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The Python and the Gazelle

REVOLT, REVOLUTION AND THE REBELS: THE CORK HURLING SAGA AS PARADIGMATIC OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

The Great Day

HURRAH for revolution and more cannon-shot!

A beggar upon horseback lashes a beggar on foot.

Hurrah for revolution and cannon come again !

The beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on.¹

I would tell you that the aspiration to revolution has but one conceivable issue, always, the discourse of the master. That is what experience has proved. What you, as revolutionaries, aspire to is a Master. You will have one.²

In the first of these epigraphs, William Butler Yeats voices one of the most telling critiques of revolution – no matter what happens, things

¹ William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Poems of William Butler Yeats*. (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.326.

² Jacques Lacan *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*. Translated by Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson. Edited by Joan Copjec. (New York, Norton 1990), p. 126.

essentially do not change. In the second, Jacques Lacan reinforces in prose the same basic critique of revolutions: violence and trauma may occur but the essential inequality between people will endure. The French revolution is often seen as a classic example of this trend – the people overthrew a relatively ineffectual king in 1789 and replaced him with a very effective emperor on December 4, 1799. The fall of communism and the embrace of capitalism would seem to make much the same point about the Russian and Chinese revolutions. Systems, it would seem, are structurally designed to deal with resistance. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, the relationship between prohibition and desire is ‘circular, and one of absolute immanence: power and resistance (counter-power) presuppose and generate each other - that is, the very prohibitive measures that categorize and regulate illicit desires effectively generate them’.³

Systems, political or structural, are very like a python eating a gazelle. There is at first a sense of amazement that the gazelle will fit into the seemingly narrower mouth and torso of the snake and after the initial act of swallowing, the shape of the gazelle is very visible in the snake’s body. However, the very strong gastric juices of the python eventually digest and break down the body of the gazelle and after a while, no trace of the gazelle remains. We have seen this in the Irish socio-political system in recent times. Despite serious inappropriate, and possibly illegal, behaviours in our banking system, none of the major players has suffered in any way. The AGMs of the banks, while a little heated, still elect the same boards of executive and non-executive directors, and the shareholders still have to accept their losses while the institutions are underwritten to the tune of billions by the taxpayers – very often those same shareholders. There are very few voices of critique here – the general opinion of commentators is that while this is unfair and unjust, the banks are structurally necessary to the economy and so must be kept in business. The Gardai did enter Anglo-Irish bank and took away a number of documents and computers, but one imagines

³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 2000), 251.

there will be no need to rush through the building of clover hill prison to house the directors of Anglo after they are charged and convicted. The python has almost resumed its original shape.

We see the same pythonesque quality at work in the structure of the Catholic church. The release of the Ryan and the Murphy reports in 2009 has been a horrific indictment of religious orders and the state inspectorate of such schools and institutions in Ireland, and also of the governance of the diocese of Dublin and the secular priests and of the hierarchical structures at the Episcopal level. As the *Irish Examiner* noted:

With an “unconditional apology”, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy said: “We accept that many who spent their childhoods in our orphanages or industrial schools were hurt and damaged while in our care. “We are mindful of all who, as children, were cared for by us in our institutions. We know that it is a very painful time for you as you read the findings of this report. It is a very difficult time for our sisters and our lay staff who gave long service in caring for children in our residential institutions. “There is a great sadness in all of our hearts at this time and our deepest desire is to continue the healing process for all involved,” the sisters stated. The Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI) acknowledged “the pain and hurt experienced by many”. “Most importantly, all of us must now make certain that we continue to learn from the past by ensuring that all vulnerable people are provided with quality care which respects their needs and dignity and reflects the compassion of Christ,” it said.⁴

Some over 800 known abusers in over 200 institutions during a period of 35 years –have been identified in terms of having committed acts of violence, sexual oppression and criminal assault on the children in these

⁴ *The Irish Examiner*, May 21st, 2009.

homes but because of an immunity deal, none of these will be named and none of these will be prosecuted. Once again a system swallows its victims and suffers no pain. It is another example of what Žižek calls the vicious circle of power and resistance.⁵

In the case of the Murphy report, there has been some Episcopal fallout as Bishop Donal Murray resigned and, at the time of the writing of this chapter, four other bishops are being seen as having to offer their resignation. However, the failure of the Vatican to co-operate with the Murphy report has been explained away by the Taoiseach, Brian Cowan, in the Dáil, and the church still retains a huge position of power in the governance of the twin areas of social state care, namely health and education. There seems to be no sign of that influence decreasing.

So I think there is definite warrant for a pessimistic view of revolution as some form of utopian act which can change the system. The lessons of history would seem to indicate that such revolutionary and systemic change is impossible but I would disagree. Instead I would agree with Michel Foucault who makes the point that: ‘one of the meanings of human existence—the source of human freedom—is never to accept anything as definitive, untouchable, obvious, or immobile’.⁶ In this context I would like to examine the recent ‘revolution’ of the 2008 panel of the Cork hurling team and to look at it as a synecdoche of the epistemology of the revolutionary project. I hope to bring to this analysis what Walter Benjamin called the ‘revolutionary gaze’, whereby each revolutionary act is perceived as ‘the redemptive repetition of past failed emancipatory attempts.’⁷ I would also cite the thought of Jacques Derrida here. He notes that it is:

⁵ Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, p.251.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Politics, philosophy, culture: interviews and other writings, 1977-1984*. Edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, Alan Sheridan. Translated by Alan Sheridan. (London: Routledge, 1990), p.1.

⁷ Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, p. 89.

possible to renounce a certain revolutionary imagery or all revolutionary rhetoric, even to renounce a *certain* politics of revolution, so to speak, perhaps even to renounce every *politics* of revolution, but it is not possible to renounce revolution without also renouncing the event and justice.⁸

So this very localised, in time and space, ‘revolution’ of the Cork hurling panel against the imposition of a manager, Gerald McCarthy, with whom they did not agree can be seen as just such an event concerned with justice. The revolution took the form of the panel of 2008 refusing to play for the new manager a fact which necessitated the selection of a whole new Cork hurling team. Unusually, the panel of players did not disband but instead remained intact and maintained a full presence in the media by setting out their demands and by taking on the Cork county board which had hitherto abrogated to itself the power to select a manager and selection committee who then went on to select a panel of some thirty players from whom the team of 15 was then selected. The role of the players is to be chosen and selected by the manager and a selection committee. This panel decided not to play for the manager and effectively withdrew their labour.

Their sense of outrage at the lack of care for their own views is palpable in their statement:

Over the years, the Cork Hurling public has been kept in the dark, not represented and misguided, in the furtherance of the agenda of taking back control at all or any cost. We are here to set the record straight. We hope that in doing so, people can make up their own minds based on the reality, not the spin we have heard for months. In the terrible turmoil of the world at the moment, the one good thing which is becoming clear is that people are being forced, and are willing, to decide what

⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews* (London: Polity Press, 2002), p. 13.

really matters to them. People are rejecting the old ways that got us in the various messes we find around us. Cork Hurling is sacrosanct to us and to those involved in it throughout the County at grassroots level. It involves a trust, a search to be the best, a belief in confidence with humility, a tradition to be revered and many traditions to be created. The trust has been abused, the standards have fallen and the members of our organization are in despair at what is happening.⁹

In the light of this statement it is not surprising that these young men decided to defy the authority which they felt did not represent them or indeed their wishes, and instead opted to act in direct defiance of that authority. They withdrew themselves from selection and forced the Cork County Board to select a development team instead. This meant that 30 of the best hurlers in Cork were effectively in revolt against their governing authority.

They took their case beyond the county board to the GAA clubs of Cork, and by so doing; they drew attention to a problematic area of democratic representation. Cork's unique representative tiers at County Board level see up to 164 junior hurling and football affiliates represented by just 16 delegates, two each from the eight divisional boards. This is a form of democratic anti-democratic silencing of people in what seems to be a democratic forum. It is a use of power to temper the resistance that is possibly to be found in these clubs, whose fees and players the GAA is happy to accept on a club-by-club basis. This is an anomaly and one to which the players drew attention. It is an example of Žižek's view of the dialectic of power and resistance:

On this level, Power and Resistance are effectively caught in a deadly mutual embrace: there is no Power without Resistance (in order to function, Power needs an X which eludes its grasp);

⁹ Full Statement from 2008 Cork Senior Hurling Panel, *The Irish Examiner*, Tuesday, January 27, 2009.

there is no Resistance without Power (Power is already formative of that very kernel on behalf of which the oppressed subject resists the hold of Power).¹⁰

In the light of this democratic deficit, it should come as no surprise that these young men decided to completely withdraw their obedience from their governing authority. It should also come as no surprise that these gestures had an effect beyond the local. As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have noted in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, in a revolutionary situation, each aspect of a struggle becomes ‘overflows its own literality and comes to represent, in the consciousness of the masses, a simple moment of a more global struggle against the system’, in other words each moment of struggle is both a literal individual instance but also ‘aside from its specific literal demands, each mobilization represents the revolutionary process as a whole’.¹¹ Thus the revolution of the Cork hurling panel, their refusal to accept their position of being selected by authority, and instead abrogating to themselves the right to anachronistically preserve themselves as the panel of 2008, has significant socio-political resonances. Indeed, Žižek indicates on the one hand that the importance of ‘the job of a critical analysis’ is to ‘discern the hidden political process that sustains all [supposedly] ‘non-’ or ‘pre-political’ relationships’.¹²

Rebellion against authority because of lack of representation on that authority smacks very much of a democratic revolution and there is definite connection to be made here with another group of young men who refused to be subject to an authority on which they were not represented. On December 16, 1773, after officials in Boston refused to return three shiploads of taxed tea to Britain, a group of colonists boarded the ships and destroyed the tea by throwing it into Boston Harbour. The incident remains an iconic event of American history, and

¹⁰ Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, pp.252-3.

¹¹ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), pp.10-11.

¹² Slavoj Žižek, ‘Class struggle or postmodernism? Yes, please!’; ‘Da Capo senza Fine’; ‘Holding the place’, in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), pp.308–29, p.234.

has often been referenced in other political protests. The Tea Party was the culmination of a resistance movement throughout British America against the Tea Act, which had been passed by the British Parliament in 1773. Colonists objected to the Tea Act for a variety of reasons, especially because they believed that it violated their constitutional right to be taxed only by their own elected representatives. One of the problems of the colonists was the issue of virtual representation. They felt that as they were unrepresented in the British Parliament that they should not be then taxed by that parliament. One can immediately see that the slogan 'no taxation without representation' has a strong revolutionary correlation, to use the terms of Laclau and Mouffe, and the GAA players' views on their own representation:

We were given a role in the selection process for the Hurling manager for 2009 by Kieran Mulvey in his arbitration findings in early 2008. In good faith, our representatives took part in a number of meetings on behalf of the panel, until it became clear that there was no process really involved. The Board Executive clearly viewed it as a vote, in which they would always have a majority. This was obviously not a "process" by any interpretation of the word.¹³

Clearly the issue of representation is crucial in both cases. In terms of the American Revolution, virtual representation was a core issue in terms of natural justice.

In Britain this was felt to be an unjust argument. Representation in Britain was confined to about 3% of property-owning men and they were de facto controlled by the gentry. The government argued that the colonists had virtual representation of their interests in Westminster. 'We virtually and implicitly allow the institutions of any government of which we enjoy the benefit and solicit the protection,' said Samuel

¹³ Statement from 2008 Cork Senior Hurling Panel, *The Irish Examiner*, Tuesday, January 27, 2009.

Johnson in his political pamphlet *Taxation No Tyranny*. He rejected the plea that the colonists, who had no vote, were unrepresented. 'They are represented,' he said, 'by the same virtual representation as the greater part of England.'¹⁴ The similarity between this virtual representation of the colonists and the virtual representation of the Cork junior clubs and the players on the Cork County Board is clear.

In bringing into question the power relations that exist between the County Board and the players themselves, the panel of 2008 are participating in what Foucault termed to be the political task 'that is inherent in all social existence', namely the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the 'agonism' between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom.¹⁵ I would argue that what these players are attempting is political and revolutionary in the extreme. The act of reifying the panel of 2008, which in many ways is impossible as there is already a panel of 2009 and the 2008 championship is over so it seems an impossibility. In the same way, the Boston Tea Party was similarly impossible. It was the culmination of a resistance movement throughout British America against the Tea Act, passed by in Westminster in 1773. Protestors had successfully prevented the unloading of taxed tea in three other colonies, but in Boston, embattled Royal Governor Thomas Hutchinson refused to allow the tea to be returned to Britain. He apparently did not expect that the protestors would choose to destroy the tea rather than concede the authority of a legislature in which they were not directly represented. Both acts were interruptions in the system of power, as are all revolutions. An 'act', a 'revolution', must change all coordinates, including those of its own measurement and evaluation,¹⁶ and revaluation is part and parcel of any 'revolution'. But as Derrida has noted, 'in this revolution there are only

¹⁴ Samuel Johnson and Arthur Murphy, *The works of Samuel Johnson, LL. D.: with and essay on his life and genius* (Published by A. V. Blake, 1843, version 2), p.430.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power, Essential Works*. 3 vols. edited by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), p.343.

¹⁶ Slavoj Žižek, , 'Class struggle or postmodernism? Yes, please!', pp.121-2.

stages of transition'.¹⁷ If the python is to be transformed, then more than just one gazelle will be needed – different stages are required. Thus the Cork hurling saga began in 2002 and ended only this year with the resignation of the former manager but not of the secretary of the county board. The French and American revolutions lasted for a number of years and there have been many stages of transition in both countries, and in both there is a healthy suspicion of power and hegemony. Indeed both secular republics embody the Foucauldian dictum of the ongoing necessity of 'the analysis of power relations in a given society, their historical formation, the source of their strength or fragility, the conditions that are necessary to transform some or to abolish others'.¹⁸

In fact, the Cork hurling panel of 2008 and the Boston Tea Party and the Storming of the Bastille all qualify as events or interruptions of the hegemonic system of power. They signify beyond themselves, in the terms of Laclau and Mouffe, 'represents the revolutionary process as a whole'. As Laclau argues, to interrupt even without full coherence 'could be a first stage in the emergence of a truth which can be affirmed only by breaking with the coherence of the existing discourses'.¹⁹ Similarly, Derrida often intimated that the key political strategy of deconstruction is, the imminence of an interruption, can be called the other, the revolution, or chaos; it is, in any case, the risk of an instability'.²⁰ And Stuart Hall emphasises the same point: for him, theory, thinking and analysis must seek to interrupt the established or the powerful other of the status quo. He views politics as interruption,²¹ and locates the value of 'Theory' primarily in and as its interruptive capacities, and precisely not in any 'theoretical fluency'.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (California: Stanford University Press Stanford, 2005), p.58.

¹⁸ Foucault, *Power*, 343.

¹⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), p.27.

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, translated by George Collins (London: Verso, 1997), p.29.

²¹ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its theoretical legacies', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp.262-275, p.282.

In this sense, these interruptions are deconstructions, to use the term associated with Jacques Derrida. 'Deconstruction takes place,' Derrida writes, 'it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity'.²² And for Derrida, the idea of a revolution predicated on the future is at the core of the deconstructive project. As Simon Tormey and Jules Townshend have observed ideology emerging from the French Revolution of 1789, which initiated the 'democratic revolution' (a term coined by de Tocqueville), beginning a narrative of growing individual equality and liberty in all spheres of human relations. It started with formal political relations and then throughout the nineteenth century extended into the economic realm (socialism is now seen as a 'moment' in the democratic revolution). By the late twentieth century it had moved into sexual, gender and ethnic relations, as well as into underlying issues to do with peace and ecology, as espoused by the New Social Movements.²³ The movement of such a democratic revolution into the sphere of sporting activity would seem to underline their point.

The term 'democratic revolution' has a specific valence in this discussion. Following on from de Tocqueville, Laclau and Mouffe have probed the nature and epistemology of this term, seeing:

the 'democratic revolution', as a new terrain which supposes a profound mutation at the symbolic level, implies a new form of institution of the social. In earlier societies, organized in accordance with a theological-political logic, power was incorporated in the person of the prince . . . the radical difference which democratic society introduces is that the site of power becomes an empty space . . . The possibility is thus opened up of an unending process of questioning.²⁴

²² Jacques Derrida, 'Letter to a Japanese Friend', in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blind*, edited by Peggy Kamuf (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp.269-276, p.274.

²³ Simon Tormey and Jules Townshend, *Key Thinkers from Critical Theory to Post-Marxism* (London: Sage, 2006), p.98.

²⁴ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.186.

In this term, we can see a resonance with Derrida's notion of democracy to come – the event of the future. It is this orientation to the future, but a future which is open and therefore open to change, that is at the core of these democratic revolutions. Derrida calls this messianism:

the relation to the arrivant who may arrive or who may never arrive-but of whom, by definition, I can know nothing in advance. Except that justice, in the most enigmatic sense of the word, is involved. And thus also revolution, because of what links the event and justice to this absolute rift in the foreseeable concatenation of historical time. It is possible to give up the imagery or the revolutionary rhetoric, or even certain politics of revolution, perhaps even the politics of revolution altogether, but one cannot give up on revolution without giving up both the event and justice.²⁵

The whole tenor of these revolutionary acts is towards the future and towards a sense of justice that is to come, that has not heretofore existed in historical time except as an idea. As the Panel of 2008 put it: 'We have no fear of the laws of the world; when there is a better player he must take our place; when there is a better team against us we will be defeated; when there is a better idea or ideal for Cork Hurling, we will be irrelevant.'²⁶ Indeed one of that panel has just retired so his own aims were those of a justice to come from which he would not benefit. The desire for justice is very much a common cause of these acts and as Deleuze and Guattari note 'desire is revolutionary'.²⁷ And the desire is to change the shape of that python. For Derrida, the place of the political is in a negotiation between the present and between the idea

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001*. Edited by Elizabeth Rottenberg. (California: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp.95-96.

²⁶ Statement from 2008 Cork Senior Hurling Panel, *The Irish Examiner*, Tuesday, January 27, 2009.

²⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone, 1984), p.116.

of democracy to come.²⁸ The role of the intellectual is to voice this negotiation and to make it central to the agenda of the academy and the public sphere in general. Derrida is calling for a 'profound change in international law and its implementation',²⁹ and he is making this call in the name of those who are voiceless in our world, a world of globalised micro and macro-communication where we all-too-often forget about those who are not part of our ongoing electronic and mobile communications networks. He is speaking for the millions of children who die every year because of water:

of the nearly 50 percent of women who are beaten, or victims of violence that sometimes leads to murder (60 million women dead, 30 million women maimed); of the 33 million AIDS sufferers (of whom 90 percent are in Africa, although only 5 percent of the AIDS research budget is allocated to them and drug therapy remains inaccessible outside small Western milieux); I am thinking of the selective infanticides of girls in India and the monstrous working conditions of children in numerous countries; I am thinking of the fact that there are, I believe, a billion illiterate people and 140 million children who have no formal education; I am thinking of the keeping of the death sentence and the conditions of its application in the United States (the only Western democracy in this situation, and a country that does not recognize the convention concerning children's rights either and proceeds, when they reach the age of majority, to the carrying out of sentences that were pronounced against minors; and so on).³⁰

This is the call to democratic revolution that Derrida sees as the vocation of the intellectual and the critic. And in the very making of that call,

²⁸ Derrida, *Negotiations*, pp.179-180.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (California: Stanford University Press Stanford, 2005), p.125.

³⁰ Derrida, *Paper Machine*, pp.125-6.

Derrida is participating in the whole idea of the democratic revolution as he is moving beyond the literary and philosophical text onto the social one. In so doing, he, and indeed this chapter, are breaking down barriers that have traditionally stood in the academy between the literary and the social. There are those who feel that the study of the social should be confined to social scientists and not to those who write in the general mode of literary theory. However, I would argue that so much of the social is created through signs and through language and that the study of the nuances of language and the signifier is a seminal political act in the process of change. All change must be expressed in language and This is the form of critique as espoused by Foucault when he notes that Critique only exists in relation to ‘something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth which it will not know and which it will not be; it watches over a domain which it really wants to police but where it is unable to lay down the law’ (Foucault 1990, 36).³¹

This critique is a form of responsibility, and one that will, eventually, gradually, change the shape of that python. It is easy to feel that nothing changes but in terms of the centrality of systems, as Derrida has pointed out, a lot of the grand narratives have actually and gradually changed through the process of ongoing revolution:

It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated an invariable presence – *eidōs*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth.³²

Here the shape of the python has been changed and quite radically as well. He has noted that if he had to give a name to his writing he would call it ‘a perpetual revolution. For it is necessary in each situation

³¹ Michel Foucault, *Politics of Truth*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), p.25.

³² Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p.353.

to create an appropriate mode of exposition, to invent the law of the singular event'.³³ For he sees deconstruction as a way to keep the event of tradition going, to keep it on the move, so that it can be 'continually translated into new events, continually exposed to a certain revolution in a self-perpetuating autorevolution'.³⁴

The deconstructive post-Marxist Wendy Brown has called this the problem of how to construct 'politics without banisters',³⁵ and it is her that I return to other Irish systems of a far more serious nature than that of the Cork GAA county board. In early June, 2009, the Ryan Report of Child Abuse was published. Images were reported of violence, sexual and physical abuse, cruelty and dehumanizing barbarity that would not have been out of place had they come from Auschwitz or Bergen Belsen. One of the main images left in the mind after two days reporting of brutality was of a twelve year old boy in one of the institutions who was being so badly beaten on a second floor landing that he fell over the banisters and died. The fact that no-one will be charged for this act is a very real indictment of church and state in this country. The forms of critique that we have cited here, the call for a justice to come that we have seen in the different revolutionary acts that have been discussed; all participate in that spirit of revolution. Thus 'democratic revolution' means that all laws, resting on no assured or agreed foundations, are open to question, as are social divisions previously suppressed by an unchallengeable central authority'.³⁶

So when Cork players came out on the field to play in the 2009 championship, there was a lot at stake. The players have won a victory – they have a new manager and they have become transformed from the

³³ Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, interview with Jean Birnbaum, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New Jersey: Melville House Publishing, 2007), 31.

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, edited with a commentary by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p.37.

³⁵ Wendy Brown, *Politics out of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp.91-120, p.93.

³⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.187.

panel of 2008 to the panel of 2009 and have changed the future of their organisation, the python has altered. It may go on to digest yet another meal and other structures may not change, but there is always the possibility of the ongoing questioning of the democratic revolution and it is a revolution that needs to be active on both the cultural and the political spheres. As a nation, we have other revolutionary imperatives to follow. Church and state all require the levels of critique that we have seen at work here. It is our duty and calling to make our democracy in Ireland a democracy to come. The Murphy report, the Ryan report, the collapse of our banks, NAMA and our structural debt are all opportunities for us, as a nation, to take part in the process of democratic revolution.

Encapsulating this, Benjamin Arditì mines the reserves and unearths the political logic of the famous slogan of the ‘events’ of May 1968: ‘Be Realistic: Demand the Impossible!’ (Arditi 2003: 85–9).³⁷ Arditì reads this demand in terms of the deconstructive insight that states of affairs, institutions, and as Protevi adds, ‘sets of positive laws, are deconstructible because they are not justice. Deconstruction is already engaged by this infinite demand of justice ... Deconstruction also finds its “force, its movement or its motivation” in the “always unsatisfied appeal” to justice . . . Deconstruction is democratic justice, responding to the calls from all others’.³⁸ Thus, justice is the simultaneously realistic and yet impossible demand of deconstruction and in Ireland, there is now an unparalleled opportunity to set out to achieve this. It is only in times of difficulty, it is only in times of systemic stress that the critical mass will exist to change that system.

Thus it is the crime of child abuse that has caused the Murphy report to stress the connection, and outline the problematic nature of the connection, between church and state:

³⁷ Benjamin Arditì, ‘Talkin’ ’bout a revolution: the end of mourning’, *parallax*, 27, April–June, 2003,

³⁸ John Protevi, *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida and the Body Politic* (London: Athlone, 2001), pp.69-70.

Monsignor Sheehy, Bishop O'Mahony and Bishop Raymond Field were qualified barristers. Bishop Kavanagh was Professor of Social Science in University College Dublin where both Archbishop Ryan and Archbishop Connell held high ranking academic posts. Despite their participation in civil society, it was not until late 1995 that officials of the Archdiocese first began to notify the civil authorities of complaints of clerical child sexual abuse. In this context it is significant, in the Commission's view, that every bishop's primary loyalty is to the Church itself.³⁹

This is a damning indictment of both church and state, as is the notion of church secrecy in the face of legal investigation. Again the report is forthright:

A similar 'culture of secrecy' was identified by the Attorney General for Massachusetts in his report on child sexual abuse in the Boston Archdiocese. In the case of that diocese, as in the case of Dublin, secrecy "*protected the institution at the expense of children.*"⁴⁰

If one can try to look for some glimmer of optimism in the face of these reports (and it is important to note that the Murphy report only examines a sample of the cases and that there are no reports on most of the other diocese in Ireland so the numbers are far greater than we now know) then it must be based on the formal critique that is found in both the Ryan and the Murphy reports of the cozy cartel that has been church-state relationships in Ireland.

It is only in these times that as well as the Yeatsian beggars changing places, that there may be a change in the nature of the lash – it may be replaced by a system of agreements and ongoing checks and balances

³⁹ *Commission of Investigation: Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin* (Government Publication, (July 2009, Part 1, p. 7

⁴⁰ Murphy Report, Part 1, p.8.

where rights and responsibilities are subject to ongoing critique and where systems are seen as contingent on their context and open to ongoing questioning and change. It is only in such a system of ongoing democratic revolution that the Lacanian master will be the people themselves.