the Irish bishops visited Pope John Paul in 1999, he reminded them that ‘nothing can substitute for the powers of the truth of the faith themselves.’ ‘Prevailing trends in contemporary culture weaken the sense of sin, he added, because of a diminished consciousness of God (...). A great pastoral effort is therefore required in order to help the faithful recover a sense of sin in relation to God.’⁴⁸

The salvation of humanity from the snares of the evil one and the redemption of the human race openly stand at the core in the new evangelisation movement. They justify the eschewal of compromise by the Vatican authorities, which can arguably be defined as conservative. The hope for Salvation, of which Derrida said that it could not be dissociated from any discussion about religion, is indeed a central issue. Commenting on contemporary religious phenomena, the French philosopher noted that new forms of religious quest should be understood as desperate attempts to be rescued from the evils of our world with which traditional religions have historically been associated. A rival, unchristian, form of salvation is thus being sought.⁴⁹ The Catholic Church is engaged in a fight to prove that such quests are wrong, that they lead nowhere, and that Christianity alone can show men the road to the love of Christ and eternal life.

Trying to define the meaning of religion, Jacques Derrida suggests its central function is precisely to provide the ultimate answer to all questions man may ask himself. No response however is possible unless a legitimate authority prescribes an absolute truth justifying this response on

⁴⁵ Donal Murray, *Secularism and the New Europe*, p.67.

⁴⁶ *Secularism and the New Europe*, p.52.

⁴⁷ *Secularism and the New Europe*, p.18.

⁴⁸ “Address of John Paul II to the Bishops of Ireland on their ‘*Ad Limina*’ Visit, Tuesday 26 June 1999”, www.votfi.com/JPII_Ad_limina_99.htm.

⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Foi et savoir* (Paris : Seuil/Laterra, 1996), pp.9-10.

the basis of a sworn faith. The Latin '*respondeo*', from which the term 'response' is derived, means 'to provide an answer', 'to be worthy of' and 'to pledge oneself in return.' The term is therefore closely akin to that of responsibility, which is derived from the same Latin word. To Derrida, religion means responsibility since it implies a promise of truth and the presence of God who is the (absent) witness of that truth. 'Si peu qu'on sache de la religion', he argues, 'on sait qu'elle est toujours la responsabilité prescrite, elle ne choisit pas librement en un acte de pure et abstraite volonté autonome.'⁵⁰ The legitimacy of the Catholic Church rests on such assumptions. Benedict XVI and the hierarchy note that they have no choice. They are bound to respect what they see as a divinely shaped order, since it is part of their responsibility to man and to God. 'Individual freedom is valued, but freedom must be balanced with responsibility',⁵¹ Father Bohan writes in *Is the Future my Responsibility?* The role of the Church is to guide people towards the truth.

Yet, given the grisly events of its history, right up to the recent sex scandals across Christendom, the Catholic Church is hardly a convincing apostle of morality and truth in the eyes of many. The hierarchy has tried to defend itself as best it could in a difficult context. It has apologised for historical and recent events, but it has also been compelled to take into account the growing anti-clericalism resulting from abuse in order to define its new missionary strategy. A redefinition of the nature of the Church has ensued. It is now claimed that since the 19th century the Church has mistakenly been interpreted as an institution aiming to gain power over society. The true Church, which is now called to take over, is the community of faithful. When launching the new evangelisation, Pope John Paul centrally addressed lay activists. In *Christifideles Laici*,⁵² he recalled the duties of the lay community of Christians whom Christ called to spread his message. Even though the Catholic Church originally showed little missionary spirit, it now appears to be following the Protestant model. Since Vatican II, a greater sense of mission has been fos-

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.44-45 and 53-54.

⁵¹ Harry Bohan, Preface to Harry Bohan and Richard Kennedy (eds), *Is the Future my Responsibility?*, p.5.

⁵² "Exhortation apostolique post-synodale *Christifideles Laici* de sa sainteté le pape Jean-Paul II sur la vocation et la mission des laïcs dans l'Eglise et dans le monde", www.vatican.va/.../apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_fr.html.

tered. The new evangelisation strategy therefore insists on the necessary commitment of lay people and the restoration of a sense of community.

The domestic model of Church is thus put forward as an excellent way of helping the mass of people understand what the communal and missionary spirit of the true Church is about. In Ireland, the *Integritas* Centre, which is based in a family home in Co Kilkenny, is an example of how the lay model operates. Its founder, Patrick Treacy, defines it as prayerful, reflective, domestic and open. Indeed, it is open to anyone who may sincerely be 'seeking a relationship with God in their lives' on an ecumenical basis. The fact it is based in the family home of a married couple with four children implies a strong feminine dimension and it places hospitality, warmth, solidarity and intimacy at the heart of the Christian project. It also aims at recovering the contemplative dimension of Christianity, by stressing the importance of prayer and the 'study of theological truths.' This, he says, is a reminder of how early Christian communities were conceived.⁵³ Father Enda McDonagh, who was invited to give the inaugural *Integritas* lecture in 2005, sees such communities as the expression of 'the new catholicity.' It must be 'hospitable (...) interested in loving and being reconciled with others.' It must also be creative in that it has to reinvent the relationship to others and to God, and ways of handing on the faith. Compassion features as another central characteristic of the new Church: the option for the poor goes hand in hand with openness and hospitality. The new Catholics must also be 'a people of hope and a people of joy' aware of the need for celebration as well as contemplation.⁵⁴

Bishop Walsh for his part sees the domestic model as a sub-group of the local Christian community. To him the parish community, the local Church should be at the heart of Catholicity. The future the Christian community should be striving for is a Christ-centred people's Church, one in which baptism and not ordination should be the primary sacrament. The Church could hence become life giving instead of being life diminishing. It would set people free instead of tying them up. To Dr

⁵³ Patrick Treacy, Introduction to Fr Enda McDonagh's Inaugural *Integritas* lecture "Reviving the Domestic Model of Church", April 9th 2005. Available on CD (*Integritas*).

⁵⁴ Fr Enda McDonagh's Inaugural *Integritas* lecture "Reviving the Domestic Model of Church", April 9th 2005.

Walsh, the different models of Church, the domestic, local and universal Church, should live in harmony if they all came to respect these ideals.⁵⁵

The Vatican approves such initiatives. The proposals issued by the Pontifical Council for Culture in 1999 and 2004 echo the local preoccupations. The human person must be placed at the centre of the process, as well as the family and the education of children. The young must be specifically targeted. The World Youth Day initiative must clearly be understood in that perspective, as should be the defence of Catholic school education. The evangelisation of culture however also implies other types of strategies. The Church must be present in the public forum. To the Pontifical Council for Culture, ‘The visible and tangible action of the Church, universal sacrament of salvation in a pluralist society, is today more necessary than ever to put the people of the world in contact with the message of the Truth revealed in Jesus Christ.’⁵⁶ This explains systematic political lobbying at state and European levels. In the same way, understanding the power of the mass media is fundamental. ‘Image, word, gesture and presence are necessary elements for an evangelisation engaged in the cultures of communities and people, even if it means being careful not to let image become more important than reality and the objective content of the faith.’ In order to show its aptitude to speak the language of the cultures it seeks to evangelise, the Vatican praises such initiatives as creating Catholic cinema prizes or presenting Charters for human rights as the Archbishop of Gdansk did. Since ‘the cultural heritage of the Church remains a means of evangelisation’, other projects include stimulating religious tourism, in the form of pilgrimages or cultural visits, exhibitions of sacred art or concerts of sacred music. All activists of the new evangelisation movement stress the aesthetic dimension of their mission. In the words of the Pontifical Council for culture, ‘beauty is one of the privileged pathways to bring people nearer to God and to quench their spiritual thirsts.’⁵⁷ To Enda McDonagh, aesthetics is indeed one of the ways which ‘enables us to become contemplative.’⁵⁸ In his

⁵⁵ Bishop William Walsh, “The Emergent Church”, The Third Integritas Annual Lecture, 22 September 2007.

⁵⁶ Pontifical Council for Culture, “Where is your God?”

⁵⁷ All quotes in this paragraph so far are taken from the Pontifical Council for Culture’s document entitled “Where is your God?”

⁵⁸ Fr Enda McDonagh’s Inaugural Integritas lecture “Reviving the Domestic Model of Church”, April 9th 2005.

“Letter to Artists”,⁵⁹ Pope John Paul thus called for the renewal of dialogue between artists, ‘image of God the creator’ and the Church. Other suggestions involve restoring the dialogue between the Church and the world of sciences in the favourable context of ethical debates which respond to the questions of scientists themselves. Catholic scientists are called to help in the evangelisation process and seize the opportunity to ‘proclaim the Gospel in scientific circles.’⁶⁰ All these strategies aim at renewing the message and image of the Church while remaining faithful to the eternal truth of Christ.

Many people believe we have reached a turning point in the history of Christianity. Using the metaphor of the cycle of seasons, Bishop Murray notes that ‘the Church is in a period of bleak winter (...). Yet the appearance of death, which plants show in winter, is in fact a sign that a renewal is taking place.’⁶¹ The Church should therefore not panic nor appear defeated, but confidently foster springtime regeneration by contributing to the new developments. In his address to Irish bishops in 1999, John Paul II however commented that ‘the new evangelisation which can make the next century a springtime of the Gospel will depend very much on the lay faithful being fully aware of their baptismal vocation and of their responsibility for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.’⁶² We could add that it will also depend on the credibility of the inculturation process, which is part of the new evangelisation project. The key to success is indeed its positive reception by the global secularised society, including the non-believers, who were particularly targeted in “Where is your God?”

The strategy to save secular society is a mixture of old and new. Central to the project is a call to return to the rich Christian heritage and the aspects of Church history that can be relevant to postmodern populations. To the hierarchy there is no redemption outside history. In the words of Pope John Paul, turning to the past will help the Church rebuild Christianity and prepare the future:

⁵⁹ John Paul II, “Letter to Artists”, 1999:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041.

⁶⁰ Pontifical Council for Culture, “Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture”.

⁶¹ Donal Murray, *The Soul of Europe* (Dublin: Veritas, 2002), pp.71-72.

⁶² “Address of John Paul II to the Bishops of Ireland on their ‘Ad Limina’ Visit”,
http://search.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1999/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19990626_ad-limina-irlanda_en.html.

Embracing with a lively sense of history the rich and multiform patrimony of ideas from the past, we must open up to the present with a spirit of trust, and project ourselves in hope towards the future. Prophecy must spring from memory.⁶³

Once purified, the Christian past must be used as a source of inspiration for the youth of the world, which Paul VI once called the Church to become.⁶⁴ To fight against rootlessness, and what Archbishop Brady calls ‘a loss of Christian memory’,⁶⁵ it is necessary to address the transmission crisis. Indeed, Danièle Hervieu Léger’s analysis of French Catholicism, demonstrates that the greatest danger for the Catholic Church today is exculturation, which she defines in the following way: ‘processus par lequel, au-delà du rétrécissement avéré de l’influence de l’Eglise dans la société, le ‘tissage catholique’ de [la] culture profane elle-même est en train de se dénouer.’⁶⁶ Even though the situation may not be as desperate in Ireland as it is in France, Michael Paul Gallagher does note the increasing relevance of the concept in the contemporary Irish context.⁶⁷ The causes of such disaffection are certainly many, but one may precisely be, as Michael Cronin suggests, that Ireland was for too long ‘a spectacular victim of transmission.’

Even if he fears the advent of a society in which the only remaining value would be money, Cronin expresses no regret for a time when ‘Ireland was a transmissive society obsessed with ends, the ends being Ireland’s freedom or its place among the nations or the fate of our souls.’⁶⁸ The golden age of Catholic authority in Ireland did not only leave happy memories; the 1950’s, in particular, were quite tough. The oppressive na-

⁶³ Quoted by Donal Murray, *Secularism and the New Europe*, p.22.

⁶⁴ *Secularism and the New Europe*, p.22-23.

⁶⁵ “Archbishop Brady Leads Irish Bishops in thanking Pope Benedict XVI”, Catholic Communications Office Press Release, 28 October 2006: <http://www.catholiccommunications.ie/Pressrel/28-october-2006.html>.

⁶⁶ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Catholicisme, la fin d’un monde* (Paris : Bayard, 2003), p.97.

⁶⁷ Michael Paul Gallagher, “Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age: a Perspective from Loneragan”, in Declan Marmion (ed), *Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age*, p.157.

⁶⁸ Michael Cronin, ‘How Things Have Changed in Ireland over the Past Ten Years’, in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy, *Global Aspirations and the Reality of Change* (Dublin: Veritas, 2004), pp.48-49.

ture of Church power, its narrow-mindedness, its denial of sexuality and of individual freedoms may in part be responsible for today's disaffection. In Ireland as elsewhere, while systematically aiming to foster the good, Judeo-Christian universalism sought to eliminate what it considered the darker part of humanity, its animal dimension in particular. Michel Maffesoli convincingly argues that it resulted in totalitarian violence from which people are now trying to free themselves. This totalitarian violence was also characterised by appalling excesses. The *Ferns Report* gives ample evidence of how secure certain priests felt they were free to do whatever they liked since people's deference ensured that the truth would be hushed up. Mention is made, for instance, of how a priest 'began to feel a boy's private parts so much so that it hurt him' in the front of a car, while two elderly people were sitting in the back.⁶⁹ In the same way, while it is commonplace for the Church to lament the decline in vocations, no-one ever alludes to the conditions in which the increase in the number of vocations was obtained in the first place. It is undeniable that social pressure, connected to the Church's progressive growth to omnipotence, is largely accountable for the phenomenon in 19th and 20th century Ireland. Prior to the French Revolution, the Church exerted a similar pressure on society in France, as is made obvious by the fact that the second sons of all noble families were predestined to become ecclesiastics whether they liked it or not. This is not to say that many didn't feel called or weren't saintly, but pressure was such that there was little effective choice. Tony Flannery, recalling his youth, openly acknowledges that he had no option but to become a priest and that if he could start all over again he would choose a different life.⁷⁰

To Michel Maffesoli, the will to free oneself from Church universalist morality and its social consequences explains the return of what Catholics call evil:

C'est contre la violence totalitaire de cet universalisme que ressurgit (...) la sagesse démoniaque, sagesse incorporée, plus vécue que pensée, qui est essentiellement relativiste. C'est-à-dire qu'elle met en relation tous les éléments constitutifs de la nature, jusque et y compris les plus sauvages.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ferns Report, 2005, 4.5.16, p.94: www.bishop-accountability.org/ferns/.

⁷⁰ Tony Flannery, *From the Inside* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1999), p.8.

⁷¹ Michel Maffesoli, *La part du diable – Précis de subversion postmoderne* (Paris :

According to Maffesoli, evil must be understood as the dark part of ourselves, which culture can only partly tame. It expresses itself in emotions that seem to supersede reason in the contemporary ethos. Mark Hederman addresses this question in his book entitled *Kissing the Dark*. Being a liberal, he believes that the dark side of human beings must be reintegrated into modern Christianity.⁷² However, such is not the position of the Vatican, which reverts to the dogmatic foundations of the Christian faith and recalls their historical origins. Maffesoli wonders at the present interest in commemorations and jubilees of all kinds, that both states and Churches insist on celebrating. To him, this can be interpreted as an attempt to go back to original certainties: ‘Le jubilé fait mémoire de l’origine (...)’, he writes; ‘on peut (...) interpréter la pulsion jubilatoire (...) comme le travail de l’inconscient collectif qui entend donner force et vigueur à ce qui fonde l’être ensemble originel.’⁷³

In this context, one tricky question is no doubt: How convincing are the Church’s apologies for the past? Another could be: How can we be certain of the Church’s aptitude to change and go back to the ideals of the primitive Church or revive the mystical tradition of the Middle-ages? Another yet might be: how long will it take people to actually forget? Memory is a central parameter of the analysis.

True, one solid ground for hope is the obvious spiritual quest that characterizes the late modern age and the so-called return of religion. It is visible in Ireland as elsewhere, notably in the fact that atheism is not gaining ground and that belief in a form of divinity is almost unanimous. In spite of Church disaffection, all surveys show that spirituality matters to people. Emily O’Reilly explains that Ireland has succeeded in freeing itself of ‘the hard rocks of fundamental Catholicism’, but all that is left is ‘an empty, sterile, barren piece of land.’ ‘The challenge for Irish people today’, she says, is to find a way of taking and accepting ‘this newly secular society and inject[ing] it with a value system that takes the best of that which we have jettisoned and discards the worst.’⁷⁴ Cynical commentators, however, write: ‘We are still strongly vestigially Catholic and we cannot sin guiltlessly (...) This dilemma is captured by the notion that

Flammarion, 2002), p.38.

⁷² Mark Hederman, *Kissing the Dark* (Dublin, Veritas, 1999).

⁷³ *Kissing the Dark*, p.33.

⁷⁴ Emily O’Reilly, “Imagining the Future – An Irish Perspective”, in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy (eds), *Imagining the Future* (Dublin: Veritas, 2005), p.82.

central to modernity is the ambiguous spirit of the devil' who, according to tradition, is good and bad at the same time, just like the children of the Celtic Tiger.⁷⁵

Whatever the cause, it seems that many are unhappy with the present situation, in spite of considerable progress in terms of living standards and freedom. Trying to explain the current apparent nostalgia for the past and for 'the fixed points of the compass' described by Fintan O'Toole.⁷⁶ Kieran Keohane and Carmen Kuhling very convincingly argue that 'as people are torn and tear themselves free from traditional worlds, they are also free to fall in love with them again (...). When freed from tradition, we gain the ability to see good in it –integrity, solidity, stability, continuity, groundedness.'⁷⁷ In the end, what people seem to be looking for is an identity with which they may be reconciled, one which gives them a sense of permanence and stability –even if it means forgetting a lot of unpleasant memories and re-imagining the past as a golden age. Paul Ricoeur argues that memory, imagination and identity are indissolubly connected. Besides, memory has always been manipulated to suit the interests of authorities. In his book entitled *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, he writes:

C'est dans la problématique de l'identité qu'il faut (...) chercher la cause de la fragilité de la mémoire ainsi manipulée. Cette fragilité s'ajoute à celle proprement cognitive résultant de la proximité entre imagination et mémoire et trouve dans celle-ci son aiguillon et son adjuvant.⁷⁸

Classic analyses of postmodern identities insist on the feelings of fragmentation, disconnection from the past, isolation and loss of a sense of self. In the words of Lyotard, 'Chacun est renvoyé à soi et chacun sait que soi est peu.'⁷⁹

However, Keohane and Kuhling suggest that while these phenomena are 'in some contexts relevant to the experience of everyday life in

⁷⁵ Kieran Keohane and Carmen Kuhling, *Collision Culture: Transformations in Everyday Life in Ireland* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2004), p.171.

⁷⁶ Fintan O'Toole, *Black Hole, Green Card – The Disappearance of Ireland* (Dublin: New Island Books, 1994), p.11.

⁷⁷ *Black Hole*, p.175.

⁷⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris : Seuil, 2000), p.98.

⁷⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1979), p.30.

Ireland (...) a tension or collision between (post)modernity and tradition are a better way of understanding the Irish experience.⁸⁰ If the Church is to be reborn on the basis of the merits of tradition, it clearly involves manipulating memory. It also implies suggesting a favourable representation of the Church's contribution to the spiritual well-being both in the revisited past and in the hoped for future. Michael Paul Gallagher thus puts forward a Catholic interpretation of what he calls a 'fragile sense of identity' which rests on the limits of the secularist model. He believes that 'we live at a time of exhausted dreams, of failed promises and of the breakdown of rational humanism.'⁸¹ In other words, people are experiencing the limits of Enlightenment ideals. Postmodernity, he continues, affects people in such a way that their imagination, memory and sense of belonging are wounded, which necessarily affects their religious identity.⁸² Building the future will mean addressing this problem and since 'the identity challenge is cultural', the answer will have to be 'communal and cultural, not just individual and inner'.⁸³ This is precisely what the new evangelisation dynamics is about. It is, made possible by the fact that many turn to 'spiritual searching'⁸⁴ in the hope of finding a solution to their sense of void and loss and a centre that holds. It is believed that opening people's eyes to the truth of God, will help people come alive to Christ again. Indeed, according to Bishop Murray: 'Rejecting the truth is another way of describing sin and sin is not freedom but slavery.' The only path to real freedom is to respect the truth of God: Truth will set everyone free. Besides, he adds, if 'The values and truth of Christianity remain unchanged, that doesn't mean that it is sufficient to give old answers to new questions.'⁸⁵ What this really means is open to question. The Church wishes to appear both capable of adaptation and attached to an unbending dogma that provides eternal certainties, which is a true challenge.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p.123.

⁸¹ Michael Paul Gallagher SJ, "Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age: a Perspective from Lonergan", in Declan Marmion (ed.), *Christian Identity in a Postmodern Age*, p.145.

⁸² Gallagher, p.151.

⁸³ Gallagher, p.156.

⁸⁴ Michael Paul Gallagher SJ : "Post-modernity, Friend or Foe", in Eoin Cassidy, *Faith and Culture in the Irish Context* (Dublin: Veritas, 1996), p.72.

⁸⁵ Donal Murray, *Secularism and the New Europe*, p.46.

Nowhere does this express itself with more vigour than in the option for ‘a people’s Church’. In the Irish context, where the past links between Church and state caused so much unhappiness, fear and hurt, the question is particularly relevant. It is to be noted that, even after John Paul II initiated the new evangelisation, the Church was very strongly restructured around Rome, which Enda McDonagh doesn’t consider ‘altogether positive’.⁸⁶ In the words of Tony Flannery, it can be argued that John Paul II was ‘autocratic and dictatorial.’ He was also very much of a traditionalist. Did this Pope really initiate a renovation of the Church’s fundamental organisation? Did he really open to the requests of the faithful where that organisation was concerned? How democratic is the Catholic Church today? How much does it support local or private initiatives that have no obvious allegiance to the Vatican? All these questions stand at the heart of the Church’s contemporary difficulties.

In his seminal analysis of myth, memory and history, Moses Finley suggests that the past has always been used to justify authority.⁸⁷ Paul Ricoeur ascribes the same function to the manipulation of memory and forgetfulness connected to the process of identity building by a system of power.⁸⁸ Even though Benedict XVI recently wrote that he drew his inspiration from the early Church⁸⁹ – which interpreted its mission in strictly spiritual terms – we may wonder if saving the institution and its power is not as much at stake as saving society.

So have we really come to the end of an era, one in which the Church is struggling to survive? In 1983, Benedict XVI wrote: ‘the crisis of the faith is shared with the Church of all ages’.⁹⁰ It is not the first time the Church feels threatened. There have been ups and downs in the history of the Church and it has always managed to survive, even at the time of the Reformation. It is not the first time either that the laity and Church people alike are called to reform their ways. Some of the accusations which are addressed to sinners remind one of similar imprecations going

⁸⁶ Fr Enda McDonagh’s Inaugural Integritas lecture “Reviving the Domestic Model of Church”, April 9th 2005.

⁸⁷ Moses Finley, *Mythe, mémoire, histoire* (Paris : Flammarion, 1981), pp.227-230.

⁸⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, pp.100-103.

⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p.21 and p.169.

⁹⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, “Handing on the Faith and the Sources of Faith, in Joseph Ratzinger, Godfried Danneels, Franciszek Macharski et Dermot Ryan, *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, p.17.

as far back as the early Middle Ages and regularly recurring in the course of history. So what really is new? To Danièle Hervieu-Léger, what is radically different from anything that occurred in the past is exculturation. To her, it is a major historical event and it cannot be dissociated from the overall decline of institutions resulting from secularisation, individualism and democratisation.

La culture de l'accomplissement de soi, l'avènement de la démocratie des identités, l'ébranlement des ordres d'absoluité (...) qui permettaient de reconduire dans une forme séculière la transcendance des normes et valeurs partagées en leur sein ont progressivement raison de ces institutions d'identification.⁹¹

To the French sociologist, this doesn't necessarily mean that the ultimate collapse of Catholicity will ensue, but rather that a second Reformation may be forced upon the Church. In the meantime, things are indeed changing a lot. Yet the Church remains officially attached to the myth of its own immutability, if only as a result of liberal pressure from the inside. In fact, it has no option but to claim all answers to present problems can be found in the past, in the reforms initiated by Vatican II in particular. Hervieu-Léger concludes as follows: 'Le problème est aujourd'hui de savoir si la tension est surmontable et si la contradiction entre l'institution 'qui descend d'en haut' et l'institutionnalité produite par les acteurs n'a pas atteint le point de rupture.'⁹² Today, the Vatican and conservative forces in the Church appear determined to remain in control by masterminding the new evangelisation movement for instance. Time will tell if it has the capacity to hold in check dissenting views resulting from globalisation and the growth of secularism. Religious changes may in the future result from a pressure from the bottom up rather than the reverse.

⁹¹ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Catholicisme, la fin d'un monde*, p.313.
⁹² *Catholicisme, la fin d'un monde*, pp.315-316.

Mary Pierse

In Careful and Carefree Secular Engagements: Towards Understanding the *Saecula*

The careful and carefree secular engagements of the title are identifiable both in *Esther Waters*, an 1894 novel by George Moore, and also in the quite recent poetry of Dennis O'Driscoll and Cathal Ó Searcaigh. However, the focus of this paper cannot be entirely literary because no matter from what angle the notion of the secular is approached, questions scream out: What is the secular? What is secularisation? Are these fixed concepts at all, or ever? How could it be possible to meaningfully address the ideas of secularisation without precise classification? It must surely be the case that any treatment of secularisation would be seriously flawed if such consideration were based upon, and conducted in, vague and woolly terms. For that reason, this paper will first consider definitions of the term 'secular', and working within and from those definitions, will consider the import of depictions by Moore, O'Driscoll and Ó Searcaigh.

The difficulties encountered in interpreting 'secular' become immediately obvious in the face of its various definitions. Amongst many dictionary offerings, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary lays out the most comprehensive array of meanings, identifying two strands of origin, the first deriving from the Old French word *séculer*¹ and the second originating immediately from the Latin *saecularis*.² It is interesting to

¹ Modern usage *séculier*.

² In the first strand, the meanings include: 1. Ecclesiastical, pertaining to non-monastic clergy (as opposed to regular clergy); 2a. Belonging to the world and its affairs; civil, lay; non-religious, non-sacred; 2b. not concerned with religious subjects; 4. Pertaining or adhering to the doctrine of secularism. In the second strand, the proposed associations include: 5. Existing in time; 6. Occurring, or celebrated once in an age, century; 7. Living or lasting for an age. *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* Fifth Edition vol.2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

observe that the OED separates the adjective into its ecclesiastical-related and its time-related meanings, noting that the word ‘secular’ that derives from old French and Latin relates to ‘an age’ or ‘a period’, while in Christian Latin, the word secular denotes ‘the world’ as opposed to ‘the church.’ Pursuing the notion of ‘an age’ or ‘a period’ in Latin dictionaries, one finds that *saecularis* relates to a *saeculum* or an age.³ In the singular form, the noun *saeculum* is the period of one human generation (about 33 years), or the people who compose a generation; however, the plural *saecula* has the additional meaning of being the spirit of the age, of the times. In a wider sense, it means a hundred years, a century, an indefinitely long time, an age. Turning to Irish dictionaries – and they may possibly have an additional relevance for considering the secular in an Irish context – the word ‘secular’ is rendered as *saolta* or worldly, or related to life, but also as *céadbhliantúil*, or relating to a century, and as *ci-anaosta*, or ancient, primeval. Yet, ‘to secularise’ is both *dí-eaglaisiú* (to un-church), and more positively, *tuathú* (to make lay). In Irish, secular clergy become *gnáthchléir* or ordinary clergy.⁴ On the basis of those English, Latin and Irish versions, it appears that there is agreement between them as to a meaning of secular other than the interpretation that is very commonly used, and regularly attached to societal developments that are seen as negative. Perceiving a wealth of understanding in the less-familiar denotation, this paper will, as it focuses on literary engagements with the secular and secularisation, read the secular as spirit of the times. It is thus intended to take a broad perspective that will ultimately be seen as more meaningful and justifiable than what would be achieved by corralling the construal of ‘secular’ into a confrontational binary where its opposite is always a restricted and restricting reading of ‘the religious.’

The 1894 novel, *Esther Waters*, was a bestseller in its time and has remained in print ever since.⁵ The story is the tale of an illiterate servant

³ Thus, the *ludi saecularis* are the games held at intervals of about 100 years and the *carmen saecularis* is the hymn sung at those games (and referred to by Horace and Suetonius). D.P.Simpson, *Cassell's Latin-English & English-Latin Dictionary* (London: Cassell, 1968).

⁴ Niall Ó Dónaill (eag.), Tomás de Bhaldraithe (eag. comhairleach), *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1977).

⁵ The edition used for this paper is George Moore, *Esther Waters*, edited by David Skilton (Oxford: World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1995).

whose religious adherence is to a strict sect called the Plymouth Brethren. After she becomes pregnant by a footman who deserts her, she is looked down upon, exploited by, and preached to, by persons who in the main belong to different religions, whether Anglican, Salvation Army, Methodist, Dissenter, or Jew. Esther and one of her employers, a Mrs Barfield, both belong to the Brethren. George Moore's description of Mrs Barfield's attitude to precept and commandment is interesting: 'Her religion was like a garden – a little less sedulously tended than of yore, but no whit less fondly loved.'⁶ The rules of the sect are rigid, and the women respect its tenets; however, they set human need above the unfor-giving code. One example of this is the occasion when, tempering regulations with mercy, Mrs Barfield provides Esther with a reference that allows her to get a job and survive, although refusing that reference would have been more in line with the stern outlook of the Brethren and its demands for repentance by one who had 'sinned'. A further instance is Esther's decision to support her husband in his bar and betting business – despite both being forbidden by Brethren rules. As Esther says: "religion is easy enough at times, but there is other times when it don't seem to fit in with a body's duty."⁷ In response to a challenge from a former suitor, a Plymouth brother, she says: "A wife that brings discord into the family is not a good wife, so I've often heard."⁸ The cruelty of societal attitudes towards Esther, and the ready, harsh judgments on her morality are invariably linked with particular echoes of biblical quotation or religious rhetoric, and/or class bias. Always, they lack even a scintilla of charity. Her Victorian society is clearly wedded to the externals of religious belief and stricture, it would expect to be perceived as God-fearing, as the very antithesis of secular; certainly its language and idiom belong to its avowed godliness and religious nature. However, the many examples of generosity and charity in this novel cannot be aligned in any way with religious bodies and their rulebooks – rather they are linked, albeit subtly, with rather sophisticated differentiations of moral necessity and human need. They constitute an unobtrusive contrasting of the spirit and letter of religious creeds.

⁶ *Esther Waters*, p.36.

⁷ *Esther Waters*, p.243.

⁸ *Esther Waters*, p.280.

The era in which this novel was written, and set, was one of burgeoning evangelical Churches, devotional revolution, conversions (often called conversions), minor cults, growing Church membership; it was a time when increased attendance at church was seen as proof positive of society's devout and upright nature, and absence from church viewed as socially, morally and religiously deficient. The society would have called itself Godly. Yet, one discerns in this novel the gap that existed in English society, the chasm between its professed religious beliefs and its relentless unchristian pursuit of worldly gain at the expense of anyone who could be abused. In furnishing his honest and realistic picture of a Victorian world, Moore can also be said to depict the secular in the wider sense: he paints the spirit of the age, portrays the reality as opposed to the conventional credo, conveys the multi-faceted aspects of the times – at the end of a reign, the end of a century, a period to be recorded, in all its variety, for posterity. It was an epoch when the patriarchal establishments maintained control over economic, public, domestic and religious matters but indubitably it was also a decade (the gay nineties, the naughty nineties) when many sought change and liberation, while others clung to the traditional, solely for fear of the new. The religious and the so-called secular elements of society were equally present. In his novelistic exposé of the actuality, George Moore reveals to us the shaky foundation on which identification of the religious or secular nature of a society might be made – and thus makes it clear how rash it could be to claim any trend towards, or away from, either state. Given the obvious divergence between public rhetoric and private practice, could a comparison of church attendance patterns, whether between 1890 and 1990, or in 1960 and 2000, really indicate the extent of religious devotion or secular belief at either time? It cannot be seen as remotely plausible to make such a claim and yet churchgoing is often the yardstick used to assess the so-called religious/secular balance.

It could be alleged that, on the basis of fiction and linked to just one fin-de-siècle novel, it is fanciful, arrogant and unsound to challenge church attendance statistics as valid measuring tools of the secular and religious natures of a society. However, that charge would not be borne out by the recent findings of social historian Callum Brown. In *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*,⁹

⁹ Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation*

Brown scrutinises the narrative of religious decline, or what is commonly called secularisation, and he takes issue both with those who judge religious adherence or secularisation by numbers alone, and also with those who focus on structures (churches and classes) rather than the personal in piety. At the time of growing industrialisation and urbanisation that took place between 1750 and 1950, Brown perceives what he terms 'a robustness of popular religiosity'¹⁰ with a language of religion that was sustained by the media in novels, magazines and tracts, in all of which Christian language, morality and narrative structures provided people with the vocabulary and concepts with which to view their own life stories and experiences. Brown finds that Christian Britain collapsed quite suddenly in the 1960s when the personal discourse vanished. He blames the gendered nature of that discourse for its disappearance and identifies the keys to understanding any secularisation in Britain as the simultaneous de-pietisation of femininity and the de-feminisation of piety from the 1960s. This process was a total reversal of what evangelicals had accomplished in the early 1800s.¹¹ In the 1960s, new media, changed gender roles and the moral revolution took away the impression that lives were Christian. However, Brown sees not the death of Churches, or the death of God, but death of the particular culture of Christianity that sustained the public notion of a religious society. Moreover, as he points out, gains as well as losses can be perceived: Britain is now a multi-faith society that is ethnically diverse, and attachment to religions other than the traditional ones is increasing. One might well ask if those other faiths are to be disregarded in any facile assessment and number-counting of what has commonly been called 'secularisation.' In addition to the unreliability of such quantitative measurement, would it not be plausible to discern racial, class and power prejudices in that type of evaluation?

Viewing the coexistence of religious discourse with choices that could be deemed primarily secular in the worldly sense is typical of the *saeculum* that is depicted in Moore's novel. Incidentally, so is recognition of Churches and sects other than those to which a majority in the state belong. Could the mix of the religious and the secular be the same combination that is a particular feature of American society today? The

¹⁰ *1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁰ Brown, p.195.

¹¹ Brown, p.192 and pp.58-87.

question of how religions can survive and thrive in that capitalist society is tackled partially, and en passant, by Brown. Drawing attention to the gender basis of much American religion wherein a still-vigorous evangelical rhetoric, of home, family, motherhood and apple pie, sustains the protocols of gendered religious identity and the ties to respectability, Brown reads the very presence of discursive conflict in the U.S. as indicative of a living Christian society. His verdict is: 'Piety and femininity are still actively enthralled to each other' in a very materialist American culture.¹²

Brown's choice for evaluating the religiousness of a society is that of discursive Christianity, a listening to the voices in dominant media, whether books, magazines, religious tracts or other media. Also dealing with discourse, David Domke and Kevin Coe provide a further understanding, and aid in assessment, of the American situation. In *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*,¹³ they consider the religious rhetoric that has been a central part of politicians' armoury since 1932. The evidence adduced would point to the conclusion that the use of religion and the mention of God are nothing more than a cynical political ploy and that, in the case of the current president (George W. Bush) who ends 80% of his addresses with 'God Bless America', the intention is to cloak the absence of serious meaning with the potent mix of patriotism and religion, thus making it somewhat more difficult for opponents to attack the speaker. Domke and Coe's panoramic survey of public addresses by presidential candidates and presidents over 75 years, opens a window on the *saeculum* in all its variety, and in showing the secular or worldly drive just under the apparently religious exterior, it makes clear that separation between religious and secular is far from clear-cut, and that attempts to measure such a putative divide are fraught.

George Moore's depiction of the secular and religious was careful in its literary construction while, for the period, it was somewhat daring in its implication – its message said that Esther represented personal conscience striving, and winning at least a moral victory, against the communal 'wisdom'. The idea was not a sudden whim on Moore's part, nor

¹² Brown, p.197.

¹³ David Domke & Kevin Coe, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

was the portraiture an isolated flash-photo of a moment. Ten years earlier in *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), he had also illustrated the same lesson through the character of Alice whose solid moral actions contrast with societal norms and whose principles are dissociated from churchgoing.¹⁴ This is another way of saying that both women discern appropriate moral routes in their own circumstances, and follow them despite strong pressure to take other paths that would have been decreed proper by convention or by hierarchical pronouncement. The actions of Alice and Esther derive from, and contribute to, their own dignity, and are not the conduct prescribed by dictate or convention.

If the *saeculum* is painted with authorial prudence and bravery on Moore's part, those are qualities that would not be expected to be necessary in twentieth and twenty-first century writing. And so, although the secular and the religious ooze from some of Dennis O'Driscoll's poetic lines, it is probably a more carefree attitude that can be discerned in his literary approach. O'Driscoll's themes and treatment drily and perceptively capture the preoccupations and follies of 21st century Irish society. His latest collection, *Reality Check*, fulfils exactly that valuable function in terms of surveying the *saeculum*.¹⁵ Yet, and possibly surprisingly, both in the poem titles and in O'Driscoll's rhetoric, there are unmistakable echoes and reflections of familiar religious discourse. The final three lines of "Diversions", the opening poem of *Reality Check*, read:

You ache to touch the hem of its current
as you drive by, reach out like a willow leaf,
contrive a way, in passing, to partake.¹⁶

The concluding lines of "Bread and Butter" ask:

Could anyone not
live contentedly on bread
and butter alone.¹⁷

¹⁴ Moore linked those two characters in his approving comment on them in 'Salve', *Hail and Farewell* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1985). Edited by Richard Allen Cave, p.275.

¹⁵ Dennis O'Driscoll, *Reality Check* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2007).

¹⁶ O'Driscoll, p.9.

¹⁷ O'Driscoll, pp.12-15.

The linguistic resonances are equally overt in “The Call” where the opening sestet says:

When we call on God, we always find him out,
 away on business maybe, lost in a world of his own,
 performing miracles for distant universes, volunteering
 to undergo humiliation all over again on another planet’s
 equivalent of a cross to which his credulous disciples¹⁸
 nail their colours as a drowning man clings to a mast.

It is apparent that O’Driscoll is acutely aware of the tensions inevitable in today’s parallel survivals of an inherited tradition and its commonly available discourse, with a more materially focused quotidian. This is expressed in the poem “Intercession”:

God and humankind meet on uncommon ground.
 They just don’t speak the same language.
 He plays hard to get.
 They try to smoke Him from His lair with incense.

A later couplet in the same poem asserts:

‘Both sides operate to incompatible agendas.
 Priestly mediation fails to close the widening rift.’¹⁹

Reflecting current doubts, O’Driscoll asks (in “The Call”):

Is it conceivable that he still dotes on the very hairs
 of our sceptical heads?²⁰

In this poem, the poet also closely interweaves current business jargon with received beliefs:

Has he ceased believing in his mission statement, lost faith
 in his epoch-creating role?

¹⁸ O’Driscoll, p.19.

¹⁹ O’Driscoll, p.18.

²⁰ O’Driscoll, p.19.

Indicative of past and present, maybe even of two *saecula*, some lines in the ultimate stanza of that poem spotlight a revealing décor:

Once, his beatific smile graced all our houses like an ancestral
 photograph or the graven image of a charismatic President or King.
 Now the blanched patch left in its place must be brushed out,
 the wall painted over, a hall mirror found to occupy that space.²¹

O'Driscoll's forensic scrutiny continues in "Forever", a poem that intones in litany style, and whose every element denies the permanence suggested by 'forever.' The characters and situations are recognisable and they include:

Forever the kind who believe in God (a little) and horoscopes (a lot)
 and cannot resist a buy-one-get-one offer!
 [. . .]
 Forever the girl upending the nearly-empty crisp packet and savour-
 ing life to the full, to the last salty cheese-and-onion flavoured
 crumb.
 [. . .]
 Forever the exasperated mother – hatchback open, hazards flashing,
 eyes peeled for the traffic police – while her son, packing the drum
 kit, plays it cool.

The final lines offer a neat verdict:

Forever. And ever. All going well.²²

That intermeshing of religious language with material reality is widespread in O'Driscoll's poetry, and its use captures the complexity of an Irish decade, perhaps even a *saeculum*. It is indicative of the strength of the still-extant religious discourse, at least mildly suggestive of surviving impulses towards the religious or the transcendent, and it demands some further interrogation in the light of newer sociological theories. However, before adverting to such investigations, it is opportune to probe poetry by another contemporary Irish poet, Cathal Ó Searcaigh.

²¹ O'Driscoll, p.20.

²² O'Driscoll, pp.41-43.

There is religious allusion in abundance, albeit with a contrasting tone, in the Irish-language poetry of Cathal Ó Searcaigh. Arguably, his rural background and working life contribute to that different slant, one in which other aspects and preoccupations of this *saeculum* are especially apparent – ecological concerns, the search for the spiritual, for peace of mind, for justice in the world. These are phenomena that are recognisable on all sides today, both in Ireland and in peoples worldwide, and surely their existence refutes any definition of secularisation that would limit its remit to institutional religion and numbers; so too would those manifestations refuse an explanation of secularisation that perceives an inevitable teleology from industrialisation to globalisation via apostasy.

Two of Ó Searcaigh's poems have the title "Tearmann" (Refuge or sanctuary). Both are set in the outdoors, on the mountain and on the bog, and they exult in the beauty of natural surroundings. In the earlier poem (1993), Ó Searcaigh's rejection of one creed and espousal of another are made plain:

Anseo is lena bheatha seachas lena bhriathra
 a chuireann cibe Dia atá ann e féin in iúl;
 gan aird aige ar chomharthaí omois ach oiread le haltú.
 Foinse gach fuinnimh. Cruthaitheoir na nDúl.
 Is leor leis a bheith ag borradh, ag bláthú
 is ag brú chun solais i ngach brobh nuafháis.
 [] Le gach anáil dá dtarraingim,
 análaím chugam é ar an aer íon
 chomh friseáilte le harán, chomh fionnuar le fion.²³
 (trans.)

Here, it's with his life and not his words
 that whatever God there is, presents himself;
 disregarding reverential signs or thanks.
 Source of all energy. Creator of the Elements.
 [. . .] With my every breath,
 I inhale him in the pure air
 as refreshing as bread, as invigorating as wine.²⁴

As Ó Searcaigh discards the institutional religion that he views as 'craífeacht borb na puilpide/ag bagairt léin ar lucht na hearraíde' (crude

²³ Cathal Ó Searcaigh, *Homecoming/ An bealach 'na bhaile* (Indreabhán: Clo Iar-Chonnachta, 2004). Edited by Gabriel Fitzmaurice, p.46.

²⁴ My translation.

piosity from the pulpit/that threatens woe to transgressors),²⁵ he moves to a spirituality that finds its strength in creation (as in the more recent “Tearmann”),²⁶ and also in community solidarity (“Cuireadh”),²⁷ in ethical concern for suffering people in Palestine and Iraq (“Mairgneach na mná i mBaghdad”, “Mórtas na mná Pailistíní” and “Cárta Poist chuig Yusuf san Iaráic”),²⁸ with some disquiet about the earth and the succeeding generations (“An Tobar”).²⁹ In “An Tobar” (The Well), the memory of well water and the rituals attached to its careful conservation are contrasted with the dullness and disconnectedness of the piped-water era and the counsel is ‘Caithfear pilleadh arís ar na foinní’ (We must return to the sources). The horror of war, and Ó Searcaigh’s sympathy with its victims, are patent in the lines from “Mairgneach na mná i mBaghdad” which voice the lamentation of Iraqi women in the middle of bullets, bombs, rotting bodies, guns and diving fighter planes, and are emphasised by the repetition of ‘Tá an bás i mo chroí anocht’ (Death is in my heart tonight). In “Cuireadh” (An Invitation), the poet opens his heart and hearth to all who suffer: ‘sibhse atá eaglach, ocrach, aonarach,/ taraigí, tá fáilte romhaibh’ (you who are fearful, hungry, alone/ come, you are welcome). The sentiments could not be more in accordance with religious tenets, and the linguistic connections are apparent; it is the institutional religious links that are eschewed.

Ó Searcaigh’s creed can be viewed as secular too, and especially in the sense that it is a ‘spirit of the age’. Rather than indicating the loss of morality, law and order, tradition, religious practice, and sense of community, and national identity, Ó Searcaigh’s poetry embraces and espouses and wishes for just those qualities and articulates them in a vocabulary and phraseology that is rich in resonances from well-known religious sources. Thus, any lament of a decline in community or individual standards emerges from the poet’s own highly ethical and moral framework; his perceptions and expressions are both *saolta* (related to life) and *cianaosta* (ancient), and the delivery of the message marks a hallmark of the *saeculum* as being the process of *tuathú* and *dí-*

²⁵ “Tearmann”, in *Homecoming / An bealach ‘na bhaile*, p.46.

²⁶ “Tearmann”, in *Gúrú i gClúidíní* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2006) p.38.

²⁷ *Gúrú*, p.11. The title means ‘An Invitation’.

²⁸ *Gúrú*, pp.49-52. Those titles translate as ‘Lamentation of the Baghdad Women’, ‘The Pride of the Palestinian Women’ and ‘A postcard to Yusuf in Iraq’.

²⁹ “An Tobar” (The Well), in *Homecoming / An bealach ‘na bhaile*, pp.42-45.

ea glaisiú (to make lay, and to ‘un-church’). A characteristic of this *saeculum* thus straddles the dual meanings of the word ‘secular’, its time component and its relationship to ecclesiastical structures. Contrary to some assumptions, the movement away from Church organisation will not inevitably result in overall societal decline; assumption of personal responsibility is capable of sustaining a spirituality that might have vanished as old ritual lost its meaning. The secular of this *saecula* is far from negative.

Discourse is the important word in new sociological theory concerning developments in society. The literary works of Moore, O’Driscoll and Ó Searcaigh both support, and are validated by, the findings of more recent secularisation studies. As early as 1977, Peter Glasner reviews use of the word ‘secularisation’ and, tracing its misuse to the values of some earlier Western sociologists, deems their depictions and analyses to be a fiction that does not reflect reality. He labels their interpretations as social myth, in other words, the result of analyses being extended beyond their scope to make broad judgments that cannot be upheld.³⁰ He suggests that conventional definitions appeared to take precedence over sociological ones and that the result was ‘generalisations from limited empirical findings.’³¹ Glasner cites the warning from Gabriel Le Bras who cautions against making assumptions of decline in religion by comparing measurements from a feudal society – where external conformity, religious and otherwise, was strictly enforced – to those of a modern society where, in relative freedom, the individuals decide their own actions: ‘Pour être déchristianisé, il faut bien qu’elles [les populations entières] aient été un jour christianisées.’³² This *caveat* is echoed with slight variation by Steve Bruce: ‘the revision downwards of our estimate of how religious was the past and upwards of how religious is the present depends on making inappropriately light of signs of religiosity in the pre-modern period and making inappropriately much of weak rhetorical affirmations in the present.’³³ More recently again, David Herbert draws attention to

³⁰ Peter Glasner, *The Sociology of Secularisation: A Critique of a Concept* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) p.115.

³¹ Glasner, pp.63-64.

³² Gabriel Le Bras, « Déchristianisation : mot fallacieux », in *Social Compass* X: 6, (Louvain : Université catholique de Louvain & FERES, 1963), qtd. in Glasner, p.20.

³³ Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford:

‘a central problem with conventional secularisation theory’ and claims it arises from considerations that limit their scope to ‘authoritarian religious institutions, conventional religious thinking (obedience to dogma) and practices (typically church-going, rites of passage) and their attenuated forms.’³⁴ Herbert points to a neglect of religious discourse in such analyses and supports Brown’s refusal of earlier secularisation theory, agreeing that there has only been a change in the form of religion, to one with less public conformity but with greater personal conviction.³⁵ Herbert stresses the importance of discursive religion for an understanding of religion’s relationship to civil society and he notes the potential role of a religion in helping people ‘to make sense of their lives in narrative terms.’³⁶

In just such narrative terms, Moore, O’Driscoll and Ó Searcaigh offer support in diverse situations: one might cite the case of Esther Waters as providing an empathetic backing for single mothers and others who are victimised for flouting unfair convention; O’Driscoll’s reference to ‘the graven image of a charismatic President or King’ brands those office-holders as false gods and returns responsibility to the individual who must hold a (hall) mirror up to reality; Ó Searcaigh’s personal environmental disquiet can be sustaining of the private concerns of other people, or it can provide a focus for a caring community involvement, while expressions of his fellow-feeling with those suffering in Palestine and Iraq also proffer the basis of a solidarity movement, the option for communal identity and inter-communal ties in a benign globalisation. The depictions by all three authors are reflective of their respective *saecula* and, in the circular relationship of discourse, they are also potential building blocks for times present and future. When the apparent collapse of public agreement on religious narrative removes traditional props, the contribution of literature can fill the space: its honesty, its variety, and its linguistic resonances offer rich and ‘user-friendly’ reinforcement and inspiration.

Donal Dorr’s *Time for a Change* (2004) recognises disillusionment with – or maybe, disinterest in – an institutional church, in his case, the

Oxford University Press, 1997) p.57.

³⁴ David Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p.15.

³⁵ Herbert, p.22.

³⁶ Herbert, p.25.

Catholic Church. However, he takes as starting point the fact that society generally has not rejected the spiritual and the transcendent: ‘There is a real hunger for spirituality in our time. Many people who have become disillusioned with formal religions are still looking for a meaning in life and a source of hope and spiritual energy.’³⁷ Lionel Pilkington has furnished an example of the complexity that may be taken by one of many forms of that spiritual hunger: he explains the phenomenon of the estimated 2 million who ‘paid homage to the relics of St Thérèse’ in 2001 as evidence of ‘a widespread ethical desire’, as ‘enduring physical manifestations of hope and renewal and as the potential foundation for an alternative public sphere.’³⁸ In his introduction to *La Sécularisation en Irlande*, Paul Brennan muses: “Il a été dit que l’on ne pouvait parler d’une quelconque sécularisation inéluctable dans le cas de l’Irlande.” While Brennan did not firmly concur with the assertion, his reservations might be deduced from the question he poses in relation to a subsequent comment that refers to the lack of evidence for any return of religion to Ireland as had been the case in Europe: ‘Encore un exemple du retard séculier de ce pays ?’³⁹ The title of an essay by Patsy McGarry is very apposite: in “The Rise and Fall of Roman Catholicism in Ireland”, he mentions how Christianity in Ireland had “incorporated the old gods and sacred places into tradition” and how it was ‘still acceptable to take a coal from a fire to celebrate St John the Baptist and throw it into a field for luck.’⁴⁰ While McGarry writes of the death of a Catholic church, he makes it clear that the bones of an older religion (*cianaosta*) live on, thus providing further support for the route and interpretations taken by this paper, that to measure the secular in connection with institutional religion is misleading, but that the evidence of the spiritual and the moral are ever-present and are to be seen in a myriad different manifestations in

³⁷ Donal Dorr, *Time for a Change* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2004), p.7.

³⁸ Lionel Pilkington, “Religion and the Celtic Tiger: The Cultural Legacies of Anti-Catholicism in Ireland”, in *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society and the Global Economy*. Edited by Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbons & Michael Cronin (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p.138.

³⁹ Paul Brennan, (dir.), *La Sécularisation en Irlande* (Caen : Presses Universitaires de Caen, 1998), p.15.

⁴⁰ Patsy McGarry, “The Rise and Fall of Roman Catholicism in Ireland?”, in *Irish and Catholic?* Edited by Louise Fuller, John Littleton & Eamon Maher (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2006), p.31.

each *saeculum*. The divisions of the dictionary definitions of secular can actually come together in the concurrent decline of ecclesiastical structures, and the existence of contemporary beliefs, many expressed with a soupçon of the religious discourse that pertained to the heyday of the metanarrative, authoritarian Churches and patriarchal religions.

Some of the persisting beliefs include the idea of the transcendent, or the *au-delà*, and they are in evidence in different literary places. Ó Searcaigh's *au-delà* includes what he wants the reader to notice in the rush of a commercial world: the beauty of the earth, the fragility of nature, the importance of history and place, the resource of inherited language, the danger and poverty of shackled minds. What he wishes the reader to grasp is openness to possibility and to tolerance. One element of this faith is intimated in a recent poem "Gúrú i gClúidíní", in which he conveys the Buddhist belief that life does not start with birth nor finish with death, but that there is more than that out there.⁴¹ Dennis O'Driscoll is less forthcoming:

Whatever pious upward-gazing
eye once saw in the sky's reredos
has become a blur, the apocalyptic
light of dusk – wines, divine golds,
daubs of ceremonial purples.⁴²

However, it is 'a blur', it has not disappeared; it will be 'so many millennia until night falls/on our universe and everything/on earth comes down to nothing.' And the *au-delà* is unapologetically present in Cecilia Ahern's *PS, I love you*, maybe as a kind of guardian angel, while in that same writer's *If You Could See Me Now*, there is a totally natural recognition of a spirit world.⁴³ The success of those novels indicates the acceptance of the concepts by a very large global readership. Things were so different a century earlier when George Moore's ear was attuned to much more specifically religious discourses and his critical eye was firmly fixed on the inconsistencies in the institutional messages. It was, of

⁴¹ "Gúrú i gClúidíní" (Guru in Nappies) is the title poem in the collection *Gúrú i gClúidíní*, (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2006), p.16.

⁴² From "Skywriting", in *Reality Check*, p.69.

⁴³ *PS, I Love You* (London: Harper Collins, 2004); *If You Could See Me Now* (London: HarperCollins, 2005).

course, another *saeculum*. Distinguishing the exigencies of changing times and also discerning the existence of a faith community, an Irish Catholic archbishop recently said that Irish Catholics ‘needed help to let go of ‘a home’ which no longer existed; [. . .] They need to be encouraged and enabled to enter a new place they may sense as deeply alien.’⁴⁴ The view of a Church of Ireland archbishop is that ‘The way of being church is changing.’⁴⁵ It would seem that the institutional churches have implicitly accepted ‘secular’ as spirit of the times rather than as necessarily meaning ineluctable abandonment of the spiritual.

It hardly seems reasonable that, despite evidence from literary and sociological sources, some common interpretations persist in linking the words secular and secularisation to gloom, doom and decay. With new sociological theory that strongly supports the interpretation of secular as spirit of the times, discourse theory presents the opportunity to assess the wide range of public beliefs over the centuries. In their careful and care-free analyses of two *saecula*, the word pictures painted by George Moore, Dennis O’Driscoll and Cathal Ó Searcaigh, make considerable contribution towards filling in the narrative and the record. If anything, their sketches show that there is really nothing new on the face of the earth, just a shifting and settling, as it will be forever and ever – *in saecula saeculorum*.

⁴⁴ Interview by Patsy McGarry with Dr Michael Neary, Archbishop of Tuam, in *The Irish Times*, 12 May 2008.

⁴⁵ Interview by Patsy McGarry with Dr John Neill, Archbishop of Dublin, in *The Irish Times*, 13 May 2008.

Jean-Christophe Penet

Ultramodernity and the Redefinition of Secularisation as the Restructuration of Belief in Contemporary France and Ireland

Historically speaking, the word ‘secularisation’ means the process whereby Church possessions are given to lay people or organisations. The word was later used to talk about a religious person renouncing their vows to live in the secular world. More generally, the word is used when Church people and Church goods stop being under the jurisdiction of the Catholic institution to fall, instead, under the control of the secular – and, therefore, the political – world. As a result, the secularisation of the world, which has retained all of these meanings, has now come to mean every aspect of the loss of influence of the religious within society due to the gradual substitution of mythical explanations of the world by scientific and positivist ones from the 16th century onwards.

The concept of secularisation must, therefore, be understood in the general context of a ‘crisis of religion’ that is said to have started with Humanism and the Enlightenment. In France and in Ireland, this crisis went through various phases under the influence of, amongst others, the French Revolution, British secularism, liberal theology and, eventually, the Second Vatican Council. In spite of their obvious fundamental differences, these events all bear witness in one way or another to the transformations of institutional religion that took place during modernity.

In *Les théories de la sécularisation*, Olivier Tschannen considers secularisation as a paradigm, since a paradigm ‘[...] *peut fonctionner lorsque la théorie n’existe pas.*’¹ According to him, the first important

¹ Indeed, a paradigm is not a theory, but ‘[...] *une entité qui comporte au moins trois éléments distincts : 1) un ensemble de présupposés philosophiques ou métaphysiques ; 2) un ensemble de résultats (achèvements) scientifiques universellement reconnus, se traduisant en un ensemble d’habitudes scientifiques ; 3) des artefacts pouvant être utilisés pour la solution d’énigmes (puzzles).*’ Olivier

event in the construction of the paradigm of secularisation was the development of a positivist social science that considered the ‘crisis of religion’ to mark the end of all religions. The word secularisation was sometimes used in that context, but more often in a political context than in a ‘scientific’ one (TS, 87). Auguste Comte, for instance, thought that religion in its traditional form would end up disappearing, though he never used the word secularisation. This word, however, was used by the members of the London Secular Society. It was during that time that the ideas of the differentiation between religion and politics and of the scientification of the world were integrated into the paradigm of secularisation. The second important event in the emergence of the paradigm of secularisation was the development of proper sociological theories on religion by the late 19th and early 20th century, notably with the writings of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Max Weber (1864-1920) and of Karl Marx (1818-1883), as their sociological theories integrated the very important notion of rationalisation into the paradigm of secularisation.

The third important event in this process was the creation of an empirical sociology of religions under the aegis of Catholic sociologists in the 1940s. This pastoral sociology was led, in France, by Gabriel Le Bras and by his student, Jean Blanchard, who published a study on *The Church in Contemporary Ireland* in 1962. Pastoral sociology was based upon a traditional conception of Catholic identity, which had not as yet drawn the consequences of the said “crisis of religion” due to the rationalisation of the world. However, Olivier Tschannen showed that, in a way, this Catholic sociology : ‘[...] *constituait une réponse à cette crise: elle était en effet largement motivée par le déclin de la pratique et les problème de vocation ayant marqué cette période*’ (TS, 88). Pastoral sociology was, in fact, using empirical methods in the hope that it would find the origins of and thus ultimately, solve the ‘crisis of religion.’ According to this form of sociology, if France was prey to secularisation, Ireland was not, as there were no empirical traces of secularisation there until the late 1970s. I believe, however, that it is possible to argue that secularisation had already reached Irish shores by the early 1960s, which brings into question the validity of an empirical approach to the concept

Tschannen, *Les théories de la sécularisation* (Genève : Droz, 1992), p.20. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by TS, followed by the page number.

of secularisation. Unlike in France, attacks against Rome's teaching in Ireland did not come from within society, but from abroad, since the moral values of Ireland's political norms were those of Ultramontanist. If this made the attacks slower and weaker at first, it did not make them any less real. Thus, just as Henri Godin's *France, Pays de Mission?* (1943) denounced '(...) the new things – the radio, the cinema, the newspapers – coming from the great cities and bringing a pagan spirit that is slowly eating away much of the soul of France.'² Archbishop D'Alton expressed the same concern in 1950 when he wrote in *The Furrow*:

We have to face the fact that with the rise of the new inventions such as the cinema and the radio, we no longer enjoy [sic] our former isolation. Our people are constantly being brought into contact with a civilisation for the most part alien and materialistic in outlook.³

If Archbishop D'Alton showed himself nonetheless reassured for the Irish, as he saw them 'deeply attached to their faith and loyal in their practice of it, despite the dangers of modern life,'⁴ he had good reason to worry. Truly, television was a growing challenge to the Church's strict control of moral values – which had been affirmed, as far as books and the cinema were concerned, respectively by the 1923 Censorship of Films Act and the 1929 Censorship of Publications Acts – since the BBC programmes that could be received along the east coast escaped censorship. Louise Fuller showed the outraged reaction of *The Furrow's* television critic Eithne Conway in 1958 when, following two documentaries on prostitution and on homosexuality broadcast by the BBC, she wrote that:

[...] she was concerned about 'the repercussions of B.B.C. transmissions on moral and religious issues.' She referred to 'the menace of television' and

² *France Pagan? The Mission of Abbé Godin* (London: Catholic Book Club London, 1949), p.67. Quoted from Louise Fuller, "The French Catholic Experience: Irish Connections and Disconnections", in Eamon Maher, Eugene O'Brien & Grace Neville (eds.), *Reinventing Ireland Through a French Prism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), pp.97-112, p.103. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by FCE, followed by the page number.

³ Quoted from Louise Fuller (FCE, 103) Archbishop D'Alton, "The Furrow and its Programme", in *The Furrow*, 1:1 (February 1950), p.6.

⁴ Ibid.

the distressing effect on young minds of the 'immodest dress' worn by some lady panel members and the 'embarrassing close-ups in the love scenes of many of the plays'. She remarked that while such things were commonplace in films shown in cinemas throughout the country, the problem became more acute when it was introduced into 'the last refuge and stronghold of Christian principles, the hearths and homes of the nation.'⁵

Even though it could reach but one part of the country, the BBC was therefore beaming modern values into the island as early as the 1950s. And this factor of socio-cultural change was reinforced in Ireland by the ever-growing number of people moving from rural areas to Dublin, and of people emigrating to Britain or further afield to find work. First of all, migrations to Dublin were a clear sign that Ireland was slowly but surely moving away from defining itself as a traditional, agrarian society to embrace the urbanisation then familiar to most European countries at that time. What is more, according to Louise Fuller: 'While emigration, on the one hand, provided a safety valve which could be said to have delayed change in a society that was rigidly stratified and formerly cushioned from outside influences, the returned emigrants, on the other hand, also posed a challenge to traditional values and ways of thinking.' (ICS1950, 43) As a matter of fact, the very mobility of the Irish showed that many people who were unhappy with their situation tried to improve it by moving location instead of enduring it any longer. This had deep implications for Irish Catholicism, since this meant that a lot of Irish people refused to continue 'offering it up,' and thereby rejected one of the central precepts of intransigent Catholicism.⁶

In "La religion, mode de croire," French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger made the point that:

⁵ Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism Since 1950: the Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002), p.40. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by ICS1950, followed by the page number.

⁶ Louise Fuller pointed out that 'Deep in Catholic consciousness was the emphasis on the necessity for sacrifice and self-denial. Bishops in their pastorals repeatedly reminded the faithful of the importance of the spirit of mortification. Also central to the thinking of Catholicism was the idea that while one's life situation might not be quite what one would have wished for, it was not right to be resentful. This had to be seen as the will of God, and accepted. The way to deal with it was to 'offer it up' and wait for a reward in the next life, because it was only then that true happiness could be attained' (ICS1950, 49).

Le « réductionnisme méthodique », qui est arrachement de l'objet au discours des acteurs, est certes un moment nécessaire de la démarche critique et vaut pour la sociologie dans son ensemble. Mais cette démarche tend à prendre, dans le cas de la religion, un sens à la fois théorique et normatif. Elle implique (...) que la religion se confond entièrement avec les significations et les fonctions sociales, politiques, culturelles, symboliques qui sont les siennes dans une société donnée.⁷

The modern, rational and empirical approach to religion by the social sciences considered religious experiences to be quantifiable data that could be determined through the objective study of social and historical configurations. They were not, therefore, interested in the exact nature of those religious experiences. The nature of belief, which is part and parcel of any philosophical questioning of religion, was completely ignored by this 'methodical reductionism.' Because, as is extremely well-argued by Tom Inglis in *Moral Monopoly. The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (1998), Catholicism was used as a social *habitus* in Ireland during the first half of the 20th century: one could wonder, however, if Catholic belief was of a religious or a political nature. Even though they could show the importance of Catholicism in Irish society at the time, empirical studies could not answer that question. Thus, probably encouraged by the redefinition of Catholicism that had taken place during the Second Vatican Council, sociology started revisiting the conception it had had of religion until then by the late 1960s. At that time, the sociology of religion seems to have become aware of the "(...) *dynamiques croyantes de la modernité elle-même, au-delà de la trajectoire supposée inéluctable du désenchantement rationnel.*" (RMC, 146).

From the late 1960s, social science no longer studied religions only, but started focussing, instead, on the religious and its role within the modern, political world, even though they held the latter to be principally disenchanted. In *The Invisible Religion* (1963), however, Thomas Luckmann dismissed the 'so-called process of secularisation as a 'modern myth.'⁸ He refused, in fact, to acknowledge the consequence drawn in the mythical perceptions of secularisation; that of a decline of religion. Ac-

⁷ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "La religion, mode de croire", in *Revue du Mauss*, n°22 (2003), pp.144-157, p.145. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by RMC, followed by the page number.

⁸ Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York : Macmillan, 1967), p.37.

According to him, secularisation did not bring about the end of religion in Western societies, because an a-religious, secular social structure did not necessarily imply an a-religious, secular society. His point was reinforced by the second part of Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (1967) entitled "Historical elements," in which Berger contended that secularisation originated from a particular locus of the social system, and that, like a virus, it spread throughout the system thanks to what he called "carriers" of secularisation.⁹ In his view, the main carriers of secularisation in Western societies were economic. Yet other carriers were also at stake, some of which were located at a symbolic level and, sometimes, within religion itself. Berger consequently considered that secularisation could not be considered as a process with a single cause and universal outcomes. The secularisation process had, he believed, different consequences within the various sections of society. Although Berger emphasised the survival of religion in the publicity of politics by showing that no wars or marriages ever began without the traditional religious symbolic ceremonies (SC, 129), he nonetheless insisted on the fact that this was simply a rhetorical survival of religion in the face of secularisation. According to him: 'The religious legitimisations of the state [...] remain as rhetorical ornamentations devoid of social reality' (SC, 133). In spite of Berger's qualifications concerning the public survival of religion, his *Sacred Canopy* proved that, even though secularisation meant the decline of institutional religions, it did not necessarily mean the disappearance of religion – which was now called the religious.

Following Berger's image of secularisation as a virus, sociologists then started considering that the secularisation process of Western societies meant a generalisation of the religious view of the world; having given up the cloth, religious symbols, values and norms could now spread to the secular sphere. This, however, did not mean a victory of the religious view of the world, but rather its dismantlement. Indeed, by spreading to the secular world, not only did the religious view of the world lose its coherence, its specificity and its enchantment, it also entered into fierce competition with science and other modern value systems. Clearly the paradigm of secularisation now implied the rather para-

⁹ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements in a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York : Doubleday, 1967), p.109. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by SC, followed by the page number.

doxical idea that the religious survived when religions were fading away, and that the religious was no longer to be found in a particular locus of society, defined as it was by a particular function, but that it was spreading throughout the whole of society, particularly in politics. In fact, despite his earlier claim that the religious had no social reality in politics, Peter Berger later reassessed the role of the religious in politics and ended up considering 'civil religions' as the very illustration of the generalisation of the religious to politics.¹⁰ Religion never completely disappears from the public sphere and this is why, in terms of France, I believe that Catholicism was gradually replaced by the cult of the *République* throughout the 20th century. Obviously, this notion of 'civil religion' and its application to concrete examples – to France's ideal of the *République* or to communism, for instance – presupposes the functionalist approach to society developed by Durkheim.

According to Durkheim, the prerequisite for modern political ideologies to be compared to religions was that the latter be defined by the institution of some sacredness and not of a God. Actually, Durkheim believed that sacredness was at the root of every society as it enabled the establishment of a myth of parthenogenetic creation and of self-identification. The role of religion, for him, was not to serve religious purposes but, instead, to solve the identity issues faced by every human entity, be they communities or nations.¹¹ This was clearly the role played by Catholicism in Ireland, as the sacredness it instituted was used to define Irish identity until recently. This is why it is possible to argue that Catholic belief in de Valera's Ireland was, above all, of a political nature. The problem with that functionalist approach to religion, however, is that it does not account for the emergence of the new forms of religious movements that have appeared in the last few decades, and that are different both from institutional religions and from civil religions. Furthermore, I also believe that this functionalist approach is not completely satisfactory, as it does not help us to understand what became of Catholic forces in Ireland after the Church lost its moral monopoly, as the latter has never been replaced by a civil religion. Similarly, in *The Sacred*

¹⁰ Peter Berger, *Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p.148.

¹¹ Shmuel Trigano, *Qu'est-ce que la religion ? La transcendance des sociologues* (Paris : Flammarion, 2001), p.240.

Canopy, Berger still defined secularisation as a process whereby various sections of society and of culture were gradually becoming freer from the authority of religious institutions and symbols. Yet this definition of secularisation, which dominated most of the 1970s and 1980s, is seriously questioned in the light of some recent statements by Bertie Ahern and Nicolas Sarkozy, to the effect that religion in general – and Catholicism in particular – still has a role to play in French and Irish society. In fact, it is possible to argue that the situation of the religious has changed so much in the past forty years that it is now possible to talk about a new socio-religious deal for those societies. A redefinition of the paradigm of secularisation consequently appears to be urgent. Or, to put it in Jean-Paul Willaime's words:

Si le paradigme de la sécularisation n'est plus suffisant pour penser cette situation, il n'est pas pour autant obsolète : c'est en effet parce qu'une certaine sécularisation arrive à son terme, celle qui désigne la perte de pouvoir des institutions religieuses sur leurs propres fidèles et sur la société dans son ensemble, que le religieux se recompose sous de nouvelles formes.¹²

At this stage in my reflections, I shall briefly mention the strong impact that the liturgical reforms agreed by the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s had on French and Irish Catholics, and more particularly on the way they redefined their faith and themselves in its aftermath. The new constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, consisted, in fact, of a simplification of the liturgy by tracking down magical interpretations to put the emphasis, instead, on the purely religious meaning of Catholic practice. The aim was to make the meaning of the sacraments understandable to a greater number of people and, thereby, to bring the language of the Church closer to that of the modern world. The Catholic Church thus underwent the disenchantment with its own liturgy when it sought to modernise it with the Second Vatican Council. However, this disenchantment encountered the almost immediate resistance of 'popular religiosity,' whether in France or in Ireland. As shown by Danièle Hervieu-Léger in an article on "Religion and Modernity in the French Context: For a New Approach to Secularisation," this popular religiosity, or

¹² Jean-Paul Willaime, *Europe et religions. Les enjeux du XXI^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), p.202. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by ER, followed by the page number.

‘simple faith,’ was ‘[...] almost entirely free of control by the clergy and its regulations, and which was more sensitive to the celebrational, emotional, and extraordinary dimensions of religious manifestations than to the longwinded explanations of their theological and spiritual significance.’¹³

In a similar manner, studying the various manifestations of religiosity in the France of the 1980s, the French sociologist showed that, far from losing ground due to the post-Council redefinition of liturgy, the popularity of traditional religious practices such as pardons, the display of relics and of possessions grew during that decade. What is more: ‘Far from attracting an audience only among the traditional social categories, these manifestations now attract[ed] a more middle-class public, whose role-identification and imagination fed on them’ (RMFC, 19). In fact, this was, according to her, the logical consequence of the dramatic spread of ‘new religious movements’ in general, and of Catholic charismatic movements in particular, from the early 1970s onwards. These movements, which numbered thousands of members and over 1,000 prayer groups in the early 1990s in France, are most often associated with larger and more structured communities, such as *Emmanuel*, *Le Chemin Neuf* and *Le Lion de Juda*. Even though they have always been considered with suspicion by the French Catholic hierarchy, these charismatic movements, which have clearly ecstatic forms of religious expression – with, amongst other forms, healing practices, prophecies, speaking in tongues, etc. – have fared so well that they have now become acculturated to the official Catholic institution.

Analysing these new religious movements, Salvatore Abbruzzese made the point that they offered a form of spirituality defined as ‘[...] *une option globale qui propose, au lieu d’une insertion dans des « lieux « désertés ou devenus inexistantes, une vie nouvelle immergée dans le siècle.*’¹⁴ These new Catholic movements seem to present all of the char-

¹³ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, “Religion and Modernity in the French Context: For a New Approach to Secularisation”, in *Sociological Analysis*, 51, (1990), pp.15-25, p.19. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by RMFC, followed by the page number.

¹⁴ Salvatore Abbruzzese, “Les nouveaux mouvements religieux”, in *Encyclopædia Universalis*, Corpus 5 (Paris : Encyclopædia Universalis, 2005), p.104. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by NMR, followed by the page number.

acteristics of their ultramodern times, as one of their fundamental elements is the central autonomy of the individual. In charismatic communities, indeed, the mutual recognition of subjective experiences and the expression of personal emotions are considered to be the best way to achieve personal conversion. Moreover, the fact that all of these movements come from the same Catholic background prevents them from presenting themselves as the unique, right way to achieve salvation, which increases the autonomy of individuals who remain free to choose between the various different forms of spiritual renewal. What is more, another ultramodern characteristic is that: “*Charpentés sur le modèle communautaire, ces mouvements donnent vie à une pluralité de réseaux relationnels, qui posent le sujet dans un univers d’échanges, de sociabilité et d’entraide sans équivalents*” (NMR, 105).

Similarly, Tom Inglis made the point about contemporary Catholicism in Ireland that the fragmentation of its orthodoxy has led to increased diversification in ways of being spiritual and moral. As a result, devotional religion appears to be thriving in Ireland, with the number of people who make pilgrimages to traditional penitential sites such as Croagh Patrick and Lough Derg increasing, while Church teaching on divorce, sex outside of marriage, contraception and abortion is widely ignored or contested.¹⁵ This is to be explained, according to him, by the fact that: ‘It is only when real alternatives to being Catholic began to emerge, when Catholics realised and accepted that they could be religious without being Catholic, that the religious *habitus* became heterodox, and the Church’s monopoly position within the religious field began to decline.’¹⁶ Standing in sharp contrast with the strict requirements of Catholic belonging defined by the institution during modernity, ultramodern Catholic belonging therefore no longer requires any specific social attitudes and practices. All things considered, the only social attitude

¹⁵ According to Religious Affairs Correspondent Patsy MacGarry, between 35,000 and 45,000 people climbed Croagh Patrick on 27 July 2008, the figure having doubled since 2007 (*The Irish Times*, 28 July 2008). This growing popularity of pilgrimages in Ireland was confirmed very recently, when 3,000 people from Dublin left for Lourdes to to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the apparitions at Lourdes to St Bernadette (*The Irish Times*, 8 September 2008).

¹⁶ Tom Inglis, “Catholic Church, Religious Capital and Symbolic Domination”, in Michael Böss & Eamon Maher (eds.), *Engaging Modernity* (Dublin: Veritas, 2003), pp.43-65, p.51.

contemporary Catholics have in common is their observance of the principle of social discretion which is, in fact, one of the characteristic features of contemporary urban societies.

This is the reason why Danièle Hervieu-Léger believes the new religious movements to be particularly revealing in relation to the new forms of the religious in ultramodern societies. Indeed, she contends that it is quite significant that these charismatic movements are not made of 'the backward social categories or among the underprivileged rejects of modernity,' but that, on the contrary, their leaders, their militants and most of their adepts come from the middle classes of 'intellectuals, technicians, and managers, along with some executives from big business and financial circles' (RMFC, 21). According to her, this proves that the phenomenon commonly known as 'the return to religion,' and which is characteristic of ultramodern societies, is not only due to the shortcomings of a modernity rejected by those returning to religion.

More generally, Danièle Hervieu-Léger rejects this interpretation of the return to religion as a sign of the rejection, by some, of modernity because such an interpretation rests entirely on a conception of secularisation that assumes an inevitable decline of religion in the modern world. Indeed, she argues that this interpretation perceives the new religious movements only in terms of protest, anti-modernity and irrationality, thereby ignoring the fact that they convey an alternative rationality that is as both in harmony and in conflict with modernity. She believes that, on the contrary:

This particular ambivalence with respect to modernity is visible in the affinity of these movements with the processes of the privatisation and individualisation of beliefs, which is precisely characteristic of the situation of religion in modernity. It is visible in the mobility of religious networks that are founded on an associative basis, as well as in the emphasis that they place on personal experience and the individual's 'right to subjectivity' (RMFC, 22).

This ambivalence can be explained, according to Danièle Hervieu-Léger, by the very paradoxical nature of modernity. Indeed, in *Vers un nouveau christianisme*, she contends that, during modernity, while, on the one hand, the historical process of modernity dissolved religion, on the other hand, its utopia permanently restored the conditions of a form of belief in which the tension was maintained between the daily determinations of reality and a utopian horizon which justified and directed every effort made in this reality. Thus, because modernity defined itself as a historical

process, as the belief in a mission to accomplish and a prophecy to fulfil – whether it was the creation of the *République* or of an Irish nation as a moral community – it took place within that very tension. Hence the paradoxical nature of modernity, in the light of which the relation between secularisation and the renewed interest in religion within ultramodernity, which first appeared contradictory, now makes perfect sense.

If modernity abolished religion as a system of meaning and as the drive of Man's efforts, it created, at the same time, the spatio-temporal frame of a utopia that fundamentally remained in harmony with the religious belief in accomplishments and salvation. Consequently:

Nous faisons l'hypothèse que cet écart utopique, constamment réélargi, alors même que les connaissances et les techniques se développent à un rythme accéléré, constitue l'espace de redéploiement permanent de « représentations religieuses » que le rationalisme décompose de façon tout aussi permanente. (...) Les « systèmes religieux » ou « traditions religieuses historiquement constituées » sont la zone la plus consistante, la plus structurée et la plus élaborée, de ce champ des « représentations religieuses » : comme tels, ils sont aussi la zone sensible de ce travail de décomposition-recomposition du champ religieux qui caractérise la modernité, dans toute la durée de son histoire : cibles privilégiées de la critique rationnelle, ils sont aussi un réservoir inépuisable de significations utopiques, constamment reformulées, réaménagées, réactivées.¹⁷

Accordingly, if the new religious movements found their inspiration in the contradictions of modernity, it is only because the development of modernity was *per se* contradictory, and not because its development was incomplete. In fact, the new religious movements force us to radically redefine the notion of secularisation. Secularisation can no longer be seen as the gradual disappearance of religion in the face of the rationalisation of society. It must now be defined as the process of constant reorganisation of the work of religion in ultramodern societies which are structurally incapable of satisfying the expectations that they must arouse in order to exist, and which can find no better response to the uncertainties that arise from their interminable quest for the means to satisfy these ex-

¹⁷ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Vers un nouveau christianisme ?* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), p.226. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by VNC, followed by the page number.

pectations.¹⁸ In ultramodern French and Irish societies, in which change and innovation have become all-important and in which, therefore, uncertainty has become a social prerequisite, this process of secularisation, of constant reorganisation of religious forces, has taken place within a larger process of restructuration of Catholic and political belief and practices.

If we agree with Danièle Hervieu-Léger's definition of religious belief in modern societies not as a specific form of belief, as specific practices or as an original representation of the world, but as '[...] *un mode particulier de légitimation de l'acte de croire, à savoir par l'appel à une tradition,*' that is a form of belief that can be transposed to political ideologies, and if we also agree with her new definition of secularisation as the reorganisation of the work of religion within society, then it is possible to show that France and Ireland underwent their respective secularisation processes within a strangely similar time frame. Thus, in the first phase of secularisation, which started as early as the 16th century but had its first visible effects in the 1780s and ended with the 'sixties,' religious belief stopped being confined to institutionalised religions and was gradually generalised to politics. This turned the heteronomous societies that France and Ireland were into political, autonomous societies through the creation of modern political ideologies which promised to liberate people through institutionalised, collective action, in the name of what the modernists called progress, and Irish nationalists or Ultramontane Catholics called a return to tradition, to a Golden Age, both of which were to be achieved in the future, and were therefore founded on a political belief that was identical to religious belief.

From the 'sixties' onwards, however, this modern phase of secularisation gave way to a second, ultramodern phase of secularisation, which consisted of another restructuration of religious belief within society. After the religious disenchantment of the world, this is now the period of a political disenchantment in which belief – whether it be religious or political – has become individualised. In this ultramodern phase of secularisation, which can be called hypersecularisation, belief does not rest on

¹⁸ '[...] *la sécularisation, ce n'est pas la disparition de la religion confrontée à la rationalité : c'est le processus de réorganisation permanente du travail de la religion dans une société structurellement impuissante à combler les attentes qu'il lui faut susciter pour exister comme telle.*' (VNC, 227)

tradition anymore. It has therefore moved from being transcendent to being immanent, a choice made by the individual. Hence the simultaneous crisis of all modern political ideologies and their institutions that currently suffer from a lack of confidence – the *République* and its Civil Service in France, Irish-Catholic nationalism and the Irish Catholic institution in Ireland, Ultramontanism and the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the Vatican. This does not mean that Catholic and political belief have disappeared altogether in the wake of secularisation, but that both are now much more complex and fragmented and that they are often directed towards charismatic individuals and no longer, as used to be the case, towards institutions.

This phenomenon can be observed within Catholicism itself. In fact, I believe that the Catholic Church did not become modern with the Second Vatican Council, as it had already gradually become so in its reaction to the French Revolution in the late 1870s, but that it started becoming ultramodern at that stage. The liturgical and institutional reforms brought about by the Council had, for instance, moved the emphasis from the institution to the laity, the Church being now defined as the ‘People of God.’ As a result, Catholic identity gradually became defined at an individual level, which soon gave rise to a myriad of subjective definitions of what it is to be Catholic. The post-Council era has therefore been one of reassessment and experimentation under the aegis of the ultramodern principles of change and of uncertainty. I contend that this sense of crisis of the Catholic Church is caused by the restructuration of belief which has made Catholics move from the modern belief – felt as a certainty – that the Roman Catholic Church was the only institution to possess the truth and, therefore, to be able to show the way to a collective salvation, to the ultramodern belief that salvation can be achieved only at an individual level by choosing to believe. This view has been accentuated by the Church’s recognition of other Churches with the new policy of ecumenism developed by Vatican II. Thus, in the television show ‘*C dans l’air*’ broadcast in February 2007 and dedicated to ‘*La France pas très catholique*,’ the Bishop of Coutances and Avranches Mgr. Stanislas Lalanne presented Catholic faith as a choice: ‘*De nos jours, être catholique, c’est un choix. On décide de dire je crois, et cela transforme sa vie.*’ He added: ‘*Même si pour moi, dans ma foi, c’est le Christ qui est la vérité – et je ne dis pas le catholicisme, mais le Christ, qui est la vérité – je crois que dans les différentes traditions religieuses il y a des richesses qu’il*

faut entendre.' In a similar manner, only 7% of the French continued to see Catholicism as the one true religion at the same time.¹⁹

Belief, within Catholicism, has therefore moved from the certainty of the truth defended by the institution to the uncertainty of individuals who trust fellow individuals rather than institutions. The Catholic institution has become 'yet another organisation' that has to compete with other religious institutions on the market of faith,²⁰ and it is charismatic individuals such as L'Abbé Pierre in France, who have become the standard bearers of a redefined Catholicism.²¹ L'Abbé Pierre denounced the incoherence created by the rationalisation and the subjectivisation of ultramodern societies by defending the underdogs of French society. His highly popular and apolitical fight for the protection of the poor, for the defence of human rights and freedom was typical of this new form of individualised belief transformed into symbolic actions that enable contemporary Catholicism to regain some of the social and cultural credibility it has lost.

The same phenomenon can be observed concerning political belief. In ultramodern France and Ireland, a growing disaffection can be felt for every form of institution, including political institutions. Unlike their modern forefathers, the French and the Irish no longer believe in the possibility of collective action. In fact, the individualisation of belief amongst the French and the Irish means that they now want a more direct, immediate practice both of their faith and of politics. The individualisation of belief is therefore accompanied, in both countries, by its growing fragmentation. This was illustrated, at a political level, by the

¹⁹ *Le Monde des Religions*, n°21 (January-February 2007), p.28.

²⁰ According to Eugene O'Brien, the fact that RTE 1 one should have broadcast the television series *Father Ted* from the 1990s, a series that ruthlessly mocks the Catholic Church in Ireland, proves that 'The Church is now seen as just yet another organisation, as part of the way in which society and culture are ordered, and which is subject to the same rules, regulations and expectations as the other societal structures with which it competes.' Eugene O'Brien, "'Kicking Bishop Brennan up the Arse...': Catholicism, Deconstruction and Postmodernity in Contemporary Irish Culture", in Louise Fuller, John Littleton and Eamon Maher (eds.), *Irish and Catholic? Towards an Understanding of Identity* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2006), pp.48-63, p.48.

²¹ L'Abbé Pierre regularly arrived first as the favourite public personality of the French in the IPSOS enquiries. See: <http://www.ifop.com/europe/sondages/OPINIONF/top50persoout2005.asp>.

fact that there were no less than 12 candidates to the Presidency in the French 2007 Presidential election. Still in politics, it could be argued that, even though the French and the Irish have grown wary of their political parties and trade unions, the increasing success of personalities claiming they do not belong to the traditional family of politics illustrates this re-structuration of political belief. It seems that individual personality matters more than the ideas of a collective party in contemporary politics.²² This phenomenon started with the sixties, as it was de Gaulle's 5th Republic (1958) that established one individual, the President of the Republic, as the upholder of the values of the *République*, which he is held to embody.²³ The personality of the President of the Republic has consequently played an increasing role ever since, so much so that they have all wanted to be remembered by physically leaving their trace in French history under the shape of gigantic cultural infrastructures – the Centre Pompidou, François Mitterrand's Bibliothèque Nationale or Jacques Chirac's Musée du Quay Branly. If in contemporary France political belief in the institutions of the *République* is at an all-time low, the level of belief in the powers of the French President has remained quite high. Thus, very serious polls are published regularly that measure the level of confidence the French have in their president. If the French do not be-

²² This is what Jean-Paul Willaime highlighted in Europe et religions when he pointed out that: 'Emmanuel Todd, analysant le résultat du vote Le Pen en avril 2002 en France, souligne « la désintégration des croyances collectives “ manifestée par la perte d'emprise collective tant du parti communiste que de l'Eglise catholique, deux structures de sens qui encadraient traditionnellement les mentalités et pouvaient nourrir de riches et conflictuels débats.' (Emmanuel Todd, « La désintégration des croyances collectives », in *Le Monde*, 28-29 avril, p.20). A cette perte d'influence, Emmanuel Todd ajoute la décomposition parallèle des idéologies nationalistes – relayées par le gaullisme – et socialistes. Tous ces mondes de sens avaient une double caractéristique : il représentait une cohérence qui structurait symboliquement les individus et en faisait de façon séculière et/ou religieuse des croyants. En permettant aux gens de dépasser la fonctionnalité du quotidien et les logiques utilitaires d'une rationalité instrumentale axiologiquement indifférente, ils incitaient les personnes à agir, à devenir militants, à défendre une cause. Or dans le domaine politique comme dans le domaine religieux se produit de l'anomie, de la déstructuration symbolique qui rend plus difficile l'orientation des individus (ER, 229).

²³ This was not the case in the 3rd and the 4th Republics, in which the Parliament was the defender of those values, and therefore had more powers than the President.

lieve in their President any longer, this is then taken as the sign of a serious political crisis.

When they choose their president, the French do not vote as much for the representative of a political party as for a candidate they believe will have the necessary charisma to embody the values of the *République* while also being their leader. This was certainly the case, once more, in the French Presidential election, where the two major candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal, were judged at least as much on their charisma as on their ideas. If Nicolas Sarkozy ended up carrying the day, it might have been partly due to his repeated claim in the media that he did not belong – unlike the vast majority of French politicians, and unlike Ségolène Royal – to the clique of the ‘*énarques*’ (*énarques* being the name given to the alumni of the highly prestigious and élitist *Ecole Normale d’Administration*). By doing so, he broke off with tradition to found political belief, instead, on his own personality. In fact, if the *République* as a political ideology seems to have been disenchanted, there remains something sacred about the French President of the Republic. After the generalisation of religious belief to politics with the rise of a political belief in the *République* embodied in the Parliament, this belief itself has now been transferred to one single individual, the President. This sacred character of the French President is suggested by the fact that even the first socialist President of the 5th Republic to have passed away, François Mitterrand, was buried in a traditionally religious manner in Notre Dame de Paris in 1996. If, because it was presented as a personal decision,²⁴ Mitterrand’s burial according to the Catholic rite represents yet another hint at the individualisation of religion, the fact that the ceremony was official makes for a *mélange des genres* between Catholic and political practice that is so characteristic of contemporary Western societies. No doubt, this ceremony helped to maintain, if not reinforce, the sacred

²⁴ Indeed, according to Pierre-Yves Baudot: ‘*Comme le montrent les obsèques de François Mitterrand, où Mgr Lustiger n’hésite pas à entremêler dans son homélie les textes du défunt et les références religieuses, une large place est laissée dans les oraisons aux réflexions que le défunt a pu avoir sur sa propre fin. C’est en tant que cas particulier – particulier comme exception et particulier comme privé – que le « grand homme » devient un homme de foi.*’ Pierre-Yves Baudot, “In Manus Tu As... Les funérailles religieuses des présidents de la république en France (1877-1996)”, in Erwan Dianteill, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, and Isabelle Saint-Martin (dir.s), *La modernité rituelle. Rites politiques et religieux des sociétés modernes* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2004), pp.55-70, p.65.

character of the presidential function. With this redistribution of political belief that has taken the form of an individualisation, the President of the Republic has therefore become, for the French, more important than republican institutions, as he is believed to be more powerful than they are. Thus, both Ségolène Royale and Nicolas Sarkozy promised, while candidates to the Presidency, to use their powers as President to reform the institutions of the 5th Republic so as to remedy what is felt as the current crisis of the *République*. Actually, these promises illustrate the fact that the French have remained wedded to the Jacobite conception of democracy as the expression of a collective choice through a strong, centralised State. However, these can only be vain promises as no individual – be they the French President of the Republic – and no reform of the institutions either could remedy the current disillusionment of the ideal of the *République*, as this disenchantment is but the outcome of this second phase of secularisation which is taking place in most Western societies. This is why I believe that, because they both rested on a collective form of political belief, it was not only the Catholic Church in Ireland, but also the modern ideology of the *République*, that soon became, to put it in Tom Inglis's words, 'a fish out of water' at a time of liberalisation, of hyperindividualism in which, as pointed out by Marcel Gauchet: '[...] *il s'agit de se délivrer du politique au profit de la société et des individus privés.*'²⁵

Hypersecularisation and the ensuing restructuring of belief can also be felt in Ireland. Indeed, if, in the realm of political belief, Bertie Ahern, the leader of Fianna Fáil, could hardly have insisted on the fact that he did not belong to the traditional family of politics – having been Taoiseach since 1997, he led his campaign for the Irish 2007 General Election under the motto 'Bertie's Team', thus bringing his own individuality and that of the Fianna Fáil candidates under the spotlight. With such a motto, gone was the institutional political party Fianna Fáil – only individualities mattered. Political involvement has consequently become, like belief, individualised and fragmented, with people preferring to vote more for individuals than for a specific party.²⁶ Or, to put it in Pascal

²⁵ « Entretien avec Marcel Gauchet. Le politique permet à la société de tenir ensemble », in *Philosophie Magazine*, N°7, mars 2007, pp.54-59, p.55.

²⁶ In his article, "Religion et sécularisation," Pierre Bréchon showed how: '*Le sens du vote est en train d'évoluer dans les jeunes générations: plus que le devoir civique, c'est désormais la présence – ou le sentiment – d'un enjeu particulier qui*

Balmand's words : '[...] *le constat qui s'impose est donc celui d'un morcellement de plus en plus intense, la culture de masse et la « civilisation des mœurs » faisant voler en éclat les sociétés closes pour leur substituer une sorte de kaléidoscope, au sein duquel chacun se définit par des comportements pluriels qui ne représentent plus forcément de cohérence d'ensemble.*'²⁷

In Ireland, the restructuration of belief can be felt in the new, strong belief Irish individuals have in the free market. Consumption had become all-important in Celtic Tiger Ireland, as shown by Rosita Boland's article entitled "The New Religion", dealing with the opening of Dundrum's new shopping centre in Dublin and published in March 2005. Boland described (in rather sarcastic terms) the hysteria generated by the opening of the shopping centre, which she compared to a 'national event,' and how: 'Before the doors were opened [...] to the shopping public, all 75,000 of them, there was a short ecumenical service to bless the centre. No, that is not a joke. Fishing boats have always traditionally been blessed annually, since lives depend on the safe passage of these boats. The only thing in danger at Dundrum Town Centre is the limit on a credit card.'²⁸ In contemporary, ultramodern Ireland, the service had to be ecumenical, and three Churches were therefore represented – the Methodist Church with minister the Rev Alan Wardlow, the Church of Ireland with minister Canon Des Sinnamon and the Catholic Church with Fr Donal Doherty. For that matter, both Fr Donal Doherty's justification of his presence – 'Wherever there are human beings there is a sense of mystery, and at the depths of the ordinary we find what is ordinary' – and Don Nugent's, the director of the centre, statement that Dundrum Town Centre would '[...] define the way we live today and offer a holistic experience to enrich, indulge and inspire every aspect of our lives', prove that religious belief is being gradually redefined out of politics, the collective,

commande la participation. Dès lors, le pourcentage d'électeurs peut beaucoup varier selon les scrutins, comme l'attestent les élections françaises de 2007: on est passé d'une abstention très faible aux deux tours de la présidentielle (16%) à un record aux législatives quelques semaines plus tard.' Pierre Bréchon, "Religion et sécularisation. Croyances religieuses et croyances politiques: quelles relations?", in Cahiers Français, n°340, septembre-octobre 2007, pp.32-37, p.33. All subsequent references will be denoted in brackets by R&S, followed by the page number.

²⁷ Pascal Balmand, *Histoire de la France* (Paris: Hatier, 1992), p.406.

²⁸ *The Irish Times*, 5 March 2005.

and into the ordinary and individual act of consumption worshipped by free market.

It is no longer with politics that Catholicism has to compete in ultramodern societies by trying to control it – the way it did during modernity – but with a much more global adversary, the free market. In Ireland, more and more Irish families go shopping instead of going to Mass on Sundays. Similarly, Patsy McGarry emphasised in his article, ‘Come for the shopping and stay for the prayer,’ how these shopping centres ‘increasingly have the scale of great cathedrals with an emphasis on height and uplifting spirit.’²⁹ In the same article, McGarry showed how, in order to compete with the latter, the Catholic Church opened oratories in Irish shopping centres, like the one that opened in Blanchardstown in May 1998. In his opening speech, the Archbishop of Dublin Desmond Connell anticipated questions as to the motivation of the Catholic Church for opening such an oratory by stating that it was ‘to provide a sign that the market, too, has its place in the designs of God for our welfare,’ and that the oratory was also ‘a sign of deeper needs than the market itself can supply... a place of quiet where people may rest for a while and open their hearts to the presence.’³⁰ In ultramodern Ireland, the Catholic Church recognises the liberal values of the free market, but probably with the same objective as the one it had when it asked French Catholics to recognise the *République* by the late 19th century – with the aim to better influence it.

Both in France and Ireland, competition for the Catholic Church no longer comes from politics, but from the logic of the market. The latter has now become, with consumption and the stock market, the new locus of an individualised and fragmented form of belief. In fact, even political ideologies have suffered from this restructuration of belief, and they now have to compete against this new form of fragmented belief. This is why the European common market, which is an illustration of the ultramodern belief in the logic of the markets, is fought both by nationalists such as Sinn Féin in Ireland and by Le Pen’s *Front National* as well as by communist political parties such as *Lutte Ouvrière* in France. Thus, in ultramodernity, the modern ideologies of the *République* in France, of Irish Catholic nationalism in Ireland and of Ultramontanism have all had to

²⁹ *The Irish Times*, 9 September 1998.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

say goodbye to the power and the glory following the restructuration of religious and political belief and practices since the early sixties. This does not mean, however, that the influence of these political ideologies has completely disappeared. Just as the French, for instance, still have the Jacobite reflex to consider that the State should be strong and centralised, and that it should therefore curb the economy to the country's needs and oppose every liberal socio-economic measure, there remains a Catholic element in the way the Irish define their nationality and their laws, and an intransigent element in the way the Roman Catholic Church defines itself. If these elements are a clear sign that the second phase of secularisation of French and Irish society and of this imaginary country, this 'imagined community' that is Catholicism, is not finished, these traces of past political ideologies nonetheless appear to be gradually fading away.

Véronique Gauthier

Religion, économie et mondialisation : une analyse institutionnaliste

Le vingt-et-unième siècle sera-t-il celui de la renaissance des religions ou celui de la laïcisation ? Le débat reste ouvert. A l'instar des autres pays européens, l'Irlande offre un paysage religieux de plus en plus complexe. La mondialisation serait-elle coupable ?¹ Cet article adopte une approche institutionnaliste afin d'analyser les liens entre religion et économie. Les « institutions » y sont définies comme les habitudes, routines, règles, normes et lois qui déterminent notre manière d'interpréter le réel et, par conséquent, les interactions au sein de la société :

Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence, they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. Institutional change shapes the way societies evolve through time and hence is the key to understanding historical change.²

En façonnant les choix individuels et les interactions au sein de la société par le biais des valeurs et règles de conduite qu'elles transmettent, les religions influent indirectement sur l'économie. Mais leur incidence varie selon la structure locale. Nous identifierons donc la place de la religion au sein de la matrice institutionnelle irlandaise en nous interrogeant sur son impact en termes économiques. Considérant ensuite la religion non plus comme variable indépendante mais comme variable dépendante, nous aborderons la question des conséquences pour la religion des changements économiques depuis la fin du vingtième siècle.

¹ En référence au livre de Paul Krugman, *La mondialisation n'est pas coupable: vertus et limites du libre-échange* (Paris : La Découverte, 2000).

² D. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.3.

Comme divers autres pays colonisés, l'Irlande rejeta les modes de vie associés au pays colonisateur et c'est dans ce rejet que le mouvement nationaliste puisa sa force tout en dessinant progressivement un idéal vers lequel tendre. Mais l'État irlandais qui vit le jour en 1922 ne correspondait que partiellement à une entité territoriale et historique. La tâche qui incombait aux autorités du nouvel État fut donc de préserver et consolider le sentiment d'identité nationale malgré la partition du territoire. La guerre civile témoigne de la difficulté de cette tâche. Dans ce contexte, les revendications identitaires et le processus de légitimation de l'État s'appuyèrent, au moins partiellement, sur l'Église catholique capable de rassembler les Irlandais et de renforcer la cohérence.

L'Église catholique s'était en effet imposée en tant qu'institution au cours du dix-neuvième siècle. Avant la Grande Famine, les Irlandais allaient peu à l'église, les églises étant par ailleurs rares. Le traumatisme de la Grande Famine, des pertes humaines et l'émigration modifièrent la situation. De nouvelles églises, plus grandes et mieux décorées, furent érigées, accueillant un nombre croissant d'Irlandais lors des services religieux.³ La matrice institutionnelle qui se forma après 1850 accorda un rôle prépondérant aux valeurs catholiques car elles consolidèrent la société et permirent l'élaboration d'un projet national. Ces valeurs défendaient une société rurale, fondée sur l'entité familiale et les déclarations en ce sens se multiplièrent. Ainsi, le Père Finlay s'exprima en 1922 contre l'industrialisation de l'Irlande. « *One Belfast is enough for Ireland and I should be sorry to see another...The reason is I don't believe that Belfast conditions tend to the welfare of the population.* »⁴ Cette vision était en accord avec les idéaux de la Ligue gaélique. Douglas Hyde, premier président de la Ligue, avait lui aussi mis en garde contre l'emprise que pourrait avoir le mode de vie anglais sur les Irlandais. L'anglicisation signifiait l'urbanisation, l'industrialisation et le commercialisme et s'opposait au mythe de la civilisation gaélique et rurale à laquelle la Ligue aspirait. « *Ireland was never, never will be...furnaced-burned...Commercialism was far from her shores...she, in her language,*

³ Emmet Larkin insiste sur le fait que les Irlandais acceptèrent l'autorité catholique suite au traumatisme de la Grande Famine et à la perte de la langue gaélique.

E. Larkin, *Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (New York: Arno, 1976).

⁴ M. E. Daly, "Attitudes towards the City in 19th and 20th Century Irish Society", in *Études Irlandaises* (No 10, 1985), p.185.

national dramatic revival, has turned her back upon Mammon.»⁵ Ces valeurs nationalistes et catholiques perdurèrent d'autant plus aisément que de 1922 à 1973, 50% des hommes politiques et des hauts fonctionnaires, en majorité catholiques, avaient été membres de la Ligue.⁶ Cette alliance entre la religion et le nationalisme permirent donc de fabriquer un idéal puissant dont l'influence persista jusqu'au XX^{ème} siècle, idéal dont était la consolidation de la société :

Recent analysis has suggested that Episcopal obsessions about sexual morality were routed in a concern to arrest the further disintegration of an authority impaired by the ravages of civil war. Yet another factor is the common concern of church and state to establish a national identity in the face of political disillusion. Though the treaty remained the 'dream that went bust', though the island remained partitioned and the republic a mirage, there remained Catholic ideals to bind together a riven nation. Catholicism, always central to so much of Irish nationalist ideology, thus took an additional significance in the search for national identity.⁷

La Constitution de 1937, contrairement à celle de 1922, accorda à l'Église catholique une position clé, dans l'article 44.2. « L'État reconnaît la position spéciale de la Sainte Église catholique, apostolique et romaine en tant que gardienne de la foi professée par la grande majorité des citoyens. »⁸ L'Église catholique intervint directement dans certains secteurs (éducation, santé notamment) pour remplir ses fonctions mais son emprise opéra également indirectement, par le biais des normes et des règles du jeu. Par conviction personnelle ou par intérêt politique, les hommes politiques durent s'aligner sur la position de l'Église. Même les non-pratiquants savaient que l'électorat soutiendrait les autorités ecclésiastiques,⁹ la majorité des Irlandais ayant été instruits dans des écoles contrôlées par l'Église catholique. D'ailleurs, Tom Inglis n'hésite pas à

⁵ M. Goldring, *Faith of Our Fathers: A Study of Irish Nationalism* (Dublin: Reptsol, 1987 – 2^{ème} éd.), p.55.

⁶ T. Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005 – 2^{ème} éd.), p.113.

⁷ R. Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Helicon, 1983), p.59.

⁸ P. Brennan, *La Sécularisation en Irlande* (Caen : Presses Universitaires de Caen, 1998), p.126.

⁹ J. H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-79* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), p.368.

affirmer que « *Being Catholic became synonymous with being Irish. It became the sameness which made the Irish different.* »¹⁰ En tant qu'institution, elle eut donc un rôle stabilisateur évident. Ce rôle influença-t-il l'économie irlandaise ?

A la suite des travaux de Max Weber, l'idée d'une incompatibilité entre valeurs catholiques et capitalistes gagna du terrain. Ses analyses sur les origines de l'esprit d'entreprise l'amènèrent à constater des affinités entre l'éthique calviniste et l'esprit du capitalisme industriel.¹¹ Il attribua cette correspondance au fait que le calvinisme soutint non seulement la recherche du profit comme devoir éthique mais découragea aussi la consommation et l'attachement aux biens extérieurs. L'Église catholique en Irlande découragea-t-elle l'esprit d'entreprise irlandais ? L'analyse sociologique de Paul Keating et Derry Desmond offre à cet égard une hypothèse séduisante. Leur étude montre que les entrepreneurs irlandais accordaient une faible priorité au travail et aux affaires, considérant leur activité professionnelle comme un moyen de subvenir aux besoins de leur famille. Les auteurs notèrent une faible régulation morale de l'activité économique. Ainsi, l'évasion fiscale n'est pas considérée comme une faute morale. Ces deux facteurs révèlent le caractère « traditionaliste » des entrepreneurs. Keating et Desmond cherchèrent à en expliquer l'origine dans les valeurs prônées par la « culture du paradis nationaliste catholique. » Ils avancèrent ainsi que les valeurs prêchées par l'Église catholique irlandaise¹² n'offraient aucune référence à la vie économique ou

¹⁰ T. Inglis, *Global Ireland: Same Difference* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), p.144.

¹¹ Selon la croyance calviniste, les hommes ne peuvent conquérir leur salut par des moyens ecclésiastiques et sacramentaux. Mais les pasteurs calvinistes les encouragèrent à s'engager assidûment dans le travail professionnel et à se croire élus. Le succès matériel devint alors le signe de l'élection divine.

¹² Le catéchisme de la doctrine catholique définit six commandements :
 aller à la messe le dimanche et les jours de fête religieuse,
 faire le jeûne et s'abstenir aux jours dits,
 confesser ses péchés au moins une fois par an,
 recevoir l'eucharistie à Pâques,
 contribuer à soutenir le clergé,
 observer les lois de l'Église en ce qui concerne le mariage.
 P.Keating & D. Desmond, *Culture and Capitalism in Contemporary Ireland* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993), pp.24-25. Ma traduction.

à l'éthique civique. L'enseignement de ces valeurs et normes influence les choix individuels.

It is through their engagement with these collective representations as transmitted by families, schools, churches and other institutions of socialization, that individuals come to develop their understanding of themselves as socialized beings; they are the media through which people become enabled to give meaning to their lives and to take their stances towards the complexes of objects, events, actions and possibilities that make up the world.¹³

Comme le souligne J. H. Whyte, la hiérarchie catholique disposait d'une arme qu'aucun autre groupe ne possède : son autorité sur la conscience des hommes. La majorité des hommes politiques étaient catholiques et acceptaient que la hiérarchie s'exprimât sur les questions de foi et de morale.¹⁴ Par ailleurs, l'ascendant de l'Église reposait sur une organisation exceptionnelle. Son quasi monopole sur l'éducation lui permit d'influencer la formation du caractère irlandais. En 1982, 491 des 572 écoles secondaires en Irlande étaient catholiques, tout comme 3400 des 3500 écoles primaires.¹⁵ Ce rôle fut accepté sans difficultés par les autorités politiques. L'influence de l'Église catholique se retrouvait également dans le système médical et social. Par ailleurs, en raison des nombreux bâtiments en sa possession, elle joua un rôle économique souvent négligé. Paul Keating et Derry Desmond la décrivent ainsi comme « l'entrepreneur moral » et « l'institution la plus influente de la société irlandaise. »¹⁶

Bien que pertinentes, ces analyses ne mettent à jour que les effets de l'enseignement catholique au niveau de l'individu. L'approche institutionnaliste met à jour également son incidence en termes de changement sociétal. En réduisant les incertitudes, l'Église catholique contribua au système d'incitations qui gouvernait le comportement des membres du groupe. B. Johnson insiste sur cette fonction particulièrement cruciale des institutions.

¹³ P. Keating & D. Desmond, *Culture and Capitalism in Contemporary Ireland*, p.192.

¹⁴ J.H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-79*, p.368.

¹⁵ T. Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society*, pp.55-58.

¹⁶ P. Keating & D. Desmond, *Culture and Capitalism in Contemporary Ireland*, p.192.

Institutions reduce uncertainties, coordinate the use of knowledge, mediate conflicts and provide incentive systems. By serving these functions, institutions provide the stability necessary for the reproduction of society. Therefore, there are limits to how rapidly they can change without disrupting society. Inertia is a basic feature of institutions (...) They provide the stability necessary for change.¹⁷

Dans le cas irlandais, nul ne peut ignorer que l'Église catholique offrit cette stabilité. Mais celle-ci ne facilita pas le changement. Insistons de nouveau sur la nature systémique de la société. Elle est façonnée par diverses institutions qui parfois s'opposent, parfois se soutiennent, oeuvrent dans un sens ou dans l'autre. L'évolution des sociétés naît de ces constantes interactions et affrontements institutionnels. En Irlande, diverses institutions allèrent dans le sens du maintien d'une structure sociale conservatrice qui n'autorisait comme expression de mécontentement que l'émigration et décourageait l'esprit d'innovation et d'entreprise. Cette inertie retarda le développement industriel de l'Irlande. Dans son analyse comparative de l'économie irlandaise, Lars Mjøset montre que l'influence exercée par l'Église et celle provenant du système politique se renforcèrent mutuellement pour créer un cercle vicieux caractérisé par un Système national d'innovation¹⁸ faible et un déclin de la population via l'émigration.¹⁹ Les valeurs défendues par l'Église catholique légitimèrent et renforcèrent le déclin démographique et le manque d'innovation. Comme le souligne Douglass North, les éléments du passé laissent des traces persistantes :

History matters. It matters not just because we learn from the past, but because the present and the future are connected to the past by the continuity of a society's institutions. Today's and tomorrow's choices are shaped by the past.²⁰

¹⁷ B. Johnson, "Institutional learning", in B-A Lundvall (ed.), *National Systems of Innovation: Towards a Theory of Innovation and Interactive Learning* (London: Pinter, 1992), p.26.

¹⁸ Le Système national d'innovation se définit comme l'ensemble des institutions, normes et valeurs influençant l'innovation au sein de la société.

¹⁹ L. Mjøset, *The Irish Economy in a Comparative Institutional Perspective*, NESC, Report No 93 (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1992).

²⁰ D. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, p.vii.

Bien que possible, le processus d'évolution sera inévitablement lent. Rien d'étonnant alors que l'Irlande demeurât fortement catholique à la fin du vingtième siècle, malgré l'ouverture des années 1960 :

In spite of considerable social turmoil and the religious transformations over the past three decades, it is clear that modernisation processes in Ireland have not been accompanied unambiguously by secularisation.²¹

Mais des changements eurent lieu. Moins inerte, plus ouverte au changement, la société irlandaise offre désormais un visage moderne et pluraliste.²² En ce qui concerne la religion, le recensement de la population de 2006 laisse entrevoir une réalité beaucoup plus complexe que par le passé :

Religion d'appartenance:	Personnes (2006)	Evolution 2002-06, en %
Catholique	3 681 446	6.3
Protestante	125 585	8.6
Autre religion chrétienne	29 206	36.5
Presbytérienne	23 546	14.4
Musulmane	32 539	69.9
Orthodoxe	20 798	99.3
Méthodiste	12 160	21.2
Autre religion	57 928	44.7
Sans religion	186 318	34.8
Non mentionnée	70 322	-11.1
Total	4 239 848	8.2

Source : Government of Ireland, *Census 2006: Volume 13- Religion* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2007), p.17.

Les catholiques demeurent certes largement majoritaires, leur proportion augmenta même de 6,3% entre 2002 et 2006 mais dans un contexte de

²¹ M. P.Hornsby-Smith, "Social and Religious Transformations in Ireland: a Case of Secularisation.", in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (Vol. 79, 1992), p.289.

²² Il est néanmoins important de souligner les différences au sein de la société. Les changements n'ont pas affecté tous les segments de la société de manière homogène mais l'image donnée est celle d'une société ouverte au changement.

croissance démographique (la population totale augmenta de 8,1%).²³ La catégorie la plus importante après les Catholiques, reste celle des personnes se déclarant « sans religion », leur nombre triplant entre 2002 et 2006. Autre phénomène notable, la plus grande diversité de religions avec notamment l'augmentation du nombre d'Orthodoxes et de Musulmans. D'une manière générale, le paysage religieux irlandais est beaucoup plus hétérogène qu'il ne l'était il y a trente ans. En fait, deux tendances apparemment contradictoires apparaissent. Si l'évolution au cours des années 1960-1990 semblait suivre les prédictions de la théorie de la modernisation,²⁴ on dénote depuis 1990 à la fois une sécularisation croissante et une renaissance de certaines religions. Ces modifications du paysage religieux irlandais sont-elles liées aux changements économiques que connaît l'île verte depuis 1990 ?²⁵ Nous émettrons l'hypothèse que les phénomènes de mondialisation et de globalisation affectent tous deux la religion mais différemment, l'une jouant sur l'offre, l'autre sur la demande.

Contrairement à la langue française, l'anglais ne dispose que d'un seul terme pour décrire deux phénomènes distincts. Cette précision du français est pourtant utile. En effet, cette distinction permet de mieux saisir les apparentes contradictions dans la sphère religieuse. Levitt fut le premier à utiliser le terme « *globalisation* » en 1983 pour désigner la convergence des marchés, le fait que les entreprises vendent partout le même produit comme si le marché mondial n'était qu'une seule entité. Ce phénomène, qui va au-delà de la sphère économique, correspond au terme français de « mondialisation ». Il se distingue du phénomène décrit en 1990 par Kenichi Ohmae et qui désigne une forme de gestion des entreprises intégrée à l'échelle mondiale : les entreprises d'un même groupe conduisent leur recherche, financent leurs investissements et recrutent à l'échelle mondiale. Ainsi la mondialisation est un processus historique d'ouverture croissante des économies et des sociétés alors que la globalisation se réfère à la gestion des entreprises.

²³ Government of Ireland, *Census 2006: Preliminary Report* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2006), p.9.

²⁴ Les personnes se déclarant sans religion étaient en effet au nombre de 1 107 en 1961, 7 616 en 1971, 39 572 en 1981 et 66 270 en 1991. *Census 2006*, p.9.

²⁵ Les cas d'abus sexuels mettant en cause des membres du clergé qui firent la une des journaux à la fin des années 1990 jouèrent, à n'en pas douter, également un rôle.

Ces deux phénomènes sont donc bien distincts. Peut-on en déduire leurs conséquences sur la religion ? La mondialisation s'accompagne d'une homogénéisation des préférences et des choix. Au cours de ce processus, les frontières s'effacent, le local s'insère dans le mondial. Par conséquent, la mondialisation joue surtout sur l'offre religieuse. Selon la théorie du marché de la religion, plus l'offre est variée, plus les pratiques religieuses augmentent.²⁶ Ainsi, il n'est pas rare de rencontrer des Irlandais se déclarant bouddhistes. Les personnes peuvent désormais choisir la religion qui leur paraît le mieux répondre à leurs aspirations.

La globalisation perturbe davantage la société, d'où les nombreuses manifestations contre les valeurs sur lesquels elle se fonde, notamment la recherche impitoyable du profit. Les nouvelles firmes globales intègrent les activités financières, commerciales et industrielles.²⁷ Les fusions et les acquisitions s'enchaînent. Les cadres de référence se modifient constamment. L'OCDE nota en 1996 la diversité des instruments mis en place par ces entreprises afin de maximiser leurs profits :

Depuis peu, les stratégies des entreprises combinent toute une gamme d'activités transfrontalières selon un recours accru à de nouvelles formules associant investissements internationaux, échanges et activités de coopération internationale pour assurer leur expansion internationale.²⁸

Les firmes globales opèrent généralement dans des secteurs de pointe et localisent leurs activités là où elles sont les plus rentables. Ces activités sont coordonnées à l'aide de technologies de l'information et de productions flexibles et intégrées à une chaîne de valeur internationale.²⁹ Ainsi, les valeurs qui sous-tendent la globalisation ressemblent à celles qu'étudia Max Weber au début du vingtième siècle, à savoir l'esprit d'entreprise, la flexibilité et la recherche du profit. Par conséquent, elle affecte davantage la demande religieuse. Si tel est le cas, elle tendrait à

²⁶ L. Iannaccone, "The Consequence of Religious Market Structure: Adam Smith and the Economics of Religion", in *Rationality and Society* (Vol. 2, No. 2, April 1991), p.157.

²⁷ V. Fabre-Bonté Nicoletti, « Investissements dans les pays étrangers et stratégie de globalisation », in *Revue Région et Développement* (No 9, 1999), pp.4-5.

²⁸ OECD, *Globalisation of Industry* (Paris: OECD, 1996), p.23. (Ma traduction.)

²⁹ W. Andreff, "Le Règne des firmes multinationales globales?", in P.Cabin (ed.), *L'Économie repensée* (Auxerre : Éditions Sciences Humaines, 2000), p.308.

renforcer le processus de sécularisation en Irlande puisque les valeurs sur lesquelles elle repose s'opposent clairement aux valeurs mis en avant par la religion dominante. Nous devons toutefois souligner que la sécularisation des mœurs n'implique pas pour autant une laïcisation. En effet la sécularisation est d'abord un processus socio-culturel dans lequel les valeurs religieuses deviennent de moins en moins pertinentes au cœur de la matrice institutionnelle. La laïcité est socio-politique et implique un déclin du pouvoir de l'Eglise dans la gouvernance d'un pays. Comme l'avance Jean Baubérot, lorsque la sécularisation l'emporte sur la laïcisation cela signifie que la religion a réussi, globalement à s'adapter au changement social et qu'elle peut continuer à symboliser la nation.³⁰ Ce qui est le cas en Irlande même si l'Eglise catholique s'impose plus difficilement que par le passé.

Force est donc de constater la diversité des interactions entre relation et économie. Le poids de l'Eglise catholique dans l'histoire irlandaise ne fait aucun doute. Quant à son incidence sur le développement économique, elle fut à la fois positive et négative. L'Eglise permit une consolidation de la société essentielle à sa pérennité mais au lieu de permettre l'innovation économique, elle la découragea et contribua à renforcer le statu quo qui retarda l'industrialisation. Le cas irlandais illustre les dangers de toute généralisation. Les institutions, les normes, les valeurs agissent au cœur d'un système national et leur portée dépend de la structure institutionnelle nationale.

Sociologues et économistes de la religion s'attachèrent par ailleurs à identifier l'impact de l'économie sur les religions. En Irlande, les statistiques révèlent une mutation des pratiques religieuses depuis l'ouverture de l'économie. La relative nouveauté du phénomène nous invite à une grande prudence mais il nous semble d'ores et déjà crucial d'envisager la mondialisation et la globalisation comme deux processus distincts. En élargissant l'offre religieuse, la mondialisation tendrait à accroître la participation religieuse alors que la globalisation conduirait à une sécularisation des mœurs. Cette hypothèse, avant d'être validée, demande de plus amples informations sur les motivations personnelles des personnes mais nous pouvons néanmoins affirmer que la religion, à l'instar des autres composantes de la matrice institutionnelle, sera influencée par la mondialisation et la globalisation.

³⁰ J. Baubérot, *Laïcité 1905-2005, entre passion et raison* (Paris : Seuil, 2004).

Patrick Claffey

Masters and Servants: Joseph Pagnol, Brian McMahon and the Primary School

It would seem that the school has often been one of the favoured loci in what we have come to call the process of secularisation or laïcisation. Most notably, this has been the case in France where the debate around laïcité took on a ferocity not found elsewhere, and, indeed, still continues to produce a lot of polemical heat and manifestations of deep divisions, as François Mitterrand found out to his political cost as recently as the 1980s.¹ Proving that the debate is still very much alive,² there has been a very mixed reaction to the latest comments made by Nicolas Sarkozy during the recent visit of Pope Benedict XVI to France. Speaking in favour of a laïcité positive, President Sarkozy went much further than any previous French leader in questioning the concept. The process of secularisation or laïcisation would now seem to be in train in Ireland where the question of Church involvement in schools has become the subject of increased debate.³

To some extent, the matter of secularisation or *laicisation* could be considered to be nothing more than managerial, a question of who runs our schools, but of course it is more than that. All sides in the debate are no doubt sincerely concerned for the well being and educational devel-

¹ See Jean-François Huchet, « Offensive contre la loi Falloux », Lettre de l'Institut François Mitterrand, <http://www.mitterrand.org/Offensive-contre-la-loi-Falloux.html>, accessed 5 septembre 2008. This *projet de loi* initiated by Mitterrand's first more purely ideological government sought to create an entirely unified public system of secondary education and was largely defeated by street protests organised by the Catholic Church. It was dropped in the subsequent *cohabitation*. It was the last big face-à-face in this debate.

² See « Le discours de Nicolas Sarkozy », in *Le Monde*, le 14 Septembre 2008.

³ See for instance John Walsh, "Church demands key role in new secondary schools", in *Irish Independent*, 9 September 2008.

opment of the young people in their charge, but they also have an eye to their own interests: the questions of power and influence in the early years of socialisation are a part of any education, good and bad. This paper seeks to cast light on the challenges and possible solutions by reflecting on the lives and attitudes of Bryan MacMahon and Joseph Pagnol. Both were involved in education in their respective countries, and both were dedicated and not totally uncritical servants of the dominant socio-political ideologies of their time.

Bryan MacMahon and Joseph Pagnol are, it appears to me, two personalities who allow us to have a better understanding of the question since they were at the front in the realities of debate, *militants* in the field, teachers in their classrooms. One of these speaks to us directly in his own writing where he reflects, albeit from the remove of retirement, on his life as a teacher from the 1930s into the 1970s. During some of this time, I was in the education system so it is very familiar to me. Bryan MacMahon (1909-1998) taught in a small primary school that was part of the Catholic system, which was and largely remains dominant in Irish Primary education.⁴ MacMahon was a prolific writer, while spending all of his life also as a primary school teacher, or as he calls himself a 'master.'⁵ Much of the material called upon here comes from his autobiographical work *The Master*.⁵ Being a writer, he was clearly not typical but neither, I imagine, was he unique in his views.

The other voice comes to us less directly, not through his own writings but through the portrait of him traced for us by his son, the French film maker and writer Marcel Pagnol (1895-1974). In a marvellous little autobiographical work,⁶ later turned into a very lovely film *La Gloire de mon père* by Yves Robert, Pagnol *filis* presents us with an affectionate, humorous but not entirely blind picture of his father Joseph Pagnol (1869-1951) who worked as a primary school teacher just as the process of *laïcisation* was gaining considerable momentum following *la loi de 1905*, of which he was an ardent supporter.

⁴ The Catholic Church retains authority over 3000 out of the 3300 primary schools in the state.

⁵ *The Master* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1992). Bryan MacMahon was born in Listowel, Co Kerry in 1909. He has written novels, short stories, pageants, radio features, plays and television scripts. He was President of Irish P.E.N. and a committee member of the Academy of Irish Letters. Also a member of *Aosdána*, he died in 1998.

⁶ Marcel Pagnol, *La Gloire de mon père* (Paris : Editions de Fallois, 1988), p.20.

While these two interesting men lived at different historical periods and in entirely different socio-political circumstances, I am fascinated by what they have in common: a certain discipline, ‘severe they were, and stern to view’,⁷ to paraphrase Goldsmith. They were probably a little authoritarian, but with a dedication to and affection for the children who had been entrusted to them, and had both an awareness of their role as educators and a desire to bring their charges a step further than they had perhaps been able to go themselves. In MacMahon’s case, certainly, there was a deep desire to give them a way out of the poverty of post-independence Ireland through education. His idealism is palpable in a moving passage in *The Master*, where he writes:

I look at the dim class photographs of that time with misgivings. Disease was implied in the pale faces before me. Infant mortality was taken for granted. The white coffin slung on ribbons and carried through the streets by huge ex-soldiers was an almost everyday sight. Pneumonia was feared; the crisis time struck terror. But despite adversity, the boys before me seemed poised to leap forward, eager to bring about change.⁸

What is the central thesis of this paper is the fact that they were both dedicated and sometimes, though not always, uncritical servants of the dominant socio-political ideologies of their time: Pagnol in the service of the classical idea of *la République laïque*, as developed by Gambetta, Combes, and Ferry, and as it was expressed in the two foundational pieces of legislation referred to later in this paper: *la Loi n° 11 696 du 28 mars 1882 portant sur l’organisation de l’enseignement primaire (la loi Ferry)*⁹ and *la Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l’Etat*.

MacMahon was equally devoted to Irish nationalism, the language and to his religious faith, albeit in a quite critical way. This was the dominant ideology of his time, developed through the Gaelic League,¹⁰

⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, 1770.

⁸ *The Master*, p.7.

⁹ Named after French statesman Jules François Camille Ferry (1832 –1893) who moved the laws of 16 June 1881 and 28 March 1882, which made primary education in France free, non-clerical (laïque) and mandatory.

¹⁰ The Gaelic League founded in Dublin on July 31, 1893 by Douglas Hyde. Though apolitical, the league attracted many Irish nationalists. The League did not commit

the Gaelic Athletic Association, through the cultural nationalist movements represented by Yeats, Lady Gregory and others, to the independence movement and into a post Civil War Ireland dominated by de Valera's vision of a country, 'joyous...with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens....'¹¹

Clearly the historical context out which they came and within which they worked, is what determined the lives of these two men as 'masters' and servants of the ideology of their time, whether it be late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France, or Ireland in the early years of its independence,

Une certaine idée de la France, une certaine idée de l'éducation – la loi de 1905¹²

For the outsider, the French concept of *laïcité* and the heat surrounding debates on the subject are often difficult to understand. Perhaps all the more so for Irish people, since the role of the Church in Ireland was both very central and very different. In fact, the debate on secularisation of schools is still in its early stages here and, in any case, it seems unlikely that we will reach the same pitch of fervour as our Gallic cousins, with their love of a genuine *militantisme*. For anybody who knows France well, I think it is clear that *la laïcité* in the French sense goes quite a bit further than the simple process of social differentiation or institutional autonomy from religious influence implied in the Anglo-Saxon term *secularisation* as applied to different social institutions, notably schools, hospitals and other public services. A good working definition of *secularisation* is provided by the sociologist Bryan Wilson:

it is a radical reorganisation of the structure of society... the process in which the major areas of social organisation (economy, government, defence, law, education, health maintenance, and recreation) become *differen-*

itself entirely to the national movement until 1915, causing the resignation of Douglas Hyde. Most of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation were members.

¹¹ In Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (Arrow: London, 1995), p.72.

¹² See Kevin Williams, "Religious Worldviews and the Common School: The French Dilemma", in *Journal of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain*, Vol 41, 4, 2007, pp.675-692 for an excellent philosophical treatment of the subject. See also Hervé Terval, "Laïcité religieuse, anti-religieuse, a-religieuse: L'évolution de l'école française entre 1880 et 1918", in *Social Compass*, 54(2), 2007, pp.255-266.

tiated and *autonomous*, and in which organised religion has finally relinquished the last remnants of the presidency that it once enjoyed over the whole gamut of social affairs.¹³

In effect, this is the privatisation of religion that has become the hallmark of most Western European societies and has always been the case constitutionally in the United States.¹⁴ Religion becomes an affair of personal conviction and is effectively relegated from public spaces and as a feature of correct public discourse. It must be noted however that public figures in Ireland, while remaining private about their religious convictions, would probably never feel the need to mark the same distance with these as might be the case in France. It is generally assumed that, while remaining relatively private, most of our politicians and other public figures do have religious convictions and are generally no more or no less agnostic than the rest of us. Some, at least occasionally, will publicly acknowledge such beliefs.

It can be argued that the understanding in France, however, is more ideological and very certainly political. Writing in *Le Monde*, UMP Senator Gérard Larcher states:

Considérée comme introduisant des éléments dissolvants pour la communauté des citoyens au sein d'une nation indivisible, la religion fut redoutée comme un concurrent politique pouvant conduire à ce contre quoi luttèrent avec ardeur les pères fondateurs de la III^e République : le « gouvernement des curés. »¹⁵

Clearly this often led to serious divisions, especially in the early years of the last century, between what seem to be two apparently contradictory world views. For those of us who are not French, it can still appear that *la République* makes claims on its citizens which go beyond what we might feel comfortable with. France seems to allow little in terms of

¹³ Bryan Wilson, "New Images of Christian Community", in J. McManners, *The Concise Oxford History of Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 1990), pp. 587-617, p. 587.

¹⁴ See Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America* (London: Random House 1974 edition), especially Book I Ch XVII and Book II Ch V dealing with religion in America.

¹⁵ Gérard Larcher, "République et religion, l'équilibre", in *Le Monde* 6 septembre 2008, 20. My emphasis.

identity apart from citizenship, acknowledging neither ethnic or religious identities in *la communauté des citoyens au sein d'une nation indivisible*.

In seeking a clear understanding of what is meant by *la laïcité*, I think the following provides a good working definition:

Dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle, sous la III^e République, la laïcité est devenue une conception de l'organisation de la société visant à la neutralité réciproque des pouvoirs spirituels et religieux par rapport aux pouvoirs politiques, civils, administratifs. Le but était de lutter contre le cléricisme, c'est-à-dire l'influence des clergés et des mouvements ou partis religieux sur les affaires publiques. La laïcité est aussi une éthique basée sur la liberté de conscience visant à l'épanouissement de l'homme en tant qu'individu et citoyen.¹⁶

While the first part of this definition corresponds largely to that of Wilson in that it is largely bureaucratic, the latter part goes quite a bit further developing it into an ethical *Weltenschaung*, thus moving into a terrain that religion would previously have considered its own.

In relation to schools, this found legislative expression originally in Loi n° 11696 du 28 mars 1882 portant sur l'organisation de l'enseignement primaire (la loi Ferry)¹⁷ and was more fully and formally developed in la Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat. The latter loi has become the philosophical as well as the legislative cornerstone of a concept that is considered essential to the French republican project. Nonetheless, the law has been the subject of increased discussion in recent years with the reappearance of more radical forms of religion in the public space and with attempts by at least sections of the political class and the religions to come to a new understanding of their public role.

Defending the *la du 28 mars 1882* Jules Ferry, its principal mover, sought to explain the philosophy underlying it:

La loi du 28 mars se caractérise par deux dispositions qui se complètent sans se contredire : d'une part, elle met en dehors du programme obligatoire

¹⁶ <http://www.toupie.org/Dictionnaire/Laicite.htm> accessed 5 September 2008. My emphasis.

¹⁷ Named after French statesman Jules François Camille Ferry (1832 –1893) who moved the laws of 16 June 1881 and 28 March 1882, which made primary education in France free, non-clerical (laïque) and mandatory.

l'enseignement de tout dogme particulier ; d'autre part, elle y place au premier plan l'enseignement moral et civique. L'instruction religieuse appartient aux familles et à l'Église, l'instruction morale à l'école.¹⁸

Le législateur n'a donc pas entendu faire une œuvre purement négative. Sans doute, il a eu pour premier objet de séparer l'école de l'église, d'assurer la liberté de conscience et des maîtres et des élèves, de distinguer enfin deux domaines trop longtemps confondus : celui des croyances, qui sont personnelles, libres et variables, et celui des connaissances, qui sont communes et indispensables à tous, de l'aveu de tous. Mais il y a autre chose dans la loi du 28 mars : elle affirme la volonté de fonder chez nous une éducation nationale, et de la fonder sur les notions du devoir et du droit que le législateur n'hésite pas à s'inscrire au nombre des premières vérités que nul ne peut ignorer.¹⁹

In speaking of *premières vérités*, Ferry was using a language that was quasi-religious. The reaction of the Church was strong and immediate. The more trenchant point of view in the early years of this debate is well expressed in the following statement from a leading Catholic newspaper:

Dans l'école laïque, le crucifix et l'image de la Sainte Vierge ont été enlevés, les pieuses sentences, les préceptes de la morale chrétienne inscrits sur les murs ont été enlevés. Le maître a commencé sa classe sans invoquer le nom de Dieu ; et si quelque écolier a fait, par habitude, le signe de la croix, il a été repris aussitôt et peut-être puni comme d'une faute. Pour le début, un commentaire sur la Déclaration des droits de l'homme, un éloge du régime républicain, a remplacé la leçon de catéchisme et d'histoire sainte.²⁰

The debate continued with even greater intensity following the promulgation of *La loi de 1905*, with a Papal Encyclical which condemned it as '*gravement offensante pour la dignité de ce siège apostolique, pour Notre Personne, pour l'Épiscopat, pour le clergé et pour tous les catholiques français.*'²¹ It is quite clear that for some the faith school, still un-

¹⁸ Lettre de Jules Ferry, Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, aux instituteurs du 17 novembre 1883. See Dimitri Denard, *Dictionnaire d'histoire de l'enseignement* (Paris : Éditions Universitaires Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1981), article *Ferry, lettre aux instituteurs*. My emphasis.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *L'Univers*, 2 octobre 1882.

²¹ Pie X *Vehementer Nos*, Papal Encyclical, Rome, 11 February, 1906.

der the control of what Gambetta described as *l'ennemi*,²² or clerical domination, has been considered as '*un terrain à conquérir au nom de la laïcité*.' Interestingly, as is often the case in France, the language chosen to describe the *vocation* of the school was itself often quasi-religious. In another speech Gambetta made the following less bellicose but no less significant remarks:

*L'école est vraiment le séminaire de l'avenir, notre séminaire à nous, celui d'où sortiront les citoyens mûrs pour les difficultés de la vie intérieure, et prêts aussi pour le service extérieur de la France, le séminaire républicain, qui implique à mon sens cette triple nécessité : l'obligation, la gratuité, la laïcité. On a bataillé quelque temps sur le dernier terme. On a demandé à modifier, à transiger (...). Messieurs, à toutes ces demandes, il faut répondre : non, nous voulons l'Église chez elle et l'école chez elle, l'instituteur absolument maître du lieu où il donne ses leçons.*²³

For others, of course, the school was '*une forteresse à défendre au nom de la foi*', a vital instrument in the transmission of *les valeurs chrétiennes* that had made France *la fille aînée de l'Église*, values that had, they believed, been under attack in the wake of *Le siècle des Lumières* :

Qu'au moins la liberté de l'enseignement soit établie sur de telles bases qu'à côté de ses écoles nous ayons au moins les nôtres subventionnées par l'État comme les siennes. (...)
Vous voulez faire de la laïcité scolaire une arme de guerre religieuse, de l'obligation scolaire le synonyme de la libre pensée obligatoire ; nous ne l'accepterons jamais. La paix dans la liberté, si vous le voulez ; sinon la guerre jusqu'au bout.²⁴

A Catholic deputy at the Assemblée Nationale drew the lines clearly:

²² Léon Gambetta (1838 -1882). On 4 May 1877, sensing a threat from the reactionary clerical party seeking to restore the temporal power of the Pope, he delivered his famous speech: ' Je ne fais que traduire les sentiments intimes du peuple de France en disant ce qu'en disait un jour mon ami Peyrat : *le cléricalisme ? Voilà l'ennemi*.' Léon Gambetta devant la Chambre des députés, 14 mai 1877, in *Discours et plaidoyers choisis* (Paris : Charpentier, 1883). My emphasis.

²³ Léon Gambetta, Discours dans une réunion électorale de Paris, 20^e arrondissement, 12 août 1881 in *Discours et plaidoyers choisis*, My emphasis.

²⁴ Jacques Piou, député catholique, discours à la Chambre des députés, 21 janvier 1910.

*Nous sommes en présence d'un conflit irréductible. Tant qu'il a été possible d'espérer une conciliation à la faveur d'une neutralité spiritualiste, l'école neutre a pu vivre. Aujourd'hui, tout est changé. Vous êtes des positivistes, des libres penseurs, des matérialistes, et, il n'y a pas de Dieu, il n'y a que la raison, pour vous, que la science. Soit, mais nous ne voulons pas que nos enfants subissent le joug de cette raison, courte par tant d'endroits, le joug de cette fragile science qui décrit tout et n'explique rien. Là est le conflit, aucune transaction.*²⁵

Here the argument was simple, reductionist if you will. Science had come to replace faith and this was completely unacceptable. Positivism, freethinking, materialism and atheism were going to destroy *la vieille France, fille aînée de l'Église*.

Joseph Pagnol (1869-1951) instituteur laïque, utopiste et républicain.

Marcel Pagnol's portrait of his father in *La Gloire de mon père* is sympathetic and gently humorous, affectionate, but not blind. He is aware of his integrity and his dedication, but also of his pedantry and his intolerance. He is remarkably successful in portraying a French *instituteur* from the early part of the 20th century and the environment in which he was formed. Joseph was, as his son describes him, *un jeune homme sérieux*, whose seriousness was more than reinforced by his training in the *Ecole Normale Primaire*. Pagnol begins his description of this institution borrowing from Gambetta, noting that '*Les écoles normales primaires étaient à cette époque de véritables séminaires...*' He portrays these schools as centres of anticlericalism and rabid in their critique of both the church and religion:

[...] la théologie y était remplacée par des cours d'anticléricalisme. On enseignait à ces jeunes gens que l'Église n'avait jamais été rien d'autre qu'un instrument d'oppression et que le but et la tâche des prêtres [...] était de nouer sur les yeux du peuple le noir bandeau de l'ignorance [...]

La mauvaise foi des « curés » était d'ailleurs prouvée par l'usage du latin, langue mystérieuse, et qui avait, pour les fidèles ignorant, la vertu perfide des formules magiques.

²⁵ Ibid.

La papauté était dignement représentée par les deux Borgia, et les rois [...] ne s'occupaient guère que de leurs concubines quand ils ne jouaient pas au bilboquet [...].²⁶

In M. Pagnol's view, the schools were largely in the service of the dominant political philosophy of the day. He notes: '*les cours d'histoire étaient élégamment truqués dans le sens de la vérité républicaine. [Puisque] tous les manuels d'histoire du monde n'ont jamais été que des livrets au service des gouvernements.*' The result was to produce teachers strongly moulded in the dominant ideology of the system to carry the battle to the front on which it would be won or lost, the towns and villages of the *département*:

Alors, par une sorte de déhiscence, la bonne graine était projetée aux quatre coins du département, pour y lutter contre l'ignorance, glorifier la République, et garder le chapeau sur la tête au passage des processions. [...] Ils avaient une foi totale dans la beauté de leur mission, une confiance radieuse dans l'avenir de la race humaine. Ils méprisaient l'argent et le luxe, ils refusaient un avancement pour laisser la place à un autre, ou pour continuer la tâche commencée dans un autre village déshérité.²⁷

The teachers' zeal for the cause was unlimited and they had a deep sense of *mission*, of being sent to the furthest outposts of the *République* in the cause of the Enlightenment and in a more or less declared battle against Gambetta's common *ennemi*. They were marked by a certain severity, even Puritanism, disliking alcohol at least as much as they disliked the monarchy and the Church. They also constructed a new *hiérarchie républicaine* to which they showed total respect and what often seems like fawning deference:

Car le plus remarquable, c'est que ces anticléricaux avaient des âmes de missionnaires. Pour faire échec à « Monsieur le curé » (dont la vertu était supposée feinte), ils vivaient eux-mêmes comme des saints, et leur morale était aussi inflexible que celle des premiers puritains. M. l'inspecteur d'Académie était leur évêque, M. le recteur, l'archevêque, et leur pape, c'était M. le ministre : on ne lui écrit que sur grand papier, avec des formules rituelles. «

²⁶ *La Gloire*, p. 15.

²⁷ *La Gloire*, pp. 18-19.

Comme les prêtres, disait mon père, nous travaillons pour la vie future : mais nous, c'est pour celle des autres....²⁸

Pagnol's picture is close to the type of the *instituteur laïc*. Joseph Pagnol was above all *un serviteur fidèle de la République* within its *tradition laïque et radicale*. This is well illustrated in the contrast with another character, *l'oncle Jules*, his brother-in-law. Jules, while also a *fonctionnaire de la République*, was of a very different mould and viewed as suspect: *l'oncle Jules allait à la messe*. It followed necessarily that his political position was in total contrast to that of Joseph, and his son offers an amusing child's perspective on the difference:

[L]’oncle attaquit les gens qui s’appelaient « les radicot ». Il y avait un M. Comble,²⁹ qui était un radicot, et sur lequel il était difficile de se faire une opinion : mon père disait que ce radicot était un honnête homme, tandis que l’oncle le nommait « la fine fleur de la canaille » et offrait de signer cette déclaration sur papier timbré. Il ajoutait que ce Comble était le chef d’une bande de malfaiteurs, qui s’appelait «les framassons ». Mon père parlait aussitôt d’une autre bande, qui s’appelait «les jezuïtes », c’étaient d’horribles «tartruffes » qui creusaient des « galeries » sous les pieds de tout le monde...³⁰

While clearly close friends, the two men differ deeply on the religious question giving rise to one of the more memorable scenes in the book:

Lorsque mon père apprit – par une confidence de tante Rose à ma mère – qu’il [l’oncle Jules] communiait deux fois par mois, il en fut positivement consterné, et déclara que « c’était un comble ». Ma mère alors le supplia d’admettre cet état de choses, et de renoncer, devant l’oncle, à son petit répertoire de plaisanteries sur les curés, et en particulier, à une chansonnette qui célébrait les exploits aéronautiques du vénérable père Dupanloup³¹ [...]

²⁸ *La Gloire*, p.20.

²⁹ Politician Émile Combes (1835 – 1921) studied for the priesthood, but abandoned the idea before ordination. He later became a Freemason and was known for his radical anti-clerical views.

³⁰ *La Gloire*, pp.114-15.

³¹ P. Félix Antoine Philibert Dupanloup (1802–1878). Elected to the Académie Française in 1854 where he became leader of the ‘parti religieux’ which opposed the election of agnostic intellectuals. He resigned in 1875 following the election of Emile Littré, an agnostic.

Mon père secoua tristement la tête, et soudain d'une voix furieuse, il s'écria :
 - Voilà ! Voilà l'intolérance de ces fanatiques ! Est-ce que je l'empêche, moi, d'aller manger son Dieu tous les dimanches ? Est-ce que je te défends de fréquenter ta sœur parce qu'elle est mariée à un homme qui croit que le Créateur de l'Univers descend en personne, tous les dimanches, dans cent mille gobelets....

Joseph sees himself as something quite different, a liberal and tolerant product of the Enlightenment doing battle with a system that is deeply flawed and marked by an evil history:

Et bien, je veux lui montrer ma largeur d'esprit. Je le ridiculiserai par mon libéralisme....

But the 'liberalism' turns out to be something less than that:

Non, je ne lui parlerai pas de l'Inquisition, ni de Calas, ni de Jean Huss,³² ni tant d'autres que l'Eglise envoya au bûcher, je ne dirai rien des papes Borgia, de la papesse Jeanne ! Et même s'il essaie de me prêcher les conceptions puériles d'une religion aussi enfantine que les contes de ma grand-mère, je lui répondrai poliment, et je me contenterai d'en rigoler doucement dans ma barbe.³³

Joseph, however, will preach another gospel. Opening the school year of 1900 he announces to his class of CM2 that '*ce siècle sera un grand siècle, un siècle de miracles – ceux de la science bien sûr.*' His rare encounters with the clergy are marked with a frostiness that goes well beyond mere formality and he shows little inclination to doff his hat at any time. He is more than a little *pointilleux* about any religious reference or metaphor and is quick to stamp out anything even mildly resembling a *glissement vers le religieux* in thought, word or deed, so to speak:

- Cui-là, dit le paysan, c'est les barres de Saint-Esprit.

³² The *affaire Calas* took place in Toulouse and proved the intervention of Voltaire. It led to the torture and execution of the Protestant Jean Calas (1698-1762) following a show trial. Jean Huss was a theologian, university don and Czech religious reformer, excommunicated in 1411 and executed in 1415. Condemned for heresy, his execution led to the foundation of the Hussite movement, seen as a precursor of Protestantism.

³³ *La Gloire*, pp.45-46.

A ce nom, si clairement « obscurantiste », mon père fonça in sourcil laïque, et demanda :

- Ils sont très calotins, dans le pays ?

- Un peu, dit le paysan.

- Vous allez à la messe, le dimanche ?

- Ca dépend... Quand nous avons la sécheresse, moi je n'y vais pas, jusqu'à tant qu'il pleuve. Le bon Dieu a besoin qu'on lui fasse comprendre.

Je fus tenté de lui révéler que Dieu n'existait pas, ce que j'avais de très bonne source : mais comme mon père se taisait, je gardai modestement le silence.³⁴

While Marcel Pagnol's portrait of his father is not historical in the strict sense, I think it does give a valuable, and often amusing, insight into a person who was amongst those who were '*les clercs de République*', dedicated to the cause and its underlying social and political philosophy. My thesis in this paper is that all school teachers somehow play this role even when the philosophy differs and this is where we turn to Ireland and Bryan MacMahon.

The vision of a new Ireland – cultural nationalism and religious faith

For historical reasons it is clear that education in Ireland took a very different trajectory from that of France. In precisely the period when French primary education was being *laïcisé*, the Irish system was becoming almost entirely confessional. There were obvious historical reasons for this. Garrett Fitzgerald writes: 'The origins of today's confessional i.e. religiously organised, Irish education and, to some extent, also its hospital system ... lie way back in the sectarian structure that was imposed on the island after 1691.' This was the year of the establishment of the Anglican Church as the *Church of Ireland*, a position that gave it an almost complete monopoly of the educational system. Fitzgerald notes that the 10 per cent Anglican minority came to play a role in the country that 'was in many ways more significant than British rule itself.' When the changes began to come, following Catholic emancipation in 1829, there was a sharp reaction to this domination of education, to widespread discrimination against Catholics and non-established Protestants, and to aggressive Church of Ireland proselytising. By 1850, the new schools, which had been founded since the establishment of the national school

³⁴ *La Gloire*, p. 89.

system in 1831, and which were intended to be multi-denominational, 'had been converted by both Catholics and Presbyterians into denominational establishments, existing in parallel with [Anglican] schools.'³⁵

Central to this was the controversial figure of Cardinal Paul Cullen (1803-1878). Ultramontane and highly conservative, Cullen became Archbishop of Armagh in 1850 and the first Irish cardinal in 1867. Whatever way one views Cullen, it can certainly be said that he shaped the Irish Church of his day and for the following century, with the ambivalent legacy of 'Cullen's Catholicism' leaving its imprint not only in Ireland but as far away as Australia and New Zealand. Fighting what he saw as the Anglican domination of education, he made a decisive contribution to the Powis Commission of Inquiry in 1869, notably in his insistence on the denominational training of teachers. To paraphrase a later source, it was to be 'a system of education for Catholics [...] wherein Catholic children are taught in Catholic schools by Catholic teachers under Catholic control.'³⁶

This was certainly the thinking behind the founding of St Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra, in 1875. As the College website states: 'The College quickly became and remains the alma mater for a large proportion of Irish primary teachers.' While it certainly differed ideologically from Gambetta's *séminaire de l'avenir*, St Patrick's had all hallmarks of a seminary. John Coolahan notes:

Its way of academic and social life was reflective of the other training colleges, as they continued a nineteenth-century model of the formation and socialisation of the national teaching force. Both State and Church took great care that the students be moulded in the desired shape. The colleges were boarding in the full sense with only limited time approved for social life outside the college. The colleges were all single sex. They were denominationally run and religious services were observed at early morning, late evening

³⁵ Garrett Fitzgerald, *Ireland in the World : Further Reflections* (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2005). Chapter 6, "Catholicism, the Gaelic Revival and the New State", pp.109-111.

³⁶ *The Times Educational Supplement*, 29 October 1921, p.323. Quoted in John Coolahan, "The Schoolmaster in the New State", in Gabriel Fitzmaurice (ed.), *The World of Bryan MacMahon* (Cork: Mercier 2005) pp.164-192, p.172.

and on all religious festivals. The daily timetables were very full, with heavy lecture schedules and allocated times for all functions.³⁷

The emphasis was very much on moulding the teachers not just in the religious sense but in the dominant nationalist ideology of the day. Coolahan notes significantly for instance the ‘reliance placed on lecture notes given in Irish [while] not much emphasis was placed on library study or personal reflection by students.’³⁸ Writing in *The Master* of the students coming out of the teacher training colleges, MacMahon states:

Whatever road was taken, the government of the day acquired these students cheaply, trained them cheaply, and, hand in glove with the ecclesiastical authorities, sent them out into the land confident that, subject to rigid inspection, they would display the qualities of dedication, humility, and obedience. Which, to a considerable extent, they did.
[...] As a group they loved Ireland and the things of Ireland, and were the pillars of the communities in which they taught.³⁹

Having gained control of the schools in the middle of the 19th century, it is clear that the Church fought to continue its domination over the following century, opposing both the government of the day and subsequently the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation on anything it perceived as threatening its authority and influence. This was particularly the case in the period immediately preceding and following the foundation of the Free State in 1922. For instance, Coolahan notes the Church’s opposition to the proposed Education Bill in 1920, no doubt forewarned by the French *Loi de 1905* and determined by Pius X’s subsequent *Vehementer Nos*. While *la fille aînée de l’Eglise* might have succumbed to the wiles of the world and the rising tide of secularism, this nascent Catholic state, and a Church with the wind of social approbation in its sails, was being vehement indeed:

This was the most radical and comprehensive effort at the reform of Irish education ever proposed. However, it ran into prolonged controversy, and the strong opposition of the Catholic Church, which saw in its administrative proposals a diminution in the control of schooling which it had won itself in

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Coolahan, pp.171-2.

³⁹ *The Master*, p. 111.

the nineteenth century. Public opinion became polarised in the intense debate, with the teachers strongly in favour of the bill, which among other things promised them increased salaries and improved conditions of work. Eventually, in December 1920, the Education Bill was withdrawn, just a week before the Government of Ireland Act establishing partition was enacted. This was the last attempt at educational legislation for the whole island henceforth very different policies would prevail for education within the two administrations, north and south. The controversy on the withdrawn bill cast a long shadow on subsequent developments. One outcome was the awareness of politicians that interference on education was a hazardous undertaking.⁴⁰

The practical outcome for the teachers was that, unlike their French colleagues, they had to deal with a dual hierarchy, one secular and the other ecclesiastical:

It was enjoined on us by the state to undertake the revival of Irish as a spoken language, a task that, by and large, we manfully faced; and it was also enjoined on us by the Catholic Church, which to put it at its mildest, was powerful at that time, to transfer from one generation to the next the corpus of Catholic belief....⁴¹

The poles that held together the Irish educational world had been firmly established. The lines of authority ran from the headmaster to the school manager, who was the parish priest, through the diocesan school inspector who oversaw religious instruction, and, in my memory, handed out religious images on his annual visits, to the bishop, who kept a more distant eye on things but did not hesitate to intervene at the first sign of controversy or dissent. There was a parallel state structure running through the often dreaded *cigire*, the local school inspector, through the Department of Education, to the Minister of the day. However, in case of conflict there was little doubt about which hierarchy would prove decisive.

While the emerging state deferred to the Church on questions of school administration, this did not mean that it did not have its own objectives. As Coolahan notes, in the new Free State:

The priority of educational policy was for curricular change. This was trenchantly articulated by the new chief officer of the minister, Pádraig Ó Brol-

⁴⁰ Coolahan, p.166.

⁴¹ *The Master*, p. 97.

cháin, when he addressed a meeting of the Commissioners of National Education on 31 January 1922. He told them: 'In the administration of Irish education it is the intention of the new Government to work with all its might for the strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music and traditions of Ireland their natural place in the life of Irish schools.'⁴²

This was effectively the cultural nationalism that was to be the *leitmotif* of Irish education for several generations. A report issued in 1922 had given a central place to the Irish language in the school programme at the expense of elementary science and drawing. Art and the Enlightenment apparently could wait; the priority was to be the embedding of the national myth. Coolahan notes that 'the curriculum which Bryan MacMahon and his contemporaries were required to implement was a narrow 3-R type programme, with two languages, Irish being the one most favoured.'⁴³ In terms of extra-curricular activities, the emphasis was on 'national games' as the GAA became the other major proponent of cultural nationalism, often in strong co-operation with the Church through the local schools. It can be argued that this continued until 1966 when Donogh O'Malley⁴⁴ began to eye modernity with his radical reform of the secondary system.

Master MacMahon

By the time MacMahon came to teaching, the primary school system had taken on a very definite form, marked by cultural nationalism and the strong presence of the Church in both its day-to-day administration and in the oversight – if not development – of educational policy. This was essentially very different from what was happening in France and it would not be until near the end of the twentieth century that the situation came under any kind of serious scrutiny.

MacMahon was critical of the 'dire conditions', the 'squalor', prevailing in the schools and also of many of the official attitudes he en-

⁴² Reported in the *Irish School Weekly*, 11 February 1922. Quoted in Coolahan, p.167.

⁴³ Coolahan, p.169.

⁴⁴ Donogh Brendan O'Malley (1921-1968) a Fianna Fáil politician. As Minister, O'Malley developed the school transport scheme, promoted new non-denominational comprehensive community schools and is seen by many as the man who positioned Ireland for its later success through education.

countered in both Church and State. In one particularly damning passage he writes:

What with faeces, cocoa, soup, rats, mice, crumbs, spiders, wasps, crows, gulls, and various insects that prey on humankind – not to mention the inspectors who examined the intellect, the clergy who presided over the spirit – ours was a poor example of a centre of learning. Noisy it certainly was, but not a mansion, except in Goldsmithian sarcasm.⁴⁵

In the context of this paper, his attitude to the Church and the clergy is of particular interest. While it is clear that he was a practising Catholic who gave a broad general assent to the tenets of his ‘own particular and possibly idiosyncratic belief’, he was far from uncritical. The fact that during his teaching career he also wrote regularly for *The Bell*⁴⁶ would indicate that he would have been viewed with a certain suspicion in clerical circles. As he tells us in *The Master*, he wrote critically of ‘clerical tyranny’ and an unhealthy preoccupation with the sixth commandment. This caused what he describes as ‘much misunderstanding’, denunciation ‘from at least three pulpits in the locality [...] and the traditional belt of the crozier (crozier?) from a bishop or two.’

At the same time, MacMahon is critical of what he sees as clerical and State neglect of the schools. In a passage that shows his conviction in the face of clerical fire he writes:

This did not bother me in the least. I was conscious of an inner sense of rectitude, and this even though I had gone so far as to say in my article that the reverend manager ‘who fails to ensure that pupils entrusted to his care are educated under hygienic conditions is railing scrap-iron to the enemies of his church, which will one day be returned to him or to his successor in Christ in the form of shot and shell.’ This was strong language at the time.⁴⁷

This is a particularly significant passage since it contains much of what I would describe as the kind of repressed resentment of clerical domination of which I was aware in my own youth – most notably perhaps in my fa-

⁴⁵ *The Master*, p.18.

⁴⁶ *The Bell* literary journal was founded by Sean O’Faoláin and Peadar O’Donnell in 1940 and endured until 1954. It was known for its independence of thought and expression.

⁴⁷ *The Master*, p.28.

ther, but which I imagine was probably more widespread across all social classes than is generally thought today. There was the ambivalence of an attachment to the institution but at the same time a deep irritation, and probably often anger, at the foibles of its clergy. MacMahon's words in this passage were more prescient than he could have known at the time he was writing them. His was not the more overt anti-clericalism of Joseph Pagnol but there is a great sense of the frustration that would clearly manifest itself in a later generation of teachers.

Bryan MacMahon is equally critical of what he sees as the insufficiencies of religious education which he saw as rigid, remote, cold and abstract, providing little in terms of spiritual sustenance or real argument:

Butler's catechism, by order of the bishop, was in use in the diocese of Kerry during the greater part of my life as a teacher. It was a little book, printed on cheap paper, its pages held together by a single staple, and could be slipped easily into a pocket. It contained 112 in all, some 86 in question and answer form. There were no illustrations.

...By the end of his primary school period every pupil was presumed to have learnt by rote almost all the contents of this little book, with its total of perhaps 25,000 words. This included one answer – running to a total of 170 words – that purported to offer with absolute accuracy proof of the existence of Purgatory. This stout information provided the child, possibly destined for the immigrant boat, with an answer calculated to confound humanists, atheists, agnostics, or even HG Wells himself.⁴⁸

Ultimately, however, the Church is an essential part of his life 'a vehicle for [his] faith but also a fruitful source of [his] culture'. He saw Catholicism as a 'cultural treasure house' and an essential part of his Irishness. In this MacMahon inhabited a world between what had become the poles of Irish life: the Church and the new State.

It is hardly surprising that MacMahon's attitude to the young state is largely similar to his relationship with the Church: not so much love-hate as one of some frustration at its inadequacies, while subscribing to its basic orientation. He is sometimes harsh, particularly when he sees the state failing in its duty to educate the pupils within the system in minimally humane conditions. In one passage in *The Master*, he recalls personally taking to task in public the Minister for Education Dick Mulcahy for betraying the 'inheritors of [the] revolution' by allowing them to be edu-

⁴⁸ *The Master*, pp.98-101.

cated in 'squalor', pointing to the descendants of Michael Collins and Thomas Ashe in the desks.

At the same time, however, as in his relationship with the Church, it is clear he accepted the overall philosophy of education as it was enunciated at that time. He had no doubt about the national project and the place of the language within that project. In a significant passage he writes:

For this was also a time of idealism: much of the *fervour of the Easter Rising* persisted into the twenties and thirties; the wave of consumerism and materialism, with its attendant revision of our island story, had not yet threatened to engulf us.

We realised that without a vision the people perished. We realised that there was nowhere the children could move on the social ladder except upward. Personally, I realised that motivation was a first requisite if the lost children of the nation were to be cherished. *So we set out to establish something bright and shining in which the Irish language would play an important part.*⁴⁹

It can be said that MacMahon, like many of his generation, had internalised de Valera's Ireland, even if the reality was often far from the vision. In his later years, he was upset by revisionist readings of Irish nationalism, by the relative failure of the language movement, and by strident criticism of the Church. This was hardly surprising since these were the pillars of his world.

Does Ireland need a 'loi de 2008'?

In terms of secularisation, France and Ireland offer interesting case studies of two very different trajectories. While France may be *la fille aînée de l'Église*, Ireland has long been considered to be one of the great bastions of Catholicism in Western Europe. Even when France became somewhat hesitant in keeping '*les promesses de son baptême*', the hope was that Ireland would remain a beacon in the onset of darkness throughout secular Europe, as it was seen to have been in the past. This, of course, has not proven to be the case as Ireland, and increasingly I would suggest, Poland, appear to have succumbed to the charms of a more materialistic and secular society. One does indeed find in Ireland many of

⁴⁹ *The Master*, pp.8-9. My emphasis.

the indicators of advanced secularisation: ‘the decline of popular involvement with churches; the decline in the scope and influence of religious institutions; the decline in the impact and popularity of religious beliefs.’⁵⁰ We have certainly moved on from a point where religious belief was what Charles Taylor describes ‘the default option’ in society, where faith of some kind was presumed. We have come increasingly, rather, to the situation where the presumption of ‘unbelief’ has become dominant and has indeed, one might argue, achieved hegemony in certain crucial social milieus, notably in the academic and intellectual life, but also among elites in general and even in large sections of the working class. It can often seem that, whatever the nostalgia of a ‘Celtic spirituality’, a New Age equivalent, or a return to a mythical religious past, we have become increasingly, to borrow again from Taylor, *buffered* to the religious.⁵¹

What is also striking, at times, is the ferocity of secularising voices. Having had much contact with France, what I hear in both public and private discourse on faith and religious questions in Ireland today has much in common with what I have heard in France over a period of thirty years. In some circles, notably perhaps journalism and the Academy, it is not simply an indifference to faith but an aggressive antipathy to expressions of the religious in any terms, and quite often the visceral anticlericalism sometimes encountered in France. It is not unusual, for instance, to hear anecdotal evidence of clergy and religious being treated the kind of remarks that greeted ‘*les corbeaux*’ who dared venture on to French streets in their religious habits.⁵² There have also been some moves in Ireland in more recent times against what is delicately described in France as the wearing of ‘*signes ostentatoires*’ that indicate a religious identity, notably the wearing of the *hajib* in schools by young Muslim women.⁵³ As in the UK, however, this does not appear to have found much support here.

⁵⁰ Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 26.

⁵¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Belknap, 2007). Introduction.

⁵² A term of derision for priests or religious wearing a soutane or religious habit, which I heard used up until the late 1970s in Montpellier.

⁵³ Shenaz Kermalli, ‘Hijab ignites Ireland rights debate’, *Al Jazeera*, 10 September 2008, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2008/09/20089915285235465.html> accessed 15 October 2008.

What often appears to be the new social orthodoxy in Ireland is a dogmatic secularism that claims to be a product of the Enlightenment but sometimes seems to owe little to reason. This orthodoxy is marked by several of the worst aspects of the dogmatism its adherents claim to abhor! It brooks no contestation. In fact, it often seems impossible to have any discussion on religious or faith issues so much are the intellectual waters muddied by irrational, sometimes infantile, emotions and unbridled prejudice. It is an anger that often appears almost oedipal as we seek to shake ourselves free of a faith that has never grown up.⁵⁴ It sometimes appears that we are in fact going down the French road.

The attitude to faith in Ireland, however, often appears to be based more on the antipathy towards an institution that came to be to be perceived as an overweening and sullenly resented presence at all levels of society. The image of the priest for many people of an older generation is surely well captured by Jack B. Yeats painting *The Priest*, at the National Gallery, a hard man exuding a rough and rather gruff authority, surely not to be contested or trifled with. He would certainly have been familiar to Bryan MacMahon. This is probably not the only image we could find but it is one that is real for many people.

It can be argued that this image is the legacy that secularisation, rather than *laïcité*, has set out to undo in Ireland and it is perhaps understandable, given the nature of the ecclesiastical edifice and its historical omnipresence, that the arguments have been robust. But, of course, religious faith and its institutions have not gone away. They remain important in the lives of many people even if the locus of their influence has changed. The structured dialogue with faith bodies instituted by the government is an acknowledgement of this fact.⁵⁵ However, it is also essential that the dialogue between religious institutions and society be broadened and deepened at all levels, social, political and academic. History, including our own, provides abundant proof of the dead ends into which faith can lead. It needs to be challenged and questioned at all times if it is

⁵⁴ Parts of this section originally appeared in *The Irish Times*, Tuesday, September 4, 2007 'Rite and Reason' column.

⁵⁵ See Speech by An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., at the Inauguration of the *Structured Dialogue with Churches, Faith Communities and Non-Confessional Bodies* in Dublin Castle, on Monday, 26 February 2007, <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/index.asp?locID=558&docID=3257> accessed 15 October 2008.

to avoid becoming a closed sectarianism speaking only to itself. However, a society devoid of faith and spirituality is also in danger of losing touch with itself. Here again, history provides abundant examples of the ideological dead ends in which humanity has found itself when it fails to recognise the transcendent as a factor in determining human values. Jurgen Habermas speaks of his interest ‘in an approach which is respectful of religious traditions which distinguish themselves by their superior capacity in articulating our moral sensibilities.’⁵⁶ Speaking specifically of France, sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime writes:

[O]n peut dire qu’en France on est passé d’une laïcité de combat à une laïcité de gestion. Cela n’est pas sans conséquences sur la situation de la laïcité et sa façon d’aborder les faits religieux[....] La perte effective de pouvoir des institutions religieuses tant sur la société que sur leurs fidèles, l’autocritique même de la modernité qui tend beaucoup moins à se concevoir en opposition radicale avec les traditions et qui développe une pensée des limites, le retour public de la question éthique et la redécouverte des dimensions symboliques du lien social ont contribué à générer, au sein même de la laïcité, une attitude plus ouverte, faite de neutralité bienveillante des faits religieux. C’est pourquoi Jean Baubérot parle d’un « nouveau pacte laïque ». ⁵⁷ Cette évolution par laquelle la laïcité se définit plutôt comme le cadre régulateur d’un pluralisme des visions du monde que comme un contre-système d’emprise par rapport aux religions renvoie selon nous à un processus de laïcisation de la laïcité. ⁵⁸

It is hardly surprising that the school is to the forefront in this development, a symbolic terrain to be conquered and kept by one side or the other, if that is the way we choose to see it – and it certainly was the case in France. We have chosen another way in the ‘structured dialogue’ with faith groups, precisely, one imagines, in order to avoid what is that can be perceived as the polar opposite of the situation in France. An Irish version of *La loi de 1905* seems unlikely to happen. However, this does not mean that there will not be a necessary debate on the place of faith and faith groups in education and other public services, as indeed is the

⁵⁶ Jurgen Habermas, « Habermas entre démocratie et génétique », propos recueillis par Alexandra Langel-Lavastine, in *Le Monde* du 20 décembre 2002, p.viii.

⁵⁷ Jean Baubérot, *Vers un nouveau pacte laïque ?* (Paris : Seuil, 1990).

⁵⁸ Jean-Paul Willaime, *Europe et religions : les enjeux du XXI^e siècle* (Paris : Fayard, 2004), p. 328.

case in the United Kingdom. The Catholic Church in Ireland has expressed a willingness to enter this debate and apparently does not wish to hold a monopoly on the provision of this service.⁵⁹

My interest in Pagnol and MacMahon lies in their role as teachers in the midst of such a debate. There was, of course, some difficulty with the nature of evidence available in both cases, as I have noted. However, I think many of us will recognise in both men types we are quite familiar with: stern, somewhat authoritarian with a hint of intolerance, but also with a strong sense of duty. Pagnol appears to have a more strongly ideological taint, although it is also clear that MacMahon was committed to his own 'cause.' Writing from the remove of retirement, he is perhaps not untouched by a certain bitterness as he looks back on battles won and lost. What emerges in the end is the portrait of two men dedicated to ideological causes which they saw as bigger than themselves, causes that were somewhat, but not altogether, different. They were dutiful masters and servants. We continue to need such teachers with their sense of service, but with perhaps a greater willingness to question their own positions, as we seek a system that will best serve our children.

⁵⁹ See Sean Flynn, "Archbishop says State to blame for schools crisis", in *The Irish Times*, 6 September 2007.

Anne Goarzin

Faith, Hope and Debris: Globalisation and Secularisation in the Work of Paul Durcan and John Kindness

The starting point for this article is a reflexion on Yeats's poetry and on his aesthetics of disruption. The most visual and extreme example of this is of course to be found in *A Vision* (1925), an essay in which Yeats elaborated his complex philosophy of history and his metaphysics, in particular by representing the cycles of history through a system of rotating gyres: when the gyres changed directions, an era came to an end and another one began, and this change, Yeats believed, involved apocalyptic violence (as described in "The Second Coming"). The poet's search for Unity of Being and Unity of Culture was thus bound to be challenged at all levels: he deplored the lack of consensus and of harmony which was no longer reachable, and this he saw as "coincident with the loss of standard-setting privilege; with that loss comes the loss of the beautiful", as notes Jefferson Holdridge in his book-length study.¹ Yeats was interested in comprehending how 18th-century harmony, which derived from the acknowledgement of a transcendent reality and the strength of the belief in the final cause, was disrupted. He tried to account for the nature of the events which disrupted the beautiful and the harmonious, as is best illustrated by the famed oxymoron which conflates 'the beautiful' and the 'terrible' in the famous verse of "Easter 1916": 'All changed, changed utterly / A terrible beauty is born.'

Terry Eagleton argues at the outset of his essay entitled *Holy Terror* that this rupture takes the shape of radical disruption, as shown by the violence of the French revolution which challenged set traditional hierarchies and introduced terror, thus pointing to the emergence of state violence as an element of modernity:

¹ Jefferson Holdridge, *Those Mingled Seas: The Poetry of W.B. Yeats, the Beautiful and the Sublime* (Dublin, UCD Press, 2000), p.3.

Like many a supposedly antique phenomenon, terrorism is in fact a modern invention. As a political idea, it first emerged with the French revolution – which is to say, in effect, that terrorism and the modern democratic state were twinned at birth. In the era of Danton and Robespierre, terrorism began life as state terrorism. It was a violence visited by the state on its enemies, not a strike against sovereignty by its faceless foes.²

Such blatant violence seems to be at the root of the contemporary predicament, as it marks the rejection of the social, religious, and historical consensus. It also integrates a less obvious form of violence done to the self, which is left to carry out its aesthetic experience on its own, and to find answers to the ongoing disunity single-handedly – a situation which is precisely what this collection hopes to come to terms with.³

It seems to me that the present collection's theme suggests a conflation of terms somewhat similar to that evoked in the line 'a terrible beauty is born', albeit perhaps not so oxymoronic. Indeed the association of 'secularisation' and 'globalisation' has us look into how the rupture occurs in the contemporary discourses of and on religious and national institutions. I would like to examine to what extent the Yeatsian interrogations of the conflation between aesthetic and social consensus and the eruption of political and economic violence may illuminate our reading of the postmodern issues of secularisation and globalisation. My argument here is that the apparent consensus over the benefits of globalisation and secularism in postmodern societies is increasingly being challenged. As the political is disseminated and as the representations of sovereignty are questioned, the former dissociation between Church and State is also put into question and dissensus arises. Is violence a common denominator in the move towards secularism (and the negation of the religious) and towards a globalised economy? How do we deal with a pattern that evacuates transcendence and how does globalisation fit in this

² Terry Eagleton, *Holy Terror* (Oxford, O.U.P., 2005), p.1.

³ One of the poetic solutions Yeats suggested is to be found in his 'afterlife' poems, such as 'Sailing to Byzantium' and 'Byzantium'. These are poems that offer the opportunity of a marriage of the sublime and the beautiful. As Jefferson Holdridge writes: 'Byzantine society is suitable because it is devoted to God; its expression of the beautiful and the terrible find unity in God's reconciliation of sublimity and beauty' (*Those Mingled Seas*, p.4).

pattern? Can we go as far as saying that, in a paradoxical way, globalisation leaves room for a renewed form of the Absolute?

I would like to examine the way these changes have occurred and are occurring in Irish society through the poetic works of Paul Durcan and the visual art of John Kindness. Durcan's poems suggest aesthetic alternatives to the hegemonic discourse of Church institutions, while Kindness particularly looks into the by-products of an aggressive globalised economy which has substituted objects for individuals, and economic heartlessness for collective solutions. Both artists show an interest in disruptions, uncertainty, uncontrollable events and the vulnerability of human relations in a global world. Before I move on to visual and textual illustrations, I would like to define these artists' approach to globalised and secularised Ireland. I call theirs a 'cellular' reading of the world, which is made palpable through the aesthetic choices they make: the familiar, the neglected and the debris appear to be their privileged medium to counteract the new hegemonic networks beyond sovereignty and the individual.

In a recent essay, French anthropologist Marc Abélès insists on the fact that globalisation is associated with the challenging of sovereignty per se, and not just of state sovereignty:

...tout se passe comme si, en définitive, la question centrale était celle du devenir de la souveraineté dans le monde incertain où nous vivons. ... ce qui est en cause, c'est moins un type d'organisation politique, qu'une certaine conception de la souveraineté qui faisait le cœur du système, aussi bien dans sa dimension nationale que dans son articulation globale.⁴

Governance has shifted from national institutions to transnational organisations which do not aim at governing countries (such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation), but do question the way the political is represented: 'ce qui est en cause, c'est le sens même que l'on donne à l'activité politique, c'est la représentation du politique qui est en train radicalement de se transformer.'⁵ In this context, it seems that a dramatic change has occurred between the citizen (*l'individu-citoyen*, i.e. the individual preoccupied with the rela-

⁴ Marc Abélès, *Le spectacle du pouvoir* (Paris, L'Herne, coll. Carnets, 2007), pp.125-127.

⁵ Abélès, p.132.

tionship between the individual and the sovereign state), and what Abélès terms *le sujet biologique* after Hanah Arendt (the *bios politikon*):⁶ ‘c’est d’un véritable décrochage que l’on peut parler, avec la montée en puissance d’une représentation qui met les préoccupations du vivre et du survivre au cœur de l’agir politique’.⁷

Indeed, the contemporary shifts in the relationship between the individual and the sovereign state corroborate a concern with growing uncertainty about the future. It is as if something has gone askew in our perception of a nationally safe and geographically as well as historically circumscribed nation-state: both 9/11 and global warming are associated with a feeling of helplessness when faced with uncontrollable political and natural events. This, Abélès says, has led to the projection of the individual into a society that is characterized by an unstable sense of the collective interest (which he calls ‘*survivance*’) rather than by a stable sense of what Yeats might have called Unity of Culture, and which Abélès terms ‘*convivance*’, an idea which relies on the assumption that the nation-state brings about synchronic harmony to those living within the *polis*:

La question de la survivance prend évidemment d’autant plus de relief qu’elle correspond à l’affaïssement de ce roc qu’a constitué pour les sociétés occidentales la formidable puissance d’un état tout à la fois national et protecteur. On ne s’étonnera pas que les individus soient directement affectés par la perte de repères qu’implique un tel effondrement : côté rapports sociaux, la fragilisation du lien collectif façonné dans le cadre institutionnel dont on entrevoit de plus en plus les failles, ôté territoire, des délimitations jusqu’alors pertinentes... qui s’effacent en ouvrant tout grand sur un monde aussi vaste que flou. Dans une grande mesure l’Etat, quels qu’en fussent les pouvoirs effectifs avait été investi par un réseau de croyances, et il avait pris, dans des conditions parfois tendues, le relais du religieux, d’où un considérable investissement symbolique. L’Etat n’incarnait pas seulement un pouvoir d’assistance, mais aussi une assurance quant à l’avenir.⁸

⁶ See Judith Butler et Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *L’Etat global*. Translated by. F. Bouillot (Paris, Payot et Rivages, 2007), p.39.

⁷ Abélès, pp.125-127.

⁸ Abélès, p.140.

Thus, paradoxically, while both the nation-state and institutionalised religions are being challenged by fear for the future and uncertainty⁹, there is a growing need for the redefinition of strategies of a more collective, non-institutional ‘*survivance*’.¹⁰ The distinction between *survivance* and *convivance* is also to be paralleled with what Arjun Appadurai defines as flexible, ‘cellular’ modes of organisation versus centralised or ‘vertebrate’ structures such as national governments in his study entitled *Fear of Small Numbers: an Essay on the Geography of Anger*.¹¹ Awareness of contradictions such as the eradication of cultural difference entailed by the fluxes of capital and information – which is concomitant with the desire of minorities and individuals to be part of the global flow – forces the individual to reassess new visions that take into account the complexity of this networked culture and steer clear of simplistic fundamentalist readings, as Mark C. Taylor argues in a stimulating essay:

The rapid spread of global capitalism creates the instabilities and insecurities that undercut traditional moral and religious values. In an increasingly connected world, rapid change is not only unavoidable but is a necessary survival strategy. As mobility transforms all aspects of life, ideas become as fluid as the media in which they circulate. With everything in rapid flux and becoming complex, the desire for simplicity, which is characteristic of every version of fundamentalism, religious or otherwise, is understandable.¹²

⁹ In *Confidence Games* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.308), Mark C. Taylor remarks that ‘The dissolution of the bipolar world [of the Cold War by Ronald Reagan] created a multicentric world, which proved very unstable....When the world is understood as a battlefield between good and evil, the disappearance of the powers of darkness create a personal as well as a political voice, which cries out to be filled.’

¹⁰ See Abélès: ‘...dans des sociétés où la menace est une dimension intégrante du présent, autrement fondamentales apparaissent désormais les questions de la vie et de la survie. En sorte que les idées d’équilibre et d’ordonnement, de justice et de droit, ne prennent leur sens que dans la perspective du risque et de la précaution’ (*Le spectacle du pouvoir*, p.158).

¹¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Duke U.P., 2006) / *Géographie de la colère. La violence à l’ère de la globalisation*. Translated by F. Bouillot (Paris, Payot, 2007).

¹² Taylor, *Confidence Games*, p.312.

Durcan's 'Cellular' State

I find the distinction between the cellular and the vertebrate I mentioned above particularly relevant in the case of Paul Durcan, a poet with an undeniable interest in discourses which usually go unheeded. The astonishing variety of Durcan's personae climaxes with the snail of the title poem "A Snail in My Prime",¹³ or the very humane cow of the *Cries of An Irish Caveman* collection¹⁴ – a cow which, although technically quite vertebrate, coalesces with the gastropod in the 'cellular' world of Durcan. Indeed, his poetry proposes to resist the order imposed by global fluxes and capital and its 'fear of small numbers' with the randomness of care-free and permanent motion: His world conjugates geographical boundlessness and small-scale bonding and suggests the positive strength of the cellular, as in the poem entitled "The Dublin-Paris-Berlin-Moscow Line":

May I, a Dubliner, live always in exile
 In the village of Ringsend between the Drain and the Gut;
 May I always lack a consistent vision of the universe
 When I am saying my poems;
 May I remain always inarticulate
 When I am composing my poems ...

May I never again fall
 Out of the arms of my daughters
 As we tramp up and down Europe
 Having become the migrants that we are –
 Barbarians on the Dublin-Paris-Berlin-Moscow line. (SMP, 237-39)

A Snail in My Prime is a collection in which Durcan offers an almost loving reading of the short-sightedness and decline of representatives of the Catholic Church in Ireland (for example in "Irish Hierarchy Bans Colour Photography") while suggesting the potential for renewed life and creativity beyond the institutions of the Church (or even within them at times, as in the poem entitled "Sister Agnes Writes to her Beloved Mother"). According to Durcan, limitless desire should apply to everything human,

¹³ Paul Durcan, *A Snail in My Prime, New and Selected Poems* (London: Harvill, 1993). References to the collection are abbreviated as SMP followed by page number.

¹⁴ Paul Durcan, *Cries of an Irish Caveman* (London: Harvill, 2001).

not to the market, as he shows through the uncontrollable character of Polycarp. A slightly barmy defrocked priest, Polycarp is 'now living back at home' writes Durcan, and is also at home with his true personality. What passes for madness is the expression of utter freedom from social and religious conventions:

It's a crime against all decency
To be one of the very few

Who has had courage like Polycarp
To be his own sweet self ...

But Polycarp polkas the streets
As free and easy as he feels;
Sometimes he walks on his toes,
Sometimes on his heels.

...
Desire under the steeples and spires,
Polycarp's back in town. (SMP, 25)

And while individual unchecked desire may be socially perturbing, Durcan argues that a firm but understanding rule may achieve concord and conjugate conflicting individual desires. This is what the poem "The Functions of the President"¹⁵ points to. The poet sees Mary Robinson as a functional woman to set things right in the management of the house of Ireland and of the Republic. Her Presidency was an attempt to restore meaning in the lives of individuals who were overwhelmed by desires (which were in fact nothing but addictive cravings fuelled by the market), and consumed by what they believed they were consuming:

When... Mrs Robinson was elected
President of the Republic of Ireland
She became the head of a dysfunctional family
Numbering between three and four million
Traumatized adolescent parents and children,
Traumatized by alcohol, murder, rhetoric, greed.
Transplanting her own functional background
Into the dysfunctional foreground

¹⁵ Paul Durcan, *Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil* (London: Harvill, 1999). References to this collection are abbreviated as GFB followed by page number.

[She] injected the blood politic
 With serum of justice;
 A woman with no fear of hypodermics.
 ...
 Between the family and the family members
 She induced concord – the undreamed-of concord. (GFB, 251)

I would like to stress that Durcan's frequent use of house images is related to the Greek term *oikonomos*, or the managing of a household in the economic sense of the term. One of the most striking examples is that of the official home of the Republic, *Áras an Uachtaráin*, which is evoked in two matched poems. In the 1978 poem "Making Love outside *Áras an Uachtaráin*",¹⁶ the poet fantasized the irruption of the disapproving figure of the founder of the state, de Valera, who was depicted 'levelling an ancient rifle' at a young generation whose patriotic hopes were matched by a strong desire for freedom, and therefore felt somewhat left out in the building process of the prude nation state. Interestingly, the 1999 counterpart to this poem is entitled "Making Love inside *Áras an Uachtaráin*", a variation which confirms that the young generation has reclaimed the nation's symbolic home. At the time of Mary Robinson's Presidency, 'home' had thus come to mean the need for a reunited family spanning beyond national boundaries and acknowledging a diasporic history rather than focusing on generational struggles. This was symbolized by:

...
 The light in the kitchen window
 Not only to the future of the unknown, citizen
 ...
 But to the actuality of the unknown exile
 Whether he or she be a bus driver in Cleveland
 Or drilling for water in North-East Brazil. (GFB, 225)

The consensus was one that had overcome the Church's restrictive discourse and interdictions. Sacred dread seemed to have slipped out of the frame, and the individual appears as though caught in an ecstasy of freedom and sensual pleasures detached from transcendental values. Durcan's personae requested the right to scream, breed, make love, and wallow in all kinds of duly registered and more or less deadly sins. At this

¹⁶ The 1978 poem was republished in *A Snail in My Prime* (1993), p.41.

stage in the early 1990s, none of this seemed to trigger a sense of anxiety in Durcan's personae. Fear of change, let alone fear of God, was not on the agenda. The candid enjoyment of excess only revealed freedom of speech and expression and had not yet been altered by the branding and commodification of this newly found, although slightly utopian, family-nation. However, Durcan's more recent poems insist on how the place of this new found 'home' and its *oikonomia* has been negated by the relentless development of chrematistic exchange or, in other words, exchange for exchange's sake, heedless of Aristotle's warning that chrematistics 'threaten[s] to transform the householder's obligation of hospitality and liberality into a narrow calculus of cost and benefits, it divert[s] goods from their natural uses and limits to a sphere of intermediaries, where circulation and accumulation could accelerate and expand without purpose, and, more important, without limit.'¹⁷

With globalisation, economic excess has replaced the creative enthusiasm which had itself replaced the religious.¹⁸ The mother figure of the President has given in to a dehumanised network encompassing economic and symbolic violence. Furthermore, the consensus over the benefits of a networked and globalised economy for Ireland is only propped by the illusion that power and domination have been gained locally, which, Durcan says, is yet another delusion of the virtual. In "The Functions of the President", he uses the figure of the ancient Celtic elk as a substitute for that of the emerging economic Tiger:

And but then! and but how!- we repaid her !
 In '97 we staged a presidential election
 In which we defiled the status of women.
 In her stead we elected the Celtic Elk
 Whose hooves are the hooves of a hairy economy;

The superfluous span of whose antlers cannot penetrate
 The Scots pines of our ancient songlines:
 Under the shredded umbrella spokes of whose fossil tines
 The children of the nation are no longer children

¹⁷ Taylor, *Confidence Games*, pp.69-70.

¹⁸ Taylor, p.316 : '...throughout the course of modernity and postmodernity, art displaces religion as the source of spiritual vision and inspiration and then, in turn, is displaced by money and markets, which come to embody human desire'.

But Barbie dinosaurs in chains dragging aborted dreams.
 From the functional years of the 1990s
 We are crashing into the 21st century,
 The digitally manipulated, pixelated panorama of 2001:
 Into the virtual instead of the actual
 Shells on Rosses' level shore.
 At heel, at heel, conform, conform.
 The formality of spontaneity is dead;
 The chaos of cliché has succeeded. (GFB, 251-53)

In his most recent collection *The Art of Life* (2004), the poet's mood has shifted from downright bitter to ironically ambivalent: 'Although I am globally sad I am locally glad', the speaker says in "The Far Side of the Island".¹⁹ In this poem, the political (the nation-state) seems to be internationally repossessed by the economy. Fast travel and transportation have evacuated the national and local dimensions (the West, for example). In "The Man with a Bit of Jizz in Him", dwindling human interaction is reduced to practical conversation and family networks are only perceived as time-and money-saving connections :

My husband is a man –
 With a bit of jizz in him.
 On Monday night in Sligo I said to him:
 'Let's go someplace for a week
 Before the winter is on top of us.'
 He said: 'Where would you like to go?'
 I said: 'Down south West Cork or Kerry.'
 He said: 'Too much hassle.'
 He said: 'Dublin Airport early tomorrow morning.
 I'll drive halfway, you drive halfway.'
 We caught the Aer Lingus Dublin-Nice direct flight:
 180 Euro return.
 Driving to Dublin he phoned his niece in Hertz.
 He said: 'I want a car in Nice'. (AOL, 3)²⁰

¹⁹ Durcan, *The Art of Life* (London: Harvill, 2004), p.1. References to this collection are abbreviated to AOL followed by page number.

²⁰ See also the poem "Ireland 2002": 'Do you ever take a holiday abroad? / No, we always go to America' (*The Art of Life*, p.15).

Indeed, globalisation has brought the exotic and the foreign into the picture but it has also sold the nation in the process, as the opening poem “Golden Island Shopping Centre” suggests:

After tortellini in The Olive Grove on the quays
I drive over to the adjacent shopping centre,
Golden Island Shopping Centre,
Around whose acres of car park
I drive in circles for quarter of an hour
Before finding a slot in a space painted yellow
GOLDEN ISLAND EXPECTANT MOTHERS (AOL, 1)

The speaker exposes the delusion of freedom provided by the wide space of the parking lot, while the expedition to the store only allows for a simulacrum of movement in an enclosed space where human energy is spent in vain:

Two hours later I stumble from Tesco
With high-altitude sickness;
Dazed, exhausted, apprehensive, breathless;
In worse condition than
Many a climber on the South Col of Everest.
Such mobs of shoppers on a Sunday afternoon,
Such powerlessness. (AOL, 1)

As he is about to be fined for illegal parking, the poet stands for the local and the symbolic in a nation that has become commodified and has even branded its name (as the title “Golden Island Shopping Center” suggests). Undeterred by the guard, the speaker reasserts the unifying political role of the poet and the necessity for creation in general by reactivating the mother image in a somewhat absurd way:

Despite you and your terrier
Ireland remains my native land –
My Golden Island –
And I will park where I can.
So go soap your jaws in the Jacuzzis of Malaga:
I AM A GOLDEN ISLAND EXPECTANT MOTHER! (AOL, 2)

Debris Into Art: John Kindness And The Aftereffects Of Globalisation

With the emergence of the Celtic Tiger and the ensuing globalisation of the economy, it seems that a form of violence has forced its way into the carefree atmosphere expressed in Durcan's 1990s poems. And this is where the work of Kindness comes into play to serve my argument that art is one way to handle the aftermath of economic violence, even though it may well provide the viewer with crucial questions rather than firm answers. Kindness pays close attention to the debris of economic growth and he envisions them as metaphors for the violence it imposes on the subject. The artist exposes an economy that has become sacrificial, for all money is blood money in the virtual system where rewarding the Gods of consumption and capital does not necessarily entail being rewarded by them.

The by-products of globalisation might thus be said to be economic and spiritual: want and poverty have increased (and are proportional to the excess of objects produced) thus leading to more striking inequalities, and to the inevitable derived issues: what is left once the objects of desire have been consumed? Debris and detritus are terms which refer to the human consequences and those left on the side of the road in this race for happiness and fulfilment, as well as to the actual environmental consequences of globalisation. Kindness's works provide us with artistic short-cuts which blend classic form with contemporary issues. His irreverence, catalogue editor Marianne O'Kane Boal says, derives from the conflation of recognisable artistic style with less typical medium and subject, and crosses aesthetic borders:

...a religious struggle is demonstrated through embittered animals, modern day New York is presented using the classical conventions of Greek vase painting, Renaissance portraiture is utilised as a mode of depicting contemporary sitters, precious Madonnas after Raphael and Hogarth are revised in the style of cereal boxes, courtly gentry are represented as an assemblage of breakfast items in a mode reminiscent of sixteenth century mannerist painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo; and famous mythological scenes are symbolised by a range of detritus observed by the artist.²¹

²¹ Marianne O'Kane Boal and Wendy Steiner (eds), *John Kindness, Retrospective 1986-2006, online exhibition catalogue*, produced in relation to the twenty year

Kindness offers to tackle the human frustrations of globalisation: desire has shifted from the godhead to temporal go(o)ds, and yet the utopian notion that the current will flow back from the God to the worshipper, or that profit will be redistributed, somehow seems to endure. His visual works thus ironically focus on the impermanence of things and on the elusiveness of the real which the virtual networked culture involves. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most prominent god in Kindness's transcendental menagerie should be the god of trade *Hermes* (1990). He is, as Mark C. Taylor reminds us, 'Messenger of the gods and guide to the underworld ... a polymorphous trickster whose multiple guises anticipate the elusive confidence man'²² and he is represented by Kindness in an aptly liminal position: on an exercise bike – moving, yet not advancing in space; cycling and re-cycling. Kindness's techniques also point to the ephemeral dimension of the post-modern space or of the non-places. His *Mr American Express* (1990) is a good example of this: it is made of toasted soda crackers used as *tesserae*, or pieces of floor mosaic, in a way that questions the centurion figure epitomizing global monetary exchange as well as the visual debris of advertising.

Through an ironical reading of the codes of art history, Kindness's *Toilet Virgin – After Sassoferrato* (2004) suggests indeed that new commercial values have been substituted to the sense of the sacred, but also postulates that a new order might be gained from the ethical and religious failings of the global world. This is done literally by inserting his works within the chain of global recycling and networks of goods, ideas, and people. While he recycles conventions of the history of art, he also reclaims apparently insignificant objects produced and disposed of by consumer society. His *Lace Car* which was crafted in 2006 in a Lee Valley dumping ground in northeast London illustrates how the artist views objects not as commodities, but as stories of usage. The discarded and the debris reclaim the space of the community and make a story out of waste. His works entitled "Scraping the Surface" or "Detritus" both part of his 1990 'yellow cab' series of etched taxi fragments conjugate theme and method (the *sgraffito* technique) : scooping up waste is what the artist does, pointing to the excesses and weaknesses of consumer society. He

retrospective exhibition at the Switch Room Galleries, Belfast, October 17 – November 13, 2006. See : www.johnkindness.co.uk.

²² Taylor, *Confidence Games*, p.68.

questions the established aesthetic order by investigating objects that do not seem fit for art and asserts the relativity of these works by locating them in places where they may be altered or even tampered with, or by using edible media which point to the ephemeral nature of all things. Kindness's 'waste land' reclaims meaning, albeit one that blurs the lines between the sacred and the profane, low-brow and high-brow culture.

The Virtues Of Uncertainty

In keeping with the times rather than as a tribute to them, I shall propose a very uncertain conclusion at this stage. For the only certainty the post-modern era seems to offer is that the real has become elusive, or virtual, as Taylor writes: 'Since the virtual is never present as such, it cannot be represented but can only be traced in its aftereffects.'²³ Network economy had led to an emerging virtual reality and a precarious equilibrium between all kinds of interrelated spheres. In other words, globalisation is not just about the setting up of modern markets: it is also about the criss-crossing influences of the interrelated networks of religion, art and finance. Such is the rather terrifying, fuzzy and relative condition which both Durcan and Kindness attempt to pin down. They acknowledge the openness provided by these networks and are interested in the constant motion of things, the unexpected and the unpredictable, yet theirs is a joyful absurdity, or in Yeastian terms, a 'tragic joy'. Throughout their works, they take chances and make the most of the gift of difference and impermanence. For there is indeed an ambivalent sense in this 'virtual reality' which Taylor says:

is the current guise for what was once called sacred or perhaps even God. Virtuality, however, is a strange God. In a world where reality is virtual, nothing is certain or secure...the improbable not only can happen but does happen repeatedly. In the face of the truly improbable, risk cannot be completely hedged. Who would want it otherwise? Risk, uncertainty, and insecurity, after all, are the pulses of life.²⁴

²³ Taylor, *Confidence Games*, p.322.

²⁴ Taylor, p.331.

Catherine Fravallo and Angela Feeney

La Laïcité à la française peut-elle apporter des solutions aux défis que pose à l'enseignement en Irlande le multiculturalisme ?

Primary education in France and Ireland

Great changes have taken place in Ireland in recent years and we are moving towards developing a plurality of models of patronage for primary education in a culturally pluralist society. The question one must pose is what is the future of the Catholic school in the new context? What can we learn from France where secularism has existed for over a century? The place of religion in the public sphere in France and in Ireland could hardly be more different. In France there is a very definite allocation of religion to the private sphere. The state school in France is regarded as an extremely neutral and secular civic space in which any expression of religious commitment is prohibited. In Ireland there has been and continues to be a very important role for the Church in the education of our young people. Increasingly, however, there is in Ireland a viewpoint which tends to look at religious education as something ideological or divisive and perhaps not really a good thing for young people and certainly alien to what should belong to a school curriculum in a modern pluralist democracy. What follows is a dialogue on this important issue in 21st century Ireland and on what we can learn from the French experience of secularism.

Catherine : Cette communication n'a pas pour but de reprendre le débat sur la laïcité en France mais d'essayer de voir si ce « modèle » si spécifique à la France serait susceptible d'apporter des solutions aux défis bien réels auxquels sont confrontés les acteurs du système éducatif irlandais alors que la société de ce pays se trouve dans une situation de forte évolution démographique, tant du strict point de vue quantitatif que de la grande diversité d'origine, ethnique et culturelle de ces 'nouveaux Irlandais' comme on les appelle désormais. Témoin, la situation de crise qui

s'est développée à la rentrée scolaire 200 dans plusieurs banlieues du nord et de l'ouest de Dublin où se sont installées ces dernières années des communautés d'immigrants venus pour la plupart d'Europe du Nord et de l'Est ainsi que de pays d'Afrique noire.

La plupart des commentateurs ont rapporté les difficultés envisagées par les enseignants et les parents d'élèves devant le manque de préparation des autorités face à la véritable explosion de la demande de places en milieu scolaire, particulièrement dans le secteur primaire. D'où la situation de crise qui se pose dans ces petites villes de banlieue, comme, d'ailleurs, dans d'autres régions de l'Irlande du début du 21^{ème} siècle.¹ Il apparaît essentiel de trouver au plus vite des modalités d'adaptation du modèle irlandais, de manière à faciliter l'intégration de ces « nouveaux Irlandais » dans une société qui envisage son pluralisme sous un jour globalement positif. Car la contrepartie d'une attitude de « laissez-faire » serait d'alimenter un racisme latent, bien qu'encore insuffisamment documenté, parmi les couches sociales qui vont se trouver elles aussi confrontées à une autre crise, d'ordre économique cette fois.

Angela: Yes, very much so and the very existence of denominational schools is being called into question. The latest round in the debate over denominational schools to which you refer erupted in September 2007 when it emerged that an 'emergency' primary school had to be established in north county Dublin (Balbriggan) to cater for 90 mainly black children of immigrant parents. It was in this context that accusations of social division, segregation, and even 'educational apartheid' again arose. Patricia Kieran notes:

[...] some see Catholic schools as redundant in a culturally diverse society. As the Irish Catholic population declines and parents simultaneously look for greater choice in educational provision, the prevalence of Catholic schools in every part of Ireland appears a kind of inflexible systemic educational anachronism which serviced the educational needs of a bygone age yet fails to meet the needs of a changing society.²

¹ Ruadhán Mac Cormaic, "Questions get tougher", in *The Irish Times*, 22 December, 2007.

² Patricia Kieran, "Embracing Change: The Remodelling of Irish Catholic Primary Schools in the 21st century", in John Littleton and Eamon Maher (eds), *Contemporary Catholicism in Ireland: A Critical Appraisal* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2008), pp.43-68, p.45.

The 2007 controversy this led to headlines such as “Black Children Left out of Irish Schools”, as well as to a critical evaluation of the role of the Catholic Church, the largest stakeholder in Irish primary education. Some commentators claimed that it was excluding religious and ethnic minority groups from its schools. Once more, according to Kieran:

The Balbriggan crisis seemed to indicate that Ireland had difficulty integrating its increasingly diverse population and that its school system, including its Catholic schools, was deficient in responding to the task.³

The Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, emphasized that the Catholic Church could not be held responsible for the State’s lack of planning in the area of education and he stressed that he would be happy to see a plurality of patronage and providers of education. He was thus countering the view, expressed by many, that the Church was intent on monopolizing the Irish educational system or that it discriminated against religious minorities. The Archbishop also made the following point: ‘The Catholic education system has been far-seeing and has provided Catholic schools for Catholic parents. We have done our job, if there are others who are left without schools, they should not blame us.’⁴

Irish culture and indeed Irish identity carry a significant religious loading and this has been expressed in literature by figures such as Joyce, Beckett and McGahern, to name but a few. Even how we say hello in our own language – ‘Dia Dhuit’ – makes reference to religion. But we now live in a different Ireland and this ‘new’ Ireland presents its challenges. Many of these challenges have already presented themselves in France. This is why we are so keen to hear from France now and discuss what has been the French experience and how it has handled this particular challenge. But is it not also the case that this debate on secularism has reopened in France as a matter of urgency, due perhaps to the presence of a significant Muslim community and the durable presence of Islam in that country. Indeed, countries which have a system of schools that puts social integration as its number one goal – arguably France is such a country – still suffer from social tensions. The images of the rioters who took over parts of Paris in 2006 were seen throughout the world.

³ Kieran, p.53.

⁴ Diarmuid Martin, *The Irish Times*, 6 September, 2007, p.1.

Catherine : La situation du système éducatif en Irlande est particulière en ce sens que l'Etat y a délégué le contrôle de l'enseignement aux diverses églises et communautés religieuses, dont la plus fortement représentée est, bien évidemment, l'Église catholique. Il n'y a donc pas dans ce pays de tradition laïque, ce qui peut surprendre des observateurs français imprégnés de culture « républicaine ».

Angela: I'm glad you mentioned that since an important factor in this debate about our present and future is our colonised past. For example, during the Penal times of the 17th and 18th centuries, Catholics were forbidden to teach and Catholic schools were illegal until 1782. Rich Catholics sent their children abroad but the majority of children got no education. There were schools but these were for Protestants. Banned by the Penal Laws from keeping a school, some Catholic teachers defied the laws and operated illegally as 'hedge-schoolmasters.' In fact, our state-organised national school system was founded as a result of the Stanley Education Act of 1831, almost 40 years before a state system of education was established in Britain. However, for the first 150 years of its existence, this national school system had no legislative legitimacy but drew its sole authority from a letter written by Stanley (Lord Derby) to Augustus Fitzgerald, Duke of Leinster. The national school system as we know it today evolved from this Act. Free education of a non-denominational character was introduced specifically to meet the views of the Catholic hierarchy which had 'brought to favour an undenominational system of state-provided education by the activities of the proselytising societies.'⁵ However, this principle of mixed schools with joint religious management, upon which this letter was insistent, was never enforced. This opting out by the Anglican and Presbyterian churches combined with the predominance of Catholics in so many rural areas, ensured that within 20 years, the national schools had become *de facto* denominational, with Catholic bishops installed in most of them as school patrons. With independence in 1922 the government reinforced the denominational character of schooling, 'the emergent nation seeking pillars on which to build itself...plumped for holiness and the Irish language.'⁶ The new curriculum for primary schools of 1999 shows much

⁵ Donald Akenson, *The Irish Educational Experiment* (London: Routledge, 1970), p.121.

⁶ William Trevor, extract from *Beyond the Pale*, in P.Craig (ed.), *The Oxford Book of*

has changed and the State no longer assumes an active role in the religious formation of its citizens but the document endorses the importance of understanding and of tolerating diversity and the value of pluralism within the context of our Christian heritage. Although today more than 3,000 of the 3,200 primary schools in the Republic are controlled by the Catholic Church, which also has responsibility for over 400 voluntary secondary schools, the presence of clergy among staff has declined – up to the 1960's the majority of secondary teachers belonged to religious orders, nuns, priests and brothers. By the 1990's the vast majority of teachers were neither clergy nor members of religious orders. So, you are right in saying that that denominational educational has played a very large part in the Irish educational system.

Catherine : Il est donc intéressant – et urgent d'un point de vue social et culturel – de comparer l'expérience irlandaise à celle d'autres pays européens, pour tenter de voir dans quelle direction la situation peut évoluer : séparation des églises et de l'Etat ou bien un modèle nouveau et mieux adapté à l'Irlande, qui reposerait sur le respect mutuel des diverses communautés ethniques, religieuses et culturelles qui co-existent actuellement au sein de la société irlandaise, en reconnaissance du pluralisme et au nom de la tolérance. Un modèle que nous connaissons bien est le modèle français : c'est la laïcité. C'est un modèle déjà ancien, qui a fait ses preuves, qui a le soutien, en France, de la majorité des Français, y compris des catholiques, car c'est un modèle qui les a bien servis, et l'on est en droit de se poser la question : peut-on faire mieux ?

Angela: But would you say there is great confusion and uncertainty today in France regarding secularism? Even the very law itself is full of pitfalls. Is it not very negative? Secularism *à la française* lays down a prohibition which translates into a limitation on religious freedom, since any limitation is a negation; this prohibition concerns the religious beliefs of individuals, not in order to restrict them but to exclude their intervention in, or impact on, the relations between private individuals and public authorities. Seen in this light, the French version of secularism is the exclusion or negation of religion only in the State. Does this then allow for its expression outside the State and thus allows for religious freedom?

Catherine : Oui, il demeure qu'en France aussi la question mérite d'être posée : comment concilier la laïcité et les sociétés pluriculturelles telles que le sont aujourd'hui toutes les sociétés occidentales, y compris la société irlandaise ? Car le choc des cultures qui est au cœur des sociétés pluriculturelles risque trop souvent d'alimenter un sentiment de ne pas être reconnu, ou même d'être rejeté ou ignoré, ainsi qu'un discours où chacun devient convaincu d'être une victime.

Les laïques se plaignent que dans le débat il n'y en a que pour les religieux, et ceux-ci demandent plus de respect pour leurs croyances et leurs pratiques. Au sein de certains d'entre eux, dans chaque camp, il y a de « petits clercs qui sommeillent », comme les nomme l'historien des religions Jean Baubérot.⁷

Angela: It has been argued that there is a rightful place for denominational schools in the Irish educational system, as part of a pluralistic system, one in which there are faith-based schools as well as other types of schools receiving state support. We must not forget that when we speak of the 'state' that it is a function of society – we are talking about a reality that includes individual citizens and the organs of the state but also other elements of society such as families and local communities. The recent change in Irish demographics, whereby we are now a country of immigration and have 'new Irish', has also accounted for these debates over recent years. These increasingly mixed enrolments present a huge challenge for schools eager to preserve their Catholic ethos. Certain members of the Catholic hierarchy have warned of the danger of providing purely academic religious instruction if the whole school could not actively practise their faith together. Another interesting aspect to this population change and highlighted by Bishop Willie Walsh, is where Catholic parents avoid sending their children to schools which cater for pupils of immigrants. Accepting that it was natural for parents to try to enrol their child in what they regard as the most suitable school, Bishop Walsh said he had observed occasionally that there was a move to a country school from a town where immigrants were living. Bishop Walsh regretted that for too long the Department of Education has used the Catholic Church to shoulder the burden of social integration in the Irish education system: "The Church has been used as a scapegoat, somewhat

⁷ Jean Baubérot, *La Laïcité expliquée à M. Sarkozy* (Paris : Albin Michel, 2008), cité dans *Le Nouvel Observateur*, le 24 avril, 2008.

unfairly, and some blame has been attached to the Catholic school system for social problems”, the bishop said. “It was long-term planning by the Department of Education that caused that difficulty. We (the Catholic bishops) accept the fact that we have more schools than we need to cater for those who want a Catholic education, and we welcome the entry of other patrons such as the VEC into the system to shoulder the burden.”⁸

Catherine : Même si la laïcité ne constitue pas un principe fondateur du système républicain spécifique à l’Irlande, il faut souligner qu’il y existe un courant républicain civique et anti-clérical aux yeux duquel une séparation totale selon le modèle français apparaît comme la seule alternative possible. L’anticléricalisme qui a marqué les premiers temps de la laïcité en France se justifiait par un désir – sans doute même un besoin – d’émancipation par rapport à une religion – le catholicisme – qui avait jusqu’au début du 20^{ème} siècle, joui d’une position dominante. La relation conflictuelle qui opposait les républicains à l’Église catholique s’expliquait historiquement et culturellement par l’objectif de combattre la domination religieuse au nom de la neutralité garantissant la diversité de tous et le droit égal de tous de croire et de ne pas croire. N’oublions cependant pas que le rapport de forces entre église et Etat a ses origines dans une époque bien antérieure.

Angela: Interestingly Dr. Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin has recently stated that he believes there is a necessity for a plurality of patronage in the increasingly diverse Ireland of today. The Catholic Church in Ireland, he has said, has to: “stop thinking we have to provide everything [...] If we want plurality of patronage, the State must ensure plurality exists [within a community] to ensure a level playing field. On the other hand [...] if we get ghetto schools, it is because we already have ghettos.”⁹

In the pastoral letter entitled *Vision 08 – A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland*, the Bishops’ Conference explores the role of the Church in a changing Ireland in which the Catholic bishops have stressed the inclusive nature of Catholic schools. The initiative comes after the

⁸ Bishop of Killaloe, Willie Walsh, speaking at the launch in Dublin in May 2008 of a pastoral letter from the Irish Bishops Conference titled *Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland*. As reported in *The Irish Times*, May 18, 2008.

⁹ Diarmaid Martin, “Governance challenge for future primary school needs.” Speech delivered at Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, 27th June 2008 Available at www.catholicbishops.ie/media-centre and at www.catholiccommunications.ie.

Church was forced to defend criticism that non-Catholic children were being left without primary school places in parts of Dublin because Catholic children were receiving priority. The letter seeks to explore the special character of Catholic schools and how ‘they contribute to society and to the educational system of which they form such a significant part’.¹⁰ However, they also stress that religious education, designed to confirm and deepen an understanding of the faith, forms an essential part of the curriculum in Catholic schools and functions as its core. This means, for example, that Catholic schools commit resources and time to religious education as a matter of priority, according to the pastoral letter. The letter also warns that without a clear vision Catholic schools ‘are in danger of being taken over by other agendas such as the points’ race or social elitism.’ So, the real question that arises in my mind is where is the place for faith in a secular world? Is religion to be reduced to the role of an academic subject?

Catherine : La question mérite qu’on la pose. L’Irlande du 21^{ème} siècle n’est pas la France du début du 20^{ème} siècle. La société irlandaise fonctionne selon les règles du pluralisme culturel et culturel qui n’existait pas en France dans les années 1900. De plus la foi dominante, celle de l’Église catholique, n’est plus le monolithe culturel qu’elle était il y a seulement une ou deux générations et d’autres systèmes de pensée et de sens se sont progressivement sentis capables de réclamer leur place à l’intérieur du système éducatif.

C’est ainsi que le secteur multiconfessionnel – la version se rapprochant le plus de l’école « sans dieu » à la française dans l’Irlande d’aujourd’hui – se développe de manière particulièrement remarquable : ce sont les parents eux-mêmes qui sont à l’origine de la demande d’un autre modèle que celui délivré dans le passé par les communautés religieuses. Cela se passe d’ailleurs parfois aux dépens d’un autre modèle scolaire en expansion au cours des vingt dernières années, celui des écoles dites ‘Gaeilscoileanna’, ces établissements où l’enseignement est délivré en gaélique. Ceci témoigne de façon fort intéressante de la demande grandissante parmi les parents des jeunes irlandais de modèles éducatifs qui ne se conforment pas aux modèles traditionnels ou standards. Ici encore, la notion de choix est fondamentale.

¹⁰ *Vision 08* p.2 . Available at www.catholiccommunications.ie.

Pour revenir à la question de la place de la religion dans le système éducatif, il faut comprendre que l'enjeu est tout autant social et culturel que religieux. Il est aussi européen. S'il est vrai que le fait religieux est revenu au cœur des débats sur les revendications identitaires au cours des dernières années à travers, par exemple, l'immigration, l'islam et l'élargissement de l'Union Européenne, ces débats ne semblent pas se restreindre à la question religieuse mais plus largement à la capacité des sociétés occidentales à reconnaître, accepter et intégrer la différence et l'altérité. La connaissance des cultures religieuses apparaît nécessaire à l'intelligence des sociétés actuelles, de leur passé et de leur présent, et pourrait en conséquence contribuer à une plus grande cohésion sociale. Citons le philosophe Régis Debray:

Si la laïcité est inséparable d'une visée démocratique de vérité, transcender les préjugés, mettre en avant des valeurs de découverte (l'Inde, le Tibet, l'Amérique), desserrer l'étau identitaire, au sein d'une société plus exposée que jadis au morcellement des personnalités collectives, c'est contribuer à désamorcer les divers intégrismes, qui ont en commun cette dissuasion intellectuelle : il faut être d'une culture pour pouvoir en parler.¹¹

Après tout, l'objectif principal de la laïcité est la neutralité, qui vise au respect de toutes les croyances. La morale laïque n'a pas à être totalisante ni totalitaire.

Rappelons en effet, que les trois grands piliers de la laïcité sont :

La neutralité de l'Etat, puisque la Constitution (article 2) précise que la laïcité impose à la République d'assurer « l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion » ;
La liberté de conscience et d'opinion, donc le libre exercice du culte
Le pluralisme qui implique l'égalité des religions et des convictions, la reconnaissance du fait religieux, et la protection des cultes minoritaires contre les discriminations.

Angela: All of which has echoes in a recent report published by the European Commission on Racism and Integration focused on Ireland and makes a number of wide-ranging recommendations. Specifically, on education, it urges the Irish authorities to promote the establishment of multi

¹¹ Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale, "L'enseignement du fait religieux à l'École laïque", in *La Documentation Française*, février 2002, p.21.

or non-denominational schools and to adopt legislation to provide for this. It highlights the fact that the vast majority of schools in Ireland are Catholic and says the country's growing diversity has created a demand which the current system is unable to meet. It has emerged that the UN had warned the Irish Government that the children of immigrants were in danger of being discriminated against in terms of admission to schools.

Two years ago, a UN committee recommended that existing legislation needed to be amended to prevent this occurring. In 2005, the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination told Ireland it was concerned that existing laws and practice would favour Catholic pupils in the admission to Catholic schools in case of shortage of places. It went on to say that 'recognising the intersectionality' of racial and religious discrimination' encouraged the State 'to promote the establishment of non-denominational or multi-denominational schools and to amend existing legislation so that no discrimination may take place as far as the admission of pupils (of all religions) to schools is concerned.'¹² Last September the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child reiterated these concerns and again called on Ireland to amend legislation. Setting aside these legal and constitutional issues, this debate about secular education cannot be separated from the broader debate about the decline in the number of Catholics in Ireland. There is a move away from the Church in general as evidenced in the census of 2002. In the context of total households, the number of children recorded as 'no religion' or 'religion not stated' had increased by 86.4%.

Catherine : Alors, la laïcité – telle qu'elle est pensée en France – est-elle armée pour répondre aux défis posés par le multiculturalisme des sociétés occidentales et de la société irlandaise actuelle, en particulier, mais également par d'autres questions ayant trait aux interrogations sur la bioéthique, la naissance ou la mort (recherches en matière de cellules-souches, avortement, euthanasie pour ne mentionner que quelques questions qui sont, couramment, sources de nombreux débats.) On peut donc voir que la laïcité est, comme l'affirme le journaliste, Patrick Jarreau une querelle « qui ne dort que d'un œil »¹³ et qui ne se limite pas au monde de l'éducation. Comment comprendre le multiculturalisme et quelles en

¹² <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/42de64b44.html>.

¹³ "La Laïcité, une querelle qui ne dort que d'un œil", in *Le Monde*, le 9 février 2008.

sont les limites? Multiculturalisme ne signifie pas relativisme culturel où tout serait permis.

Prenons comme exemple le débat qui a, il y a peu, agité les consciences en Grande-Bretagne. L'archevêque de Canterbury, l'anglican Rowan Williams, a provoqué un véritable tollé lorsqu'il a suggéré, au cours d'un entretien retransmis à la chaîne de radio BBC Radio 4 en février dernier (2008), que l'adoption de certains aspects de la charia ou loi islamique au Royaume-Uni était probablement inévitable et même souhaitable, dans la mesure où elle serait facteur de cohésion sociale. Dans l'interview, tout en se gardant de préconiser l'adoption de certains aspects jugés inacceptables par des Occidentaux, il met en avant l'idée que la même loi pour tous appliquée de manière intransigeante à des sections de la population qui ne lui reconnaissent pas de valeur intrinsèque, peut être vue comme source de dangers:

There's a place for finding what would be a constructive accommodation with some aspects of Muslim law, as we already do with some aspects of religious law ... That principle that there is only one law for everybody is an important pillar of our social identity as a western democracy. But I think that it is a misunderstanding to suppose that means people don't have other affiliations, other loyalties which shape and dictate how they behave in society and that the law needs to take some account of that.¹⁴

Pour exister de façon harmonieuse, le multiculturalisme se doit de fonctionner selon les règles d'une anthropologie des droits de l'homme qui permette de définir ce qui est acceptable et ce qui est « non négociable ».

Angela: Yes but the law in France which excludes religious instruction from state education, reserves a day a week for it outside educational premises. By making it clear that the secular republic 'respects all beliefs', the 1958 Constitution accords religion a zone of freedom. Yet it was necessary to legislate to prohibit religious symbols in state establishments. This is simply a consequence and an application of secularism properly understood, whereby religion and its manifestations are excluded from the public sphere. The question needs to be asked as to whether the law on this subject adopted in March 2004 by The National Assembly and The Senate by a very large majority in both cases resolved

¹⁴ Entretien avec Christopher Landau, BBC Radio 4, *World at One*, le 7 février 2008, texte complet à consulter sur http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/.

the issue or else sought to send a clear message to all Muslims living in France indicating the path to follow in order to be integrated into French society. The law should be accompanied by positive measures in favour of the Muslim community, in conjunction with educational matters, in order to facilitate both the practice of its religion and social integration. Hence the whole debate about wearing the scarf in France.

Catherine : La question du port du foulard semble destinée à revenir périodiquement sur le devant de la scène. Il convient d'ailleurs de se demander s'il constitue véritablement un symbole fort ou n'est en réalité qu'un exemple anodin. Le débat en France s'est concentré il y a deux ou trois ans sur le port du foulard par, à l'origine, deux jeunes filles de confession musulmane. Les données de « l'affaire » sont bien connues.

Il est désormais rappelé, au titre de la Loi du 15 mars 2004 encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les établissements scolaires publics, que « dans les écoles, les collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou de tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit ».¹⁵

Un observateur français remarquera, non sans surprise, que des jeunes filles manifestement de confession musulmane ne semblent avoir aucune difficulté à se faire accepter dans une école catholique irlandaise, qu'un voile accompagne ou non l'uniforme de leur établissement. Cela se comprend : la reconnaissance du fait religieux comme facteur d'identité et de cohésion sociale entraîne une certaine forme de tolérance d'autres confessions – même minoritaires. Là aussi il est évidemment question d'« arrangement constructif » de l'emploi du temps, mais d'une manière générale il ne semble venir à l'esprit de personne de refuser l'entrée d'un établissement scolaire à une jeune personne désireuse d'apprendre. A vrai dire, il faudra aussi faire la remarque qu'il existe un critère d'ordre quantitatif. Lorsque l'appartenance à une communauté religieuse différente de la majorité n'est le fait que d'un petit nombre de personnes, la tolérance est bien plus grande que lorsque le nombre dépasse ce que l'on entend par minorité.

Par rapport à la situation conflictuelle qui se manifeste en France de manière récurrente depuis une dizaine d'années, la question mérite d'être

¹⁵ Code de l'Éducation, article L141 – 5 – 1, créé par Loi n°2004-228, version en vigueur au 1 septembre 2004.

posée : au nom de l'universalité d'un principe ou d'une valeur – la laïcité – ne risque-t-on pas de tomber dans la discrimination ?

Citons encore Jean Baubérot :

L'important, c'est de déterminer où on met le curseur. On a intérêt à le mettre à un endroit qui permette aux gens de faire une démarche sans avoir l'impression de devoir renier leur culture. En sachant aussi faire la distinction entre ce qui est réversible et ce qui ne l'est pas : sur ce qui est irréversible, il y a urgence, et il faut être ferme ; alors que sur ce qui est réversible, il peut y avoir négociation, dialogue, compromis, processus. L'excision, c'est tout un destin, on ne peut tergiverser. Le foulard, on peut discuter.¹⁶

Angela: The Church will remain in education only as long as parents want it to. Several bishops have gone on record as saying the number of primary schools under Church patronage is too large and needs to be reduced. But even if the number drops by ten per cent or twenty per cent, the Catholic Church will still be a major player in education in the future, provided parents continue to support it. The pastoral letter states that 'in current circumstances Catholic schools continue to meet the challenge of seeking educational excellence, while resisting the pressures of merely pragmatic, utilitarian approaches which tend to subordinate the good of the person to lesser ends.'¹⁷ The time is now ripe for a transition to new forms of trusteeship. The number of priests and religious involved in educational leadership, and in education as a whole continues to decline. Many religious congregations are now engaged, in some instances, through collaboration with other congregations, in the process of exploring, planning and setting up new forms of trusteeship. By this means, some or all of the responsibility for the schools they formerly administered will be transferred to trusts made up wholly or partly of lay people.

We must not lose sight of the fact that parents are, after all, the primary educators of their children and this fact is anchored in the Irish Constitution and confirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art 26, no 3: 'parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children', and since the family as an in-

¹⁶ "3 questions à Jean Baubérot", in *Etats, laïcité, religion, Regards sur l'actualité*, n°298, La documentation française, février 2004.

¹⁷ *Vision 08*, p.8.

stitution is antecedent to the state, so too its rights are antecedent rights imposing certain duties on the State, above all to provide the necessary material and other conditions for parents to see that their children receive the kind of education they desire, including formation in the faith of the parents. The Iona Institute recently commissioned an opinion poll on the subject of parental choice.¹⁸ Two statements were posed to respondents with a view to determining which was the closer to their point of view:

1. In order to promote social integration all children should go to the same kind of school.
2. Parents should have the right to choose from a variety of schools for their children.

Twenty six per cent agreed with statement one while seventy three per cent agreed with statement two. Almost seventy five per cent agreed with the principle of parental choice. Thus the obligation of the state to promote a pluralist system of denominational schools is clearly established in principle. The growth in popularity of the new multi-denominational Educate Together primary schools show that parents increasingly espouse a system of education that welcomes children of all faiths and none. The aspirations of the architects of the Irish state ‘to cherish all the children equally’ may soon be realised.

Catherine : Les perspectives qui s’ouvrent en Irlande au début de ce siècle laissent entrevoir une reconnaissance accrue du pluralisme culturel qui caractérise désormais la société irlandaise. Il sera intéressant d’observer les changements qui ne vont pas manquer de se produire dans un pays qui se trouve désormais aux prises avec une crise économique dont les effets vont sans aucun doute toucher les plus faibles de la manière la plus radicale. Parmi ceux-ci se trouvent les familles immigrées et les communautés étrangères en général. L’Irlande va-t-elle, à travers son système éducatif, réussir là où tant d’autres pays ont échoué, à intégrer ces « nouveaux Irlandais » dans le respect de leur diversité ?

Régis Debray disait en 2002 qu’on pouvait avancer que « la laïcité est une chance pour l’islam en France et l’islam de France est une chance pour la laïcité. »¹⁹ Même si l’on ne parle pas véritablement de laïcité en

¹⁸ Conducted by Red C and based on a nationally representative sample of 100 people.

¹⁹ Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Education Nationale, “L’enseignement du fait

Irlande en des termes comparables, il demeure que l'ouverture actuelle que l'on y constate s'en rapproche. En conclusion, la question qui mérite d'être posée est la suivante, et c'est une question qui s'adresse aux Irlandais comme aux Français : Quelle « laïcité » pour l'Europe du 21^{ème} siècle?

Eugene O'Brien

'The Humanities of Tomorrow': Negotiation Globalisation and Secularisation

The relationship between secularisation and globalisation is a complex one, and makes itself felt in numerous ways, as the various chapters in this book have outlined. Generally, these terms would seem to be parallel in relation to their epistemological force. Globalisation can be seen as the capitalist outcome of Enlightenment rationality:

What western cosmopolitans call 'global civil society' in fact goes no further than a network of connections and functional interdependencies which have developed within certain important sectors of the 'global market', above all finance, technology, automation, manufacturing industry and the service sector.

We will return to the collective noun 'cosmopolitans' later in this chapter but for the moment, I would just like to flag it as being significant to our argument. Anthony Giddens has defined globalisation as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.'¹ This seems like a description of the teleological progress of post-Enlightenment modernity, with an increasingly lateral sense of mobility as a Habermasian social sphere is gradually amplified in keeping with the flow of capital and the agency of a free-market economy. The advances of science and technology, in the service of the techno-capitalist superstructure, have reshaped our sense of self, time, nation and ideology.

Secularisation has generally been seen as being the philosophical mode of globalisation. It came into being with the separation of Church and State that accompanied the establishment of the republics of the

¹ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p.64.

France and United State of America, and was a central tenet of the Enlightenment. Secularisation is part of the techno-scientific mindset that underwrote both modernity and postmodernity. Both globalisation and secularisation would seem to share the signification of being either anti- or post-religious, or at the very least, of being inimical to a religious perspective, and in turn they have given shape to much of the ideological aspect of contemporary culture. Secularisation and globalisation have meant huge changes for how individuals perceive their lives in their local world. As Paula Murphy puts it: ‘the Other of the third millennium is a global Other.’ For Lacan, this term signifies the way in which the symbolic order is experienced by specific individuals: it is ‘the nexus of social, moral and linguistics codes, in the gaze of which the individual lives, speaks and acts.’²

In his seminal essay “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Culture Economy”, Arjun Appadurai makes the point that the relationship between the global and the local, and between capital and the subject, is one which defies simple definition: ‘the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centres and peripheries).’³ He goes on to postulate a new interactive negotiation between different aspects of the globalised world: ‘*ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes*.’⁴ For Appadurai, it is the interaction of these ‘-scapes’ that is of interest. These interactive and multi-perspectival ‘-scapes’ can be seen as broadly analogous the Lacanian ‘big Other’ and to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus*.

The *habitus* is the practical and unthought (and untaught) background: ‘the *habitus* is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions.’⁵ As

² Paula Murphy, *The Shattered Mirror* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars press, 2009), p.12.

³ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.32.

⁴ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p.33.

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*. Translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard

Bourdieu also explains: the conditionings associated with a 'particular class of conditions of existence produce the *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representation.'⁶

So in a globalised world, our sense of self is reflected back by a transnational big Other, or *habitus*, and the imperatives of secularisation and globalisation are major factors in their construction. In this chapter, through the work of Jacques Derrida, I would like to set out a cognitive map of the meaning, significance and interaction of these terms, and I will argue that their full meaning is not obvious or static, but is only to be found in a more complex process of negotiation. I will also examine the effects of this cognitive map on the real political map of Ireland and the United States of America. But any such articulation must take account of the binary nature of knowledge that has been our inheritance in the western European tradition. I am using the term 'negotiation' in the sense used by Derrida in a book of the same name. He speaks of:

always working in the mobility between several positions, stations, places, between which a shuttle is needed. The first image that comes to me when one speaks of negotiation is that of the shuttle, la *navette*, and what the word conveys of to-and-fro between two positions, two places, two choices. One must always go from one to the other, and for me negotiation is the impossibility of establishing oneself anywhere.

Similarly, I will go 'from one to the other', negotiating between 'globalisation' and 'secularisation' while also placing both terms in a more inclusive constellation of meaning. So, as well as relating the terms to each other, I will probe the meanings that can be found by relating each term to its other. I will argue for a secularised-global or globalised-secular ethical position which will go beyond the existing meanings of the terms, and set out some parameters for a new humanistic paradigm which is post-nationalist and post-religious, while still respecting the twin areas of nation and faith. Initially, we must examine the epistemological status of these two terms 'globalisation' and 'secularisation'.

University Press, 1984), p.170.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practices* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.53.

So, drawing on the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, I will examine the structuration of the terms ‘globalisation’ and ‘secularisation.’ According to Saussure, each unit of meaning is divided into the signifier, the signified and the referent: ‘a linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern’;⁷ he goes on to add that ‘*in the language itself, there are only differences ... and no positive terms*’ [*original italics*].⁸ For Derrida, drawing on the structuralist theories of Claude Levi-Strauss, Western culture has been constructed on the basis of a series of binary oppositions: black/white; fat/thin. However, these oppositions are not flat, structural slot-fillers that are devoid of any baggage. Instead, the whole notion of ideology interferes with this a-historical pairing of opposites, and Derrida has made the point that within each binary opposition there is an ideological weighting, a ‘violent hierarchy.’⁹ It is these weightings that bring an ideological valence to our structures of knowledge as they attribute value as they seem to just describe reality. So it is *white/black; male/female, heterosexual/homosexual; self/other* etc. with the weight of value falling on the initial term, while the second term is inferior even at the point of utterance. And the meaning of each is dependent on the other and thus meanings are in constant negotiation.

Derrida’s project of deconstruction, a term that has been much abused in recent years, is predicated on analysing this ongoing negotiation of meaning. As he notes: ‘to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment.’¹⁰ But this reversal is only the first step in the deconstructive project, and he goes on to explain that deconstruction offers a double reading will attempt to overturn the terms of the opposition and at the same time to displace the system which contains the opposition. It is not just a question of passing from one concept to the other but of ‘overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articu-

⁷ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechaye with collaboration of Albert Reidlinger. Translated by Roy Harris, (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.66.

⁸ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p.118.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*. Translated by Alan Bass. (London: Athlone, 1981), p.41.

¹⁰ Derrida, *Positions*, p.41.

lated.'¹¹ This type of hermeneutics is crucial in terms of how we know our world, and how we structure our reality. As Jacques Lacan has memorably put it: 'it is the world of words which creates the world of things',¹² and if we look at the binary structures which filter our knowledge, then the word 'globalisation' can only signify if it is paired with its opposite, namely 'localization'. So for the global to have a meaning, it must be contrasted at the levels of signifier and signified, with the local. And to deconstruct 'globalisation' it will be necessary to trace this relationship between the global and the local, to invert the relationship and finally to attempt to create a new epistemological structure wherein the relationship between the local and the global is transformed.

Deconstruction also takes into account the associated ideological charges that are attached to terms such as globalisation: such words are never innocent and can be the points of initiation for strong real-world reactions, as we will see when we come to look at the Irish government's response to the financial crisis of 2008-2009; the Irish hierarchy's response to inquiries about child sexual abuse and the epistemological stance of Barak Obama, later in this chapter. Deconstruction also suggests that these oppositions do not exist in absolute form: they mutually transform each other in a process of anastomosis and negotiation. So, just as feminist theory and practice has changed perceptions of the role of femininity, consequently the roles and qualities of masculinity have undergone analogous changes. Hence, as our notions of globalisation have altered, so too our notions of localisation must also have altered. The same is true of the term secularisation and its binary opposite, religion or more alliteratively, the sacred. But there are other associations with the signifier that we need to negotiate as well.

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida discusses *hauntology*, seeing ghostly hauntings as traces of possible alternative meanings. Derrida's spectrality involves acknowledging the other that haunts the self; it involves acknowledging the possibility that the 'h' in *hauntology* is a hovering presence over the certainties of ontology, and above all, it is predicated on the future: 'the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated by Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.329.

¹² Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*. Edited and translated by Anthony Wilden (New York: Delta, 1968), p.39.

only as that which could come or come back.¹³ The ghost is that which can complicate the inheritance of the past, which can fracture the inheritance, which, far from issuing from a fixed centre, and from containing an unequivocal meaning, 'is never gathered together, it is never one with itself.'¹⁴

By playing on the neologism's homonymy with 'ontology' in French, drawing attention to the ghostly presence of the silent *h*, Derrida outlines an ethico-political engagement with a present that is not ontologically fixated on the actual. Ontology is inhospitable to the specter, for the specter both is and is not: 'it is by nature *Unheimlich*, strangely there and yet not there, neither fully present nor entirely absent.'¹⁵ The ghost therefore does not belong to ontology, but it is in a relationship with ontology in terms of tracing different aspects of meaning. *Hauntology* is not 'the opposite or the final overcoming of ontology, but its spectral trace.'¹⁶ So, when we speak of secularisation, there is a *hauntological* presence working behind this word, namely the sacred, and that other aspect of the binary haunts the secular. It is as if the secular is always looking over its shoulder at the sacred, and it is important in this context to keep in mind our sense of a negotiation, of a movement between the two determined positions, the *navette*, or shuttle, where there is a constant to-and-fro between the positions. The same is true of the global, which must always be seen in terms of its local 'other', and these two terms shuttle back and forth, transforming each other, and their relationship, as they develop. But of course there is another dimension to the shuttle as this to-ing and fro-ing is not a teleological activity, rather is it the process through which the wool thread is passed between the warp threads from one side of the web to the other in weaving, and this image is important in the present discussion. I hope to tease out the conceptual framework first and then to look at some examples of the negotiation between these terms using examples from contemporary Irish society which embody the relationship that will be set out in the diagram below.

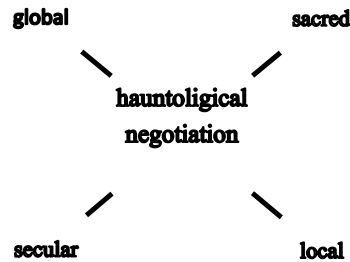
¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. Introduction by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (London: Routledge, 1994), p.39.

¹⁴ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.16.

¹⁵ Ross Benjamin and Heesok Chang, "Jacques Derrida, The Last European", *SubStance* 110, Vol. 35, no. 2, 2006, pp.140-171, p.153.

¹⁶ Benjamin and Chang, "Derrida The Last European", p.154.

To fully understand each term, we must grasp the *hauntological* negotiation between these four terms: the global, the secular, the local, and the sacred. To contextualise these terms we need to create a cognitive map of this *hauntological* negotiation between the different threads, and between the binary oppositions that comprise these threads, and our discussion will emulate this process with four warp threads, which we have already signified:



Our discussion will look at all of these crossings and overlappings and will read the terms in the light of each other. In this sense, we will be reading along the lines of J. Hillis Miller when he spoke of anastomosis in *The Ethics of Reading*, in terms of notions of 'penetration and permeation'. Miller is also speaking about the relationship between text and context, and sees this notion of context as hovering 'uneasily' between 'metonymy in the sense of mere contingent adjacency and synecdoche, part for whole, with an assumption that the part is some way genuinely like the whole.'¹⁷ Interpretation, for Miller, in his discussion of anastomosis, necessarily involves a variety of 'crossings, displacements, and substitutions, as inside becomes outside, outside inside, or as features on either side cross over the wall, membrane or partition dividing the sides',¹⁸ and I will argue that such transgressive and transgenerative crossings of fron-

¹⁷ J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James and Benjamin*. The Wellek Library Lectures (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p.6.

¹⁸ Miller, *Ethics of Reading*, p.7.

tiers are a central feature in Derrida's work, and I will go on to demonstrate the efficacy of this type of transgressive thinking in my own analyses of the terms secularisation and globalisation. Indeed, Derrida, in "Living on: Borderlines", probes the epistemology of the border between text and context in a broadly analogous manner, as he talks about borders in terms of permeability, noting that no context is 'saturatable any more', and that 'no border is guaranteed, inside or out.'¹⁹ In other words, meaning is always permeable and each instance needs to be analysed critically.

It is at this level of anastomosis or crossing that the first connection between these terms can be found. In terms of our conceptual map, the relationship between our eponymous terms 'globalisation' and 'secularisation' is one that can be traced back to the etymology of the initial term. And I am going back to specific and local occasion and date, November 6th 1999 to be precise at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, to a colloquium that was part of a series of talks entitled "Discussions of the Twenty-first Century." The general theme of the day was "The New World Contract" that was being drawn up by Federico Mayor, then Director General of the Institution. Derrida's intervention took place in the context of a debate on 'Globalisation and the Third Industrial Revolution.' Derrida chose the title of '*La mondialisation, la paix et la cosmopolitique*' ('Globalisation, Peace and Cosmopolitanism.') It was transcribed and published in the journal *Regards* 54, February 2000, pages 16-19.²⁰

In a very 'local sense', and I use this term as part of the negotiated meaning that we are in the process of constructing, Derrida joked that as his talk would only last for twenty minutes, he would need to allocate specific time periods to each of the three terms of his title: ('seven [minutes] for globalisation, seven for peace, no more than six for cosmopolitanism')²¹ and to add that it was almost against the 'rights of man' to be forced to be so brief on such important topics. But as is often the case with Derrida, there was a serious purpose behind this temporal division, as he went on to make a connection between the global and the sacred. The more normal connection, and one which has been made cogently

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Living on: Borderlines" in Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum Press, 1987), pp.75-176, p.78.

²⁰ Derrida, *Negotiations*, p.404.

²¹ Derrida, *Negotiations*, p.371.

throughout this book, has been that between globalisation and secularisation, between a sense of the value of science and knowledge on the one hand, and that of the movement of global capital on the other. However, in terms of the negotiation of meaning, and in terms of an attempt to set out a more informed sense of critique of this term, Derrida looks awry at this connection and, referring back to our cognitive map, he explores a relationship of anastomosis between the global and the sacred.

Discussing the idea of globalisation, Derrida connected the term with religion as he explains that both terms involve an attempt at placing the human in a more universal structure. He sees a clearly defined consensus between on the one hand, 'the believers in the natural universality of the rights of man' and, on the other, those who 'see the rights of man and international law in general, as still marked by their European or Greco-Roman-Abrahamic (by which I mean their Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic) origin, insofar as they are rooted in a history, in particular languages and archives.'²² Derrida is making the point that, at a conceptual level, the universalizing aspect of globalisation, the desire to open borders and connect with people in personal and economic and social discourses which transcend the givens of national and political nation-states, has a parallel with the religious idea of filiation between communities of faith which similarly transcend the borders of the political. So it is a crossing, or an anastomosis between the local and the global, just as the secular is a negotiation with aspects of the sacred. There is also a strong sense of the cosmopolitical at work here as ideally, globalisation could be connected with cosmopolitics, and it is time for us to look in more detail at that term.

In this sense, there is a further negotiation of meaning between the terms of our diagram as the local is connected to the sacred as all religions, especially what Derrida calls the 'religions of the book',²³ have a defined messianistic location where Abraham, Jesus and Mohammed began their ministry. Islam, Christianity and Judaism all began as local religions, and all have shrines and places of pilgrimage which value the local and, ironically, have made these places global. So Bethlehem, Nazareth, medina, Mecca, Jerusalem, Qum, Najaf – all of these very local places have an existence at the level of the signifier in the minds of peo-

²² Derrida, *Negotiations*, p.371.

²³ Derrida, *Negotiations*, p.213.

ple who have an interest in religious matters. And of course a further level of negotiation between the local and the global is to be found in the very fact that we in Ireland know about places like Qum, Najaf, Fallujah and Kerbala, because this knowledge is due to the telemedia aspects of globalisation, and the traditional hegemonic Western perspective on world affairs (and perhaps the classic incident of the possibly apocryphal English newspaper headline: “Fog Over Channel – Continent Isolated”), has been renegotiated through the presence of English-language media such as Al Jazeera, which give an alternative perspective on issues.

Similarly the tele-technology and techno-science that drive much of the globalised world also deconstruct the local with respect to the global. Traditionally, the local is seen as something small, closed off, intimate; it is very much on the inside in terms of the binary ‘inside/outside’, and much of modern technology has attempted to keep this sense of the local intact. So we have the borders of the nations-state, the walls of the house and home, the sense of the secret as we have account books, and even our books and notebooks have covers which we can close in order to keep the information inside, and therefore, local. But the technology of globalisation tends to deconstruct these ideas.

Hillis Miller makes the point that technologies such as photography, the telegraph, the typewriter, the telephone, the gramophone, cinematography, radio, tape recorders, television, and now CDs, VCRs, DVDs, cell phones, computers, communication satellites, and the World Wide Web have changed the way we see the world and interact with the world. He notes that these new technologies, are not just superadded to our being in the world, but radically alter it, and he goes on to speak about similar points made by Derrida in an as-yet-unpublished seminar. Derrida sees how:

This new electronic space, the space of television, cinema, telephone, videos, fax, e-mail, hypertext, and the Internet, has profoundly altered the economies of the self, the home, the workplace, the university, and the nation-state’s politics. These were traditionally ordered around the firm boundaries of an inside-outside dichotomy, whether those boundaries were the walls between the home’s privacy and all the world outside or the borders between the nation-state and its neighbours. The new technologies invade the home and the nation. They confound all these inside/outside divisions.

This confounding of distinctions between inside and outside is both caused by, and the result of, negotiations such as those indicated in our

cognitive map, and the very meanings of words have become similarly elusive and polysemic. In terms of such linguistic *glissement*, Derrida goes on to further explore the connections between the global and the sacred. He distinguishes between the concepts of the 'world' and the 'global', and his reasons for so doing are interesting, as they again develop the connection between the global and the sacred, and between the local and the global. He sees the signifier 'world' as gesturing towards a historical discourse which is different from that of:

the globe, of the universe, of Earth, of the *cosmos* even (at least of the *cosmos* in its pre-Christian meaning, which Saint Paul then christianised precisely to make it say 'world' as *fraternal* community of human beings, of fellow creatures, brothers, sons of God and neighbours to one another). For the world begins by designating, and tends to remain, in an Abrahamic tradition (Judeo-Christian-Islamic but predominantly Christian) a particular space-time, a certain oriented history of human brotherhood, *of* what in a Pauline language – the language that continues to structure and condition the modern concepts *of* the rights *of* man or the crime against humanity (horizons *of* international law in its actual form to which I would like to return, a form that conditions, in principle and by right, the becoming *of* globalisation [*mondialisation*]).

Here, the very emancipatory modes of globalisation are seen as deriving from aspects of the sacred, especially in terms of the organization of the sacred into the religions of the book. Hence, the mode of globalisation which sees contacts made between people at a level transcending the nation-state, and one which gestures towards the concept of the transnational citizen, or world-citizen, the mode which is in the tradition of the Enlightenment, the *Aufklärung*, where religious myth and suspicion were suspended, and where science and different forms of knowledge and reason were set up in their stead. In an interview with Giovanna Borradori, Derrida was asked about the connections between globalisation and cosmopolitanism and he interestingly again referred to a sacred discourse, suggesting that we should 'beyond the old Greco-Christian cosmopolitical ideal (the Stoics, Saint Paul, Kant), see the coming of a universal alliance or solidarity that extends beyond the internationality of nation-states and thus beyond citizenship.'²⁴

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real And Symbolic Suicides: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida." Interview with Giovanna Borradori, in *Philosophy in a Time of*

In this sense, the negotiation is now between globalisation and cosmopolitics, a concept that looks at all of the more positive socio-ethical benefits of a community that transcends national borders. For Derrida, this idea has its roots in the sacred, in the crossing or anastomosis between the ideals of the Christian churches and those of the Enlightenment, and thus the negotiated meanings of a deconstructive reading break down the seeming binary of religion-Enlightenment and instead can trace a conceptual lineage for the cosmopolitical from ‘Saint Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, to the Stoics, and to Kant.’²⁵ Kant felt that some notion of world citizenship would be the condition for approaching his ideal of perpetual peace. But for Derrida, the negotiation between globalisation, secularization, the sacred, cosmopolitics and ethics is one which is a performative and not a constative. For him, this negotiation of concepts is the only way in which they can have relevance for us and our time:

But if we must in fact cultivate the spirit of this tradition (as I believe most international institutions have done since World War 1), we must also try to adjust the limits of this tradition to our own time by questioning the ways in which they have been defined and determined by the ontotheological, philosophical, and religious discourses in which this cosmopolitical ideal was formulated.²⁶

Thus, in the binary oppositional sense of the creation of knowledge paradigms, the sacred, or religion, would have been seen as diametrically opposed to Enlightenment rationality but in a broader temporal framework, the negotiations between these two terms became more fluid, and in terms of our diagram, the negotiations between the secular and the sacred are mediated by a more global sense of time and space, and *hauntologically* connected with cosmopolitics as well. When local disputes between religion and science are read in that broader framework of which our map is an illustration, connections can be found which are not immediately obvious. So the inside-outside binary which structures modernist epistemology, and which, when extrapolated to epistemological discourse, would see religion as the inside and science as the outside, or vice-versa, is now deconstructed and these boundaries are shown to be

Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp.85-136, p.123-124.

²⁵ Derrida, “Autoimmunity”, p.130.

²⁶ Derrida, “Autoimmunity”, p.130.

fluid in the extreme. This means that in many ways, deconstruction is the philosophical discourse of our current technologised and globalised age par excellence, as its epistemological mobility and fluidity mirrors that of the fluid and pervasive technology of which both Derrida and Miller speak.

And this fluidity is also to be found in the ethico-moral valences of the two terms. Derrida, on being asked about globalisation, made the point that it can be seen to have huge benefits for humanity: 'the transparency made possible by teletechnologies, the opening of borders and of markets, the levelling of playing fields and the equality of opportunity', he goes on to add that there have never been in the history of humanity, in absolute numbers: 'so many inequalities, so many cases of malnutrition, ecological disaster, or rampant epidemic (think, for example, of AIDS in Africa and of the millions of people we allow to die and, thus, kill).'²⁷ In other words, Derrida, in his discussion of this term, is creating a cognitive mirror image of our cognitive map as he negotiates the valences and levels of meaning.

The ethico-moral valences of globalisation and secularisation are not predetermined any more than are the meanings of the terms themselves. We have been tracing these possible meanings in a conceptual sense through this chapter and I would now like to offer a performative instance of how the use of French theory can illuminate aspects of the ethico-moral valence of the impact of globalisation and secularisation on the financescapes and ideoscapes of the contemporary Irish context. My core point is that praising or blaming globalisation or secularisation for the benefits or ills of contemporary Ireland is to miss the point – what is needed is a negotiation, in the Derridean sense, and an awareness of the constellation of meaning within which these terms are operative in their creation of the big Other or the *habitus* of Ireland in the third millennium.

To see globalisation as a definite benefit for humanity is as oversimplified as seeing religion as all good. To be sure, globalisation has brought great benefits to our time, and to Ireland in particular. It could be said that as a nation-state, we skipped the long slow advent of modernity, with the heavy industrialisation and the gradual socio-cultural rise of the bourgeoisie, and went straight through hyper drive into postmodernity in all its glory. Our gross national product increased exponentially over the

²⁷ Derrida, "Autoimmunity", pp.121-122.

1990s and the Celtic Tiger economy made Ireland one of the success stories of Europe. However, in a manner typical of the binaries we have been discussing, after the economic boom came an economic recession. In a global context, the crash of various banks and insurance companies such as Lehman Brothers, Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA) and Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMC), more commonly known as Freddie Mac, in 2008 in the USA, and AIG and Northern Rock in the United Kingdom, meant that the effect of globalisation was felt very sharply in Ireland. The response to this crisis was suitably speedy, as befits a financial sector where billions and trillions of dollars are transferred across the globe at fibre-optical speeds. The US government has guaranteed its sub-prime mortgage market to the tune of 700 billion dollars while six European governments coordinated a 2 trillion euro rescue plan.

Given the globalised nature of our financescape, the Irish banking system has been affected by this recession as well. A guarantee by the Irish government, on September 30 2008, of some 440 billion euro meant that we followed suit in this process. There has been a further guaranteeing of the three major banks, Allied Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland and Anglo-Irish Bank, with the first two being capitalized to the tune of 2.5 billion euro and the latter receiving 1.5 billion euro for the same purpose. On top of this, in early December, 2008, Anglo Irish Bank chairman Sean Fitzpatrick, resigned after admitting that he had concealed up to €87 million in directors' loans from the bank over an eight-year period to avoid disclosing the amount to shareholders. 'He transferred the secret loans to Irish Nationwide Building Society before the banks reporting year-end on September 30, only to transfer them back shortly afterwards. Hours after his departure the banks chief executive David Drumm resigned.'²⁸ In January 2009, the Irish government nationalised Anglo-Irish Bank, and the financial regulator, Michael Neary, resigned after an inquiry showed that details of these loans had been known by some members of his office as early as September 30, 2007. These loans were moved to the Irish nationwide Building Society, and it must have been obvious that there was, at the very least, deception going on, but no action has been taken against this institution. Other members of the board

²⁸ Simon Carswell, "The Year the Bubble Burst", in *The Irish Times*, Saturday, December 27, 2008.

of Anglo-Irish Bank resigned in January but there were no enforced terminations nor was there any investigation onto the relationship with the auditors who seemed to have missed all of this and are hence either negligent or incompetent. And yet these are the very institutions who foreclose on mortgages, and repossess homes and cause businesses to close down.

In the area of the sacred, the archdioceses of Cloyne in Ireland was thrown into turmoil when the report of the National Board for Safeguarding Children (NBSC) followed an investigation last year by NBSC chief executive Ian Elliott into the management of two child protection cases in Cloyne. Completed on June 28 last it found that practices in Cloyne were 'inadequate and in some respects dangerous.'²⁹ The report stated bluntly that Bishop John Magee of Cloyne was culpable to the extent that: 'any references to the need to protect vulnerable young people and to act in a timely and effective way to achieve this end' were 'glaringly absent.'³⁰ Instead, the welfare of the priests seems to have been the priority.³⁰ The report dealt with allegations of child abuse against two priests, identified as Father A and Father B. Breda O'Brien notes that the first complaint about Fr B was in early 1995, and points out that it took three further complaints before Bishop Magee sent the priest a letter, in February 1998. She goes on to ask the pertinent question: 'How could there be a three-year gap before removing him from a school, and an eight-year gap before reporting him to police?'³¹

Yet Ian Elliot, Chief Executive Officer of the NBSC, only came to know of these allegations through, in one case, a complaint to the office of the Minister for Children, and in another, a referral from a helpline funded by religious orders. He did not learn of them through information furnished by the diocese of Cloyne, although they did eventually cooperate with the investigation. There are further reports on clerical child abuse due to be published in 2009. There is a Health Service Executive report, the Ryan Report on abuse in residential institutions and a report on the Dublin archdiocese. A separate Health Service Audit has already accused the diocese of Cloyne of having failed to alert health authorities

²⁹ Patsy McGarry and Harry McGee, "Child Report Dismissed by Diocese Committee", *The Irish Times*, Tuesday, January 6, 2009.

³⁰ Breda O'Brien, "Suspicious Inevitable after Church's Record on Cloyne", in *The Irish Times*, Saturday, December 27, 2008.

³¹ Breda O'Brien, "Suspicious Inevitable", *Irish Times*.

to a child sex abuse allegation, in contravention of existing child protection guidelines. The report of a HSE audit, examining the handling of child-protection policies in Catholic dioceses cited evidence that the diocese was in breach of the Ferns child protection guidelines. The audit report said the Bishop of Cloyne John Magee had ‘acknowledged his error in this respect.’ It said misunderstandings relating to the roles and responsibilities in this area led to the failure.³²

Again, there have been no dismissals, no enforced resignations and the primate of Ireland, Cardinal Sean Brady has stated that he does not feel that Bishop Magee should resign. Here is an eerie similarity between Brady’s sense that there is no need for Magee to resign and finance minister Brian Lenihan’s statement that it was not the role of the government to look for heads to roll in the banking sector. In both cases, we are seeing systems protect themselves, close off their borders, ensure there is no negotiation of responsibility and also steadfastly refusing to allow for any changes on the *habitus* or the big Other. Now in both of these instances Ireland has very much followed suit in the case of our global other and out global *habitus*, as the banking scandals and clerical scandals have been global phenomena, and generally secular governments and a secular legal system has been used to telling effect by the Church as a way of limiting their legal liability and indeed, across the globe, the church has fought such cases with the full panoply of the law – the secular law.

So despite the seismic changes brought about by globalisation and secularisation in Western Europe and the Anglophone world, it would seem to be a case of *plus ça change* – the institution is protecting itself by refusing to change and by refusing to take responsibility. Indeed, there is a view that globalisation is actually a *de facto* conservative force in the socio political *habitus* and the seeming openness of borders – literal, those of cyberspace and conceptual ones – is a chimera. For Bill Readings, globalisation and the apparently irresistible rise of transnational corporations has been accompanied generally by a process of depoliticisation characterized by ‘the loss of belief in an alternative political truth that will authoritatively legitimate oppositional critique.’³³ According to

³² Carl O’Brien, “Diocese of Cloyne failed to alert HSE to allegation of child sex abuse Bishop ‘acknowledged his error’ – report”, in *The Irish Times*, Thursday, January 8, 2009.

³³ Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.47.

Simon Wortham Morgan, this is due to the 'dereferentialisation of culture that happens alongside the weakening of the nation-state' which begins to erode the distinction between cultural participation and exclusion. He goes on to note that another causal factor of this depoliticisation is the fact that the modern or 'posthistorical' bureaucratic state is much less fashioned on the basis of the traditional concepts and politics of national identity, instead reproducing itself mainly in terms of the 'non-ideological belonging':

The previously fundamental relationship between the state and the individual (understood variously in terms of longstanding conceptions of right, contract, and so forth) is therefore increasingly dismantled as the era of 'transnationality' or 'globalisation' takes hold, and it is in these terms that the question of political inclusion or exclusion with regard to the (political) centre becomes misleading if not obsolete.

So is this a necessary factor in the globalised and secularised big Other and *habitus*? Are we necessarily bound to accept this broader transnational status quo of power reserving to itself the ability to critique itself and of the institution – Church or State – refusing to be accountable to anyone but itself? I would resonantly answer no, and would cite the French theoretical perspective used in this essay as warrant for this position. For Derrida, negotiations are crucial, as are the unvoiced *hauntological* absences that haunt the hegemonic ontology of those in power. In the same way as cyber culture has deconstructed the old binaries of inside and outside, so the cosmopolitical dimension of globalisation can do the same in the socio-cultural sphere.

In terms of our cognitive map, I would argue for a *hauntologically* -inspired sense of ethical globalisation, one which veers towards the cosmopolitical, and would draw on the formulation of the world as etymologically inspired by the religions of the book. The globalisation in question here is not just economic but socio-cultural and ideological and capable of transforming through crossings and anastomoses, the big Other and *habitus*. For Derrida, the concept of a secular-sacred globalisation is a desired one and one which can be traced back to the roots of the words themselves. He speaks of the 'Abrahamic filiation' of the word and of the associated 'ethical-political-juridical concepts that tend to regulate the process of globalisation [*mondialisation*], the becoming-world of the

world-especially through international law and even international criminal law.³⁴ It is in this context that I would argue for a globalised ethics which takes into account the necessity of negotiation and the performativity of meaning and ontology. I would agree with Derrida that the most important thing to do in a globalised context is, on the one hand, to analyse the meaning of the word and to look at the:

geopolitical axioms and the assumptions of international law, and everything that rules its interpretation, back to its European, Abrahamic, and predominantly Christian, indeed Roman, filiation (with the effects of hegemony implicit and explicit that this inherently involves).

This negotiation between globalisation and the sacred is actually a deconstructive invention which will allow the secular *habitus* of contemporary culture to be infused with the ideals that drove the early Christian church, ideals that in turn derive from Greek and Roman notions of a transnational global order. But of course these global orders were imperial in their operation, and those imperial aspects of globalisation have been addressed in this chapter through the lack of accountability at the higher levels of institutions which has its source in the divine right of kings doctrine, which itself derives from the habit of proclaiming an emperor divine in Greco-Roman times. And in order to combat this tendency for the global Other to merely replicate in large the national other, Derrida sets up another negotiation, noting that on the other hand, the necessary task of thinking through globalisation, a thinking process which:

would consist in never giving up-through cultural relativism or a facile critique of Eurocentrism – the universal, universalizing exigency, the properly revolutionary exigency that tends irresistibly to uproot, to de-territorialize, to dehistoricize this filiation, to contest its limits and the effects of its hegemony.

For him, the key to understanding and implementing a sense of globalisation that comes closer to a sense of the cosmopolitical as adduced by Kant is in a constant reinvention and negotiation of the meanings of the term. What is needed is the negotiation of which we have been speaking; the fluidity and anastomosis which I attempted to represent in the dia-

³⁴ Derrida, *Negotiations*, p.375.

gram at the beginning of this chapter; the sense that we 'must not give up rediscovering, inventing, inventing this time in the sense *of* inventing as discovering what is already there potentially, namely, in this filiation itself, the principle of its excess, of its bursting outside itself, of its auto-deconstruction'.³⁵

And politically, this sense of negotiation has been exemplified in the election of Barak Obama in the United States. His campaign, with its use of email, SMS messages, targeted audiences and YouTube, was a performative example of this more positive use of globalisation, cosmopolitics and indeed secularisation. Beginning from the local, the steps of the courthouse of Springfield, Illinois on February 10th, 2007, and invoking the *hauntological* presence of a previous American president whose campaign set out from those same steps, Abraham Lincoln, Obama has campaigned with a message of hope and change that embody the positive and more cosmopolitical aspects of the globalised paradigm. His message of change and of systemic change, is vastly different from the more static responses to our own problems in Ireland.

Perhaps the key thing about globalisation and secularisation is that their meanings can change and that they can become forces for ethical benefit to our world. For Derrida, Europe, with its broadly based, secular composition, this is probably closer to the idea of a cosmopolitical political structure than any to date. So while these may be impossible ideals, yet they are there to be striven for. Just as Barak Obama made the point in his inauguration address that he was speaking in a city where his father might not have been served in a hotel sixty years ago, so it is the orientation towards the future that is significant about his policies and about his speech. He has spoken about the problematic and strife-riven past of the United States of America but the trajectory of his remarks is very different. He has noted that the history of the United States is full of struggle and conflict:

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and travelled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and ploughed the hard earth.

For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn. Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better

³⁵ Derrida, *Negotiations*, p.375.

life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

The whole trajectory of this speech is one of negotiation with the meanings of the past, it is one where past sacrifices are not to be hoarded up or reified but rather are to be seen as the building blocks for a better future. In cosmopolitical terms, Obama's vision is one where difference and contention are seen as positives:

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus - and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

Here he speaks of the segregation of the past as something which made Americans stronger because they have come through them and are changing them as they progress. This is in stark contrast to the attitude of the Irish clergy and political establishment whose whole thrust was towards protecting the errors of the past rather than laying the framework for the future. The sense of changing the system, of breaking down the barriers and crossing the borders to new territories, of breaking down the barriers of inside and outside through the *hauntological* awareness of other relational connections outside of the binaries has not been part of the Irish political or clerical system.

Thus globalisation, if interpreted one way can be for the gain of an elite and the exploitation of others on a global scale – it is imperialism and colonialism under a transnational banner. Derrida's use of 'Europe' another term that we could add to our cognitive map, as a synecdoche for this negotiated meaning between the global and the cosmopolitical. He hopes for the creation, not of a Europe that would be 'another military superpower, protecting its market and acting as a counterweight to other blocs, but of a Europe that would be able to sow the seeds of a new alter-globalist politics.'³⁶ For Derrida, 'Europe' is like the other terms we have

³⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*. Interview with Jean

been discussing – it requires interpretation and while it has been a driver in the globalised techno-scientific imperialism that has been seen as among the worst aspects of globalisation, so it is also the source of the cosmopolitical, idealistic, ethical and emancipatory aspects which offer hope for a transformation of the old paradigms of inside and outside:

Since the time of the Enlightenment, Europe has undertaken a perpetual self-critique, and in this perfectible heritage there is a chance for a future. At least I would like to hope so, and that is what feeds my indignation when I hear people definitively condemning Europe as if it were but the scene of its crimes. This force is underway. Even if its motivations are still confused, I don't think anything can now stop it. That's what I mean when I say Europe: an alter-globalist Europe, transforming the concept and practices of sovereignty and international law.

His vision is very much a cosmopolitical one, but he is criticising the tradition even as he is enunciating it, and this performativity is part and parcel of the negotiation which we have been carrying on between the key terms globalisation and secularisation. I would argue that this is the same negotiation that we have seen on the rhetoric and epistemology of Barak Obama where he sees aspects of the United States as being on a continuing journey, a journey of crossings, negotiations and anastomoses.

One can see dawnings of this negotiation with fixed meanings in an Irish context as well. Despite the pitiful failure of the Catholic hierarchy to deal with their culpability, one priest, Father Michael Mernagh, aged 70, in a gesture of public atonement, walked from Cobh in county Cork to the pro-cathedral in Dublin where he was welcomed by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin. This gesture was in many ways an example of an act of performative resistance by one of the rank and file clergy and the performative itself – a journey taken on foot – symbolised a desire for change in the system and possibly a recognition that this change would be slow in coming. Father Mernagh was joined in his 300km walk of atonement by at least 50 others:

They included Paddy Doyle, the wheelchair-bound author of *The God Squad*, the searing autobiography which was published in the 1980s before the trickle of clerical sex abuse allegations became a flood, fellow abuse victim

Birnbaum. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. (New Jersey: Melville House Publishing, 2007), p.42.

Marie Collins and the co-ordinator of Irish Survivors of Child Abuse (SOCA) John Kelly. They were joined by Barnados' chief executive Fergus Finlay, Sister Stanislaus Kennedy and Travellers from the Pavée Point project. Augustinian priests Fr Liam Ryan and Fr Ben O'Brien also shared the journey.

So in the area of the church, there is an element of the alter-global or the cosmopolitical at work, and the same glimmerings are to be seen in the Irish body politic. In the wake of the banking crisis of which we have been speaking, some seventy of the shareholders of Anglo-Irish Bank are taking a class action against the bank, its directors and the firms of auditors, all of whom have remained silent as to the nature of their responsibility for the financial mismanagement to date. Here, if globalisation has brought about this hegemony in Church and State, so alter-globalisation, or cosmopolitics, is attempting to negotiate with, and resist and transform, those hegemonic perspectives. Here there is a haunting of the sacred by the secular and of the secular by the sacred as the filiation of people who are wronged is made overt in the public sphere.

This type of negotiation between the secular and the sacred and the global and the local is necessarily performative: it is a text that is both created by, and transformative of, its socio-cultural context, and each negotiation is singular and performative. As Miller puts it, this would be an 'alternative kind of performative' which 'creates the norms and laws that validate it'. Each such performative 'constitutes a happening that changes decisively the surrounding context.' It responds to a call or demand from an 'other' that can never be institutionalized or rationalized. Hence the call of the 'other', which in this formulation brings the speech act into being, would have to pre-exist any subject or agent of cognition or communication.³⁷ In a political sense, such a cosmopolitical form of globalisation as our best hope for the future, for what Derrida has termed is the task of a new humanities.

³⁷ J. Hillis Miller, "Literary Study in the Transnational University", in *Black Holes / J. Hillis Miller; Or, Boustrophedonic Reading*, J. Hillis Miller and Manuel Asensi (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp.3-183, p.179.

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Index

- 1916 Rising, 98
Abbey Theatre, 91, 93
Abélès, Marc, 221-223
aesthetic, 35, 39-40, 44, 83-84, 138,
220-221, 230, 232
Ahern, Bertie, 129-132, 161, 170, 180,
216
alcohol, 91-92, 94, 204, 225
America, 49-50, 57, 60-61, 152, 199,
228, 250-251, 267-268
analysis, 6, 11, 43, 80, 124, 140, 142,
145, 185, 187-188, 190, 266
Analysis, 11, 43, 80, 124, 140, 142,
145, 187
anastomosis, 253, 255-257, 260, 266
Appadurai, Arjun, 223, 250
Aristotle, 227
Assemblée Nationale, 202
Baubérot, Jean, 8, 194, 217, 238, 245
Baudrillard, Jean, 57, 59
Beckett, Samuel, 49, 60, 70, 91, 235
Behan, Brendan, 5, 91-100
The Hostage, 5, 91-100
belief, 12, 23, 28, 39-42, 46-47, 105,
129, 134, 142, 149-150, 154, 161-
162, 167, 169, 173-177, 179-182,
199, 210, 212, 215, 219, 238, 244,
264
Berger, Peter, 168-170
Bernanos, Georges, 12, 15, 17, 19-20,
22, 27, 28
Journal d'un curé de campagne, 5,
15, 17
Bishop, Elizabeth, 23, 123-124, 126,
134, 137-139, 144, 176-177, 239,
263-264, 275
Bloom, Harold, 46, 56, 256
Bolger, Dermot, 5, 12, 101, 106-107,
115, 118-119
Bourdieu, Pierre, 250-251
Bradbury, Malcolm, 60
Brady, Seán, 140, 264
Broderick, John, 16, 272
Brown, Callum, 150
Bruce, Steve, 31, 40, 158, 215
Carlson, Julia, 74
Catholic Church, 8, 11, 15, 23, 25-28,
96, 98, 132-136, 140, 145, 160, 167,
170, 172, 176-177, 180-182, 189,
195, 196, 209-210, 218, 224, 235,
237, 239-240, 246
catholicisme, 176, 239
Celtic, 5, 10, 79, -82, 84, 88, 125, 143,
160, 181, 215, 227, 230, 262, 273
Celtic Tiger, 10, 125, 143, 160, 181,
230, 262
Chadwick, Kay, 61
change, 19, 21, 54, 60, 75, 87, 94, 123,
125, 128, 142, 150, 159, 166, 175,
176, 185, 190, 197, 210, 219, 221,
223, 227, 238, 264, 267, 269
chrematistics, 227
Christian, 8, 11, 28, 75, 81, 83-84, 113,
126, 128-129, 131-132, 134, 137,
139-142, 144, 148, 150, 152, 166,
199, 237, 257, 259, 260, 266, 274
Christianity, 80, 85, 129, 131, 133-135,
137, 139, 142, 144, 151-152, 160,
199, 257, 272
church, 22, 29, 73, 75, 110, 116, 148,
150, 158-159, 162, 187, 203, 212,
264, 266, 270, 272

- church attendance, 150
 Church of Ireland, 110, 162, 181, 207
 citizenship, 7, 8, 112, 200-221, 226, 259, 260
 Coad, David, 64
 Coe, Kevin, 152
 cognitive map, 251, 255, 257, 259, 261, 265, 268
 Combes, Emil, 197, 205
 Conrad, Joseph, 272
 consensus, 219-220, 226-227, 257
 consumerism, 57, 61, 123, 132, 214
 context, 8, 11, 17, 40-41, 76, 81, 129, 132, 134, 136, 139-140, 142, 145, 148, 163-164, 198, 212, 221, 233-234, 237, 243, 254-256, 261-262, 266, 269-270
convivance, 222-223
 Coolahan, John, 208-211
 corruption, 132, 134
 cosmopolitics, 257, 259-260, 265-270
 de Beauvoir, Simone, 99
 de Man, Paul, 256
 de Valera, Eamon, 92, 99, 169, 198, 214, 226
 De Valera, Eamonn, 198
 debris, 83, 221, 230-231
 deconstruction, 40-41, 97, 252, 258, 261, 267
 Derrida, Jacques, 33, 34, 35, 40-41, 43-44, 46, 48, 135, 251-254, 256-261, 265-268, 270
 différance, 41
 désenchantement, 167
 Desmond, Derry, 182, 188-189
 discourse, 67, 92-93, 95, 98, 151-155, 159, 161-162, 199, 215, 221, 226, 259-260
 disruption, 219
 Domke, David, 152
 Dorr, Donal, 159-160
 Doyle, Roddy, 269, 273
 Durcan, Paul, 6, 219, 221, 224-228, 230, 232
 Ecole Normale Primaire, 203
 economy, 61, 129, 183, 198, 220-221, 227-228, 230, 232, 249-250, 262
 Educate Together, 247
 Education, 198, 209-211, 213, 236, 239-241, 245, 247, 271
 ego, 28, 41, 110
 emigration, 10, 54, 77, 166
 enjoyment, 227
 Enlightenment, 9, 11, 22, 45, 86, 126, 132, 144, 163, 204, 206, 211, 216, 249-250, 259-260, 269
 ethics, 130, 139, 157, 160, 200, 231, 251, 254, 260-261, 265, 267, 269
 Europe, 7-9, 60, 79, 86-88, 125-126, 130-131, 135, 138-140, 144, 160, 166, 170, 178, 182, 199, 214, 217, 224, 234, 242, 247, 251, 254, 257, 262, 264, 266-269, 273-274
 failure, 20, 71, 135, 214, 264, 269
 Fanning, Ronan, 187
 femininity, 151-253
 Ferry, Jules, 5, 49, 197, 200-201
 feudal society, 158
 Fianna Fáil, 180, 211
 Finlay, Père, 186, 270
 Flannery, Eoin, 141, 145
 foreign language, 100
 fragmentation, 51-52, 143, 172, 177
 France, 3, 6-12, 15, 17, 22, 49-50, 57, 60-61, 76, 79, 91, 99-100, 115, 117, 124, 126, 129-135, 140-141, 146-147, 163-166, 169-171, 175-182, 195-200, 202-203, 207, 209-211, 214-221, 233, 235, 237-240, 243-247, 250, 254, 261, 265, 271-275
 Franco-Irish, 1, 3, 271-275
 French Catholicism, 10, 16-17, 21-22, 51, 60-61, 79, 81, 86, 88, 126, 140, 142, 160, 166, 167, 169, 172, 176-177, 182-183, 186-187, 208, 213-214, 235
 French theory, 261
 Gaelic, 86-87, 92, 100, 197, 208
 Gaelic League, 92, 197
 Gambetta, Léon, 197, 202-204, 208
 Garvin, Tom, 187

- Gauchet, Marcel, 180, 273
 Gibbons, Luke, 160
 Giddens, Anthony, 249
 Glasner, Peter, 158
 global market, 249
 globalisation, 8-12, 31, 36-37, 43, 45, 49-50, 59, 61, 76, 83, 88, 91, 100, 124, 127, 129, 139, 146, 156, 159, 161, 182, 192-194, 220-232, 249-261, 264-270, 273
 Globalisation, 1, 3, 5-6, 13, 31, 48, 121, 193, 219, 230, 249-250, 256, 271, 275
 grand narratives, 50
 Greek, 33, 43, 63, 80, 226, 230, 257, 266
 Greene, Graham, 27
 Habermas, Jurgen, 128-129, 217, 260
habitus, 167, 172, 250-251, 261, 264-266
 Harmon, Maurice, 17
 harmony, 12, 33, 79, 138, 173-174, 219, 222
 Haw-Haw, Lord, 104
 Heaney, Seamus
 Seeing Things, 32-33, 35, 40, 42, 47-48
 hegemony, 215, 266, 270
 Herbert, David, 158-159
 Herbert, Zbigniew, 87, 159
 Report from the Besieged City, 87
 Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, 140, 146, 166-167, 170-175, 179, 273
 Higgins, Aidan, 16
 Higgins, Rita Ann, 16
 Hill, Myrtle, 53-55
 Hillis Miller, J., 256
 Holmes, Michael, 60
 homosexuality, 76, 92-94, 97, 100, 165, 252
 Hornsby-Smith, Michael P., 191
 Hyde, Douglas, 186, 197
 Iannaccone, Laurence, 193
 identité nationale, 130, 186
 ideology, 7, 10, 88, 179, 187, 197-198, 204, 209, 249, 252
 image, 31, 39, 41-42, 45, 52, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 76-77, 81, 83-84, 138, 155, 159, 168, 191, 201, 216, 229, 251, 254, 261
 imaginary, 91, 183
 immanence, 42, 45-46, 47
 immigrants, 61, 234, 239, 242
 individualism, 11, 146
 Inglis, Tom, 22, 167, 172, 180, 187-189
 institutions, 7, 129, 146, 159, 170, 176-177, 180, 185, 189-190, 194, 198, 215-217, 220, 221, 224, 260, 263, 266, 273
 IRA, 92-93, 95, 97-98, 100, 104-105
 Ireland, 6, 8, 10, 17, 22-25, 28, 34, 50, 59, 61, 64, 72, 74-75, 82, 87, 91, 93, 97-98, 100, 112, 114, 123-129, 131-132, 134-139, 140, 142-144, 156, 160, 163-172, 175-182, 186-192, 195, 197-199, 207-211, 214, -218, 221, 224-225, 227-229, 233-242, 251, 258, 261-264, 267, 271-275
 Irish history, 84, 88, 126
 Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 209
 Irish nationalism, 197, 214
 Irish Studies, 64, 65, 69, 97, 272, 274, 275
 Jameson, Frederic, 50-52, 58, 59
 Jameson, Fredric, 50-52, 58, 59
 Jean-Paul II, 136
 Joyce, James, 49-54, 56, 59-60, 235, 275
 Dubliners, 49-51, 54, 56, 60
 Ulysses, 56
 Joyce, William, 104
 Keating, Paul, 188-189
 Keegan, Clare, 49-61
 Walk the Blue Fields, 49, 51
 Kennedy, Stanislaus, 31, 125-126, 128, 136, 140, 142, 270
 Kindness, John, 6, 219, 221, 230-232
 Kundera, Milan, 63
 Kurth, James, 10
La Gloire de mon père, 196, 203
 La loi de 1905, 201, 217

- Laborde, Cécile, 8
 Lacan, Jacques, 250, 253
 laïcité, 7-8, 22, 126, 130, 194-195, 198, 200, 202, 216-217, 233, 237-247
 Laïcité, 3, 6, 194, 233, 238, 243
 Larcher, Gérard, 199
 Le Bras, Gabriel, 158, 164
 Lehman Brothers, 262
 Leonard, Garry, 56
 Littel, Jonathan, 102
 Lyotard, Jean-François, 50, 143
 Maffesoli, Michel, 141-142
 Maher, Eamon, 1, 3, 5, 7, 12, 15, 64, 65, 73, 160, 165, 172, 177, 235, 273
 Mahon, Derek, 5, 12, 31, 32, 34-38, 40, 44-48
 Maignant, Catherine, 5, 12, 123
 Malcolm, David, 60, 64
 Mallarmé, Stéphane, 60
 Markievicz, Comtesse, 111
 McCabe, Patrick, 50
 McFarlane, James, 60
 McGahern, John
 Memoir, 16, 23, 29
 That They May Face the Rising Sun, 5, 15, 17, 21, 63-64, 69-77
 The Dark, 16, 24-25, 72, 74
 McGarry, Patsy, 28, 160, 162, 182, 263
 McGreevy, Thomas, 5
 Breton Oracles, 5, 79-80, 88
 McMahan, Bryan, 6, 195
 The Master, 196-197, 209-210, 212-214
 McQuaid, John Charles, 16
 memory, 44, 54, 63-70, 83, 97, 116, 140, 143-145, 157, 210
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 33-34, 38-39, 41, 43-44, 47
 Merton, Thomas, 81, 86, 272
 Miller, J. Hillis, 255-256, 270
 Mitterrand, François, 179
 Mjøset, Lars, 190
 modernism, 10, 11, 36, 44, 46, 49-52, 56-61, 80, 88, 124, 143-144, 163, 172-174, 182, 211, 219, 227, 249-250, 261
 Modernism, 11, 49, 51, 56-58, 60-61
 mondialisation, 5-6, 11, 101, 106, 111, 114, 118, 185, 192-194, 256, 259, 265
 Mondialisation, 3, 275
 Moore, Brian, 16, 147, 150-153, 158-159, 273
 Moore, George, 16, 147-153, 158-159, 161-162, 273
 A Drama in Muslin, 153
 Esther Waters, 147-149, 159
 morality, 57, 133, 135-136, 141, 149, 151, 157, 187
 multiculturalisme, 6, 233, 243-244
 Neary, Archbishop Michael, 162, 262
 negotiation, 12, 92, 250-258, 260-261, 264-270
 Neill, Archbishop John, 162
 Niall of the Nine Hostages, 111
 North, Douglass, 8, 31, 37, 185, 190, 226
 nouvelle, 104, 107, 171
 Ó Criomhthain, Tomás, 70-71
 Ó Criomhthain, Tomás
 An tOileánach, 71
 The Islandman, 70-71
 Ó Searcaigh, Cathal, 147, 155-162, 273
 O'Brien, Edna, 16
 Obama, Barak, 253, 267-269
 OECD, 193
 Other, 65, 67, 69, 139, 250-251, 261-266
 Pagnol, Marcel, 6, 195-197, 203-207, 213, 218
 patriarchy, 53, 56
 Pearse, Patrick, 114
 Picon, Gaëton, 15
 piety, 81, 88, 151
 pluralism, 132-135, 237
 Plymouth Brethren, 149
 poetry, 31-32, 36-37, 42-43, 82, 84, 86, 88, 147, 155-157, 219, 224, 271-272, 274
 political, 7, 8, 16, 88, 98, 126, 129, 131, 133, 138, 152, 163-167, 169, 175, 177-185, 187, 195, 196-197, 199-

- 200, 204-207, 216, 220-223, 228-229, 251, 254, 257, 264-265, 267-268, 270, 274
- postcolonialism, 97
- postmodernism, 31, 45, 49-51, 57-61, 227, 250, 261
- Postmodernism, 50-53, 57, 59, 271
- prayer, 21, 58, 95, 137, 171, 182
- Proust, Marcel
A La Recherche du Temps Perdu, 66, 75
Contre Sainte-Beuve, 65
- Rabaté, Jean Michel, 56
- racism, 92, 97
- Real, 10, 70, 114, 259
- recession, 262
- relativism, 126-127, 132-134, 266
- religion, 7-12, 16-17, 19-22, 25-28, 49, 52-54, 58-61, 74-79, 83-88, 92, 95-100, 110, 123, 127-132, 135, 138, 142, 144, 147-181, 183, 185, 187, 191-210, 213, 215-217, 220, 223, 225, 227, 230-246, 250-251, 253, 257, 259-265, 272, 274
- responsibility, 53, 72, 126, 129, 135-136, 139, 158-159, 237, 246, 264, 270
- Ricoeur, Paul, 143, 145
- Robinson, Mary, 225-226
- Roman, 8, 11, 110, 132-133, 160, 176, 183, 257, 266
- Roughley, Alan, 60
- Roy, Olivier, 8, 11, 252
- Rupp, George, 9-10
- sacred, 16, 138, 147, 160, 179, 231-232, 253-260, 263, 265-266, 270
- Said, Edward, 80
- Sampson, Denis, 64, 68-69
- secular, 7, 9-15, 20, 22, 28, 40, 47-48, 59, 61, 86, 91, 100, 126, 129-132, 139, 142, 147, 149-153, 157, 160, 162-163, 168, 210, 214, 233, 240, 242, 244, 251, 254, 255, 257, 260, 264-267, 270
- secular, definitions, 7, 9-12, 15, 20, 22, 28, 40, 47-48, 59, 61, 86, 91, 100, 126, 129-132, 139, 142, 147, 149, 150-153, 157, 160, 162-163, 168, 210, 214, 233, 240, 242, 244, 251, 254-257, 260, 264-267, 270
- secularisation, 5, 9, 11-12, 17, 28, 59, 61, 79, 124, 126-127, 146-148, 151, 156, 158, 162-168, 170, 173-175, 180, 183, 191, 195, 198, 214, 216, 220, 249-257, 261, 264, 267, 269, 273
- Secularisation, 5, 13, 249
- secularism, 7, 8, 10, 15, 27-28, 49, 59, 61, 127, 129, 131-132, 146-147, 163, 209, 216, 220, 233, 236, 238, 244
- Secularism, 126, 135, 140, 144, 238
- sex, 24, 53, 92, 94-95, 96, 98, 123, 132, 136, 172, 208, 264, 269
- Shakespeare, William, 79
- Simone de Beauvoir, 99
- simulacrum, 229
- sinners, 92, 145
- solidarity, 89, 94, 128-129, 137, 157, 159, 259
- sovereignty, 7, 220-221, 269
- St Patrick's Training College, 208
- subject, 31-37, 39-52, 56-57, 60, 73, 91, 100, 177, 195, 198, 200, 209, 230, 240, 244, 246, 250, 270
- subjectivity, 38, 49, 57, 60, 173
- Sundstrom, Jacqueline, 99
- survivance*, 222-223
- symbolic, 33, 39, 45, 47, 48, 58, 86, 98, 168, 177, 217, 226-227, 229, 250
- Synge, J.M., 49, 91
- taboo, 24, 92
- technology, 127, 249, 258, 261
- text, 16, 22, 24, 34, 43, 51, 58, 63, 76, 81, 87, 99, 255, 270
- The Master*, 196-197, 209-210, 212-214
- theatre, 91, 98, 100
- Theatre Royal, 93, 99
- tolerance, 91-92, 95, 100, 206
- translation, 156-157, 274
- ultramodernité, 273

- ultramodernity, 172-177, 181-182
- uncertainty, 123, 175-177, 221-223, 232, 238
- Vatican II, 136, 146, 176
- Vian, Boris, 99
- Village, 197
- violence, 52, 75, 125, 141, 219-220, 223, 227, 230
- waste, 231
- Weber, Max, 34, 164, 188, 193
- Whyte, James, 66, 187, 189
- Whyte, John Henry, 66, 187, 189
- Willaime, Jean-Paul, 170, 178, 217, 273
- William of Orange, 111
- Wolfenden Report, 93
- women, 54, 59, 76, 95, 97, 109, 127, 149, 153, 157, 215, 227, 267, 271
- Yeats, William Butler, 49, 50, 56, 60, 84, 91, 198, 216, 219-222, 275

