

**Censoring Nationalisms:  
Literature, Legislation and National Identities in Ireland, 1923-58**

**Brad Kent**

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## Abstract

### Censoring Nationalisms:

#### Literature, Legislation and National Identities in Ireland, 1923-58

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This thesis examines the relationship between literature and State-directed censorship in the process of national identity formation in post-independence Ireland, from 1923 to 1958. It traces the institutionalisation and workings of censorship by providing culturally and historically informed readings of banned books written by Irish writers, State, Church and personal archival documents, and the secular and religious media of the day. This interdisciplinary cultural approach allows for the analysis and articulation of the bottom-up resistance from those who were censored and fought the censorship, the top-down imposition of norms and mores through the State's banning of literature, and the informal censorship that occurred at points in between the writers and the State at the hands of booksellers, librarians, social groups and literary critics. By undertaking such an inclusive methodology, the thesis provides a much fuller understanding of how censorship and the resistance it engenders function than what has previously been offered in other studies; there is therefore a simultaneous focus on the official State nationalism that censors and the oppositional nationalisms that are censored. It develops this dual focus by arguing that censorship is a crucial means of determining the cultural borders of

the nation in terms of what it permits and prohibits from circulating within the territory of the State. More exactly, it demonstrates that prohibited literature contains ideas and images that cannot be assimilated to the constructs of official nationalism. Furthermore, the thesis challenges the concept of institutions as they have been theorised by political scientists. While institutions are defined by their ability to remain resistant to change, the thesis argues that such a concept is predicated on the fact that theorists and empiricists have focused on what are termed “hard” institutions. Instead, censorship is posited as a “soft” institution for its relatively more malleable quality that allows it to be shaped by those in power while still conforming to other characteristics of institutions. Finally, the thesis examines the legacy of censorship, specifically through how censored books are and are not discussed in the decades after they are banned and unbanned. It makes the case that in order to undo the harm the State causes to a society through censorship, literary scholars need to continue to prioritise the discussion and analysis of formerly censored books and the power structures of the society that censored them.

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## Introduction

In Judeo-Christian beliefs, censorship has existed since the dawn of humankind. The Tree of Knowledge bore the forbidden fruit that Adam and Eve were instructed not to taste. When they finally gave into temptation and bit the apple, they became corrupted and tainted with sin. They fell from the state of Grace, which in this case was blissful ignorance, and were banned from Eden for daring to defy God. For their attainment of knowledge, the future of humankind was eternally damned. The Book of Genesis, which describes the foundational moment of the world, is therefore explicit about the dangers and repercussions involved in challenging authority. Knowledge is not to be taken lightly: it must be highly regulated and should only be accessed by those who are capable of appreciating and properly using its power.

Closely associated with this originating myth is the importance placed upon the "Word." This is emphasised in the Gospel According to John: "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God."<sup>1</sup> There was no light until He verbalised His permission for it to exist: "Let there be light."<sup>2</sup> And so it was as He commanded the sky, the earth, the sea, and all living creatures into being. In giving His son Jesus to the world, "The Word became flesh."<sup>3</sup> The Word was therefore both the mind of God and God incarnate. Because of its divinity it was sacred, and so the Word, and by association *all* words, must be respected and feared.<sup>4</sup> Under such conditions, literary censorship is both understandable and natural.

The verb "to censor" is derived from the Latin word *censere*, meaning to estimate, rate, appraise and assess. The noun form "censor," which refers to a practitioner of censorship, has its origins in ancient Rome. A censor was a title the Roman Senate

bestowed upon two magistrates “who drew up the register or census of the citizens . . . and had the supervision of public morals.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, “Adherence to one formal belief system, in which articles of faith were codified, became intimately allied with government of the state.”<sup>6</sup> Though the practice of censorship is embedded in human history, it was the Romans, with their genius for administration, who first institutionalised it in 443 B.C.E. In so doing, they effectively imbricated both morality and citizenship in censorship.

In this context, Nigel Smith defines censorship as a negotiation between the personal expressions, thought and desires of an individual and the politics of the community to which the individual belongs.<sup>7</sup> Politics is understood as the public conglomeration of norms and mores that define the community. The community collectively deems what is vulgar, obscene and indecent by what it is willing to include and exclude in its attempts to create and maintain a stable society. How such definitions are arrived at and how censorship is structured and exercised are found in the community’s legislative system.

The work of Michel Foucault is particularly enlightening for understanding censorship in this regard. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault interrogates the workings of the western European juridical-disciplinary system from the time of the absolute monarchs to the late nineteenth century. He traces the ways in which society has treated its criminals, from diagnosis to the drafting of laws, and from sentencing to discipline, punishment, correction and release. In Marxist terms, he notes that industrialisation and the development of capitalism were largely responsible for the humanistic Enlightenment reforms to the judicial system that used to thrive upon blood thirsty spectacles and

enforced labour: “[T]he industrial system requires a free market in labour and, in the nineteenth century, the role of forced labour in the mechanisms of punishment diminishes accordingly and ‘corrective’ detention takes its place.”<sup>8</sup> Though Foucault examines the penitentiary system, this notion of “corrective” measures is useful to keep in mind when discussing censorship and the knowledge-power matrix that informs it.

Foucault articulates how this knowledge-power matrix functions: “We should admit . . . that power produces knowledge . . . ; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”<sup>9</sup> Because those who are in power, such as censors, control knowledge, they decide what should and should not be disseminated, thereby reinforcing the power that originally put them in their positions. Says Foucault, “The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power.”<sup>10</sup> Although censorship in some countries has led to the imprisonment, disappearance and deaths of censored authors (death being the ultimate censorship, or means of silencing the individual’s words and ideas), most modern States have been subtler. Like the public execution, the publication of lists of banned works and authors controls ideas and people and sets an example while revealing and reactivating the power of the State and its censors. While those who have transgressed the society’s norms are censored, in a sense having been served a “corrective” measure, future writers are thereby warned of what may follow if their words are not considered “correct” by the censoring powers. The body is therefore left unharmed while the “soul” (which Foucault views as the more recent site of correction) is reformed.

Foucault's theorisation becomes more directly related to censorship when he notes that under the notion of the social contract,

[t]he citizen is presumed to have accepted once and for all, with the laws of society, the very law by which he may be punished. Thus the criminal appears as a juridically paradoxical being. He has broken the pact, he is therefore the enemy of society as a whole, but he participates in the punishment that is practised upon him.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of citizenship and censorship, the censored writer is therefore an "enemy," a transgressor or a newly marginalised individual, while remaining a part of the society as a citizen who implicitly participates in his punishment. At the same time, the censored writer in the democratic society exercises his or her rights to free speech and the ability to critique the society of which he or she is a part. But, Foucault claims, the criminal (like the censored writer) is set apart from the dangerous Other: "Indeed, he is worse than an enemy, for it is from within society that he delivers his blows – he is nothing less than a traitor, a 'monster.'"<sup>12</sup> This explanation is particularly helpful for understanding the position of the censored writer who remains within the confines of the nation – but what of the exiled writer who is censored? Foucault is not concerned with such crimes, for the crimes he discusses are dependent upon the presence of the transgressor, the criminal, whereas writing can be done from elsewhere and transported as a commodity. This in turn has led to trials against other parties such as presses, editors, importers and booksellers.

Foucault further notes that in many cases the concern is not necessarily with the criminal but the effect of the transgression and the presence of the transgressor on the society as a whole. In order for punishment to be effective, a rule of "perfect certainty" must be developed in which

[t]he laws that define the crime and lay down the penalties must be perfectly clear. . . . These laws must be published, so that everyone has access to them; what is needed is not oral traditions and customs, but a written legislation which can be ‘the stable monument of the social pact’, printed texts available to all.<sup>13</sup>

The law needs to be defined in print, thus highlighting the importance and value placed on the written word as something that both guides and defines it. At the same time, censored texts are those believed, in one or several ways, to undermine and threaten the very norms, mores, and boundaries of the legislative society that seeks “stability.”<sup>14</sup>

Foucault writes: “The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*.”<sup>15</sup> “Penalty” can be read here as “censorship,” and as the means of “normalising” literature, values and identity. Through legislation, the State therefore hopes to achieve a “stable” and “normalised” society. In this case, it is in the power of the State that it is able to censor, that the authority to censor is invested, and through which what is and is not “normal” in terms of the society is defined. The drive to normalise society, to stabilise and define itself, is therefore at the heart of censorship.

More commonly, censorship is thought to occur in autocratic societies. In Communist era Poland, for example, the regime sought such absolute control that even the word “censorship” was censored.<sup>16</sup> The Government of the Soviet Union maintained power over its people through the careful regulation of information in conjunction with a police force that willingly supported and enforced the law.<sup>17</sup> And in Pakistan, successive governments have long had antagonistic relationships with the country’s press, a fact that

was highlighted in October 1979 when a total censorship was imposed on all printed and audio-visual media.<sup>18</sup>

Apartheid-era South Africa was similarly draconian, first institutionalising censorship with the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. A certain amount of dissent was permitted to allow for *the appearance* of a liberal and tolerant society, but the channels of communication were largely denied to opponents and critics of the system.<sup>19</sup> The Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963 further entrenched State control of the dissemination of information, granting the Minister of the Interior the power to ban books that were thought to be subversive. This act was amended in 1978, but only after the controversial banning the year before of Leroux's *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein* which has been described by many critics as the best satire in Afrikaans.<sup>20</sup> The new legislation allowed for a committee of experts – composed of literary critics, professors, writers and artists – to weigh in on the merit of a work to protect the minority, in this case defined as the artistic community, from the tyranny of the dominant norms and mores of the majority. However, it is doubtful that such amending legislation would have been affected by the banning of a Bantu novel or an African National Congress manifesto. The minority in this case was still white and the problem seems to have arisen from the fact that the novel was well written *and* written by an Afrikaaner in Afrikaans, the language of the governing oppressor.

In the post-Cold War world, China is often held up as the extreme case in point. For example, though China had been in the process of liberalising its airwaves, in August 2005 the State announced that it would step up the censorship of foreign television channels and imported programs. This tightening of the State's control over media was

extended to newspapers, books, and audio-visual products in an attempt to safeguard what the Culture Ministry defined as “national cultural safety.” Much of the concern stemmed from what the State viewed as the dominant western ideology and politics embedded in foreign culture. The State rationalised that it had to protect the Chinese population from these potentially harmful influences. Never once was it implied that the State might have borne some of the responsibility for the fact that its citizens were not capable of filtering out western ideology or that they were responsible enough to make informed choices for themselves. Of course, this idea strikes against the more democratic aspects of society that Chinese leaders have long suppressed. And an individual’s ability to recognize and critique western ideology would in all probability translate to an ability to recognize and critique Chinese ideology which would effectively contribute to undermining the State.

While autocratic societies provide some of the more obvious and harrowing examples of censorship, democratic States have also demonstrated a willingness and need to censor. In Ontario, the provincial government passed into law the Film Classification Act on May 30, 2005, which revoked the Ontario Film Review Board’s power to ban films. In cases where the Board feels that a film breaches obscenity laws, it will pass the film on to police who will then determine if charges are warranted under the Criminal Code. The new law was passed because of the controversy surrounding Catherine Breillat’s ardent *Fat Girl* in 2001. Breillat’s film was originally not allowed in Ontario theatres because of its depiction of teen sex, but the Film Review Board reversed its decision in 2003, a move that was viewed by many as underscoring a fear that the Board would lose a court challenge. Given that the film, as a relatively modestly budgeted

French language feature, would not have received many screenings beyond small art house cinemas, its banning suggests that important cultural values were at stake. And certainly, on the surface, they were: the dominant cultural and political opinion is that viewing minors in sexual acts leads to sliding down the slippery slope into child pornography and the sexual exploitation of children. What needed to be considered, therefore, was the overall aesthetic project, the context of the film, and the handling of the subject matter. Having supposedly considered these carefully, the Board judged that the film was irresponsible and, as such, should be banned. But the reversal of the judgment two years later suggests that the initial ruling was perhaps not as carefully considered as it was first claimed.

The treatment of Breillat's film at the outset of the twenty-first century in one of the world's most democratic societies that also has one of the strongest codes of human rights underlines how prevalent censorship is at a State level. If a society is openly pluralist and strenuously protects the rights of cultural difference and freedom of expression, there should be a corresponding decline in the amount of censorship undertaken by that society's State; and the small amount of Government interference in cinema and publishing in Ontario attests to this theory. The reason for this is simple: if the society legally safeguards and promotes pluralism, its accommodation of norms and mores must be more elastic than societies that either do not promote pluralism and free speech or are philosophically opposed to them. Because of the heightened tolerance of difference in a pluralist society that advocates free speech, there is a minimal need to police deviance as deviance is less readily identified – it is everywhere and thus, within a certain but relatively wide scope, it becomes the norm. If one imagines a society's drive



to censorship in these terms, then the oppressive censorship regime that ruled the first four decades of post-independence Ireland is better understood.

According to Eli Oboler, the Ireland of this period was “the most puritanical community since John Calvin’s Geneva in the sixteenth century.”<sup>21</sup> Having fought a long war against British rule followed by a Civil War amongst themselves, the Irish were in need of measures to create a stable society, of which censorship was one. As censorship has always been a means for a community to define itself, it is not surprising that censorship in Ireland became an institution explicitly tied to ideas of the nation, of who and what were and were not Irish. This was heightened by the fact that Ireland was a newly independent country attempting to define and mould itself in its own fashion. The people in favour of censorship correspondingly couched their arguments in nationalist rhetoric, seeing the country as a pure repository of the Catholic Gaelic *zeitgeist* that needed to be protected from the invading immoral literature that came to its shores from the continent, the United States, and especially Britain. Irish censorship in the period of 1923 to 1958 must therefore be examined in the context of a parochial postcolonial nationalism.

This study begins with 1923 because that is the year in which censorship legislation was first enacted with the passing of the Censorship of Films Act. It is also the first year to see relative stability after the achievement of Irish independence in 1922 and the civil war that followed. The study ends with the year 1958 for three main reasons. First, 1958 has been signalled as the beginning of an outward-looking Irish society that was ushered in with *The First Programme of Economic Expansion*. This was a policy turn that eventually helped foster the sort of multinational dependency that was

evident during the boom years of the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s. Before this time, for the first thirty-five years after independence was achieved, Ireland attempted to construct an insular and self-sustaining nation. With its protectionism of material and cultural products and narrow foreign policies, highlighted by its economic war with England in the 1930s and its neutrality in World War Two, the State was relatively successful. Its censorship of evil and foreign literature was both a symptom and a product of this insular mentality. Second, 1958 was also the first full year of a more liberal Censorship Board that followed the acrimonious dissolution of the Board in 1957 after years of conservative Catholic control. This is not to say that the Board had suddenly become liberal; the banning of serious Irish writers such as Edna O'Brien, John McGahern, John Broderick, Lee Dunne and Maurice Leitch in the 1960s bears this out. But the Censorship Board of 1958, and its successors, did become more considerate in its refusal to ban some of the more established classics and writers than had past Boards. Finally, 1958 is a terminal year because it saw the last concerted vigilance campaign waged by Catholic pressure groups against evil literature.

Broader and more general works reveal the importance that understanding censorship has for making sense of this period of Irish history. John H. Whyte, for example, calls the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929 the "government's most famous measure to safeguard traditional moral values."<sup>22</sup> This is an impressive pronouncement indeed considering that it appears in a study devoted to the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Irish State and includes such scandals and debacles as the Mother and Child Scheme of 1951. And it is a point that is supported by other critics, such as Donal Ó Drisceoil.<sup>23</sup> J.J. Lee and Terence Brown have argued that the

censorship supported the *status quo* by shutting down debate and refusing discussions that might have helped to benefit the poorer classes of Irish society, not to mention women, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities.<sup>24</sup> According to these four scholars, the censorship is indicative, not exceptional, of Irish society and its dominant nationalism during the period covered by this study. Whether the nationalism is driven by the maintenance of material conditions or theological concerns, the point is that the censorship worked in such a way as to support both the religious and class structures, which were themselves mutually reinforcing. By working towards a theory of censorship, as this study undertakes, one can better understand the effects censorship has upon national identity formation and, in turn, how this contested identity becomes a site of power between the various groups that struggle over the direction and representation of the nation.

As the State has a central role in institutional censorship, cultural and political specificity is important to understanding the practice. Censorship in Ireland first came under detailed academic scrutiny with the work of M.H. Adams in 1968, though Norman St. John-Stevas included a brief chapter on Ireland in his survey of censorship across the globe in 1956.<sup>25</sup> Adams' study, however seminal and excellent an historical work it may be, is largely apologetic, excusing censorship in Ireland because it kept Irish society a "wholesome" place compared to the hedonism and degradation that was supposedly swamping other Western countries at the time of his book's publication. He argues:

The possible danger to public morality which a 'marginal' book might offer is outweighed by the constant danger of heavy-handed censorship turning Ireland into a cultural ghetto – indeed, into something worse than a ghetto for, in addition to warding off foreign influences, it also has expelled its own nonconformists and rejected invaluable criticism of its own social norms and customs.<sup>26</sup>

This climate of promoting ignorance, he claims, might very well have its drawbacks, for Irish schoolchildren are described as “artificially protected, not educated.” However, he concludes, “Dublin is still a pleasant place to walk in where sex is embodied in living persons, not sidewalk hoardings and neon-signs.”<sup>27</sup> Adams therefore implies – and oddly celebrates – that the pleasantness of Dublin’s streets is the direct result of a culture of ignorance in which children are raised and taught by rote as opposed to by analysis, that is, by reading texts that challenge their ideas and values. As well, Adams’ definition of Dublin as “pleasant” hinges upon it as a place in which *to walk*, as distinct from a place in which *to live*.

More recently, Peter Martin has written on political, cinematic and literary censorship in the two Irelands from 1922 to 1939.<sup>28</sup> While Martin had access to State and Church archives, there exist more than two hundred files held back by the Department of Justice to which he did not have access. Though it is an excellent examination of some aspects of censorship, Martin’s study suffers from the same myopic methodology of Adams that is symptomatic of researchers who confine themselves within disciplinary boundaries. Both of these historians, while they study and construct a given narrative of official censorship, fail to theorise censorship as a practice and take into account the actual artifacts that have been censored. Martin attempts to excuse himself from so doing by claiming disciplinary boundaries do not permit him to go into literary or cinematic readings. This is an astonishing statement given that he is a historian: in effect, he refuses to interrogate primary sources, which is what the censored books and films are. It is curious that not once are such scruples raised over quoting and

examining other forms of writing, such as the archival evidence he meticulously documents.

Other works have engaged with different forms of censorship in Ireland: Louisa Burns-Bisogno, and Mary Corcoran and Mark O'Brien have examined the censorship of Irish nationalism (particularly the nationalism of Northern Irish paramilitary groups) in the media of the United States, Britain and Ireland.<sup>29</sup> Kieran Woodman and Donal Ó Drisceoil have undertaken excellent studies of the media and wartime related political censorship, respectively, while Brendan Ryan provides a memoir that becomes little more than a rant against the practice of censorship in his quest to celebrate himself.<sup>30</sup> Julia Carlson's collection of interviews with Irish writers who were banned in the post-1960 period is a useful starting place for understanding the personal and professional toll that having books banned took on the artists themselves.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, Joan FitzPatrick Dean and Kevin Rockett are exemplary for their analyses of Irish theatre and film censorship, respectively, that employ interdisciplinary methodologies.<sup>32</sup> Both make use of archival sources in discussing the social and political context of their studies and demonstrate a firm and admirable knowledge of how their media function. That is, while Rockett discusses at length how the technology of film and the spaces of the cinema necessitated a censorship that was specifically geared to the medium, so Dean integrates the space of theatres and the physical, live nature of performance in helping readers understand the special demands of the State on the theatre. This dissertation, which has been written under the auspices of the PhD in Humanities Program, embraces these interdisciplinary approaches; it is itself the result of spending much time with literary scholars, historians and political scientists, to name

only the most obvious influences. And it addresses the specific questions and strategies raised by a censorship of print media, in particular the use of words and language and the strategies and conventions of different genres.

In discussing the issue of censorship in the context of nationalism, this study proposes a theoretical model in Chapter One based upon a mix of political and literary theories, specifically postcolonialism and institutionalism. It discusses the debates in the literature of nationalism in order to articulate for the reader how nationalism functions and elaborate more upon the relationship between nationalism and censorship. It then posits a theory of censorship that accounts for it as an institution with its own demands and logic and also for literature as a subject that has its own conventions that need to be considered. Finally, it proposes that in the spaces between the institution and the literature, parties intervening as agents of censorship can either facilitate or hinder the practice, effectively debunking notions of censorship as merely the vacuum-sealed struggle between the State and its writers.

Chapter Two begins with a brief history of the institutionalisation of censorship in Ireland. It focuses on the major debates of the period and highlights the various groups that attempted to affect how it would function. Once it was institutionalised, the censorship experienced some growing pains in the first few years, as those responsible for it sorted out exactly how their roles were to be defined. Simultaneously, there were questions raised from the public, from both the more conservative and liberal sections of society, that forced the State to define more clearly how the censorship would function and what roles the public would play in regards to the institution. This early history ends with the first major challenge posed to the institution through the Irish Academy of

Letters, the most powerful group to represent those whose works were at the heart of the censorship debates and whose livelihoods were most affected. The result of this case, in conjunction with the precedents set by other early decisions, had a dramatic impact on the practice of censorship for the succeeding thirteen years.

Chapter Three examines informal censorship and its relationship to formal censorship. It begins by re-examining one of the biggest political crises to envelope the State in its early years: the Mayo librarianship. The case of Dunbar-Harrison, a Protestant, unilingual Anglophone sent by the State in 1930 to run a library in largely Catholic and Gaelic-speaking Co. Mayo, is most often discussed from the angles of high politics in which the main concerns are language and religion. This chapter presents an alternative, cultural reading of this case that had at its heart the issue of censorship, specifically whether she was a suitable librarian to determine what her constituents should be allowed to read. The opinions of Irish librarians in the 1930s are surveyed to illustrate how the profession envisioned its role in censorship. The chapter then shifts its focus to a heretofore unknown case involving a series of physical confrontations between Patrick Kavanagh and Dublin booksellers in October 1938. It demonstrates that many booksellers, like librarians, were acting – and were expected to act – as agents of censorship. Having provided evidence of the prevalence and expectation of informal censorship, the chapter ends with an examination of Liam O’Flaherty’s banned book *The Puritan*. This novel was written in response to the banning of his book *The House of Gold* and represents a scathing indictment of the censorious nature of Irish society from the point of view of one who had been deemed “obscene” and “indecent” by the State.

For all of these reasons, *The Puritan* presents the critic with an ideal example of how literature is employed to critique the State – and suffers for doing so.

Chapter Four is an in-depth examination of the writer Sean O’Faolain, perhaps the most tireless critic of Irish society and censorship. It demonstrates how his work – banned books, historical studies, and polemical journalism – functioned as resistance literature. The threat that O’Faolain posed to the State was through his revisionist resistance, which is explained and articulated through postcolonial theory. However, debates within Irish Studies have been traditionally polarised between revisionists, who tend to demean and criticise the potential value of postcolonial theory to understanding Irish society, and postrevisionists, who employ postcolonial theory and have abused it to provide their nationalist politics with the legitimacy offered by appeals to “high” theory. By examining O’Faolain’s revisionism of and resistance to the Irish State and the constructs of official nationalism, this chapter demonstrates how postcolonial theory and resistance can actually be used to further the revisionist project; in effect, it argues that the two are not antagonistic. In fact, O’Faolain’s resistance reveals how critics who work within a nationalist paradigm are flawed in believing that postcolonial theory legitimates their argument.

Chapter Five returns the study to the institutional focus of Chapter Two. While Chapter Two describes the institutionalisation of censorship, Chapter Five examines changes to the institution that occurred from the early forties to the late fifties. The issue of change is important to show that censorship did not function in a unified manner over the years, and came to reflect a combination of forces that were at work in Irish society and the composition of the Censorship Board. Change is also important for how it has



been a contested concept in the field of institutional theory, specifically in how it has challenged the more stable model of institutions posited by historical institutionalists. By tracing the changes made to the institution over time, this chapter will provide an argument for how institutionalism might consider and more effectively account for endogenous change.

Chapter Six appeals to border theory, a body of knowledge that has been employed by both those who examine institutions and those who work within postcolonial studies, to provide an analogous theoretical model for understanding censorship. Censorship itself functions as a border, allowing that which is acceptable to the State to circulate within its territory, while excluding that which is not acceptable. The issue of borders is a particularly thorny issue in Irish Studies because the island of Ireland has been partitioned to create two States. The Northern Irish writer Benedict Kiely, who has intervened in the partition debate in both historical texts and novels, is examined as one who, like Northern Ireland, has characteristics that are both assimilable and unassimilable to the constructs of official Irish nationalism. This is highlighted in a detailed reading of his early work with a particular emphasis on his novel *In a Harbour Green*, the first book written by a Northern Irish writer to be banned in the South despite his overtly nationalist politics of the time.

Finally, Chapter Seven provides a reading of the history of critical and institutional receptions of Kate O'Brien's *Mary Lavelle*. It argues that literary explanations for and analyses of the reasons for the banning of the novel are significant under-readings that serve to perpetuate the novel's marginalisation in the Irish canon. Indeed, in critical studies *Mary Lavelle* is identified as being banned for merely one or

two possible subversive reasons that ignore more subtle and sophisticated aspects. As such, though these under-readings attempt to make a claim for the book's place in the canon, their lack of sophistication in fact makes the case for another form of that marginalisation first achieved through censorship. Because the government's files on the banning of *Mary Lavelle* are not available (either they were never written, were lost or are yet to have been made available to the National Archives by the Department of Justice) the case for multi-layered readings of censored texts is essential. This chapter argues that while the deformative effects of censorship might be more evident in the years in which it is practised most severely, they last long afterwards and stretch into the consciousness of contemporary society. It thereby appeals to critics and scholars to continue the task of undoing the more harmful effects of censorship in the succeeding years.

As this final chapter demonstrates, censorship as it was practised in the past has immediate and pressing implications on the present even when that past is distant and the institution has been liberalised or its mechanisms dismantled. In order to understand how censorship functions in contemporary society, it is imperative that it must first be understood and examined in its past manifestations. It is with this in mind that the study begins with the origins of censorship in the newly independent Ireland after it first proposes a theoretical lens through which Irish censorship can be effectively explained.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> John, 1.1.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis, 1.3.

<sup>3</sup> John, 1.14.

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<sup>4</sup> Eli Oboler argues, "Very simply put, this comes down to saying that it must be logical and reasonable, once one has accepted the premise that God *is* the Word, that anyone who 'profanes' the Word – by blasphemy, obscenity, or pornography – is really profaning the center of faith, the core of belief, the Holy of Holies." Eli Oboler, *The Fear of the Word: Censorship and Sex* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1974), 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>6</sup> Siobhan Dowd, Foreword to *Banned Books: Literature Suppressed on Religious Grounds*, by Margaret Bald (New York: Facts on File: 1998), x.

<sup>7</sup> Nigel Smith, "Preface," in *Literature and Censorship*, ed. Nigel Smith (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1993), viii.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 25.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: Random House, 1994), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Donald R. Shanor, *Behind the Lines: The Private War Against Soviet Censorship* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 1. See also Harold Swayze, *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946-1959* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

<sup>18</sup> Amir Niazi, *The Web of Censorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship: Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>20</sup> J.C.W. Van Rooyen, *Censorship in South Africa* (Cape Town: Juta & Co., 1987), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Oboler, *The Fear of the Word*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> John H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1980), 37.

<sup>23</sup> Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945: Neutrality, Politics, and Society* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>24</sup> J.J. Lee *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 158; and Terence Brown. *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), 199.

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<sup>25</sup> M.H. Adams, *Censorship: The Irish Experience* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1968); Norman St. John-Stewas, *Obscenity and the Law* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956), 177-88.

<sup>26</sup> Adams, *Censorship*, 194.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands, 1922-1939* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Louisa Burns-Bisogno, *Censoring Irish Nationalism: The British, Irish, and American Suppression of Republican Images in Film and Television, 1909-1995* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997); and Mary Corcoran and Mark O'Brien, ed., *Political Censorship and the Democratic State: The Irish Broadcasting Ban* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Kieran Woodman, *Media Control in Ireland, 1923-1983* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985); Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*; and Brendan Ryan, *Keeping us in the Dark: Censorship and Freedom of Information in Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> Julia Carlson. *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> Joan FitzPatrick Dean, *Riot and Great Anger: Stage Censorship in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); and Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship: A Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

## Chapter One: Censorship, Nationalism and Theory

The Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, or "list of prohibited books," is the best known challenge to States' monopoly on officially sanctioned censorship. The *Index* was drawn up in 1564 under the watchful eyes of Pope Pius IV, its main purpose being to ban works based upon their perceived threats to the Church. The majority of these bannings were due to the books' philosophical differences to Church doctrine, most often interpreted and labelled as heresy and blasphemy. A congregation was convened to update the *Index*, which it did faithfully and regularly. It was not until the Second Vatican Council was enacted in 1966 that the *Index* was abrogated and thus ceased to dictate Catholic readings.

The effects of the *Index* over the four centuries it existed were felt across national borders. In Catholic-dominated polities like Quebec, for example, the *Index* was not only upheld by the Church and its disciples, its influence was great enough to make obtaining books listed on it extremely difficult.<sup>1</sup> Though the Church was universal in its worldview, it still had to act within the borders of different States. As its rules were not binding in the material world without State support, it was left to States to physically enforce their own forms of censorship. Each State, responsible for and to its own citizenry, is therefore empowered with creating its own forms of censorship – or eschewing them entirely. Because each State also reflects and dictates the cultural specificity of its people through its legislative system, the institutional censorship it creates is a manifestation of the dominant, official values of the polity. It is through the process of legislating for a given people that State-run censorship and nationalism become intricately linked. Therefore, to secure an understanding of how censorship

functions within the borders of the State, one must simultaneously seek to understand the practice and theory of nationalism.

### *Contextualising and Theorising Nationalism*

The literature on nationalism has been largely shaped by debates between two main camps. The first of these camps is the primordialist/perennialist, the second being the modernist. Primordialists argue, by and large, that the origins of modern nations and nationalism are constructed upon pre-existing groups, or peoples, that formed bonds based upon language, blood, customs, race and territory. Modernists, however, counter that without the technology of modernity and the power and far-reaching influence of State institutions, modern nations could not have formed.<sup>2</sup> Anthony Smith, perhaps the most well known expounder of the primordialist position, attempts to make a small differentiation between primordialists and perennialists, stating that perennialists adopt an empirical and historical view of nations having existed in pre-modern epochs, and they are thereby separated from “any ideological allegiances *per se*.”<sup>3</sup> Here his fine line of distinction between the primordialists and perennialists followed by the “*per se*” reveals a play with semantics and an unease that he feels at the baggage associated with being defined a primordialist. He displays a willingness to disengage himself with the primordialist school, though he still manages to argue many of its viewpoints. As such, perennialists can be absorbed into the primordialist school quite readily.

John Hutchinson, a former student of Smith's, attempts to overthrow these neatly defined camps by adding an additional one: he refers to himself as an ethno-symbolist. While ethno-symbolists make many primordialist claims, they present a withdrawal of

sorts from the primordialist and perennialist schools and a move towards a greater acceptance of the role of States in nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Modernists, Hutchinson argues, make three important distinctions: 1) ethnic communities are cultural units, whereas nations are political units based on citizenship; 2) earlier communities were culturally heterogeneous, whereas modern nations have a standardised homogeneous high culture that cements the society; and 3) ethnic groups occupy niches, whereas nations seek to be total societies wherein a hegemonic state penetrates all sectors.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, the primordialist position tends to conflate and essentialise to a large degree the ethnic group and the idea of the nation as a people. Where Hutchinson falters is in how he attempts to make the modernist position completely ignorant of ethnic groups as being important in the composition of the nation. Modernists do, in fact, account for ethnic groups in the make-up of the modern nation. Where they differ from the primordialists is that instead of accepting ethnies as natural givens, modernists view ethnies as constructs that, while they might not exist outside the system of human ordering and hierarchies, are accepted as natural givens by nationalists. In addition, while modernists might hold that the modern nation has a standardised homogeneous high culture, it is inaccurate of Hutchinson to imply that they do not acknowledge that heterogeneity exists *within* that nation; in fact, a large part of their argument is that all societies and nations *are* heterogeneous. This highlights another difference between the camps: while modernists are largely willing to see the development and construction of nations as a complex process that defies easy answers, primordialists tend to simplify and essentialise where theories cannot be provided. In effect, it is easier to notch an outcome up to human nature than to investigate the process or processes that affect and influence that outcome.

In describing his own viewpoint, John Breuilly offers a succinct definition of the modernist position: "Nationalism is inconceivable without the state and vice versa."<sup>6</sup> Expanding upon Breuilly, Montserrat Guibernau claims that nationalism is "an ideology closely related to the rise of the nation-state and bound up with ideas about popular sovereignty and democracy brought about by the French and American Revolutions."<sup>7</sup> These revolutions essentially replaced the aristocratic mindset of "*L'etat, c'est moi*" with the populous "*L'etat, c'est le peuple*." This sovereign citizenship of the Enlightenment era was then driven back by the onset of German romantic nationalism that, Guibernau says, emphasised "common language, blood and soil as constitutive elements of the *Volk*."<sup>8</sup> It might thus be argued that the original debates began between the primordialists (German romantic nationalists) and the modernists (French and American Revolutionaries) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But what is most important here is how Guibernau links the notion of a people and the politicisation of this people.

Like Guibernau, Elie Kedourie, in one of the first studies on nationalism, locates the invention of nationalism as a doctrine in Europe at the outset of the nineteenth century. "It pretends to supply a criterion," he says, "for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states."<sup>9</sup> Kedourie's use of the words "invented" and "pretends" implies that nationalism is a construct, that it is not natural, and that it is contrary to the factual. The doctrine of nationalism is posited to legitimise the power of a population, which thereby implies that the claims these nationalist groups make are otherwise illegitimate. What he fails to both state and



analyse is how such a doctrine might in fact *not* be a legitimate or effective means of achieving power or what doctrine, if not nationalism, should oppressed groups put forth to do so.<sup>10</sup>

However, Hans Kohn, a contemporary of Kedourie who also situates the advent of nationalism around the time of the French and American Revolutions, notes *how* the more primordialist position came about and its adherents began to define and defend its position. Nations and national characters, he says,

are not determined prehistorically or biologically, nor are they fixed for all time; they are the product of social and intellectual development, of countless gradations of behavior and reaction, some of which are hardly discernible in the flux of the past, from which the historian selects what seem to him to be the essential and characteristic elements in a pattern of almost confusing complexity.<sup>11</sup>

History and historians, in their selective examinations of nations and peoples, are thereby held responsible for having created these groups as ethnies, as natural givens. The disavowal and distrust of nationalism, specifically of the primordialist position, that is evident in both Kedourie and Kohn is understandable: Kedourie wrote his book in the aftermath of World War II while Kohn, a Jew that had been raised in Prague, wrote in exile during the war. For both of these men, the myths of German romantic nationalism had very tangible and frightening implications over a century after it had first inflected the more civic-minded nationalism that had risen out of the revolutionary atmosphere of the late eighteenth century.

This unease with nationalism is evident in several theorists who seem to alternate between the modernist and primordialist camps. John Armstrong, whose book title *Nations Before Nationalism* signals his primordialist leanings, provides the caveat that “there is nothing predetermined about the boundaries that distinguish an ethnic

collectivity; but one can point to ways in which these boundaries differ, notably in persistence, from those identifying a class.”<sup>12</sup> Armstrong acknowledges to some extent that ethnicity is a construct that needs to be examined, not necessarily naturalised. He allows that there is a degree of fluidity in these groups and how they are defined, and that they might shift and change with time. Tom Nairn provides the most apt metaphor to describe this nationalist position, comparing it to Janus, the two-faced deity. He posits that “modernising ambition and novel cults of a particular past and tradition notoriously co-exist within most varieties of nationalism: the backward- and forward-looking faces of any discrete population or area struggling for tolerable survival and prosperity.”<sup>13</sup> Essentially, nationalism looks at the nation’s past (real and/or constructed) while looking forward to the future, whether it is a future of modernity and prosperity, national liberation, or national expansion.

The fusion of these simultaneously backward- and forward-looking aspects of nationalism is closely aligned with the construct of the essentialised national ideal. The national ideal, what the primordialists endemically naturalise and refer to as the *zeitgeist* of the ethnic group that forms the nation, is explained by Eugene O’Brien through Lacanian psychoanalysis. O’Brien adopts Lacan’s concept of *méconnaissance*, the misrecognition of a mirror image, to demonstrate that in the case of nationalism the individual misrecognises the ideal image of the national spirit. The ideal image of the national spirit is held up to the individual as something towards which the self should aspire. Try though an individual might, the problem is that the self can never attain this ideal.<sup>14</sup> The construct of a national identity by the official or prevailing nationalism is therefore that with which one identifies one’s self and towards which one strives in order

to achieve the ideal. In turn, this ideal makes for a sense of unity of self and with those other members of the nation.

According to Eric Hobsbawm, this notion of the individual identifying with the national ideal is closely linked to what occurred during the French and American Revolutions, though this ideal was tied to a civic identity as opposed to an ethnicity. For, he argues, “if ‘the country’ is in some way ‘mine’, then it is more readily seen as preferable to those of foreigners, especially if these lack the rights and freedom of the true citizen.”<sup>15</sup> Essentially, nationalism can potentially lead to xenophobia no matter what theoretical underpinnings it is founded upon. However, by placing all forms of nationalism into the same, potentially malignant category, Hobsbawm refuses to acknowledge the liberating and protective possibilities. In effect, his argument claims that nationalism is merely a xenophobic expression of hatred and anger towards an Other, while not allowing for the love and fidelity it can inspire amongst the members of the same nation or the need for a people to rise together to overcome oppression. Taking this viewpoint, nations are therefore formed more in response to an outward threat as opposed to internal bonds. This highlights *the* defining difference between the modernist and primordialist camps: their explanations for the rise of nations.

In the case of primordialists, as already demonstrated, the nation is a given, a biologically determined ethnic that shares the same *Weltanschauung*, informed by its culture, language and religion. In other words, nations have existed since time immemorial, rising, as it were, from the primordial ooze. Modernists, however, tend to emphasise how nations are formed – or constructed – through historical processes. Miroslav Hroch accurately and articulately describes this position:

We consider the origin of the modern nation as the fundamental reality and nationalism as a phenomenon derived from the existence of that nation. However, one must not determine the objective character of the nation with a fixed collection of features and attributes given once and for all, just as it is not possible to view the nation as an everlasting category, standing outside concrete social relations.<sup>16</sup>

Hroch therefore defines nations as socially determined. This description lends itself well to Marxist critics, of which nationalism has many: Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Hobsbawm, to list but three of the more influential ones. As Marxists, it is not surprising that these critics should all be modernists, viewing nations as arising from material conditions. Hroch, for example, emphasises the importance of the role of capitalist mass production in the formation of a national market, the stitching together of many local markets, aided by advancements in travel technology.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Anderson analyses the role of print technology in helping to create the nation as an “imagined community” and thus ties the nation and nationalism to the notion of modernity and industrialisation.<sup>18</sup> In the “imagined community,” fellow nationals never meet but feel they form a nation because of the national narrative that is thread out daily across the pages of newspapers, journals, and novels in the national vernacular. Anderson’s account is perhaps one of the most influential theories of the rise of nations and nationalism to be published in the last twenty years. Arguably, Gellner is just as influential.

Gellner does not mince words in making his point against the primordialist position. He claims that

nationalism does not arise for stateless societies. If there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations. If there are no rulers, there being no state, one cannot ask whether they are of the same nation as the ruled. When neither state nor rulers exist, one cannot resent their failure to conform to the requirements of the principle of nationalism.<sup>19</sup>

In turn, Gellner argues that the development of the State has followed the increase in the division of labour that arose in the transition of societies throughout history. In the first stage, society is pre-agrarian; no State exists and people subsist by hunting and gathering. The second stage is agrarian society in which there are some weak and some strong States. Finally, there is the industrial age in which there is no option: the *presence* of the State is inescapable.<sup>20</sup> The only means by which the society can continue to function in the industrial age is to increase the level of literacy and technical competence. In effect, through the State's system of education the population is formed, indoctrinated into a national "high" culture that sutures together the disparate regions of a given territory and the citizens of the nation as they are defined within the State's boundaries. Gellner also provides the caveat that a certain population and land mass are needed to support this enterprise consisting of "primary schools, staffed by teachers who are trained at secondary schools, staffed by university trained teachers, led by the products of advanced graduate schools."<sup>21</sup>

From the primordialist viewpoint, James Kellas argues that while Gellner's thesis is compelling in terms of explaining nationalism in practical terms, he needs to take into account why people are attracted to nationalism's "primordial roots."<sup>22</sup> He also criticises Gellner for not accounting for cultural pluralism within some States.<sup>23</sup> However, Kellas fails to read into what is implied by Gellner, though this is as much Gellner's fault for not being explicit and continuing his analysis to a more definitive conclusion. Essentially, Kellas does not recognise the importance of the educational system in nation-building as a site where the national culture is transmitted, where children and young adults are indoctrinated into the "high" culture and are instilled with a love and respect for their

country through the curricula. Also, though a State might claim to be culturally pluralist, there is always a “dominant” culture, generally informed by the “official” language, the narrative of the history textbooks, the literature taught, and the rules, regulations and laws that define students’ behaviour both within the school and in the greater society. These are some of the reasons why Gellner rejects the Hegelian myth of the primordialists that views nations as natural, for nationalism “sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that is a reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one.*”<sup>24</sup>

While describing or theorising the rise of nations and nationalism is important to the modernists, the primordialists are more preoccupied with defining ethnic groups and what factors determine a nation. Kellas, for example, defines ethnic groups as “essentially exclusive or ascriptive, meaning that membership in such groups is confined to those who share certain inborn attributes. Nations on the other hand are more *inclusive* and are culturally or politically defined.”<sup>25</sup> However, this description of ethnic groups leaves much to be desired. When he says “inborn traits,” Kellas does not refer to physical traits such as blue eyes or red hair, but rather the overall “essence” of a person that marks him or her for a certain ethnic group. This “essence” of a given ethnic group, its Irishness or Frenchness, for example, is what defines it as such and keeps its members tied to the group by their attachments to and affiliations with the ethnic group. But this is problematic in that it does not allow for the need of an Other by which the group might define itself. In effect, an Irish woman feels an attachment to her ethnic group while a French man who meets that Irish woman reinforces that woman’s belonging to her ethnic group by recognising that she belongs to it. As well, the French man defines himself as

French by not being Irish and allows the Irish woman to define herself as being Irish by not being French. These two people are defined not by their ethnic make-up but by the presence of an Other, a person from outside of the ethnic group against which one can define one's self and recognise that one is in fact different from that outsider. Therefore, an individual does not define him- or herself as a member of his or her own ethnic group without a point of reference. This line of thinking might imply that the ethnic group is not a construct, that the two people recognise what is naturally different in the other person. However, this would accept the nature aspect of identity while ignoring the nurture aspect, that people are *taught* who and what they are and, therefore, who and what other people are. The importance of teaching here also reinforces Gellner's claim that a developed system of education is necessary for the modern nation and the rise of nationalism.

Where Kellas' argument is further flawed is in his contradictory statements. Though in the quote just mentioned above he attempts to separate the concepts of ethnic groups and nations, he conflates and reifies these groups throughout the rest of his book. He argues that, in the twentieth century, the ability of "submerged nations to defeat powerful states marked the triumph of ethnic/social nationalism over official or state (imperial) nationalism."<sup>26</sup> Submerged nations are therefore equated with ethnic nationalism and empires with an official or, as it is implied, civic nationalism. If a submerged nation is equated with ethnic nationalism then the newly emerged nation must *ipso facto* be equated with ethnic nationalism. According to Kellas, the nation is indivisible from the concept of an ethnic group despite the attempts at semantic differentiation he attempts at the outset of his book. But such semantics are endemic to

the primordial argument because, it could be argued, primordialists are nationalists and the primordialist project, if such a thing exists, is an attempt to naturalise nations and defend their existence. Essentially, primordialists attempt to extricate the negative connotations that are, in the post-World War II era, attributed to nationalism – and this is perhaps best illustrated through their reconfiguration of themselves as “perennialists” or “ethno-symbolists” and avoidance of the categorisation of “primordialists.” Kellas illustrates this relationship between primordialists and nationalists in stating that the emergence of formally “submerged” nations is evidence that ethnic nationalism has triumphed over official nationalism. Walker Connor comes to a similar conclusion, believing that the world-wide conflict within multi-national States reveals a “natural” need for each nation to have its own State.<sup>27</sup> However, the emergence of nationalism and nations does not reflect the triumph of ethnic nationalism over official nationalism. Rather, it merely reveals the triumph of smaller official nationalisms over larger official nationalisms. In effect, the emergent nations are not as homogeneous as Kellas, Connor and other primordialists would have their readers believe. But part of this is an unwillingness to recognise that peoples everywhere have been in contact with others throughout history. Ahistoricism is thus a particular weakness in the primordialist viewpoint.

Frederick Buell offers an historical explanation to contrast with the ahistoricism of primordialist discourse. He argues that colonisers strategically separated colonised peoples to position themselves as “the unifying cement without which native societies would fly apart, the universal that held together the many particulars,” which in effect reveals the politicised roots of “universal civilisation.”<sup>28</sup> He notes that “the search for the



uninfected-primordial, bounded, perhaps essentialized-kernel of 'native' culture becomes more and more like unwrapping an onion: one finds relationships (global, regional) beneath relationships, not a hard, definite, genuinely local core."<sup>29</sup> The notion of a "pure" primordial nation and/or ethnic group is, according to this line of argument, impossible to find because of the contact that has always existed between various groups and the constructed, often enforced, roots of their defining boundaries. Even by the very fact that these groups have had contact with one another suggests that some forms of acculturation and miscegenation have taken place, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem.

Tending away from Buell, Hroch goes so far as to posit a rationalist theory explanation for the advent of colonised societies, suggesting that members of oppressed nationalities had to choose between nationalities, identifying with either the ruling or oppressed nation.<sup>30</sup> While he rightly highlights the need to bring agency back into the discussion and that claims to primordial identities are merely reifications of human constructs, he bestows too much agency upon the members of the oppressed groups. In effect, if one is oppressed how much choice does he or she have to identify with either group? The notion of oppression is tied into a lack of agency. In this case, arguing that some oppressed groups willingly give up their claims to ethnic group status is like blaming the victim of a crime for choosing to be a victim and ignores the unequal workings of power relations.

But Hroch is not the first theorist of nationalism to inject the notion of choice into the composition of the nation. In 1884, Ernest Renan famously defined a nation as a daily plebiscite.<sup>31</sup> Renan and others since, such as Anderson, have described the nation

as creating its history out of memory, which is important for what it remembers and creates as much as for what it chooses to forget. Says Gellner: “Ernest Renan defined the modern nation, such as can rightly aspire to its own state, in terms of *oblivion*: the members of the nation, and hence of the state, have simply *forgotten* their diversity of cultural origin.”<sup>32</sup> In effect, the English think of themselves as English before they identify with a region, such as Yorkshire or Cornwall, or that their ancestors might very well have come from Scandinavia, Rome, Germany, France, Ireland, Scotland or Wales – and perhaps even India, Pakistan and parts of Africa.<sup>33</sup> In the end, the modernist position holds out that all of these, the larger as well as the smaller groupings, are convenient constructs.

Kohn argues that two fictitious concepts have caused nationalities to be thought in terms of absolutes. “One holds that blood or race is the basis of nationality,” he says, “and that it exists eternally and carries with it an unchangeable inheritance; the other sees the *Volkgeist* as an ever-welling source of nationality and all its manifestations.”<sup>34</sup> Nationality, which is substituted here for what other academics might define as ethnicity, is debunked as a pre-determined and fixed entity; the nationalist position is therefore merely a forgetting of how the nation has been constructed. Similarly, Ross Poole argues that because of the long-standing conflation of language and cultural specificity with nation, the concept of “national” has been naturalised by most people.<sup>35</sup> To counter the passive acceptance of these constructs, the modernist seeks to interrogate the ordering of human knowledge, to explain how it has arisen and why, possibly, it has been naturalised, accepted, and is readily mobilised in certain political contexts.

Paul Brass, for one, holds no mixed feelings towards ethnicity and nationalism as constructs. For Brass, such constructs are merely manipulated by those in power in order to remain in power.<sup>36</sup> Linking this idea with Gellner, he claims that whoever controls the schools will determine whether or not the ethnic group will maintain its cultural distinctiveness and therefore be readily capable of political mobilisation as an ethnic, political identity.<sup>37</sup> Similar to Brass, Marxist critic Etienne Balibar views power relations at the heart of theories of ethnicity and nationalism. Balibar argues: “Prophylactic action against racial mixing in fact occurs in places where the established culture is that of the state, the dominant classes and, at least officially, the ‘national’ masses, whose style of life and thinking is legitimated by the system of institutions.”<sup>38</sup> Balibar posits the idea of a “*fictive* ethnicity” to highlight the fact that ethnicity and nationalism are constructs.<sup>39</sup> However, by proposing the term “fictive ethnicity,” Balibar leaves the door open to social scientists to argue for a “*real* ethnicity.” For example, while Breton nationalists might argue that Breton is a “real ethnicity,” French nationalists, or at least the French State, might counter this claim by stating that Breton is actually a “fictive ethnicity.” The unsaid in this scenario is that while Breton is “officially” considered fictive, that is, it is deemed so by the French State, French is implied to be a “real” ethnicity and therefore warrants its own State.

Balibar’s writing partner and fellow French Marxist critic Immanuel Wallerstein argues that national groups “are historical constructs perpetually undergoing reconstruction.”<sup>40</sup> And with some irony history, or what he calls “pastness,” is as much of a construct as the groups that history purports to reconstruct:

Pastness is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they might not otherwise act. Pastness is a tool persons use against

each other. Pastness is a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social legitimation. Pastness therefore is pre-eminently a moral phenomenon, therefore a political phenomenon, always a contemporary phenomenon. That is of course why it is so inconsistent.<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, Balibar is sceptical of how history is employed by the national group. He argues that it is essential “to think ‘nation’ and ‘people’ as historical constructs, by means of which *current* institutions and antagonisms can be *projected into the past* to confer a relative stability on the communities on which the sense of individual ‘identity’ depends.”<sup>42</sup> History therefore becomes manipulated by the national group to justify its ongoing existence by showing it has “ancient roots” in the past. Hugh Seton-Watson refers more biting to this concept of nationalist history as its “historical mythology”:

To old nations, secure in their nationhood, their mythologies are not important; they are children’s tales once learnt and then put out of mind. To new nations, recently emancipated and still threatened by powerful neighbours, they are very important, and they matter not just to intellectuals but to working men and women in factory and field.<sup>43</sup>

While Seton-Watson’s argument that nationalist histories are mythologies is convincing, his claim that these mythologies are not important to old nations is simply not true. The very fact that these mythologies have become accepted as easily forgettable because they are naturalised, that is to say ingrained in the collective narrative and imagination, suggests that they are very important to the nation. The confidence these “older” nations might exude suggests that they are confident because they feel that they know who they are. This identity is predicated on a long history and mythologies, which are simultaneously constructed, real and forgotten. Anthony Smith emphasises this very point, though from the primordialist point of view.

Smith's argument acknowledges "national mythologies" and "myths of ethnic origins and descent" as "reconstructions of the past."<sup>44</sup> Of interest here is his use of the word "reconstruction" and how this differs from Wallerstein's use of it. Wallerstein views history as "perpetually undergoing reconstruction." In this sense, history is a construct that gets reconstructed, or added to, by the national group. Smith's use of the word "reconstruction," however, implies that the reconstruction is faithful to the past, that it reconstructs accurately the group and its identity as modernity has worn it away. Reconstruction for Smith is a return to a mythical golden age in which the essence of the national group, its ethnicity, is found and revived. John Armstrong refers to this aspect as a *mythomoteur*: "The *mythomoteur*," he says, "is what sustains a polity and enables it to create an identity beyond that which can be imposed by force or purchased by peace and prosperity."<sup>45</sup> It is of note that Nairn acerbically coins the term "fakelore" to define the folklore, mythology and constructed history and culture.<sup>46</sup> In effect, the reconstruction of the national group and its history that Smith seeks is false or, as Nairn would put it, fake.

The reconstruction that Smith points towards constitutes what for the primordialists is an awakening of the national group. Asleep for generations, the national group has "awakened" to self-consciousness and is ready to take its place amongst the other nations of the earth. Not surprisingly, this argument is dismissed by Gellner. He claims that "nationalism is not the awakening and assertion of these mythical, supposedly natural and given units." Instead, "it is the crystallization of new units, suitable for the conditions now prevailing, though admittedly using as their raw material the cultural, historical and other inheritances from the pre-nationalist world."<sup>47</sup> The birth, rebirth, or awakening of nations is merely "the transmuting of low cultures into newly literate high

ones.”<sup>48</sup> In his later work, Gellner pejoratively refers to this awakening as “the dormission of nationalism.”<sup>49</sup> Dormission theory argues that the newly awakened nation begins to assert itself by rising to national consciousness. And the most evident outer expression of this newly achieved self-consciousness of the nation is the employment of symbols and traditions.

According to modernists, the attendant symbols of nationalist history are as constructed as the nation. Or, as Eric Hobsbawm memorably terms it, the nations form “invented traditions.” “Invented traditions,” he says, “is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”<sup>50</sup> These symbols take such forms as the national anthem, the national flag, and the personification of the nation. There are, Hobsbawm argues, three types of invented traditions: “a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.”<sup>51</sup> But these symbols are not democratically chosen. Brass notes that just as elites have the agency to determine the group’s ethnicity and dictate its history, they also have the power to choose its attendant symbols and dictate these to the group.<sup>52</sup>

Smith, however, argues against this modernist theorising of symbols and traditions. He questions how these symbols, traditions and myths have such power if the nation is purely modern, insinuating that the presence of “some elements of antecedent

'culture' provide the seedbed of later political developments."<sup>53</sup> But Smith once again fails to take into account the system of education (and the power of contacts between generations of families) and how the value with which these symbols have become imbued might be transmitted. Essentially, values, like symbols, are taught and learned by the members of the national group as opposed to unconsciously and primordially sensed. Therefore, through this transmission sentiment is attached to the attendant symbols by the individuals of the national group. Guibernau highlights this sentient quality of national symbols from a modernist perspective while providing an explanation that is more rational than that of Smith:

It is important to emphasize that symbols are effective because they are imprecise. . . . [T]he nation, by using a particular set of symbols, masks the differentiation within itself, transforming the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity, thus allowing people to invest the 'community' with ideological integrity. This . . . explains the ability of nationalism to bind together people from different cultural levels and social backgrounds.<sup>54</sup>

Breuilly argues that this imprecise aspect of symbols is important for invoking a powerful means of self-reference.<sup>55</sup> This notion of nationalism and its symbols as self-reference helps to explain why they are able to readily mobilise the masses.

Michael Billig offers an effective theory of understanding how nationalist symbols and traditions might themselves rest dormant though the nation itself is self-conscious. Essentially, the established nation, confident in its identity, history and national security, no longer needs to make daily ostentatious displays of patriotism such as waving the flag. But, he argues, the symbols themselves are, or can be, strategically used. He coins the term "banal nationalism" to define the symbols that, while they might not be employed in an aggressively nationalist sense at the moment, are constantly

present and readily available to be employed as such. He says, "Daily the nation is indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition." And, he is quick to add, "banal does not imply benign."<sup>56</sup> For Billig, then, the symbols that represent the nation are not primordially connected to some notion of a collective unconscious; rather, they are taught, learned and reinforced in the schools, newspapers and streets of the nation. As such, symbols help form the nationalist narrative, that which O'Brien claims conflates people, language and history to form a *Volk*.<sup>57</sup> That the symbols of the nation are manipulated by elites also reinforces nationalism's close association to structures of social class. Hence the tendency of academics to refer to the official nationalism as "bourgeois nationalism." But social class does not only operate within nations; it operates between them as well.

Michael Hechter provides one of the most quoted and quotable analyses of social class and nationalism. He argues that "colonial development produces a cultural division of labor: a system of stratification where objective cultural distinctions are super-imposed upon class lines."<sup>58</sup> Similarly, in explaining the rise of racism and nationalism in the modern world, Balibar claims that nationalism is "a reaction to domination by states of the core" while racism is "an institutionalization of the hierarchies involved in the world-wide division of labour."<sup>59</sup> Wallerstein argues that these hierarchies are both mutually reinforcing and endemic to the structure of nations. Boundaries and nations "are always there and always ranked hierarchically, but they are not always exactly the same. . . . But there are always some who are 'niggers'. If there are no Blacks or too few to play the role, one can invent 'White niggers.'"<sup>60</sup> According to this analysis, the structure of the



nation and relations between nations are therefore ethnic constructs that mirror and perpetuate the divisions of social class hierarchies. Even Kellas, who is largely a primordialist, has come to recognise the importance of socio-economics to nationalism in proposing the formula “Politics + Economy + Culture = Nationalism.”<sup>61</sup>

Gellner points out that, for Marxists, class struggle is similar to the national struggle in that classes need to “awaken” in their own version of the dormission theory.<sup>62</sup> This is an interesting analogy, for normally one would expect Marxists to be modernists whereas the notion of nations “awakening” is a contention made by primordialists. However, Marxists do not view social classes as natural, whereas primordialists contend that nations and ethnicities are natural. For Marxists, the “awakening” that constitutes a class coming to consciousness, particularly the working classes, is merely a social group recognising its socio-economic conditions, the way that power is structured in society and the relationship between labour and those who own the means of production, and then acting as a unified mass once these are recognised. Gellner is also justified in making this analogy for how the awakening of nationalism constitutes a partial Marxist awakening in one nation coming to recognise its domination at the hands of others. He provides an aphorism that best summarises this relationship: “Classes without ethnicity are blind; ethnicity without class is empty.”<sup>63</sup> This is precisely why Marx was both encouraged and discouraged by the rise of nationalism: it promised to upend the status quo of the bourgeois and aristocratic order, but it also weakened class ties because it created ethnic ties between the various members of the ethnic community despite the social classes that existed within it. It is this that Frantz Fanon, in describing the anti-colonial struggle, warns against: while nationalism represents a step towards liberation, it

is only a step; socialism must follow quickly on its heels or be an essential part of its formation otherwise one set of masters is traded for another.<sup>64</sup> The general rule is that in the power vacuum that follows in the exchange of one State for another, it is the bourgeoisie who rule over the newly formed structures of Government. Because of this, the more radical and egalitarian strains that run through nationalism are suppressed in favour of maintaining control in the hands of the newly established rulers. In the end, the structure of the new State resembles the structure of the old and many of the inequities that existed under the old regime remain, and are sometimes further exacerbated, under the new. The formation of the Irish Free State conforms in many ways to this model of a conservative postcolonial State. The passing of the puritanical censorship legislation is a confirmation of this argument and it suggests that censorship is not only imbricated in nationalism but also in the structuring and maintenance of social classes.

Because of its tendency to support a State-imposed ideal of the Irish nation, censorship replays much of the debates between the primordialists and the modernists. Primordialists would argue that the Irish nation was attempting to purify itself of the foreign elements that had contaminated it under colonialisation and colonial rule and with the intrusion of the increasingly global market. Because of this viewpoint, the nationalists that supported the censorship legislation are very much primordialists themselves. But they are also modernists in their view that national identity and character must be nurtured and that nature alone cannot sustain the people. The State must be actively involved in dictating, or helping to form, Irish identity by protecting it from harmful foreign ideas and art. The anti-censorship crusaders tended not to argue from either position. Instead, they viewed censorship as mainly a modernist project that

is rooted in primordialist thinking of essentialised identities that can be constructed, frozen or “revived” from the detritus of modernity. Censorship therefore becomes a cultural border, guarding and protecting the nation from malignant, invasive forces. These forces are malignant precisely because of the threat they pose for miscegenation in the cultural realm, which is in turn equated in the primordialist mindset with the biological realm. That censorship is dictated by the State and each State has its own forms of censorship demonstrates that it is both a political practice overseen by the Government and a cultural practice that is reflective, and constructive, of a nation’s norms and mores.

In Ireland, the censorship debates have from the outset intertwined the need to censor with nationalism. For example, the pledge that the Irish Vigilance Association (IVA) had people sign conflates the very notion of morality with Ireland. Obliging signatories to encourage the reading of “good” literature and discourage the reading of “bad” literature,” it makes the primordialist point that “bad” literature is in fact anathema to Ireland:

The bad and unsavoury literature imported to our shores threatens to impair the fulfilment of the glorious Mission which God has entrusted to the children of St. Patrick.

Sons and daughters of the Gael! Be mindful of the grand spirit of the olden days. Help to stamp out this terrible evil from amongst us, for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland.<sup>65</sup>

During the hearings of the Committee on Evil Literature in 1926 that was formed to consider censorship legislation for Ireland, a Catholic priest went so far as to suggest that the definition that was in use for “obscenity” was not appropriate because it had been adopted from Britain.<sup>66</sup> Another person testifying before the Committee made similar claims, noting that at that time Ireland had “been content thus far to accept to accept the

law as framed for a people whose moral standards are notoriously amongst the lowest of the white races.”<sup>67</sup> In its final report, the Committee on Evil Literature unproblematically co-opted this rhetoric. Though it admitted that notions of decency vary not just between countries but also between individuals, it maintained that the publications complained of were mainly imported. Because of this, and because of the limits of the law, a censorship for Ireland was needed to remedy the problem.<sup>68</sup> The *Irish Rosary*, a conservative Catholic organ, also took this stance, arguing against detractors of the practice. The paper’s view was that censorship was the means by which Ireland could in fact further the fight for independence and full liberty from Britain. Censorship would help the nation to cultivate itself, to preserve and develop “the personality of the Irish nation.”<sup>69</sup>

The freedom and the right to legislate for a nation’s own values were what, in fact, the anti-colonial movement was about. Institutionalising censorship within a State’s boundaries was therefore the surest sign that the nation’s own culture could be expressed while those aspects that were “foreign” to it could be censored and kept out. This of course assumed that these “foreign” values were indeed foreign and were not held by members of the national community. However, the fact remains that the national community, as officially defined and represented by the State, gives the State the authority to dictate what is foreign in the first place. That each State issues its own passport, for example, supports this argument in the political sphere; that each State has its own variant forms of censorship supports this argument in the cultural sphere.

*Towards a Theory of Censorship In the Context of Nationalism*

Because Irish censorship works at the institutional level, one must begin a theory of the practice with institutional theory. At its base, institutional theory is actually no more than a reworking of traditional political science methodology. Before behavioural and micro-level approaches rose to the ascendancy in the 1950s and 1960s, the discipline of political science was embodied by the art of *Staatswissenschaft*. In this approach, the State and its institutions were bestowed primary importance. This is why the title of one of the first studies to provide the groundwork for institutional theory was *Bringing the State Back In*.<sup>70</sup> As Kenneth Shepsle notes, the importance of institutional theory is that it emphasises the stabilising nature of institutions on policies and actors.<sup>71</sup> Institutions also create sites of convergence where the relationship between mass culture, elites and the socio-economic environment can be examined.<sup>72</sup> This has specific implications when studying institutional censorship in an interdisciplinary context for how it combines these aspects. André Lecours, for one, asserts that institutions are central in both the development and mobilisation of national identities “through the boundaries they set in the subjective and political universe of citizens.”<sup>73</sup> In examining censorship as central to national identity formation, it would thus be folly to ignore the literature of institutional theory.

Perhaps the most overwhelming problem that one encounters in this body of literature is that institutionalism is itself divided into three schools of thought: rational choice, sociological, and historical. The one overarching agreement between the three schools of institutional theory is that institutions are bastions of stability and are therefore created and maintained largely to thwart processes of change.

Of the three schools, rational choice institutionalism allows for the most amount of agency. According to this school, institutions can simultaneously and periodically “impose constraints on political actors or offer them opportunities for action.”<sup>74</sup> This approach embraces Margaret Weir’s concept of “bounded innovation,” wherein institutions can create opportunities for innovation, but also provide the boundaries on the innovation that is possible.<sup>75</sup> That Weir’s concept is discussed in the context of an historical institutionalist approach to analysing politics and society might imply that the various schools of institutionalist thought are more similar than their practitioners would have us believe. However, significant theoretical differences exist between these schools of thought.

Ellen Immergut notes that rational choice theory views institutions as “the rules of the game” that affect, and effect, political outcomes, behaviours and performances.<sup>76</sup> As such, it is less structuralist than the sociological and historical approaches, a point noted by Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott.<sup>77</sup> B. Guy Peters furthers this analysis, arguing that there are a variety of rational choice models that are available to scholars, naming three of them as dominantly differentiated: principal-agent, game-theoretic and rule-based.<sup>78</sup> He admits that rational choice practitioners tend to define institutions as rules, as does Immergut, but he also notes that they are defined by sets of incentives that form a “compliance mechanism”: “Whereas compliance within normative institutionalism is moral and normative . . . , it is more calculative in the rational choice version of institutionalism.”<sup>79</sup> While institutions are aggregates of rules that affect individual behaviour, individuals are affected by the incentives that are placed before them in the hope that they will induce an expected behaviour. This differs from a normative response

in that the behaviour is induced not via morals and culturally regulated values; instead, the incentives are theorised as strategic, something that Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor attempt to clarify for the reader. Hall and Taylor's concept of "strategic interaction" is defined by two aspects. The first of these is that "an actor's behaviour is likely to be driven, not by impersonal historical forces, but by a strategic calculus." The second is that "this calculus will be deeply affected by the actor's expectations about how others are likely to behave as well."<sup>80</sup> The problem with this explanation is that it is normative, or can be interpreted as such, in that the actor is concerned with how others are likely to behave. Hall and Taylor must be more explicit in stating specifically how the behaviour of others might act as an incentive – and not just as a normative device – for others to act in an expected manner.

The set of problems that rational choice approaches share derives from the concern of how to constrain the variability of human behaviour, especially those that are more egocentric and selfish or involve decisions based upon equity and social welfare. Peters notes a related issue that arises: namely, the control or compliance of individuals within the institutions with the wishes of the leaders, or principals. He claims that according to this approach, ensuring this compliance with leaders becomes the "basic task of institutional design." This point is a flaw of this perspective in that it assumes that institutions are merely set up with the intentions to control not only the masses, but also those who are the underlings of the oligarchy. It also assumes, as Gary Miller has pointed out, that people are purely instrumental with regards to their goals and thus might not act in accordance with the goals of either the institutions involved or the wider society should they come into conflict.<sup>81</sup> While this case could be argued in terms of elite

theory, that institutions are constructed by those who rule society based upon their desire to maintain control, this ignores the possibility of any sort of institutional autonomy – which is the crux of all institutional theories. In understanding this perspective, one might better see how well it works in conjunction with elite theory, which posits, largely, that the state is merely an empty shell that is used by the elites as a mechanism for controlling all of society.<sup>82</sup>

The final similarity that the varieties of the rational choice approach share is an assumption that institutions are started from a *tabula rasa*. In essence, institutions are wholly the whims of their creators and lack any sort of historical origins, and new sets of incentives and behaviours can be integrated with much ease into the existing structures. This, again, seems to adapt well to elite theory in that the oligarchy can change the system at its own discretion and can readily mould the institutions and, by that manner, the larger society. However, it is also at odds with the theoretical underpinnings of the historical approach. Peters notes that on the subject of the creation of institutions, rational choice theory is particularly weak as it takes them as givens. But he also accepts that they can arise from a logical need since actors are rational, or possibly arise from individuals wishing to impose their will on others.<sup>83</sup> This last point is echoed by Hall and Taylor, who note that, in the view of the rational choice approach, “the process of institutional creation usually revolves around voluntary agreement by the relevant actors; and, if the institution is subject to a process of competitive selection, it survives primarily because it provides more benefits to the relevant actors than alternate institutional forms.”<sup>84</sup> The origins of institutions according to the rational choice theorist are therefore



closely intertwined with those posited by elite theorists: namely, that they are created by the elite in order for the elite to solidify and garner more control.

The emphasis of agency is therefore both a strength and a weakness of the rational choice approach. The concept of veto players is one aspect that highlights the importance of agency. George Tsebelis argues that certain individuals or collective decision makers in all systems and institutions are bestowed more power than others and their decisions are needed in order to maintain or change the *status quo*.<sup>85</sup> These veto players therefore have a degree of agency relative to others both within and without the institution. In discussing the agency of individuals, specifically elites, within institutions, Neil Fligstein argues for the importance of social skill. Essentially, social skill is “the ability to motivate cooperation in other actors by providing those actors with common meanings and identities in which actions can be undertaken and justified.”<sup>86</sup> Actors with social skill are therefore adept at manipulating other institutional actors to act with them in moving, or maintaining, an institution in a specific direction. Social skill is developed in the context of what Hay and Wincott define as “strategic learning.”<sup>87</sup> In effect, actors revise their methods and approaches to working within the institution in terms of what they have learned in their past experience. However, the notion of social skill as having importance to outcomes is refuted, as might be expected, by theorists who employ a more historical approach.

One theoretical mechanism that historical institutionalists have used to refute or diminish the importance of social skill is Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. In one of the earliest and most thorough arguments of this sort, Morten Schmidt traces Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* as having roots as far back as Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>88</sup>

*Habitus* is the composite of the norms and mores, the internal guidelines that regulate our daily thoughts, acts and words. It is not a primordial residue of a cultural *zeitgeist* but is historically constructed through experience.<sup>89</sup> Schmidt actually argues against more rigidly institutional readings of *habitus*, believing there is some independence in the formation of a more personal *habitus*. Kathleen Thelen and Daniel Béland are more institutionally-driven, believing that actors adapt themselves willingly to support and reinforce the institution in which they work.<sup>90</sup> In effect, then, actors adopt an institutional *habitus*. The adoption of this *habitus* helps maintain institutional stability as the actors behave according to the logic and norms of the institution and do not seek to change it, a point that is emphasised by Paul Pierson.<sup>91</sup> The rational choice school therefore has its theoretical limits in terms of the agency it claims actors possess.<sup>92</sup>

Sociological institutionalism is, to some extent, the opposite of the rational choice approach. As Hall and Taylor note, this approach argues that many of the institutional

forms and procedures used by modern organizations . . . should be seen as culturally-specific practices, akin to the myths and ceremonies devised by many societies, and assimilated into organizations, not necessarily to enhance their formal means-ends efficiency, but as a result of the kind of processes associated with the transmission of cultural practices more generally.<sup>93</sup>

In this way, culture itself becomes an institution. Institutions are defined more broadly than just formal rules, procedures and norms; they include symbol systems, moral templates and cognitive scripts as well. In such an approach, institutions and individuals work constantly on each other.<sup>94</sup> Immergut associates this approach with organisation theory, which stresses “the importance of symbolic codes and the role of institutions in generating meaning, as well as norms and ‘appropriateness’ as a category of action.”<sup>95</sup> She also posits the concept of “bounded rationality” that challenges the rational choice

approach. Somewhat derivative of Weir's "bounded innovation," "bounded rationality" recognises the limits that exist on the time individuals have to make fully rational, weighed decisions.<sup>96</sup> In such circumstances, individuals rely on standard operating procedures and try to make the best choice possible given the time constraints and knowledge available to them.

Peters highlights how the sociological approach can assist the theorist in understanding the working relationships of institutions through its biological metaphors. His articulation of the "population ecology approach" is particularly helpful: "organizations (or institutions) and their behavior can be understood in part through an analogy with populations of biological organisms. Just as the biological ecology model provides opportunities for only so many organisms to survive, so too the environment of organizations is capable of supporting only so many structures."<sup>97</sup> Likewise, he describes what he calls an "organizational niche," which allows the organism to define its self, its support, and its function, and survive. And in keeping with the biological metaphors, he states that the age of organisms can determine their survival; that is to say, those institutions very young or very old might not survive competition for resources and public needs.<sup>98</sup> The problem with using biological metaphors is that while they help one to visualise and understand how institutions work, they also naturalise them, perhaps suggesting that the rule and control of those elites in power is natural as well, thereby justifying a modern twist of divine right.

The sociological approach is much akin to elite analysis. Elites are those who help to define, if not crystallise, the culture of their people. As the modernist school of nationalism argues, elites create and manipulate the nation's symbols, while the society at

large has these dictated to them. Gaetano Mosca supports this claim, stating that “the political organism, in expanding, almost always aims at spreading its own social type, and often succeeds in doing so.”<sup>99</sup> If the elites are the ones that are crystallising, defining and controlling the culture, they are the ones who help mould the norms, mores, and values of the nation. Understanding this, if the institutions of a given country are said to reflect that country’s culture and, equally, the culture reflects the institutions, then the elites are those who mould the state structure, its institutions and its culture. This is specifically important to recognise if one employs the sociological approach, which views that culture functions as an institution itself. Where both of these approaches fall short is in their failure to properly account for context, an aspect that is a particularly strong feature of historical institutionalism.

The historical approach views “ the institutional organization of the polity or political economy as the principal factor structuring collective behaviour and generating distinctive outcomes.”<sup>100</sup> This variety of institutionalism also appeals to the sociological approach’s construction of institutions and the individual’s place within them:

The individual is seen as an entity deeply embedded in a world of institutions, composed of symbols, scripts and routines, which provide the filters for interpretation, of both the situation and oneself, out of which a course of action is constructed. Not only do institutions provide strategically-useful information, they also affect the very identities, self-images and preferences of the actors.<sup>101</sup>

In this last statement, and the discussion of the sociological approach, one begins to see how intertwined institutional theory is with the modernist school of nationalist thought. Identities are not primordial givens; instead, they are recognised as constructs that have been developed, defined and promoted through both elites and institutions. Identities are also apt to change and evolve under this approach that views them as constructs, affected

by institutions and in turn affecting the institutions that help to form them and their behaviour. As such, the primordialist notion of identity is recognised as ahistorical and in stark contrast with the institutionalist's notion and emphasis of the role of the State and its institutions.

Historical institutionalism can also be closely aligned with elite analysis.

Immergut notes their mutual focus on "the themes of power and interests" and that "the representation of interests is shaped by collective actors and institutions that bear traces of their own history."<sup>102</sup> Institutions are important to elites precisely for how they have historically distributed power and have been constructive of political agency.<sup>103</sup>

Institutions are therefore not neutral but instead reflect and magnify power relations in society.<sup>104</sup> Thus, a case is implicitly made for the historical approach's allowance for elite analysis in noting how institutions serve, or can serve, to reinforce the already existing power structure. The centrally important underpinning of historical institutionalism, however, is its examination of institutions over the course of a broader period. Historical contexts affect the workings and meanings of institutions, which can help to explain, for example, why fascism erupted on such a scale in the face of the high levels of unemployment in the 1930s, but not at other times of economic downturn, before or since. This accounting of and for history is largely absent in the conceptualisation of the other approaches of institutionalism. In the end, this represents a failure to place events, policies and actors in the wider context of their performances and outcomes and neglects a longitudinal study of institutions in favour of more immediate explanations for their functioning.

An important concept underlying the historical approach is “path dependency,” a concept that highlights its longitudinal nature. Path dependency is an “inertial tendency” once a path is embarked upon. It can change, but for the historical approach such change comes about only with enormous political pressure.<sup>105</sup> Such pressures are defined as “punctuated equilibria,” the moments of rapid institutional change that punctuate the otherwise relative stasis of institutions.<sup>106</sup> Historical institutionalists argue that this notion of stasis is more important and central than the punctuated equilibria: “The basic, and deceptively simple, idea is that the policy choices made when an institution is being formed, or when a policy is initiated, will have a continuing and largely determinate influence over the policy far into the future.”<sup>107</sup> Path dependence allows for institutional stability in the face of changing contexts outside of the institutions.<sup>108</sup> The concept of a “veto point,” or “clearance point,” the notion that any decision that is made or idea that is posited must go through points in a chain of linked decisions, explains how path dependence occurs. Essentially similar to veto players, any one of these links can strike down the idea/decision and thereby maintain institutional and societal stasis.<sup>109</sup> This notion of path dependency resembles in some ways elite analysis, for if the history of a given society is leadership by elites, this hierarchy will be difficult to change if the institutions that support it are static and have an “inertial tendency.” Such inertia would also explain why when there is the fall of one elite and the rise of another, many of the institutions of the former elites remain in place and the newly risen elites fail to fulfil the promises they made to the masses who helped get them into their positions of power.<sup>110</sup> The new elites tend to subjugate in much the same manner as the former elites, but might offer some concessions to appease the masses.

As already noted, one aspect that historical institutionalism does not recognise enough is individual agency. While elites may control the institutions and can make some changes from within, such as conceived in Weir's notion of "bounded innovation," they are still constrained by the institutions within which they function. Little concern is devoted to how these institutions affect the individuals who function within them, and nor is there concern for how institutions are in turn affected by the individuals.<sup>111</sup> Some agency is provided for in the notion that decisions can be made and ideas posited by individuals that might pass through the system or chain of veto points and promote change. However, the fact that "inertial tendency" is put forth as a defining feature of this approach implicitly acknowledges the little amount of faith that exists in change being affected. Furthermore, if institutions are theorised as relatively inert, the chance that they will be affected by individuals is far less than the chance that individuals, both within the institutions themselves and the larger society, will be affected by the institutions. Therefore, the change required to affect any form of change needs to come from a mass of support or a global crisis, meaning that though change is recognised, it does not come from an individual. However, it could be countered that a strikingly original and effective idea/policy posited by one person or an extremely charismatic leader can impact the larger institutional structure by influencing others to affect the desired change. This last point would also acknowledge the historical context that is specific to each scenario being examined and is such a crucial aspect of the approach's methodology.

More recently, the notion of path dependency has been challenged by both practitioners of the historical approach and their critics, specifically in terms of its failure

to account for institutional change that is endogenous and not exogenous.<sup>112</sup> The concern is that while the exogenous forces wrought by massive global events such as economic downturns and depressions, wars, and health epidemics might affect radical changes to institutional structures and mechanisms, more subtle institutional changes that are affected by society and institutional players are not properly accounted for. These theoretical shortcomings and the debates they have provoked will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five which examines censorship as an institution over a period of time.

While institutional theory is therefore essential to understanding the top-down mechanisms of institutional censorship, it fails to account for bottom-up resistance. More specifically, in order to understand how censorship functions in terms of the literature being censored, one needs a theoretical body to explain the political functioning of literature in such a context. In this search, postcolonial theory provides the most amenable model for the theorist of censorship.

Like institutional theory, postcolonial theory has its variant strains, in particular those that arise from Marxism and poststructuralism.<sup>113</sup> Because of its attention to textual and discourse analyses, the poststructuralist strain has been influential in literary studies which in turn has been the dominant discipline of postcolonial analysis and criticism.<sup>114</sup> Benita Perry, a major Marxist critic of poststructuralist postcolonial analysis, argues that by placing the focus of their study on discursive analysis, such critics give the textual precedence “over the *institutional* practices of the violent social system of colonialism.”<sup>115</sup> Likewise, Laura Chrisman has called for an examination of institutions, not public culture, as sites of racism and the need for critics and postcolonial thinkers to place importance on and account for institutions in their critiques and analysis.<sup>116</sup> It is the



institutional, materialist analyses demonstrate, that must be interrogated as the site from which violence radiates – and so the case is made for using institutional theory as a lens through which one can examine institutional censorship and explain its workings while employing the poststructuralist strain of postcolonial theory to focus on the resistance fought through and within literary texts.

The poststructuralist strain of postcolonial theory, which will be referred to hereafter simply as postcolonial theory for reasons of space, is particularly well suited to a theory of resistance, in large part for the ways in which it has deconstructed master narratives of both imperialism and nationalism that have occluded minorities and simplified complex issues.<sup>117</sup> Robert Young makes the case that postcolonial theory

constitutes a directed intellectual production that seeks to articulate itself with different forms of emancipatory politics, to synthesize different kinds of work towards the realization of common goods that include the creation of equal access to material, natural, social and technological resources, the contestation of forms of domination, whether economic, cultural, religious, ethnic or gendered, and the articulation and assertion of collective forms of political and cultural identity.<sup>118</sup>

There is therefore more than merely an impish delight in deconstructing these master narratives and modes of domination: there is an ethical imperative to do so. By challenging how society is structured (in its various institutions and hierarchies) and narrated (in its laws, works of art, media, political and social discourses), there is a demand for a more egalitarian society in terms of the material distribution of its wealth amongst, and the legal treatment of, its citizens. The emphasis on material distribution is important here, for it underlines affinities between both the poststructuralist and Marxist approaches and demonstrates that the theoretical work of poststructuralism can be directed towards actual political objectives and activism.

There is therefore a need to go beyond the discourse of nationalism, for though it might be a discourse and politics of liberation from colonial power, it reinscribes that power in its own discourse and politics.<sup>119</sup> Ato Quayson, for one, argues that the “post” in postcolonialism should be more properly read as “anti” for how it counters oppressive forces of colonialism and forms of domination in general. Postcolonialism, he asserts, “must be seen as a project to correct imbalances in the world, and not merely to do with specific ‘postcolonial’ constituencies,”<sup>120</sup> a project that extends to the ethical struggles of racism, child labour, pornography, minority rights, authoritarianism and environmental degradation. For the parameters of this study, he might also have invoked the ethical struggles of censorship.

By instituting censorship, the Irish State marginalised, in fact banned from public discourse, narratives of Irishness that it deemed dangerously counter to that it had created through its legal system. These counter narratives of the nation, argues Homi Bhabha, “disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities.”<sup>121</sup> National counter narratives, which he considers “postcolonial perspectives,” “intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic ‘normality’ to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, Young claims,

The racism and intolerance to which . . . holistic conceptions of the nation inevitably lead means that postcolonial intellectuals . . . have tried to think of the nation differently, to propose alternative accounts of the nation which began not with an idealised version of how it might be, but with how it is, highlighting the ways in which the nation can work as a force of oppression.”<sup>123</sup>

Postcolonial theory and politics therefore support the claims of Aimé Césaire who, in one of the earliest analyses of colonial discourse, concluded that “the *nation* is a bourgeois phenomenon”<sup>124</sup> and Frantz Fanon who considered that nationalism was merely *a step in the process* of the decolonisation and full liberation of oppressed peoples.<sup>125</sup> Resistance to all forms of oppression – colonial, national or global – is perhaps the essential and defining aspect of postcolonialism. It is through resistance that “the Subalterns of the Subalterns” attempt to gain equitable access to power.<sup>126</sup>

Bill Ashcroft provides the most detailed examination of the importance of resistance to postcolonialism. The “resistance to absorption” is effectively waged through the appropriation and transformation of dominant technologies so that oppressed peoples can articulate their cultural identity.<sup>127</sup> This can be achieved through such contemporary technologies as radio, television and computers, or older technologies of print media and live performance arts. However, he warns that resistance “need not *necessarily* mean rejection of dominant culture, the utter refusal to countenance any engagement with its forms and discourses.” Such isolation is impossible because of how pervasive the dominant culture is; *it has* to affect, in some way, the oppressed cultures and, *ipso facto*, the oppressed cultures affect the dominant, however slightly, merely through contact. The most effective postcolonial resistance is therefore undertaken through repeated attempts to intervene into the cultural discourse of the larger society.<sup>128</sup>

Barbara Harlow’s study of resistance literature, although it was published nearly two decades ago in the years before postcolonial theory had become widely accepted, used and developed within the academy, is still relevant and important both for how it helped define the field and for what it still has to say.<sup>129</sup> “Resistance literature,” she says,

“calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. Furthermore, the literature of resistance sees itself as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production.”<sup>130</sup> Censorship, she notes, has been a major factor in limiting the effectiveness of this literature as much for how it was banned originally as for how it has not yet come to light because of the amount of time during which it has remained ignored.<sup>131</sup>

In terms of literature in Ireland, novels were subjected to censorship while poetry and the dramatic arts were relatively left alone.<sup>132</sup> Harlow argues that the essential aspect of novels and narrative resistance writing “is the demand they make on the reader in their historical referencing and the burden of historical knowledge such referencing enjoins.”<sup>133</sup> A resistance narrative, when compared to poetry, provides “a more developed historical analysis of the circumstances of economic, political, and cultural domination and repression and through that analysis raises a systematic and concerted challenge to the imposed chronology of . . . ‘master narratives.’”<sup>134</sup> Indeed, it analyses “the relations of power which sustain the system of domination and exploitation. . . . [T]he discourse of narrative is capable of exposing these structures, even, eventually, of realigning them, of redressing the imbalance.”<sup>135</sup>

Harlow argues that resistance narratives are especially keen at being aware of and highlighting the relationship between knowledge and power. And this relationship, she claims, often creates a distorted historical record. Resistance literature therefore forces a direct intervention into dominant discourses by challenging master narratives to produce new facts and analyses.<sup>136</sup> In effect, resistance literature serves to both challenge *and*

change the ways in which society is perceived, narrated and constructed. It is therefore most disturbing for how it works as a supplementary force in the context of both colonialism and nationalism. Resistance literature does not replace the dominant narrative but rather *transforms* it through its challenge to orthodoxy and demonstration that complex issues cannot be simplified. This transformative process and power can be best understood in terms of postcolonial theory's concept of hybridity.

The problem posed to such resistance is that the State must refuse it if the narrative of official nationalism, and therefore the national imaginary and the citizenry, is to have any coherence. The paradox of nationalism, David Lloyd argues, is "that though it may often summon into being a 'people' that is to form and subtend the nation-state, it is always confronted with that people as a potentially disruptive *excess* over the nation and its state. . . . Faced with that strictly uncontainable excess, the state designates it irrational, primitive, or criminal."<sup>137</sup> Because of this excess, the State must implement marginalising practices such as censorship in order to contain it. This is precisely where the threat of hybridity is posed. The hybrid is a part and parcel of the excess; it is that which simultaneously shares in and subverts, or exceeds, the official narrative, and as such its threat is greater than that which is directed entirely from outside the group and beyond the nation's borders. The hybrid is a wedge that loosens the tight coherence of national identities and narratives.

Bhabha's theorisation of postcolonial hybridity in *The Location of Culture* remains the most persuasive and sophisticated account of the concept more than a decade after the book's publication.<sup>138</sup> He argues that hybridity, that which appears in the "interstitial passage between fixed identifications," "entertains difference without an

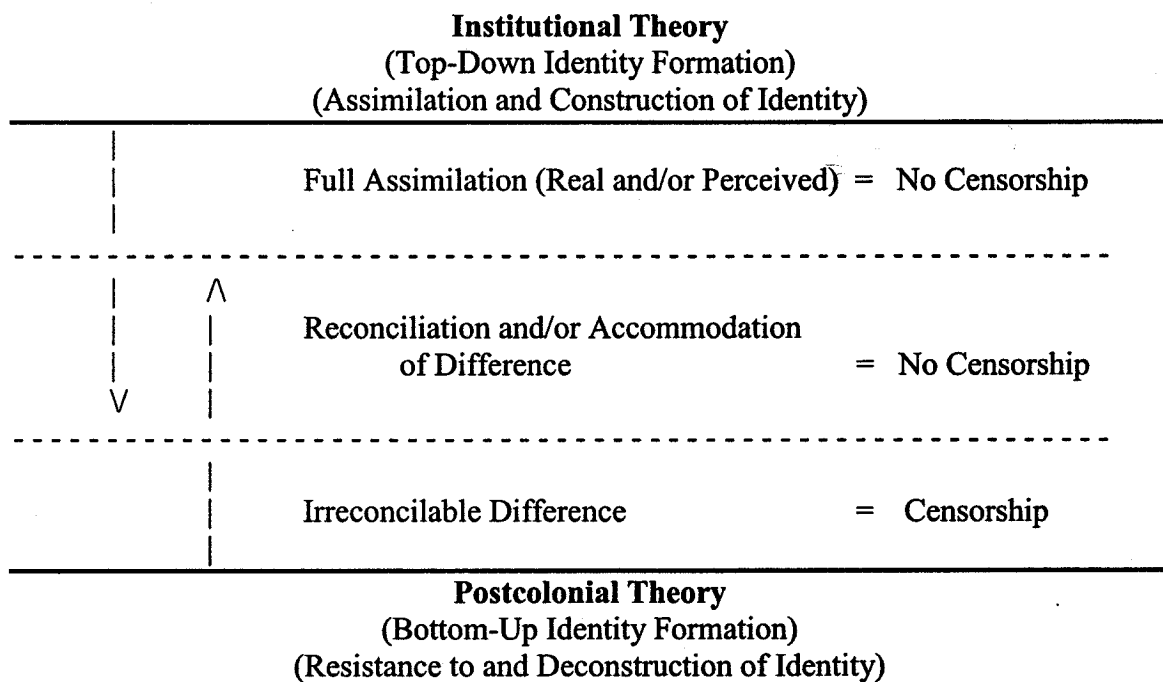
assumed or imposed hierarchy.”<sup>139</sup> Whereas the colonial binary relation of coloniser/colonised and the national binary relation of national/foreign both implicitly and explicitly assign the first of each polarity a prominent position in the hierarchical relationship, the hybrid provides a third term, something that shares in both: it is neither the one nor the other, and yet is both the one and the other. As a result, it subverts the hierarchies constructed in the binary relations. It helps to establish what he refers to as “the Third Space of enunciation” that “challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people.”<sup>140</sup> Again, the hybrid, like resistance literature, displaces the narratives of colonialism and nationalism. It is not merely a question of whether a place, event, person or text is directly involved in a colonial or national relation with regards to another, but rather it consists of a strategical device to subvert a relation that is unequal in terms of power. It is the hybrid, he suggests, that “makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the ‘people.’”<sup>141</sup> Further, it “displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.”<sup>142</sup> It reverses the effects of disavowal, “so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition.”<sup>143</sup> As such the literature produced by Irish writers that was censored by the State, that which was hybrid for the ways in which it was simultaneously Irish and non-Irish, is best articulated through postcolonial theory as a theory *and* a politics of resistance.

When the theories of institutionalism and postcolonialism are rubbed up against one another to create a theory of censorship, the critic is confronted with two

diametrically opposed bodies of knowledge. Institutionalism is largely concerned with articulating the mechanics of high politics and the functioning of its structures.

Postcolonialism, specifically the poststructuralist strain, is a theory and politics of resistance from the standpoint of the marginalised that seeks to unbalance and subvert power relations and emphasises the ethical necessity of an egalitarian society. A theory of censorship that explains how the State imposes an official identity on the national imaginary and citizenry while taking into consideration the actual texts that are the objects/subjects of institutional censorship is represented schematically in Figure 1.

Figure 1.1 A Schematic of Censorship Theory



Writings that in no way challenge the constructs of official nationalism fit into the upper third of Figure 1. These works are fully assimilated because they are fully assimilable to the State's notions of itself and the citizenry. Writings that might challenge some aspects

of the constructs of official nationalism but are tolerably challenging fit into the middle third. This middle third accounts for the appearance of tolerance in more authoritarian and puritanical societies and functions as a safety valve to allow for some dissent; in more plural and democratic societies it accounts for those works that might challenge the dominant norms and mores, even to the point of crisis and scandal, but are protected by laws pertaining to minority and human rights and freedom of expression and are thus allowed to circulate. Writings that are considered completely unassimilable to the constructs of official nationalism are accounted for in the bottom third. These works are censored for how they are not only unassimilable but are felt to threaten the core values of the society. Most threatening in the context of a national censorship are those works produced by national writers about the national society and character that cannot be reconciled with the official constructs. These are the works that are worse than that which can be labelled merely as foreign because of how they both participate in and subvert the national narrative. These hybrid works, the banned books that are both national because of the provenance of the writers and the subject material and foreign because of their complete disregard or overt challenges to the constructs of official nationalism, form the very substance of resistance literature.

One concern regarding Figure 1 is that it might be misleading in its visual aspect. While the three parts of the Figure in the spectrum of censorship appear to be equal in size, suggesting that censorship works in a pre-determined fashion in terms of quotas and evenness, this is not the case. The amount of tolerance, the capacity of a State to assimilate or at least accommodate difference is dependent upon a range of factors. First is how the institutional censorship itself is structured. In Ireland, for example, an



imprimatur was not needed; many books that were eventually censored were allowed to circulate for a time, which varied from book to book, and in some cases potentially subversive books were never brought to the attention of the authorities. A system that would have necessitated an imprimatur would have been far more effective in banning threatening books. Second is the composition of the Censorship Board. Because laws are open to the interpretation and influence of both personal and institutional mores, the members of one Censorship Board might construe a book censorable while members of another might not. Third is the society in which the censorship is structured. A more permissive society that advocates freedom of expression and cultural diversity would be expected to have a less rigid censorship than would a society that is conceived in homogeneous terms or run by an authoritarian regime. For example, in a liberal country where birth control is supported by the State and the larger society, there would be a correspondingly lesser risk that literature promoting or merely discussing such a topic would be banned when compared to a puritanical country such as Ireland over the course of much of the twentieth century. Fourth is the threat posed by exogenous forces. In a nationalist context, if a State believes it must protect its interests and security in times when it is under direct stress and pressure from the outside, it is likely to tightly control what is being said within its borders. Fifth, and closely related to the fourth, is the threat posed from internal forces. When there is concerted effort to actively and perhaps even violently subvert and overthrow the State, it is likely that censorship will accordingly become more draconian. Sixth is the book itself. Certain strategies, such as heightened style, covert linguistic and imagist selection such as metaphor and analogy, can help a thoroughly subversive book remain unbanned in the absence of attentive and

sophisticated censors. What is important to understand from these six examples, which are by no means exhaustive of the subject, is that censorship is a fluid institution, one that depends on a range of factors to determine the shape it will take and the degree to which it will allow dissidence.

The second concern regarding Figure 1 is that it implies that censorship occurs in a relationship where there are two players, the State and the literature under consideration. However, as the rational choice school of institutionalism suggests, there is a degree of individual agency that needs to be accounted for. Between the State and the work, there are a number of parties that can affect the outcome of a book being censored. Customs agents, booksellers, librarians, the readers who might recommend a book to the Censorship Board, and the members of the Censorship Board themselves are such players. As the term veto players is posited by institutionalism, the term “societal veto players” could be used to refer to such people in a context outside of institutional censorship. Censorship Board members would therefore become institutional veto players and the other people referred to above would become societal veto players. Societal veto players function as matrix power spots in the spectrum between the institutional censorship at the top and the resistance literature at the bottom. They can facilitate either censorship or the resistance to the State, or they can deflect or neutralise the pressure from one or the other or both through their various actions.<sup>144</sup> When societal veto players help censorship and hinder resistance, whether explicitly or not, they become the agents of an informal censorship. This aspect must be accounted for alongside the formal censorship of the State for how it affects the workings of censorship and the functioning of resistance literature. The problem that one encounters in

attempting to account for informal censorship is that, unlike the State, records tend not to be kept and in cases where they do exist they might not be publicly accessible in the fear of commercial or personal recriminations. But before a theory of formal and informal censorship and can be effectively illustrated, one needs to understand how censorship was instituted by the State, the mechanisms that structured it and the role of groups that affected its functioning.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Hébert, *Censure et Littérature au Québec: Des Vieux Couvents aux Plaisirs de Vivre (1920-1959)* (St. Laurent: Fides, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Smith, "Nations and History," in *Understanding Nationalism*, ed. Monserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>4</sup> For Hutchinson's views on the Irish context, see his *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987). His attempt to distinguish and define the ethno-symbolist position is most thoroughly discussed in his *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London: Sage Publications, 2004). For more varied positions on ethno-symbolism, see also Monserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, ed., *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> John Hutchinson, "Nations and Culture," in *Understanding Nationalism*, ed. Monserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 74.

<sup>6</sup> John Breuilly, "The State and Nationalism," in *Understanding Nationalism*, ed. Monserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 32. See also his *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Monserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Whether or not this oppression is real or perceived is not important.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: Collier Books, 1967), 329.

<sup>12</sup> John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997), 71.

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- <sup>14</sup> Eugene O'Brien, *Examining Irish Nationalism in the Context of Literature, Culture and Religion: A Study of the Epistemological Structure of Nationalism* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 49-51.
- <sup>15</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88.
- <sup>16</sup> Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, translated by Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.
- <sup>18</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
- <sup>19</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 4. See also his posthumously published study *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).
- <sup>20</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 5.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.
- <sup>22</sup> James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 43.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.
- <sup>24</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 49.
- <sup>25</sup> Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 4.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>27</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4-27.
- <sup>28</sup> Frederick Buell, *National Culture and the New Global System* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 37.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>30</sup> Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, 12.
- <sup>31</sup> Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8-22.
- <sup>32</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 45.
- <sup>33</sup> For the hybrid nature of Englishness, see the opening chapter of Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1-28.
- <sup>34</sup> Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 13.
- <sup>35</sup> Ross Poole, *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 69.

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- <sup>36</sup> Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), 8.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>38</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo-Racism?" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Routledge, 1991), 24.
- <sup>39</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Routledge, 1991), 49.
- <sup>40</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "Postscript," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Routledge, 1991) 228.
- <sup>41</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Routledge, 1991), 78.
- <sup>42</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Preface," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Routledge, 1991), 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *Language and National Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 6.
- <sup>44</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 191.
- <sup>45</sup> Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, 293.
- <sup>46</sup> Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism*, 207.
- <sup>47</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 49.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.
- <sup>49</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 9.
- <sup>50</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>52</sup> Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 25.
- <sup>53</sup> Smith, "Nations and History," 12.
- <sup>54</sup> Guibernau, *Nationalisms*, 82.
- <sup>55</sup> Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 64.
- <sup>56</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 6.
- <sup>57</sup> Eugene O'Brien. *Examining Irish Nationalism*, 32.
- <sup>58</sup> Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 30.

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<sup>59</sup> Balibar, "Preface," 6.

<sup>60</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, translated by Chris Turner (London: Routledge, 1991), 34.

<sup>61</sup> Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 67. Kellas' shift might also be a reflection of the more conciliatory claims of ethnosymbolism in bridging the gaps between the primordialist and modernist positions.

<sup>62</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 22.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>64</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 73.

<sup>65</sup> "Irish Vigilance Association," JUS 7/2/14, NAI.

<sup>66</sup> "Revd. M. Quinlan, S.J., President of the Catholic Headmasters' Association, examined," April 21, 1926, JUS 7/2/3, NAI.

<sup>67</sup> "Statement Submitted by Mr. P. de Burca of the Catholic Writers' Guild," April 28, 1926, JUS 7/2/5, NAI.

<sup>68</sup> "Report of the Committee on Evil Literature," JUS 7/3/4, NAI.

<sup>69</sup> Ch. D., "Notes on the Literature Bill," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXII, No. 10 (October 1928), 798.

<sup>70</sup> Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, ed., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth A. Schepsle, "Institutional Equilibrium and Equilibrium Institutions," in *Political Science: The Science of Politics*, ed. Herbert F. Weisberg (New York: Agathon Press, 1986), 51-81.

<sup>72</sup> André Lecours, "Structuring Nationalism," in *New Institutionalism: Canadian Contributions*, ed. André Lecours (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 177.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>74</sup> André Lecours, "Theorizing Cultural Identities: Historical Institutionalism as a Challenge to the Culturalists," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 33.3 (2000), 512.

<sup>75</sup> Margaret Weir, "Ideas and the Politics of Bounded Innovation," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 188-216.

<sup>76</sup> Ellen M. Immergut, "The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism," *Politics and Society* 26 (1998), 13.

<sup>77</sup> Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott, "Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism," *Political Studies* XLVI (1998), 952.

<sup>78</sup> B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The "New Institutionalism,"* (London: Continuum, 2000), 46.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies* 44 (1996), 945.

<sup>81</sup> Gary Miller, "Rational Choice and Dysfunctional Institutions," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 2000), 536.

<sup>82</sup> The major theorists of elite theory include Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto. See Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, translated by Hannah D. Kahn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939) and Vilfredo Pareto *The Rise and Fall of the Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*, translated by Hans L. Zetterberg (Totowa, NJ: Bedminster, 1968).

<sup>83</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 54-5.

<sup>84</sup> Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 945.

<sup>85</sup> George Tsebelis, "Veto Players and Institutional Analysis," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 2000), 441-3.

<sup>86</sup> Neil Fligstein, "Social Skill and Institutional Theory," *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol. 40, No. 4 (February 1997), 398.

<sup>87</sup> Hay and Wincott, "Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism," 956.

<sup>88</sup> Morten Schmidt, "Habitus Revisited," *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol. 40, No. 4 (February 1997), 445.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 450-1.

<sup>90</sup> Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* (1999), 392; Daniel Béland, "Ideas, Interests, and Institutions: Historical Institutionalism Revisited," in *New Institutionalism: Canadian Contributions*, ed. André Lecours (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 29-50.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Pierson, "The Limits of Design: Explaining Institutional Origins and Change," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 2000), 491-2.

<sup>92</sup> The three approaches of institutionalism could be defined rather succinctly in terms of agency: rational choice argues that actors act with freedom within institutions, sociological argues that actors act with constraints because of institutional limitations, and historical argues that actors act based upon behaviour that has been historically constructed. See Christensen et al., "Actors and Institutions," *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol. 40, No. 4 (February 1997), 393.

<sup>93</sup> Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 946-7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 948-9.

<sup>95</sup> Immergut, "The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism," 15.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-5.

<sup>97</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 101.

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>99</sup> Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, 103.

<sup>100</sup> Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 937. For a similar definition, see Daniel Béland, "Ideas, Interests, and Institutions," 29. For a concise differentiation between and definition of the historical and rational choice approaches, see Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," 382.

<sup>101</sup> Hall and Taylor. "Politics and the Three New Institutionalisms," 939.

<sup>102</sup> Immergut, "The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism," 16-7.

<sup>103</sup> Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, "The Potential of Historical Institutionalism: A Response to Hay and Wincott," *Political Studies* XLVI (1998), 961.

<sup>104</sup> Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," 394.

<sup>105</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 63; André Lecours, "New Institutionalism: Issues and Questions," in *New Institutionalism: Canadian Contributions*, ed. André Lecours (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>106</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>108</sup> James Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 515.

<sup>109</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 74-5.

<sup>110</sup> Both Pareto and Mosca discuss this phenomenon.

<sup>111</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 71.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Siobhán Harty, "Theorizing Institutional Change," in *New Institutionalism: Canadian Contributions*, ed. André Lecours (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 51-79; Kathleen Thelen, "How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis," in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208-40; Wolfgang Streek and Kathleen Thelen, "Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies," in *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*, ed. Wolfgang Streek and Kathleen Thelen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-39; and Paul Pierson, "The Limits of Design: Explaining Institutional Origins and Change."

<sup>113</sup> See Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); and Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), for lengthy discussions of how these two strains have affected postcolonial theory and politics.

<sup>114</sup> Major Marxist interventions in the field of postcolonial theory and critiques of the poststructuralist strain include Laura Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004); Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, eds., *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). In the Bartolovich and Lazarus edited collection of essays, E. San Juan, Jr., takes Robert Young to



task for claiming that postcolonial studies rose in importance in the academy as the influence of Marxism to define and explain the political, cultural and economic objectives of the Third World declined. He argues that "the most basic flaw of postcolonial orthodoxy (establishment postcolonialism employing a poststructuralist organon) lies in its refusal to grasp the category of capitalist modernity in all its global ramifications, both the regulated and the disarticulated aspects." E. San Juan, Jr., "Postcolonialism and the Problematic of Uneven Development," in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 222. For perhaps the earliest, most influential and most polemical critique of the poststructuralist approach to postcolonial theory, see Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992). Other critics who survey these debates and offer their own opinions from a Marxist perspective include Simon Gikandi, "Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Discourse," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 97-119; Neil Lazarus, "Introducing Postcolonial Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-16; Neil Lazarus, "The Fetish of 'the West' in Postcolonial Theory," in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43-64; Crystal Bartolovich, "Introduction: Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies," in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-17; Timothy Brennan, "Postcolonial Studies Between the European Wars: An Intellectual History," in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 185-203. While Marxists have been active in making the case against poststructuralist readings of postcolonialism, poststructuralist critics have been silent on the challenge posed to their approach by Marxism. This phenomenon suggests that poststructuralist readings are so dominant that their practitioners feel no need to broach the subject of a debate within the field. One important exception to this is Robert Young. Although Young emphasises the poststructuralist position and has himself argued strongly against Marxist approaches in *White Mythologies*, he has become more demure and reconcilable in his later works, especially *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>115</sup> Benita Perry, "The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 75.

<sup>116</sup> Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions*, 5.

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 13-4.

<sup>118</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, 11.

<sup>119</sup> For a powerful postcolonial critique of nationalism as an oppressive force, see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>120</sup> Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 11.

<sup>121</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 149.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>123</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63.

<sup>124</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, translated by Joan Pinkham (New York: MR, 1972), 57.

<sup>125</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

<sup>126</sup> Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, 356-9.

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<sup>127</sup> Bill Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 15.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>129</sup> Harlow's study was still very much a product of the field as it was constituted in the decade following the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. While she is a perceptive critic of how resistance functions, she fails to acknowledge the ways in which some resistance reinscribes power structures, especially in nationalist discourses. There is, for example, an implicit acceptance of the binary relations of Albert Memmi's *Colonised and Coloniser* that fails to interrogate the relationship more closely to tease out its complexities, especially in the grossly simplistic equation of the west as the wholesale coloniser and the rest of the world as the wholesale colonised that ignores power relations and resistance even within these politics. Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>130</sup> Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 28-9.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>132</sup> See Joan FitzPatrick Dean's *Riot and Great Anger* for how censorship acted on the theatre on an unofficial level despite the fact that it was relatively left alone by the State. Compare this to Britain's censorship of the stage in L.W. Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama, 1737-1824* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1976), and Steve Nicholson, *The Censorship of British Drama, 1900-1968* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003).

<sup>133</sup> Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 80.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>137</sup> David Lloyd, "Nationalisms Against the State," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 189.

<sup>138</sup> Not surprisingly, Bhabha's supporters and detractors of his theorisation of hybridity are roughly aligned as those who employ the poststructuralist and Marxist approaches, respectively. For a particularly strong case made in support of Bhabha, see Robert Young's *Colonial Desire*. For more critical perspectives, see Ania Loomba, "Overworlding the 'Third World,'" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 305-23; Bart Moore-Gilbert *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997); Neil Lazarus, "Introducing Postcolonial Studies"; and Andrew Smith, "Migrancy, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Literary Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241-61. Poststructuralist critics view the concept of hybridity as enabling in its indeterminacy and ability to subvert binary relations and othering constructs. Marxists, however, question the ability of the hybrid to subvert power relations just by being itself, in effect arguing that it does not by its mere presence exert any sort of challenge unless that challenge it somehow activated.

<sup>139</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 4.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>144</sup> Most relevant here is Michael Foucault's theorisation of how power circulates and functions within society. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Volume One, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1990), 94-6.

**Chapter Two:  
Setting the Course:  
The Institutionalisation of and an Early Challenge to Censorship**

On December 6, 1922, one year to the day that the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed by delegates of both the British and provisional Irish governments, the Dáil enacted as its first piece of legislation the Constitution of the Irish Free State. Under Article 73, all laws that were in force in the Free State at that date were to be in continued effect, provided that they were not inconsistent with other Articles in the Constitution, until they were either repealed or amended by enactment of the Oireachtas. On December 20, 1922, the *Adoption of Enactments Act* became the second piece of legislation passed into law by the Dáil. This act reiterated Article 73 of the Constitution in officially adopting British law, as it had extended to Ireland prior to independence, wholesale. The structure of British governance in Ireland therefore remained largely unchanged after independence save for the fact that those who now created and enforced the law were members of the Irish Free State.

For the purposes of this study, the most important of these adopted laws was the *Obscene Publications Act, 1857*.<sup>1</sup> The act was introduced in September 1857 by Lord Campbell, the Lord Chief Justice of the day, and the first arrests were made that same month. Most infamous of these arrests was the publisher William Dugdale, a notorious pornographer whose activities had prompted Campbell to draw up the Bill. The purpose of the legislation was to give the State powers to prosecute the alleged purveyors and promoters of obscenity and to confiscate the materials in question. However, it is curious that this legislation failed to define how “obscene” was to be interpreted. But this oversight was soon rectified.

In 1868, Lord Justice Cockburn, in the case of *Regina v. Hicklin*, defined “obscene” as tending “to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.”<sup>2</sup> The standard precedent in the matter of obscenity, the case was the result of the seizure of an anti-Catholic pamphlet written by an anonymous militant Protestant. The pamphlet sought to shed light upon the sort of continuously probing questions that priests were alleged to ask of ladies in the confessional and went so far as to describe in detail the seduction of penitents by confessors.<sup>3</sup> The publisher, David Bryce, was convicted under the 1857 Act. The Hicklin case was additionally important because it neglected authorial intent, holding this to be irrelevant, and instead focused on the work itself. Moreover, it assumed that a publication was obscene once it was brought before the courts and it was for the defendants, usually the author and publisher, to prove their innocence. Judgement was therefore *avant la lettre*, the defendant’s burden being that he or she was presumed guilty until proven innocent. This was the law that guided the Irish courts upon independence in 1922.

#### *The Development of Irish Censorship to 1929*

On May 3, 1923, Kevin O’Higgins, the Minister for Home Affairs, proposed legislation that would create censorship of the cinema. Speaking in the Dáil, O’Higgins argued that the measure for a nation-wide standardised censorship was a necessity and, after contacting local authorities, claimed that it was unanimously supported.<sup>4</sup> Entitled the *Censorship of Films Bill*, O’Higgins noted that the legislation was provoked by a deputation of members “representing various bodies interested in the moral welfare of the

people.”<sup>5</sup> Amongst these were representatives from the Irish Vigilance Association, the Priests’ Social Guild, the Catholic Church in Ireland, the Protestant Episcopalian Church in Ireland, and the Presbyterian Church, an impressive cross-section of the major religions in Ireland, demonstrating that the initiative was not only driven by Catholics.

Kevin Rockett has made the convincing argument that the cinema was the initial focus of these groups because of the relative ease with which it could be controlled when compared to literature; as such, it was meant to be the first step in institutionalising other forms of censorship.<sup>6</sup> Licences had to be applied for and movie houses could be granted or denied permits base upon the materials they showed. Also, films were screened in public and therefore fewer copies were brought into the country than were possibly offending publications. In 1923, there were one hundred and fifty cinemas in Ireland with average daily attendance figures around 20 000, a considerably large number of people.<sup>7</sup> The newness of the medium also made it more susceptible to controlling legislation as reading habits were by this time already well formed. The prominence of the literary arts in the national struggle for independence further bestowed upon them the political and social capital that film lacked.

One of the first deputies to speak on the matter of film censorship was William Magennis, who was also Professor of Metaphysics at University College Dublin. Magennis was to figure prominently in the censorship debates throughout the following decades. As a deputy and senator he argued passionately for the principles of censorship and more particularly as a defender of the structures of censorship in Ireland against more liberal reformers. He also sat as the Chair of the first Censorship of Films Appeal Board from February 1924 to April 1929 and as a member and Chair of the Censorship of

Publications Board (hereafter referred to simply as the Censorship Board) from 1933 until his death in March 1946. According to Magennis, the necessity of censorship stemmed from a lack of sophistication on the part of the Irish people:

[I]f the community were properly educated there would be no necessity for a censorship. But we are not in an ideal community – very far from it – and people, especially the rising generation, require to be protected from an environment that is certainly not conducive to good morals, and they require to be saved from themselves. There has been no education in this country of a primary sort that would enable those who constitute the main part of an audience at a cinematograph theatre to discriminate judiciously between what, while it is attractive and admirable as a piece of photography, is seductive and prejudicial to a proper life and to a proper outlook upon life. Our people have not been trained in these things. Citizenship and all that it entails, all that it involves, has not yet become a part of our school programme.<sup>8</sup>

Instead of proposing an improved system of education that might instruct the people on how to analyse film so that they might be able to critically engage with what they were watching, the Government created a censorship that would effectively place limits upon the people's viewing materials. In the above quote, Magennis also illustrates the distinct relationship between censorship and citizenship, demonstrating at the outset of the debates the role that censorship was to have in constructing and supporting a national populace and imaginary under the auspices of the State's definition of Irishness.

As Magennis had predicted, the Bill ran its course with fair unanimity and was passed as the *Censorship of Films Act, 1923* on July 16. The law established a sole paid Film Censor with an Appeal Board of nine members under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Home Affairs. Additionally, cinemas across the country had to continue to apply for licences to show films and if they were charged with showing banned films, or parts of films that had been cut by the Film Censor, they faced fines and the threat of never being able to renew their licence. The Film Censor, moreover, was granted the power to ban

and cut films he<sup>9</sup> considered “indecent, obscene or blasphemous or because the exhibition thereof in public would tend to inculcate principles contrary to public morality or would be otherwise subversive of public morality.”<sup>10</sup> Because of the Hicklin case, there was no need to define the terms “obscene” and “indecent”; meanwhile, Canon law defined “blasphemous.” The problem of what represented “public morality” and how this was to be interpreted, what its principles might have been and how something might have posed a subversive threat to it were left unresolved. As a result, the role of the Film Censor was highly subjective. It was therefore necessary to fill the position with a person of high moral standards who had the ability to understand and critically analyse not only the narrative but also the visual images and potential audience of a wide variety of motion pictures. This is precisely why such a large part of the Bill’s second reading was taken up with expressions of anxiety over how the Government could be assured of appointing a fit Film Censor.

Over the course of the next two years, the Censorship of Films ran relatively smoothly. But certain inadequacies in the original legislation became apparent over time and on April 3, 1925, O’Higgins moved for the reading of the *Censorship of Films (Amendment) Bill*.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of the amendment was to take into account advertisements for the cinema. In effect, while the 1923 Act policed films that were shown in the Free State, there was no control over how these were being marketed in public. After the original Act was passed, O’Higgins said he was surprised to receive letters from clergymen and priests over the types of films being shown. However, he noted:

Inquiry in many cases showed that the opinions were being formed from the advertising posters that were being exhibited in connection with these



pictures, the fact being that the scenes depicted on the posters in most cases did not occur at all in the actually exhibited films, and in some few cases were scenes that had been deleted by the Censor in the performance of his functions. Posters of this kind found their way into practically every town and into a great many villages in the country, and, as I am informed, did considerable harm.<sup>12</sup>

Under the new legislation, the Film Censor had to approve promotional posters for films before they could be displayed.

However, Bryan Cooper, an independent deputy who later joined Cumann na nGaedhael, struck an interestingly adversarial pose in suggesting how such censorship might be extended to other aspects if it were to continue along the path the Government had already set forth. He stated his suspicion of such legislation and while he might have been against it in both principle and theory, he supported it because it was “a logical sequel” to what had already been passed.<sup>13</sup> The onus was therefore placed upon the precedent. No voice was raised for reform of the earlier Act; instead, the earlier path, which Cooper viewed as being potentially flawed, was reinforced. It was therefore deemed that censorship had to be necessarily more stringent rather than more relaxed. No amendments were made to the Bill as it passed through the committee stage; it was enacted into law on June 27, 1925.

The Censorship of Films Acts of 1923 and 1925 institutionalised the practice of censorship in Ireland. Under the new Irish laws, censorship became a secretive process, something only proscribed individuals were allowed to assess in a manner that was not clear to the public. Just as the 1923 Act caused some to agree with the 1925 Act because it followed the determined path set forth by precedence, so too would the subsequent Censorship of Publications follow the mechanisms and structures of the Censorship of Films.

The first concerted efforts to combat the spread of suspect publications in Ireland were undertaken by the Irish Vigilance Association (IVA), beginning with its formation on November 10, 1911. The IVA waged an aggressive public campaign in the following years; however, despite the association's efforts, it was soon overshadowed by the onslaught of World War One and the struggles towards national independence that followed. In 1924, the Catholic bishops addressed the issue of foreign, which they conflated with "unclean," literature in their Lenten Pastorals. A year later, a special sub-committee of the powerful Catholic Truth Society of Ireland (CTS) was organised to determine legislation concerning publications in other countries and to suggest how such legislation might be effected in Ireland. The press of the day reported that the sub-committee was to represent "a new offensive movement on behalf of morality."<sup>14</sup> The sub-committee first met on May 1, 1925; it consisted of nine members, including amongst them three priests and the ubiquitous William Magennis. Later that summer the sub-committee reported its findings to the CTS, sending copies of a draft Bill to the Hierarchy for its approval. While the Hierarchy did not unanimously approve of the Bill in its current form, it did give the bishops enough to consider worthy, as two of them visited O'Higgins to discuss the subject of legislation in January 1926.<sup>15</sup> This sequence of events is important: legislation had just passed ensuring that the State controlled the circulation of some cultural production and printed advertisements through the Censorship of Films. Therefore, Rockett appears to be right when he suggests that the cinema was targeted first as a means by which the Censorship of Publications could eventually be established. The press of the day also supported this view: "The new censorship of movie pictures is now in operation," *The Leader* informed its readers, "and

we hope it will work satisfactorily. What about some sort of censorship on imported dirty papers. Why not forbid their entry into the State altogether, as it is no outrage on liberty to put an embargo on the importation of dirt.”<sup>16</sup>

O’Higgins appointed the Committee on Evil Literature (CEL) on February 12, 1926, to examine the possibility of creating a Censorship of Publications.<sup>17</sup> The CEL was composed of Robert Donovan (Professor of English literature at University College, Dublin), William Edward Thrift (Professor at Trinity College, Dublin, and a deputy in the Dáil), Father James Dempsey, Reverend T. Sinclair Stevenson, and Thomas J. O’Connell (a member of the Irish National Teacher’s Organisation). In a demonstration of pluralism as it was understood in the early years of post-independence Ireland, two of the members were Protestants and three Catholics; all, of course, were male. The CEL held its first meeting on February 17 and soon thereafter a general invitation was issued through the press to anyone “interested in the subject of the inquiry, requesting them to submit for the consideration of the CEL a summary of the evidence and recommendations which they proposed to offer.”<sup>18</sup> In addition, special invitations were sent to a dozen organisations, most of which accepted the opportunity to speak before the committee. Amongst those who appeared over the course of the investigation were the Irish Christian Brothers, the IVA, the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO), the Catholic Headmasters’ Guild, the Dublin Christian Citizenship Council, the CTS, the Marian Sodalties of Ireland, the Irish Retail Newsagents’, Booksellers’ and Stationers’ Association, the Catholic Writers’ Guild, the Garda Síochána, and several individuals. At least one organisation, the School Masters’ Association, declined the committee’s offer, believing that it had little to suggest in terms of definite proposals to extend the powers of the State

in the matter of censorship beyond those which already existed.<sup>19</sup> That the School Masters' Association refused on such grounds perhaps reveals that some form of institutionalised censorship was a foregone conclusion and that it would be more stringent as opposed to less. The opportunity to stand before the CEL was thus interpreted by some as the occasion to affect the way the institution would function, and not as a means to challenge its establishment. A brief survey of some of the more compelling and fully documented testimonies illustrates the degree to which this was the case.

In advance of their appearance, the IVA submitted a summary of the evidence related to publications in Ireland that its members had accumulated. Formed to combat evil literature, the IVA had from the beginning asked Dublin newsagents "to sign a pledge against stocking or selling objectionable papers." But they were only partially successful because "the lure of gain overcame [newsagents'] sense of righteousness and the 'dirty' papers were sold sub rosa."<sup>20</sup> As a result, the IVA stepped up its crusade, forming local committees across the country to continue petitioning newsagents and booksellers and holding public demonstrations, but they claimed that their efforts had little effect. It was suggested that the futility of their campaign offered proof that an institutionalised censorship with the authority and power to enforce the law was necessary, though the IVA's efforts had continued since the time of its inception.<sup>21</sup> The form that the IVA suggested the censorship should take is similar to that which governed the Censorship of Films. A part-time censor would be hired with the mechanisms of a voluntary Appeal Board consisting of two clergymen (one Catholic and one Protestant)

and “three laymen of standing,” by which it was implied three men of a certain socio-economic class with good education and of reputable professions.

Representing the INTO on April 21, 1926, W.B. Joyce, who was one of the founders of the IVA and later became a member of the Censorship Board, echoed the sentiments of the IVA on the necessity of censorship. He classed problematic books into three categories.<sup>22</sup> The first of these were books on birth control. The second were books obscurely described as those by “authors like Balzac and Rabelais.” And the third sort of book was “an alluring class of current fiction bristling with dangers. Compared with these,” he said, “Rabelais is to my mind an innocent. I have a terror of their coming into my house. There are of course some bad Irish writers of whom Joyce is the worst.” It is curious that he should have expressed anxiety at books coming into his house, as though they marauded the countryside, slipping into homes under the cover of night to corrupt and undermine value systems and morality. But the fear appears to be based upon the possibility that, because booksellers were not vigilant enough and were only concerned with turning a profit, he might have unwittingly purchased such a tome and would have been somehow negatively affected by its contents. As proof, he charged that at least one local bookseller he knew of specialised in such books and refused to clean up his trade. Also curious in his statement is the naming of James Joyce, particularly when the examples of modern writers Donovan had previously cited were Elinor Glynn and Victoria Cross. But given that the witness shared the family name of that notorious writer of smut, he perhaps wished to distance himself and his reputation through the possibility of making such a tangential linking.

Joyce readily admitted to the CEL that he saw no way to draw a distinction in law between books that contain references to immorality and books that are essentially immoral. Whereas the classics might discuss or introduce matters pertaining to sex, they were considered to be more discreet, having morals that guide readers to act appropriately in their own lives. Modern writers, to contrast, “exaggerate the sex interest and set it before the other phases of life.” Moreover, in the case of Robert Keable’s *Simon Who Was Called Peter*, Joyce openly admitted to the fact that though the book was indecent, it had “high literary merit.” But, he said, one should have “the courage to call a spade a spade,” and as such, regardless of its appealing aesthetic qualities, the novel should be banned for obscenity. It was therefore unacceptable to write of sex, no matter the artistry, unless the issue was couched in terms of a judgmental morality.

At one point during Joyce’s appearance, the matter of better educating the populace was suggested as perhaps the best preventative measure against evil literature. Cultured people, Thrift noted, tend to pass this class of publication over. As a teacher, Joyce admitted that education is important; however, he argued, young people do not have such discriminating powers as are necessary. But later in his appearance he testified that as a teacher he had never had a single case of a student in possession of an objectionable book.<sup>23</sup> This suggests one of five things about evil literature in Ireland: 1) the booksellers and librarians were in fact doing their jobs properly by not letting evil literature get into the hands of youths; 2) the presence and threat of evil literature in Ireland had been greatly exaggerated; 3) youths did in fact have the necessary discriminating powers Joyce claimed they lack; 4) youths were smart enough to keep such literature hidden away from authority figures; or 5) some combination of the four.

However, while he and his fellow teachers were supposedly developing the critical and analytical faculties of the population, he appealed for an immediate formation of institutionalised censorship: “[W]e cannot wait for the spread of culture, we need immediate preventive measures and there remains the fact that immoral reading is not confined to the uneducated.” Culture, then, was appealed to in the sense of a high, national culture. This is distinct from the popular culture of the masses which, according to this teleology, is not culture *per se*. Legislation was needed for the people, it was argued, “to prevent temptation being thrown in their way.” Sin and crime had to be avoided not by rational choice but by the removal of the temptation. Following this line of thinking, the sexually interested person and the potential rapist should be cured of their desires by getting rid of the people who stir them in much the same manner as evil literature should be banned and burned, but no such complication of this rationale was offered by the members of the CEL. This further suggests that the logic, or lack thereof, appealed to by Joyce represented the thinking of the CEL members in the matter and that for them, just as for the general public, the Censorship of Publications had been agreed upon before the fact.

The one group that posed somewhat of a challenge to the structure of institutionalised censorship was the Catholic Writers’ Guild. Representing the Guild before the CEL on April 28, 1926, Padraig de Burca questioned the need for a secretive Censorship Board. Instead, in the interests of a criminal’s right to trial, cases should be tried before a jury. The CEL quickly pointed out that he therefore respected “that remnant of the British Constitution” in Ireland, implying that he somehow valued British law more than a law of Irish making.<sup>24</sup> De Burca defended himself from this suggestion,

stating, "I would rely on a jury of my countrymen." While the law might have been adopted from British law, which had been legislated in part by Irish Members of Parliament, it would be interpreted locally by the norms and mores of Irish people. This is both the genius and the frustration of the relative and subjective nature of the term "obscene." The CEL, however, failed to recognise this fact, or concealed its recognition, by attacking what its members viewed as a challenge to institutional censorship. Donovan, for example, asked de Burca, "You don't fear that one of the twelve would be lacking in moral rectitude and not deal properly?" Likewise, Thrift claimed "that a great deal of the public confidence in juries has been shaken by the history of jury action in Ireland." De Burca elided these points by noting that citizens take the risk of one member of a jury lacking in moral rectitude every day and that he did not feel that the public confidence in juries had been shaken the less for it. In fact, the nature of Donovan and Thrift's questions suggests that it was *their* confidence in juries and their fellow Irish nationals that had been shaken. Because of this, the CEL all but pronounced that a responsible and parental censorship must be established to act in the interests of the Irish people who were not properly able to decide what they should read.

During de Burca's examination, not one question pertaining to aesthetics was raised. Never once did the CEL seek to understand the role of a writer and how de Bruca, as a writer, viewed evil literature. De Burca himself divided printed matter into three categories: newspapers and periodicals, books, and birth-control pamphlets and booklets.<sup>25</sup> However, he was not concerned with treating each medium on its own merits and as possible genres, but how information pertaining to birth control circulated in each. The notion that serious artistic and journalistic writing that might be banned because of



its relationship to and association with birth control was never considered. In fact, in his discussion of books, de Burca limited his examples strictly to medical texts and the works of Dr. Marie Stopes and Ettie A. Rout.<sup>26</sup> This myopia on his part is disconcerting for how it elides the issue of obscenity in literature unless one is willing to interpret his silence on the matter and his obsession with birth control as implicitly suggesting that for de Burca and the members of the Catholic Writers' Guild, birth-control literature amounted to obscenity. Nonetheless, it is curious that de Burca was the sole witness who focused solely on birth-control literature and not on literature that was more directly concerned with sex. Perhaps he wished to skirt the issue fearing that as an artist his morality might already be suspect before the eyes of the CEL. But in this case surely a harsh treatment of the depiction of sex would have put him above reproach – unless, of course, he felt that sex could be treated in an adult fashion. Likewise, perhaps the CEL failed to probe him on the matter because its members feared he might offer testimony that it did not wish to hear and might in the process compromise what he had earlier said in his condemnation of birth-control literature. Regardless, the fact that the matter was not discussed suggests that there was already a form of censorship involved in the process of the CEL's examination of witnesses.

The CEL published its final report on December 28, 1926.<sup>27</sup> It provided a coherent narrative suggesting that all people and organisations that supplied testimony and statements were in agreement with the CEL's findings. No contradictory voices or facts were noted. A minority report, in the context of Irish censorship, was itself censored and thus Irish society was singularly portrayed as being in accord with the principle of censorship that the Report advocated. Part of this is undoubtedly because

certain groups were affected by one of three factors: 1) they were never contacted to stand before the CEL; 2) they decided not to attend out of protest or hopeless resignation with the understanding that censorship was a foregone conclusion; 3) they refused to participate in the process despite being invited.<sup>28</sup>

The Report's main conclusion was that the existing laws were inadequate. This was supported by the testimony that was provided by almost all people who appeared before the CEL and was emphasised by the Garda in a statement of evidence.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the witnesses, the CEL considered legislation in other countries pertaining to the control of publications.<sup>30</sup> The greatest concerns were summarised as the ineffectiveness of the laws arising from the interpreted meanings of the terms "indecent" and "obscene," and the wide circulation of immoral publications and birth control literature.<sup>31</sup> According to the CEL, the difficulty was in applying criminal law offences as only the most absolute and extreme cases tended to be prosecuted. This problem stemmed once again from the difficulties involved in providing legal terms that could be irrefutably defined:

Ideas of decency vary, not merely between country and country, but between individual and individual in the same country. Further, what would be demoralising in the hands or to the eyes of the young might be quite without such effect upon those of mature age. And while in the case of publications it is possible to distinguish between those which are written with an obviously obscene intent, and those into which the gross or indecent enters only incidentally as reflecting the reality of life, it cannot be always easy for a judge or magistrate in applying the criminal law with its penalties to draw a definite line. The tendency will always be in such cases to give the person indicted the benefit of the doubt, and hence there is likely to be always a gap between the standards that the moral sense of the community is endeavouring to uphold, and the standards maintained by the sanctions of the criminal law.<sup>32</sup>

The charge was that the law was not harsh enough with those who propagated obscene and indecent publications. However, the system was considered faulty not merely for its laws, but also in its guiding philosophy. In effect, the chief problem, as highlighted in the concluding sentence, was that the party charged with the criminal offence was considered innocent until proven guilty. The report suggested that a more appropriate manner in which to treat those indicted was as guilty until proven innocent. The gap that induced anxiety in the members of the CEL was the gap between the moral sense of the community and the standards of the law. No case was made for the gap that existed between the publications and the law as perhaps suggesting that the law was flawed in the other direction. This lack of balance was once again the product of who the CEL had testify before it, who composed the CEL, and whose evidence it chose to include in its decision and Report. Irish society was referred to as a singular community, as opposed to being a conglomerate of several communities with differing values. The varying ideas of decency that existed within the country were therefore not as varying as the outset of the quoted portion suggests. While the Report employs a language that at times appears balanced in such statements, its conclusions contradict the rhetoric.

After summarising the history of censorship legislation in Ireland and the hearings of the CEL, several recommendations were made.<sup>33</sup> The first and perhaps most important amongst these recommendations asked for appeals to the law that would allow for an even broader judicial interpretation of the terms “indecent” and “obscene” which would thereby make prosecution of evil literature significantly easier. The CEL also recommended that a Censorship Board be created “consisting of from nine to twelve persons, representative of the religious, educational and literary or artistic interests of the

Saorstát.” The CEL therefore felt assured that a Censorship Board not necessarily versed in the law would make better judges of legal cases of indecency and obscenity than magistrates. Power would rest with the Censorship Board to decide which publications were “demoralising and corrupting,” though no guidelines were provided as to how these terms might also prove to have slippery definitions. However, censorship “should not extend to questions of a political or economic kind,” though how this was to be regulated and insured was not addressed. Birth-control literature, it suggested, should not be banned outright, but its circulation should be tightly controlled and restricted to authorised persons only, meaning mainly those in the medical profession. It also asked that greater powers be granted to the Garda so that they had the right to obtain warrants and enter premises where indecent publications were kept with the intent to sell them. Finally, it sought to extend further powers to the Customs Authorities to block the import of banned publications and the Postal Authorities to refuse delivery of indecent publications through the post. As with the vast majority of governmental reports, action was not taken on the findings until some time had passed: the first reading of the *Censorship of Publications Bill* was on July 19, 1928.<sup>34</sup>

The Catholic press, however, began running out of patience in early 1928, though rumblings of discontent with Government inaction were made in the pages of *The Leader* soon after the publication of the CEL’s report.<sup>35</sup> The first renewed campaign for Government action against evil literature can be traced to an article that appeared in the February 1928, issue of the *Irish Rosary*.<sup>36</sup> Anonymously written under the title “The Modern Sex Novelists,” the article praised James Douglas who had earlier published in the *Daily Express* what amounted to an unsophisticated invective against the spectral

image of the pervert-writer in calling for a paternal censorship.<sup>37</sup> The article argued “that some of the most filthy and notorious of sex novelists belong to the Irish pagan clique; and secondly that many Irish women and girls borrow the novels of these salacious writers from the circulating libraries, and gloat over them at home.” Unlike much of the testimony provided before the CEL, the problem of indecent literature was not found to be solely rooted in foreign countries. Irish writers were given shared responsibility for immoral writing and for posing an equal threat to the country’s women and girls. The article thus appealed to manhood, the need to protect one’s women and children from an invader, the implicit relationship drawn to an approaching army that threatened not only to take over and destroy the home, but also to rape the women. As will become apparent, this was a common strategy throughout much of the discourse that argued for a more stringent censorship.

In the April issue of the *Irish Rosary*, Robert Kirkwood used less emotive tones in discussing the problem of immoral literature in Ireland and the need for censorship.<sup>38</sup> Kirkwood argued that the dangers of such literature were being met by the work of the CTS, but admitted that despite its indefatigable efforts the problem continued because of the sheer numbers of publications that existed. The real problem, he claimed, was not in the overtly filthy paper, but the more subtle literature, such as “new books and plays that tried to inculcate false systems of philosophy, false ideas of morality and false teachings of science.”<sup>39</sup> Because, according to Kirkwood, the Irish were “multifarious” readers, that is, “they read diligently and religiously, column by column, page by page,” definite action was both more difficult and more pressing.<sup>40</sup> This was precisely why, he argued, realist writers had to be censored: “They would have us believe that there was no need to

stem the tide of Evil Literature, because life in Catholic Ireland was every bit as that portrayed in this self-same Evil Literature."<sup>41</sup> Evil Literature was thus understood to be as much a product of Ireland as it was of England or France or any other country, with no nation holding a monopoly on obscenity. Kirkwood appealed for the debates on censorship to look inward to the dangers that existed in the writings of Irish artists, for, he noted, if the threat came entirely from beyond Ireland's borders, it would be less difficult to defeat.<sup>42</sup> The danger of the Irish artist was that he or she portrayed Irish life in a wholly negative light, leading the Irish reading public to have negative views of the nation. As such, the images of the realist artist were as false as the images of the romantic writer. Therefore, he concluded, "He deserves to go – and speedily. He is undermining the defence."<sup>43</sup> Though realist and romantic writers were similarly charged with presenting false images of Ireland, it was only the realist that must be cast out. It was only the realist that undermined the defence and weakened the spirit of the nation. Like a diseased tumour that infects the body politic, the realist must be removed so that he or she does not spread his or her harmful ideas to other parts, causing irreversible damage and, perhaps, even destroy society, the host organism. This was the belief that caused *The Standard*, a conservative Catholic newspaper, to express its impatience and resentment at the delays in getting censorship legislation tabled in the Dáil.<sup>44</sup>

Following the introduction of the Bill in the Dáil on July 19 by James Fitzgerald-Kenney, then the Minister for Justice, the second reading proceeded on October 18.<sup>45</sup> Many in the Catholic press, relieved to finally see governmental action, warmly received the new legislation.<sup>46</sup> Foremost amongst the changes made in the CEL's recommendations was the composition of the Censorship Board. Believing that a

Censorship Board of nine to twelve people would slow the machinery of censorship to a crawling pace and that having only one censor would place an unfair burden upon an individual, the Bill called for five members.<sup>47</sup> The reduction of the Censorship Board from nine to five members drew considerable criticism from several deputies, including Thrift who, as a member of the CEL, took offence at what he interpreted as the ignorance of its recommendations.<sup>48</sup> In examining publications, the Censorship Board was asked to keep in mind that it was assessing the property of a publisher and a writer. It had to balance this in consideration with the “duty to the public to see that demoralising and degrading literature [should] not be in circulation in this country.”<sup>49</sup> In so doing, Fitzgerald-Kenney provided an important instructive caveat: “A book can be fairly condemned only when in its whole course it makes for evil, when its tenor [sic] is bad, when in some important part of it, it is indecent. It must not be condemned if it has here and there one or two exceptional passages.”<sup>50</sup> As an example, he cited William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, specifically the character of Becky Sharp and her loose morals, noting that the book could not be condemned because of how the tale is narrated. Likewise, though some of Iago’s expressions might be objectionable, *Othello* “could not be condemned by any sensible board of censors.”<sup>51</sup> And neither would the Censorship Board ban a medical text despite the fact that its contents might seem indecent to a non-medical person. As such, the Censorship Board had to “exercise a judicial discretion” despite the fact that its members would not be culled from the legal profession.<sup>52</sup> The single most important guiding principle in the Bill was that, similar to what the CEL had recommended, the terms of “obscene” and “indecent” were narrowly defined as being tied to notions of “sexual morality” and “sexual perversion.”<sup>53</sup> In order

for the law to succeed, the onus was placed upon the composition of the Censorship Board, its members being necessarily capable of exhibiting rational judgement and able to deny the temptation to abuse their powers and be susceptible to outside pressures.<sup>54</sup>

Though some members of Fianna Fáil stood to voice concern over the wording of the Bill, they wholly endorsed the principle of censorship and the measures that the legislation represented. Most notable amongst these supporters was P.J. Rutledge, who later took over as Minister of Justice and therefore became responsible for censorship when Fianna Fáil took office in 1932, and Eamon de Valera, the future Taoiseach.<sup>55</sup> Sean Lemass offered the only real criticism of the Government's action, claiming that it had "been too slow and cautious in introducing a measure of this kind."<sup>56</sup> One deputy offered his support by noting that given the already authoritative, protective and coercive powers of the State, censorship was a logical extension of these powers.<sup>57</sup> It was also argued that while the censorship of newspapers was admirable, the censorship of books should have been avoided. This was particularly the case because the Irish people were considered to be a newspaper reading public, as distinct from a book reading public: the only books one might have found in a house were a prayer book or "an old copy of *Knocknagow* or *Moore's Melodies*."<sup>58</sup>

However, some voices of dissent appeared. Professor Michael Tierney, a Cumann na nGaedael Senator who represented the National University, was most concerned with books being banned that should not be banned, fearing that Ireland would make itself a laughing-stock. "I have been reading a list of books that have been prohibited in Canada," he said, "and I certainly cannot say that that list is by any means a credit to the Canadian Government or whoever is responsible for its production."<sup>59</sup>



Professor Ernest Alton, an independent Senator who represented Trinity College, raised the concern of Irish censorship degrading into a form of national cultural isolationism that would effectively cut the country off from the best in contemporary and foreign thought.<sup>60</sup> And Bryan Cooper noted that by institutionalising censorship the Government would only create an illegal trade in books. “The more stringent you make the penalties,” he warned, “the greater the incentive to the literary bootlegger. It will be easier to put a thick volume of Voltaire in your pocket than to produce a dozen bottles of whiskey, and yet in New York bottles of whiskey appear as if by magic.”<sup>61</sup> Even though these three deputies made good points that might have given cause for concern or caution, the momentum in both society and Government at this time was such that they were all but ignored.

In the meantime, public debate continued in both the secular and Catholic press. The *Irish Rosary*, for example, pointed out how the Bill demanded the consent of at least four members of the Censorship Board in order to ban a publication.<sup>62</sup> This raised the fear that the Censorship Board could be rendered ineffective by the two Protestant members if they were to come to odds with the three Catholic members. Of course, because of the relatively lax and loose morals that the Catholic press associated with Protestantism, it was only a matter of time before such an occasion, or crisis as they viewed it, occurred. Given that the censorship was in the main being legislated to protect a largely Catholic Irish nation from the evils of a largely Protestant English press, the conflation here of Protestantism as a foreign characteristic, or un-Irishness, is not wholly surprising, especially coming from a sectarian source. *The Standard*, meanwhile, though

somewhat more subdued, was nonetheless fulsome in its praise of the Bill and at the tenor of the Dáil debates.<sup>63</sup>

The first major public critique of the Bill was actually launched from abroad in an article W.B. Yeats published in *The Spectator* on September 29.<sup>64</sup> The fact that Yeats had retired from the Senead only the day before has led Donald R. Pierce to convincingly suggest that the article would have probably formed the substance of a speech on the subject had Yeats kept his seat.<sup>65</sup> As one of Ireland's two Nobel Laureates of Literature, a former Senator, and a formidable individual from the period of anti-colonial resistance, Yeats' words held some sway in Irish society. However, as a member of the Protestant Ascendancy, he would always be held in suspicion by some people, just as the argument made in the *Irish Rosary* suspected the possibly treasonous and counter-productive Protestant members of the Censorship Board regardless of their morality.

Yeats' chief argument was that the deputies who designed and worded the Bill did not believe in the principles it espoused and the mechanisms it was to put in place. Its definition of "indecent" and the vague phrase "subversive of public morality" would permit the Minister of Justice "to exclude *The Origin of Species*, Karl Marx's *Capital*, the novels of Flaubert, Balzac, Proust, all of which have been objected to somewhere on moral ground, half the Greek and Roman Classics, Anatole France and everybody else on the Roman index and all great love poetry."<sup>66</sup> Though the Government claimed that its intention was not for this to happen, Yeats argued that "in legislation intention is nothing, and the letter of the law everything, and no Government has the right, whether to flatter fanatics or in mere vagueness of mind to forge an instrument of tyranny and say that it will never be used." If censorship had been alive and well in pre-independence Ireland,

the Abbey Theatre would never have survived its early controversial years and the riots surrounding *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Playboy of the Western World*. And if birth-control literature was to be banned, then the population would increase at such a rate as to make Swift's "Modest Proposal" a Malthusian necessity. "I know from plays rejected by the Abbey Theatre," he continued, "that the idealist political movement has, after achieving its purpose, collapsed and left the popular mind to its own lawless vulgarity." He ended on a fatal note, hinting at the continued exodus of Irish artists into exile should the State maintain its war against freedom of the intellect by passing such legislation.

As the editor of the popular and liberal *Irish Statesman*, AE was well positioned to criticise the proposed censorship from within Ireland. In an article that appeared in October 1928, he argued against the misguided notion that one can impose virtue by force as free will defines humans as having souls.<sup>67</sup> Bad literature can only be combated with good literature; the problem that the vigilance groups faced was that their attacks on literature were wholly negative in promoting censorship instead of offering a more positive possibility of publishing good literature. This was somewhat disingenuous of AE, as the CTS, through its imprint Veritas, had long been actively publishing religious pamphlets, brochures and readers. But his point that the total control of the public and its reading materials that such groups sought was prescient of how censorship came to function. Such desires on the part of these groups further highlighted the anti-intellectual foundations of their thinking. The problem at its root was a misunderstanding, or ignorance, of art that equated nudity with indecency: "We have seen in Irish houses reproductions on the roof of the Sistine Chapel by Michael Angelo, with breeches and

drapery painted over them. The people who did this," he concluded, "were more moral than the Popes."<sup>68</sup>

In addition to his article in *The Spectator*, Yeats wrote an attack of the censorship for Irish consumption in the *Irish Statesman* the month after AE's appeared. Entitled "The Censorship and St. Thomas Aquinas," Yeats argued that the Bill's definition of "indecent" as that which was "calculated to excite sexual passion" was "ridiculous to a man of letters" and "must be sacrilegious to a Thomist."<sup>69</sup> Yeats found it baffling that though the philosophy of St. Thomas was the official philosophy of the Catholic Church, the Catholic lawyers who designed the Bill could have made such a blunder. The Church in its artistic renderings of the Virgin Mary had often favoured more sumptuous, maternal figures, not the cold, sexless women of Puritanism. *Anima est in toto corpore*, as Cardinal Mericer, a Thomist himself, once emphasised. Unfortunately though, Irish politicians and the greater society had ignored this belief, and their Catholicism was at this time instead infused with a Victorian bourgeois prudery. They should be forced to study "Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, and ask themselves if there is no one it could not incite to 'sexual passion,'"<sup>70</sup> to which many would have answered yes. They should then ask a further question of themselves: "Are we prepared to exclude such art from Ireland and to sail in a ship of fools, fools that dressed bodies Michael Angelo left naked, Town Councillors of Montreal who hid the Discobulus in the cellar?"<sup>71</sup> Yeats admitted that immoral painting and literature existed and that, as such, they were bad art. But it was nonsense to attempt to compel aesthetic judgement with a hard-set definition. Instead, the decision should be left to educated men of letters and art who knew what should be excluded. The heart of his argument was therefore that censorship is fine in

principle, but it should be more liberally guided by an artistic cabal. This sort of elitist attitude had drawn much hostile reaction from the Catholic press, *The Leader* going so far as to suggest it was evidence of the poet's real allegiance in referring to him as "Mr. W. British Yeats."<sup>72</sup>

In the same issue of the *Irish Statesman*, George Bernard Shaw offered his views on the censorship debate.<sup>73</sup> With his trademark wit, he argued against the belief that people love nothing more than political liberty:

As a matter of fact there is nothing they dread more. Under the feeble and apologetic tyranny of Dublin Castle we Irish were forced to endure a considerable degree of compulsory freedom. The moment we got rid of that tyranny we rushed to enslave ourselves. . . . The latest demonstration of Irish abjectness is the supplanting of constitutional law by the establishment of a Censorship extending in general terms to all human actions, but specifically aimed at any attempt to cultivate the vital passion of the Irish people or to instruct it in any function which is concerned with that passion. It is, in short, aimed at the extermination of the Irish people as such to save them from their terror of life and of one another.<sup>74</sup>

Like Yeats, he saw in the legislation an ironic turn away from Thomist Catholic philosophy and envisioned the destruction of the more attractive images of saints throughout Ireland, mistakenly conflating "loveliness with debauchery" rather than "loveliness with blessedness."<sup>75</sup> Under such a mentality, even the priest who made reference to fertility or homosexuality was no better than Dr. Marie Stopes and Radclyffe Hall and, as such, should be defrocked and cast into hell for eternity. Because of this rejection of knowledge in favour of ignorance, clandestine instruction would flourish, and "everything that is evil in it will be protected and nourished, and everything that is honest and enlightening in it will be discredited and suppressed."<sup>76</sup> Ireland, in achieving its independence, had through its refusal to allow birth-control literature into the country claimed its right to harm, not help, its people. As a result, while the world was interested

in Ireland's cause in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth not a soul could have cared less. The fault, he argued, was with the Irish politicians and "a handful of morbid Catholics, mad with heresyphobia, unnaturally combining with a handful of Calvinists mad with sexphobia."<sup>77</sup>

Shaw's article provoked an immediate response in *The Standard*.<sup>78</sup> "Never was there a damper political squib," commented the anonymous writer. Shaw "seemed to think that he was launching a thunderbolt. The thunderbolt is much more akin to a boomerang, for it reveals once more the writer's congenital defects." These defects included a concern for ecclesiastical art that was "only a humorous pretence; he is really anxious lest the contraception propaganda, which is a preliminary to that mechanistic Utopia which he has recently expounded [in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*], should be interfered with." No actual line-by-line reading and refutation of Shaw's statement was made; instead, the criticism remained at the level of general commentary on and a facile reduction of Shaw's *oeuvre*. Like Sean O'Casey, Shaw was at this time an easy target in the Catholic press owing to his Protestant, Anglo-Irish background, his avowed left-wing politics, and his work in an artistic profession. Shaw and Yeats were to remain publicly silent on the issue of censorship until 1932, when they founded the Irish Academy of Letters, more on which will be said below. In the meantime, the Catholic press continued to inform the public of how censorship legislation could and would positively impact Irish society and to continue the fight against the Bill's critics.<sup>79</sup>

The Dáil resumed debating the issue on February 20, 1929.<sup>80</sup> Aside from the minutiae that are typical of such debates in hammering out the legal wording of the

legislation, the deputies showed renewed anxieties on the interpretations of how “indecent” publications would be defined. Much of this arose from fears that medical journals might be banned by the Censorship Board, but this was alleviated by deputies who argued that the Board would only be composed by those who had common sense and that such individuals would never ban such works. To allay such fears, Fitzgerald-Kenney made an amendment to protect scientific publications, though there was no debate on what would comprise a scientific work, this term seeming to be significantly more self-evident than “indecent.”

There was also much debate on the nature of complaints, how they could be lodged and who could lodge them.<sup>81</sup> Of particular concern was the question of whether or not books had to be read in their entirety. This would have resonance later in how books were being banned, as at one point it was assumed that if they were to be fully read, no more than one book per fortnight could be seriously considered by a Censorship Board composed of unpaid, part-time volunteers. But Fitzgerald-Kenney argued that in the cases of evidently indecent and obscene books, people, both complainants and the Censorship Board members, would only have to read a few passages in order to suggest the banning of the given publication. This again raises questions that were not raised during this part of the debate; specifically, one wonders what defines an evidently indecent and obscene publication if there is uncertainty as to the definitions of “indecent” and “obscene.” Likewise, there were questions raised regarding whether or not birth-control literature needed to be included in the wording or if it was merely assumed to be included by definition of its relation to obscenity and indecency.<sup>82</sup> This again provided much fodder for discussing what exactly was meant by “principles contrary to public

morality” and how it could or even should be defined. The greatest anxiety raised by the more cautious deputies was that the legislation would enable busybodies, Nosey Parkers, fanatics and cranks, of which Ireland had no small share at this time, to decide what others should and could not read in the privacy of their own homes. This discussion led to the role of librarians and booksellers and the possibility of prosecutions that might take place under the legislation should people trade in banned books.<sup>83</sup>

Fitzgerald-Kenney introduced the Bill on April 10.<sup>84</sup> It was only fitting that Sir John B. Keane provided the opening speech when the debates began the next day.<sup>85</sup> Keane was to prove the greatest opponent to institutional censorship in Ireland during the initial two decades, at least as a critic who worked within the Government. Much of his battles were to be taken up in later years by the cultural intelligentsia, including Sean O’Faolain and Frank O’Connor, but even these were to some extent watered down versions of the terms of Keane’s arguments. The introduction to Keane’s speech set the tenor for what was to follow and highlighted the deficiencies in the level of debates as they had occurred in the Dáil:

It has been said by some people of consequence that so popular is this measure in the country, and so influential are the forces behind it, that anybody who has the temerity to oppose it in principle will no longer be acceptable in public life. I am sure that is not the point of view that will appeal to this House. I am sure this House is anxious to hear the views, even of a minority, and in what I have to say I do not claim to represent more than a minority, but I claim to speak on behalf of a minority who contribute in no small measure to the amenities of this State, to its literature and to its art – who are not only the producers of literature and art, but are also patrons in a measure out of all proportion to their numbers of art and literature which, speaking generally, you might say are not patronised at all by large masses.<sup>86</sup>

Keane’s concern was that in the past the State had been preoccupied with hygiene in the physical world, such as the cleanliness of food, farms and cities; he thus offered caution



on the part of censorship legislation because it involved the move towards the State's control of hygiene of the mind. The censors, he argued, had to this point been imagined to work under the best conditions and with the best intentions, which disingenuously ignored the simple realities of both human nature and governance. While he reiterated the point that "indecent" is a concept that is relative to both cultural and historical contexts, he admitted that modern literature posed a distinct problem. In fact, he went so far as to openly and purposely conflate modern literature with sexual obsession. But this was a rhetorical strategy. As an obsession with the sexual is imbricated in modern literature, the only truly effective means of prohibiting evil and immoral publications was to burn all books wholesale as anything that came up short of this would always allow *some* questionable literature to circulate within and invade the body politic.

The Bill's concern with the sexual was further flawed as it allowed for what Keane termed "the camouflage of sex." In effect, the censor's real problem with a publication might be its political, social or cultural bent. The expression of the sexual could be claimed as the cause of a book's banning while the more problematic issues would be other aspects of the book which the censor would not be obliged to discuss. Indeed, the insidious nature of the camouflage of sex is that it would cause these other issues to be removed from society and, therefore, from public debate.<sup>87</sup> Despite the case that Keane made, the majority of the senators who spoke on the subject were in favour of the Bill, including Oliver St. John Gogarty who later had some of his works banned under the very censorship legislation he supported.<sup>88</sup> However, in the later stages of the debate Gogarty expressed considerable reserve, arguing against the banning of the classics and in favour of the need to consider "the value of a work from a humanitarian or artistic

standpoint where the higher expression of a nation's will and energy is represented in art."<sup>89</sup> The need for such caution, he argued, was illustrated in the initial hostile reception of Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen* in Ireland, which he noted was by this time internationally recognised as a play of some importance.

Some amendments were made during the Seanad debates, such as the reduction of the Censorship Board from nine to five members, a return to the original total that would allow for the censorship to run more smoothly. There was also some question as to the possibility of access on the parts of authors and publishers to the reasoning behind the Censorship Board's decisions or whether these would be in camera and would remain as such. On June 20, the Seanad approved of the passing of the Bill back to the Dáil.<sup>90</sup> The Dáil held its final debates on the Bill on July 11, accepting all amendments made by the Seanad.<sup>91</sup> On July 16, the *Censorship of Publications Act, 1929*, was passed into law.

As might be expected, the Catholic press followed the Government debates with the enthusiasm of sporting fans. The *Irish Rosary* reported its frustration at the length of time the legislation took to enact, arguing that when faced with any other national crisis, as the flood of evil literature into Ireland represented, the Government would normally act swiftly and decisively.<sup>92</sup> *The Standard*, however impatient it might have been, relished the intricacies of the political process. It offered praise for how the Dáil had amended the Bill to facilitate the censorship by allowing for individuals and not just acknowledged associations to make complaints. However, it also remained critical of the disparaging remarks levelled by several politicians as to the character of organisations such as the CTS and the IVA, specifically in the labelling of these groups as fanatical.<sup>93</sup> The paper informed its readers as the Bill passed through each of the reading and

committee stages, providing significant detail of the amendments that were made and how these would impact the mechanisms of censorship in Ireland.<sup>94</sup> Throughout this period readers were also asked to increase their vigilance to combat the propagandists of smut and contraceptive literature.<sup>95</sup> The enactment of the legislation was received with much relief, but there was some disappointment that it did not go far enough in making the censorship more effective. It had been hoped that more publications would be banned and harsher punishments would follow. Following the enactment, *The Standard* could therefore claim: "The sense of decency that is dominant in Ireland is going to dominate in these matters. To resist it would be fatal for any party."<sup>96</sup> This is the same Manichean mindset that created a committee on *evil* literature to protect and safeguard the inherent *good* of Irish society. But all political parties, as the events demonstrate, heeded the warning.

In its final form, the *Censorship of Publications Act* did not do much in the way of assuaging concerns over the definitions of problematic terminology. Despite the extensive debates, "indecent" was "construed as including suggestive of, or inciting to sexual immorality or unnatural vice or likely in any similar way to corrupt or deprave."<sup>97</sup> At least, it could be argued, reference to the equally obscure term "public morality" was expurgated from earlier drafts of the legislation which would have undoubtedly led zealous Censorship Boards to cast broader nets over censurable publications. The more efficient five-member Censorship Board was restored, though these people were to be "fit and proper," with no definition for how these characteristics were to be determined.<sup>98</sup> A member could only be dismissed by the Minister for Justice, under the auspices of whose department the censorship functioned, should he or she be absent from four consecutive

meetings or become “unfit in the opinion of the Minister.”<sup>99</sup> A book could only be referred to the Censorship Board if it “is indecent or obscene or advocates the unnatural prevention of conception or the procurement of abortion or miscarriage or the use of any method, treatment or appliance for the purpose of such prevention or such procurement.”<sup>100</sup> However, the Censorship Board had to simultaneously consider several aspects of the publication in question: its “literary, artistic, scientific or historical merit” and its general tenor; the language in which it was produced; the extent of the circulation such a book might have had; and the class of reader that might have been reasonably expected to read the book.<sup>101</sup> In order for a book to be banned, not more than one member could dissent from the Report and at least three members had to assent to it.<sup>102</sup> The same conditions applied to periodicals, but they were banned for three months’ time, whereas books were banned indefinitely.<sup>103</sup> The only party that could revoke a Prohibition Order was the Minister for Justice, and only after consultation with the Censorship Board.<sup>104</sup> Punishments for those prosecuted for knowingly trading and circulating banned publications included a fine from fifty to five hundred pounds and imprisonment from three to six months with the possibility of hard labour.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps most curious were the limitations on the reporting of judicial proceedings that discussed indecent matter, including medical, surgical and physiological details, that were “calculated to injure public morals,”<sup>106</sup> and those that entailed divorce, marriage annulments, separation and conjugal rights that did not contravene other parts of the Act.<sup>107</sup> The 1929 Act therefore repealed and replaced the *Obscene Publications Act, 1857*, that had been adopted from British law under the first two Acts of the Oireachtas.

As such, Ireland became an independent country in terms of the norms and mores it now enforced in the cultural sphere.

### *The First Years of Censorship Practice*

The first years of the Censorship of Publications were relatively calm. Most of the questions and problems that arose were over ensuring that the mechanisms worked according to the law. Members of the public and politicians raised concerns about how the institution was functioning and the cases where there were the possibilities for potential conflicts were defused quite easily. In reviewing the Government files and much of the popular press of the day, it appears that both the Government and society were cautiously waiting to see how censorship would be implemented. Only time would tell how conservative or liberal the institution and the Censorship Board members would be.

However, from the outset there was attention given to and pressure exerted on the Censorship Board's actions. In January 1930, *The Catholic Mind* bemoaned the decadence of literature.<sup>108</sup> In another article attacking the prevailing realism of modern literature, the journal questioned the reality that was being portrayed.<sup>109</sup> Realist literature, it opined, seemed solely focused on seediness, while neglecting the reality of the more religious and pious members of society – a popular refrain sung throughout the coming years.<sup>110</sup> And in April it was hoped that the censorship would soon be up and running to ban the offensive foreign papers from coming into Ireland.<sup>111</sup> Undoubtedly some of *The Catholic Mind's* fixation on censorship can be attributed to the fact that it was a journal that had only been launched in January 1930 and was eager to have its

moral position well known. As such, censorship was an obvious and easy target by which to gather some popularity in the Ireland of the 1930s. This might also account for why the journal was almost the sole outlet for a continued pressure to maintain a conservative and strong institutional censorship.

In the meantime, the CTS was preparing itself for the battle ahead by selecting five hundred individuals “of steady judgment” to systematically examine books and periodicals with the intention to submit offensive material to the Censorship Board.<sup>112</sup> This was partially in response to an early confrontation the CTS’s Executive Secretary Francis O’Reilly had with the Government. Before the mechanisms were put into place, O’Reilly, acting on behalf of the CTS, submitted a copy of Warwick Deeping’s *Roper’s Row* on October 8, 1929.<sup>113</sup> O’Reilly was especially concerned with page 394 on which he believed there to be a plea for birth control by the book’s hero, leaving it uncertain whether it was the plea itself or the fact that it was issued by the hero that made it offensive. The Department of Justice responded to O’Reilly on October 19:

The Minister has considered your letter carefully and has read some pages of the book, in or about page 394. He has come to the conclusion that whether the book is or is not a pleasant one, he could not undertake to refer it to the Censorship of Publications Board merely because on one page out of 400 there are a certain number of rhetorical questions recording doubts on the question of contraception running through the mind of the hero. The book whilst perhaps it treads on delicate ground, could scarcely be called indecent or obscene, and the rhetorical questions on page 394 in the light of the rest of the chapter could not be construed as an advocacy of contraception within the meaning of the Act.<sup>114</sup>

This was an extraordinary admission of how unprepared the Government was to implement censorship. The Censorship Board had yet to sit by this point and already it had a book submitted to it by a prominent and powerful Catholic organisation. But the Minister, instead of waiting for the Censorship Board to meet and allow it to determine

the book's merits or obscenity, took it upon himself to read the passage and the chapter in which it was found and come to his own judgment. According to the available dossiers in the Government archives, this was not to happen again; in future, the Censorship Board was the front line.

O'Reilly, however, was not placated by the response and sent an ill-advised letter that could have done permanent damage to the CTS's reputation with the Department of Justice and the Censorship Board. O'Reilly attempted to go over the Minister's head and wrote to the Taoiseach, William Cosgrave, to lodge anew his complaint of the book and what he viewed to be the Minister's shocking lack of moral direction in his decision. In the course of his letter, O'Reilly unwisely threatened the Government and the threat is highlighted in the Department of Justice's dossier: "I do not intend to let the matter rest where it stands," wrote O'Reilly. "I shall publish the correspondence with comments, unless you may be able to induce a change of heart and a change of attitude in the Department concerned."<sup>115</sup>

On October 28, Cosgrave inquired with the Minister for Justice, Fitzgerald-Kenney, as to the rationale behind his decision. A week later Fitzgerald-Kenney responded that "this book is a good illustration of the difference between a positive and a negative censorship."<sup>116</sup> The matter appears to have been dropped thereafter, with a drafted response from Cosgrave not issued. An internal memorandum in the Department of the Taoiseach suggests that high-ranking civil servants were not in favour of any action, for O'Reilly had attempted "to make the President a Court of Appeal from the Minister for Justice in the matter of the Censorship of Publications Act" and that this sort of precedent "should be discouraged."<sup>117</sup> This episode appears to have helped spur

O'Reilly and the CTS to organise their campaign of over 500 readers in the following months in the hopes that such work would translate into better results.

In the intervening time, no concerted action was taken by the more liberal sections of society which suggests that they were still waiting to see how the censorship would function. One brief campaign was lodged from abroad by George Sylvester Viereck in November 1930. Viereck was dismayed over the banning of his *My First Two Thousand Years*, co-authored with Paul Eldridge as the autobiography of the Wandering Jew. His disappointment was not merely with the fact that the book was banned, but because, as he told Cosgrave, he had fought in verse and prose for the Irish nation in the years leading up to independence. "You yourself," he wrote to Cosgrave, "told me that some of my war poems were smuggled into Ireland and printed by the men who fought for Irish freedom."<sup>118</sup> Cosgrave attempted to intercede on Viereck's behalf but was assured by the Minister for Justice that the Censorship Board had acted according to the law and arrived at its decision in a professional manner.<sup>119</sup> He was thus forced to inform Viereck of his regret, but also noted that the "Board is composed of respected distinguished citizens of different faiths, possessing a wide knowledge of conditions in the Irish Free State, and alive to anything which might be calculated to offend susceptibilities here."<sup>120</sup> In his final response, Viereck stated his understanding of the nation's right to determine its own standards, then impishly concluded: "I just see from newspaper dispatches that Ireland is riding on the wave of depression and that her exports are higher than ever. I take it for granted that I have your permission to add this fact in some way to our discussion."<sup>121</sup> Shaw's prophecy about those who had once supported Ireland in the struggle for its



independence being turned away from concern with the country occurred even more quickly than he had imagined.

Viereck's book was one of seventy-eight banned by the Censorship Board of the eighty-seven it had examined by the time it issued its first report on May 8, 1931.<sup>122</sup> Of the twenty-six periodicals examined, eighteen were banned. The report asked for more assistance in order to facilitate the Censorship Board's functioning and expressed frustration with the newspapers, particularly the *Irish Times*, that published the titles of prohibited books. This practice was tantamount to advertising censored materials. However, Irish society as a whole, especially those sections in which support for the censorship was strongest, was also criticized:

The demand for censorship was general and persistent and it was therefore expected that the public generally and Social Organisations interested in preventing the circulation of objectionable literature, would co-operate with the Board by forwarding copies of any such books or periodical publications as they considered should be prohibited. We regret to say that, with the exception of the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, which has furnished the majority of the complaints received, little assistance has been obtained from these sources.<sup>123</sup>

The reading public and Library Committees were singled out as needing to become more engaged as without their assistance the censorship could not function.

As the complaint forms available in the Government files reveal, the CTS was indeed the chief source of formal complaints to the Censorship Board. Until the date of the Board's first report was issued, twenty-seven formal complaints were made by Francis O'Reilly on behalf of the CTS and only three by citizens acting outside of the CTS.<sup>124</sup> In the two years after this date, forty-three formal complaints were lodged by O'Reilly and the CTS and six by other citizens. There was therefore some, though little, effort being exerted by the public to read books with a critical eye towards possibly

obscene and indecent material and complain about offending publications. The difference between the figures for the CTS and other members of society can perhaps be attributed to people believing that the CTS was doing a sufficient job, and people not having the means or knowledge of how to lodge a complaint. This last point is especially the case in terms of socio-economics, as lower classes would generally not have enough leisure, education or access to read some of the literature being complained about, would not complain because it was entertainment that had them as an audience in mind, and the costs of supplying the Censorship Board with copies of the offending publication would be prohibitive for those already living hand to mouth. Furthermore, the difference in the number of complaints made by the CTS and the public was perhaps reflective of a general ignorance of how censorship worked and demonstrated the assumption that the onus for the functioning of the institution was perceived to be entirely on the State. Regardless as to the reasons for this discrepancy, it was with the banning of one of George Bernard Shaw's works in the spring of 1933 that institutional censorship faced the first concerted and organised challenge to its legitimacy, authority, and functioning.

*The Banning of Shaw's Novella and the Challenge from the Irish Academy of Letters*

While one might expect the text of one of Shaw's plays, such as *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, to have been banned by the Censorship Board, it was his novella *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* that had the distinction of being prohibited in Ireland. While his article in the *Irish Statesman* in November of 1928 is illustrative of his thoughts on censorship, perhaps even more instructive to the scholar examining Shaw and his relation to the practice is the preface to *The Shewing-Up of*

*Blanco Posnet*, a play that was infamously banned by the Lord Chamberlain under the auspices of the British Censorship of Plays.<sup>125</sup> This play, Shaw wrote, “is really a religious tract in dramatic form.”<sup>126</sup> It challenged the public’s preconceived notions and firmly, though illogically, held assumptions and norms. Besides, blasphemy and sedition, he later argued in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*, are merely telling “the truth about Church and State.”<sup>127</sup> Censored works, he said,

may or may not be great poems or edifying sermons, or important documents, or charming romances: our tribal citizens know nothing about that and do not want to know anything: all that they do know is that incest, prostitution, abortion, contagious diseases, and nudity are improper, and that all conversations, or books, or plays in which they are discussed are improper conversations, improper books, improper plays, and should not be allowed.<sup>128</sup>

In November 1909, Shaw appeared before the parliamentary Joint Select Committee that was formed to inquire into the workings of British stage censorship. Shaw opened his statement to the Committee with a typically provocative defence of his oeuvre, noting that he was “a specialist in immoral and heretical plays”<sup>129</sup> and that he did so with an eye to change the misplaced morals of society. Furthermore,

[w]hatever is contrary to established manners and customs is immoral. An immoral act or doctrine is not necessarily a sinful one: on the contrary, every advance in thought and conduct is by definition immoral until it has converted the majority. For this reason it is of the most enormous importance that immorality should be protected jealously against the attacks of those who have no standard except the standard of custom, and who regard any attack on custom – that is, on morals – as an attack on society, on religion, and on virtue.<sup>130</sup>

Shaw defended minority rights from the tyranny of the majority. He feared that finding justification in tradition and superstition would lead to the inertia of both society and humankind. In effect, new ideas must test the old in order for society to make positive progress.<sup>131</sup> Under a rigid system of censorship, such ideas cannot flourish and debate

cannot occur, leading society inevitably towards stagnation and decline.<sup>132</sup> The relevance of these earlier struggles in Britain become hauntingly familiar as his words resonate in the Irish context.

In 1932, in reaction to censorship in Ireland, Shaw and Yeats founded the Irish Academy of Letters. The Academy was to offer an institution through which the cultural figures of the time could wage an organised resistance and form an effective group to lobby on the behalf of artists and the art they produced. As a result, it became known as the “Academy of Immorality” in some sections of society that viewed the constitution of its membership as “sufficient to blast it forever in the eyes of all decent Catholics and non-Catholics.”<sup>133</sup> After some correspondence on the subject, Shaw donated fifty pounds for secretarial expenses to assist Yeats in beginning the venture. Although he fully supported the project, Shaw declined Yeats’ invitation to sit as the Academy’s first president, citing his residence in London as making it too difficult of an undertaking. Instead, he suggested that AE would be a more adequate president owing to his Dublin address and his having “the requisite Jehovesque beard and aspect.”<sup>134</sup> Yeats and Shaw composed a plan

for a body to consist of twenty-five members who had written creatively ‘with Ireland as the subject matter,’ plus, as associates, ten Irishmen whose work was distinguished but who did not fall within the definition. The letter of invitation sent to prospective members under both their names . . . made it clear that censorship was an enemy of literature that both had experienced and that the Academy would battle.<sup>135</sup>

All writers who received an invitation to join accepted the nomination with the exception of James Joyce, Sean O’Casey, and Lord Dunsany.<sup>136</sup> The mandate and political clout of this new organisation was tested the following year when one of its founders had a work

of his banned and members were dispatched to place pressure on the Government to revoke the Prohibition Order.

*The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* has as its protagonist the unnamed black girl. Having learned about God and organised religion from white missionaries in the jungles of Africa, the black girl one day raises questions that her instructors cannot answer without revealing their own ignorance. She sets off on her adventures when she asks where God might be found and is told by a missionary that He said, "Seek and ye shall find me."<sup>137</sup> In her travels she meets the God of the Old Testament, the God of Noah and the God of Job, Ecclesiastes, Micah, a Roman soldier, Jesus, St. Peter, an old wandering Jew, a group of scientists, an artist and Mohammed, all of whom offer her inadequate views of life, religion, and God. Unsatisfied, she finally stumbles upon Voltaire cultivating his garden. She is swayed by his wisdom and joins him in his work, taking a red-headed Irishman (Shaw) for her husband. She is satisfied with manual labour and later in her role as mother to her "charmingly coffee-coloured children,"<sup>138</sup> having realised the impudence that she once had in setting out to search for God. As Voltaire argues, God would probably not be interested in her and she would not be able to stand before Him in all of His power and glory. The story therefore systematically attacks most world religions in Shaw's attempt to illustrate not what is wrong with God, but how religion has failed its followers and how they have in turn failed themselves through their ill-conceived practices.

The book was published on December 5, 1932. Warren Sylvester Smith points out the irony of this date, believing that its appearance on book shelves just before the holiday season and its title might have caused later embarrassment for those who thought

they were offering a rather harmless Christmas gift.<sup>139</sup> While some might have been of this sort, surely, given Shaw's enormous popularity, reputation and infamy, most people who purchased the book would have had an inkling of the sort of perspective the book contained. In the end, five additional printings were needed to meet the demand of the Christmas rush. A total of 57 000 were sold over the first month. Another nine printings followed between 1933 and 1936, representing another 48 000. In the United States, a further 47 000 copies were printed and sold.<sup>140</sup>

In advance of the Censorship Board's intervention in the book's Irish circulation, a rather harmless scuffle emerged in Co. Wexford that reflected the larger debates to follow in the coming months. On December 30, 1932, at a meeting of the County Wexford Bee-Keepers' Association in Enniscorthy, Dr. G.E.G. Greene proposed a resolution to the membership: "That the name of George Bernard Shaw be removed from the list of life members of the Association in consequence of his blasphemous statements concerning Christ and His Apostles in his recent book, 'Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God.'"<sup>141</sup> Shaw had become a life member of the association four years earlier by subscribing the requisite fee of £3, 3s., but he had not been involved in it since then. To make his case, Greene read the passages from the book that had so infuriated and shocked him. "A man who makes observations of that kind," he said,

directs his sarcastic ridicule at the very foundations of Christianity, and should not be associated, even remotely, with our Association, even though it is only a small county society of bee-keepers. It is my duty to Christianity to move the resolution, because I think that we Christians should not put on our Christianity as a Sunday garment for the purpose of going to church; but it should influence us in every walk of life, every day, and in every society we are connected with.<sup>142</sup>

Some questions followed as to the accuracy of the quotations Greene provided. A further concern for prudence and tolerance was demonstrated by members who argued that although the comments might be blasphemous, they did not necessarily prove that Shaw was un-Christian. Finally, the fear was raised that if this precedent were to be made, every member should have to sign a paper stating that he or she was not an atheist. The Chairman, doubting that the membership had the power to undertake Dr. Greene's proposed banishment of Shaw, adjourned the meeting and thus postponed the debate.

At the subsequent meeting on January 26, 1933, the Association voted unanimously against hearing Dr. Greene's proposal any further.<sup>143</sup> Dr. Greene resigned in protest, saying, "I am sorry you prefer George Bernard Shaw to Christ."<sup>144</sup> The Chairman, unfazed, defended Shaw in surprisingly eloquent terms:

When seeking his patronage a few years ago, . . . I had no reason for believing he held the views attributed to him, and which nothing less than his avowed infidelity would have warranted.

I do not pretend to be able to fathom one of the greatest minds of our time, but I have noticed, when his own feelings respecting the Deity has been referred to, becoming reverence has been shown.

During the quarter of a century when we so often have met to consult in the interests of the little scheme which has done so much to promote kindly feelings as well as profit for many, there never was a word likely to provoke heat, and I regret that our little brotherhood should have earned contempt and ridicule by presuming to deal with a matter which, if deserving of notice at all, should have been left to others better qualified.<sup>145</sup>

From these words, it is also apparent that the association had received much negative press in the month between the two meetings. As opposed to praise and support for possibly taking a pious stance on an infamously blasphemous, socialist, and feminist writer, the association appears to have caved into more liberal pressures and mockery for its provincial and parochial values as represented by Dr. Greene. In this case, then, social

pressures surprisingly had the effect to dissuade conservatism and promote liberalism which in all probability reveals that the attention the Bee-Keepers had garnered came from beyond Ireland.

More traditional sources of literary reception were likewise liberal. *The Times Literary Supplement* provided the book with a favourable review: "Mr. Shaw is accused by his critics of a taste for *longueurs*; and it may be that some of his last acts bear out the charge. Yet he is the man who has just published in the form of an apologue a critique of the chief world religions that extracts the essentials in about seventy pages."<sup>146</sup> However, not all contemporary reviews were so kind. John Farleigh, the book's illustrator, included in his autobiography a letter that appeared in the press on March 18, 1933. Signed "Critical," the letter lamented that Shaw had come under attack while Farleigh had gotten off unscathed for his "insolent" drawings: "It is a pity the critics were not up to the other side of their job, when they could have harassed the artist as well as the author so that they might enjoy a well deserved burning together."<sup>147</sup> Though the Irish Government would burn neither Shaw nor Farleigh, their impression of the book was closer to that of "Critical" and Dr. Greene than it was to that of the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* and the Chairman of the County Wexford Bee-Keepers' Association. On May 1, 1933, the Minister for Justice, acting upon the report of the Censorship Board, made *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* the subject of a Prohibition Order.

Three weeks after the announcement of the book's banning, the Irish Academy of Letters began its campaign to have the Prohibition Order revoked. George Russell, the Academy's Secretary, wrote on May 22 to P.J. Rutledge, the Minister for Justice:



Sir. The Council of the Irish Academy of Letters has instructed me to write to you and ask if you would receive a deputation of some of its members. The council after a study of the Censorship of Publication Act and a close reading of Mr George Bernard Shaw's [sic] book "The Adventures of the Black Girl in her search for God" contest the legality of the ban fixed on this book by the Board of Censors as there is nothing whatever indecent or obscene in it, nor does it directly or by suggestion advocate the unnatural prevention of conception or the procurement of abortion, and such offences the Council submits constitute the sole reasons permitting the banning of a book. We approach you because as Minister for Justice you are in your official capacity the sole court to which an appeal can be carried. Those deputed by the Council to make this appeal will be in Dublin on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> also on the 29<sup>th</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of this month and they will come to your office at any hour you may fix on any of those days which may be convenient for you, and will put their case against the banning of Mr Shaw's book.<sup>148</sup>

On May 23, someone within the Department of Justice sent Brian MacMahon, the Secretary to the Censorship Board, a private internal memorandum asking for his opinion on the matter. MacMahon responded later that same day: "To my mind the illustrations are the only justification under the Act. The Board seemed to consider the general tendency of the book to be bad. They also considered that the pictures were such as would not be allowed, for example, to pass through the post."<sup>149</sup>

One would therefore expect that the Academy would be informed of the nature of the banning and provided with reasons as to why the book was banned in the first place. However, the Department of Justice, to its credit, and perhaps in acknowledgement of the Academy's political clout, contacted the Academy on May 24 to tell its members something quite different:

With reference to your letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> instant, I am directed by the Minister for Justice to express his regret that he will be unable to receive on any of the dates mentioned a deputation from the Irish Academy of Letters to discuss the prohibition order made in respect of "The Adventures of the Black Girl in her search for God."

Under Section 8 of the Censorship of Publications Act the Minister may after consultation with the Censorship of Publications Board revoke

any prohibition order, and having regard to the views of the Irish Academy of Letters, the Minister intends to re-consider the case of this book, and if he is of opinion that that course should be followed he will consult the Board so that a revocation order may be made.

I am to add that you will be informed of the decision reached by the Minister in this matter.<sup>150</sup>

On May 26, Russell acknowledged the Department's effort on the Academy's behalf and thanked Rutledge for his assistance.<sup>151</sup> Russell further informed him that a deputation of Academy members comprised of Yeats, Frank O'Connor, F.R. Higgins and himself would be at the Government buildings at three o'clock in the afternoon the following Monday. This, he noted, was in keeping with Rutledge's schedule as he indicated in his letter of May 25, meaning that Rutledge had communicated directly with the Academy without informing his secretaries and other people in the Department of his correspondence. But as Rutledge's offer to meet with the deputation was not in any way contradictory to the spirit of the letter sent by the Department, no harm was done.

On June 12, the Department of Justice informed the Secretary of the Censorship Board that Rutledge had met with the deputation from the Academy and heard their concerns regarding the banning of Shaw's book.<sup>152</sup> MacMahon was made to understand that under Section 8 of the Act the Minister could revoke the Prohibition Order. In order for the Minister to arrive at a decision, MacMahon was asked to provide him the Censorship Board's "full and detailed views" concerning the book. Because the Censorship Board did not meet until June 30, MacMahon did not respond to the Department until July 3. In his letter, he provided a summary of the Censorship Board's views on Shaw's novella:

'In our opinion this book is a blasphemous composition, deliberately offensive to the cherished sentiments of the vast majority of the people, irrespective of religious opinion. On the grounds of this offensiveness it

has been excluded from certain public libraries in Great Britain, but under the statutes governing our proceedings, we are not allowed to determine our decisions by considerations of this character.

However, quite apart from such considerations, the Board was unanimously of the opinion that the book was objectionable in its references to sex, indecent in its general tendency, and liable to corrupt in sexual matters. In coming to this considered opinion the Board was largely influenced by the book's attitude of contemptuous disregard of the usually accepted standards of morality, in conjunction with the coarseness and vulgarity of its illustrations.<sup>153</sup>

On July 4, the Secretary was informed that the Censorship Board's views did not favour a Revocation Order: "They refer to the book as a blasphemous composition but it is unlikely that the Attorney General would direct a prosecution for blasphemous libel."<sup>154</sup> However, the Board was informed, "It is difficult to find in the book substantial justification for the statement that it 'was objectionable in its references to sex, indecent in its general tendency, and liable to corrupt in sexual matters'."<sup>155</sup> This reveals that the Minister was seriously considering a Revocation Order at this time. In effect, the Censorship Board's decision was being questioned and the Academy's fears that the book had been unjustifiably banned under the terms of the *Censorship of Publications Act* were well-founded. In the Government's file, the copy of this letter has a hand-written note addressed to the Minister scrawled beneath it:

It may be dangerous to over-rule the Censorship Board. The Board is doing good work. They do not appear to be unreasonable and they are working voluntarily.

Their decision in this case was unanimous. They say this book has already been banned in some public libraries in England.

And you have already made a Prohibition Order.<sup>156</sup>

The Department of Justice therefore began to reel the Minister in from making any rash decisions. It must be remembered at this time that the Fianna Fáil Government, of which Rutledge was a member, had only been in office for a year. This followed five years in

opposition after five years of abstention from the Dáil because of the divisions created by the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Irish Civil War. The Fianna Fáil Government was therefore inexperienced with governance and in their roles; the sort of wily politicians that are needed to lead had not yet been nurtured. This is where the role of experienced civil servants held some sway and guidance – and where Ireland was well-served from its inheritance of the civil service education of people under the structures of the British State in the pre-independence era.

At the same time as he was consulting his secretaries, Rutledge, acting perhaps on the advice of these same people, contacted the Attorney General for his opinion on the matter. On July 24, the Attorney General responded:

I have read Mr. Shaw's book 'The Black Girl in search of God.' I approached the question as to whether the ban on the book should be withdrawn as if I were a Judge in the Court of Criminal Appeal deciding whether the verdict of 'guilty' by a jury should be set aside. I find that there is ample evidence to support the finding of the Board that the book is a blasphemous composition.

There is more difficulty in finding evidence to support the finding of the Board that the book is in its general tendency indecent. The illustrations do feature prominently the naked body of the black girl. In the eyes of the Board this appears to lend an atmosphere of coarseness and vulgarity. Apart from this they rely upon the contemptuous disregard of the usually accepted standards of morality to support their finding that the book is in its general tendency indecent. I am not prepared to say that they are not entitled to arrive at this conclusion.

I consider that the book from beginning to end is an extremely clever attack upon the fundamental basis of the Christian religion. It is subtle in the extreme and its free circulation would provoke trouble. There is no doubt that clergymen of all denominations would feel outraged if it were not to get the imprimatur of the Minister. Its attraction or danger lies in that attacks upon the Christian and other religions are lightly dressed in Shavian garb. The withdrawal of the ban would stimulate interest in the book and cause a demand much greater than had it not been the subject of any ruling by the Board.

For these reasons I consider that it would be a serious matter for the Minister to interfere with the ruling of the Board even though he may

feel that if he were deciding the question for the first time he would have taken a different view from theirs.<sup>157</sup>

The Censorship Board was not empowered, according to its mandate as described in the Act, to ban works based upon blasphemy. However, one question arises: does blasphemy equal indecency? This was never answered, although the Attorney General allowed that the Minister simply had to refer to the illustrations of the Black Girl. Yes, she is nude, but even the wording of the letter implies that although the Attorney General realised that the illustrations might be *legally* considered indecent, he hesitated in a manner that suggests his aesthetic evaluation did not consider them as such.

That same day, the Secretary of the Department of Justice was informed of the Minister's response: "In view of the Attorney General's opinion, I think the 'Irish Academy of Letters' should be informed that the Minister does not intend to revoke the prohibition order. In any event, revocation might have awkward consequences; the Board might resign as a protest."<sup>158</sup> The inclusion of this final sentence is curious. Why bother worrying what the Board would or would not do if the Minister would probably act based upon the Attorney General's advice? It appears that some consideration was still being given to bypass the Attorney General. The Minister was not concerned with the legal basis for his action, despite the fact that the Attorney General was contacted, but by what would have the fewest political repercussions. In this case, there appears to have been some calculation between the costs of either potential mutiny of the Censorship Board or a prolonged and perhaps public campaign waged by the Irish Academy of Letters.

Anxious to know what decisions the Minister had reached after almost two months had passed, the Academy contacted the Minister on July 18 asking for an

update.<sup>159</sup> When none was forthcoming, they sent a second letter on July 26.<sup>160</sup> On August 1, the Academy received a blunt response:

With reference to your letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> instant regarding the Prohibition Order made in respect of 'The Adventures Of The Black Girl In Her Search For God', I am directed by the Minister for Justice to state that he has consulted the Censorship of Publications Board and, after a full consideration, he has decided not to revoke the Prohibition Order.<sup>161</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Academy was unsatisfied with the letter. F.R. Higgins, who had taken over the position of Secretary of the Academy from Russell some time that summer, wrote asking for an explanation as to why the book was banned.<sup>162</sup> The department's response, the last document in the Government's file on the case, would not elaborate any further, noting that "it is not the practice to supply information concerning reasons for Prohibition Orders other than that published in 'Irish Oifigiuil' [sic]."<sup>163</sup> It adds that "the Minister regrets that he can add nothing" to the department's letter of August 1.<sup>164</sup>

By the end of July, Shaw had already predicted that the Government would be unmoved. In a letter to Floryan Sobienioski, in which he discussed the sales history of *The Black Girl* and the protest of Dr. Greene that garnered worldwide attention to both the Wexford Bee-Keepers and his book, he exasperatingly noted the relative extremity of censorship as it was practised in Ireland. As the Irish Censorship, he concluded, "bans many books and authors unchallenged in Poland I do not expect it to give way to a Freethinker of Irish Protestant birth."<sup>165</sup> Once he had been informed of the Government's decision, his response to Yeats was therefore tempered with good humour more than disappointment:

My dear Yeats

You can't prosecute a Government: the King can do no wrong. It is conceivable that a publisher whose stock had been made unsaleable by a censorial ban might apply to the courts for an order to the censors to withdraw the ban on the ground that it was an infringement of public liberty; but the procedure would be expensive and the decision almost certainly in favor of the censor. If the application went the whole hog in asking for a declaration that the censorship is unconstitutional the action would be magnified; but so also would be the expense and the certainty of a triumph for the enemy.

You say that the Academy cannot leave the matter where it is; but what can it do? When the *force majeure* is on the other side it is the greatest of mistakes to attempt any sort of compulsion. Articles and Miltonic essays may be hurled at the Government if the editors and publishers can be induced to print them: that is all. And even that will be a waste of time. I shall not protest: if the Churchmen think my book subversive they are quite right from their point of view.<sup>166</sup>

The matter was dropped as Shaw had suggested and no further action was taken by the Academy.<sup>167</sup>

The correspondence in the Government dossier demonstrates a definite failure on the part of the Irish Academy of Letters. If the Academy was unable to defend the case of a work such as *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, written by one of Ireland's Nobel Laureates, what chance did lesser-known Irish writers of more risqué material have? Although the censorship files in the National Archives are incomplete, the fact that no other mention of the Academy exists in them reveals that the efforts of its members went either unheeded by the Government or they were only launched in the press with an eye to maintain some level of public discourse, however impotent it might have been. The fact that mention of censorship tapers off dramatically in the pages of the popular press in the early 1930s suggests that the Academy did not even achieve the latter. Perhaps then it should come as no surprise to read in Sean O'Faolain's autobiography that the Academy became little more than a literary social club, a monthly

banquet organised and awards bestowed on its members' work.<sup>168</sup> Shaw himself considered that the Academy had become politically impotent and little more than a social clique by the outset of 1934.<sup>169</sup> This is not to say that awards are without their merit and value – the cultural capital of an award presented by a country's most prestigious literary association can certainly affect both public and governmental reception of a book. But institutional censorship ran without much interference until the Senead debates of 1942 over the banning of Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices* and Eric Cross' *The Tailor and Ansty*. What, then, could the Academy have done to promote change and defend Shaw's work?

The most obvious answer is that the Academy might have acted on its original suspicions that the book was banned for blasphemy and not for the illustrations. Shaw himself believed that this was the case. In a letter to Yeats soon after he had heard of the ban and in response to the Academy's offer to appeal it, he wrote:

Tell the Committee not to forget John Farleigh's illustrations. The revered censors are not nudists, and probably regard a nude negress as the last extremity of obscenity.

The best line to take is that the book completely justifies the Church in its objection to throwing the Bible into the hands of ignorant persons to be interpreted by their private judgment.<sup>170</sup>

As the Government's correspondence reveals, the illustrations both could and would be held up to defend the Censorship Board's decision. In order to force the Government and Censorship Board into making their practices more transparent, the Academy and Shaw could have printed a limited edition set of the book for Irish consumption that was free of illustrations. Shaw had shown that he was prepared in the past to circumvent censors through editing. For example, L.W. Conolly has demonstrated how in order to obtain a licence from the Lord Chamberlain in 1898, Shaw changed Mrs. Warren's profession



from a prostitute to a thief and edited the entire second act of the play.<sup>171</sup> And more directly relevant in this case, at the end of his letter to Yeats after having heard of the Government's final decision, Shaw added that "as the word obscene can hardly apply to my text, I wish some member of the Dáil would ask Mr Rutledge whether, if I issue a special edition for Ireland with the negress depicted in long skirts, the ban will be withdrawn."<sup>172</sup>

By removing the images from the book and submitting the new version to the Censorship Board, if the book were not censored then the nudity would have evidently been the indecent and obscene material. If the new edition were censored, the only offensive material could be assumed to be that which pertained to blasphemy. In this event, the Censorship Board's practices would have been opened up to criticism and cast the institution in a more unfavourable light. With this decision, the Academy might have waged a public war in the press, armed with proof that the practice of censorship extended beyond the mandate provided for it in the legislation. In so doing, they might have been able to raise some degree of public opinion against the censorship. However, considering the support the censorship had from the hierarchies of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, the Academy's battles would have been offset by the words from the Sunday services and in Lenten pastorals. Because of the value of religious capital versus cultural capital in post-independence Ireland, the Academy would still have had a tough fight against both Church and State.

The editing of illustrations would also have been a shrewd move because it would have revealed a discrepancy between the different forms of institutional censorship in Ireland. As a quick reading of the legislation demonstrates, the cinema had a more

sophisticated system than did literary censorship. For example, films were first submitted *before* being viewed by the public whereas books were generally submitted by the public after being in circulation, usually for some time. Furthermore, films could be banned outright or cuts could be suggested – and it was up to the distributors and producers to submit their films to these cuts or else retract them. The question arises as to why the Government did not provide for similar legislation in the *Censorship of Publications Act* as already existed in the *Censorship Films Act*. Or, in the very least, it begs the question as to why amending legislation was not provided after the practice of the Censorship Board was viewed to be faulty or undesirable in certain circumstances. But Government torpor is legion whereas slowness and a lack of creativity in the Academy's response is not what one would expect of an organisation of artists.

Had the images been removed from Shaw's book, a case for banning it would have been difficult for the Censorship Board to make. In the event that the book was not banned after the cuts were attended to, a case could have been made that the Censorship of Publications should have been held to the same practices as the Censorship of Films. In so doing, close readings by anti-censorship crusaders of materials both before and after they had been edited by the Censorship Board would have revealed even more evidently the ridiculous, subjective and uneven practices of censorship. As many Irish writers actively campaigned against the censorship, obtaining pre- and post-edited copies of books would have been easily undertaken. The sad fact of the matter is that the Academy missed a golden opportunity to demonstrate real resistance to Government control of the Irish public's reading material.

Lastly, the dossier on the banning of *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* is instructive to scholars interested in power relations. By backing down from his initial instinct to question and perhaps over-rule the Censorship Board, the Minister for Justice set a precedent that was to affect the working of the institution. Because Ruttledge acquiesced to the Censorship Board's decision, its rulings in future were left unchallenged by the Government until pressure from society became such that it was forced to amend the legislation in 1946 to allow for an Appeal Board. Before the formation of the Appeal Board, no ruling by the Censorship Board was reversed by the Minister for Justice despite the allowance for such a decision under Section 8 of the *Censorship of Publications Act*. Had Ruttledge acted against the Censorship Board in the case of Shaw's book, he might very well have provoked a crisis with the resignation of its members. But more long-term, it would have dramatically changed the practice of censorship in Ireland. The Irish Government's banning of Shaw's *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* should therefore be of great interest to those who wonder how Irish censorship *might have been* had a more liberal ethos have guided the Censorship Board. And it should also be of interest to those who wonder how Irish censorship came to function in the way it did.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a treatment of the *Obscene Publications Act, 1857*, see St. John-Stevás, *Obscenity and the Law*, 66-9.

<sup>2</sup> For background on the Hicklin Case, see St. John-Stevás, *Obscenity and the Law*, 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> The title of the publication in question was *The Confession Unmasked: Shewing of the Depravity of the Roman Priesthood, the Iniquity of the Confessional, and the Questions Put to Females in Confession* (London: Thomas Johnson, 1951). It was later reprinted under the title *The Morality of Romish Devotion or the Confessional Unmasked* (London: Protestant Evangelical Missions & Electoral Union, 1869).

<sup>4</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Volume 3, May 3, 1923, 586-7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, May 10, 1923, 751.

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<sup>6</sup> Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 3, May 10, 1923, 763.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 753-4.

<sup>9</sup> The masculine pronoun is expressly used here to highlight how the role of the censor was not just parental, but paternal. Though I am aware that in doing so I reify gender constructs as opposed to challenging them, the fact that the Film Censor has always been male supports the use of the masculine pronoun. The issue of censorship and gender is discussed in more detail below.

<sup>10</sup> *Censorship of Films Act, 1923*, Article 7.2.

<sup>11</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 10, April 3, 1925, 1894.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, May 1, 1925, 725-6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 727-8.

<sup>14</sup> *The Leader* Vol. L, No. 12 (April 25, 1925), 272. And also *The Leader* Vol. L, No. 14 (May 9, 1925), 319-20; *The Leader* Vol. L, No. 26 (August 1, 1925), 621.

<sup>15</sup> This paragraph owes much to Adams, *Censorship*, 15-21.

<sup>16</sup> *The Leader* Vol. XLVII, No. 24 (January 19, 1924), 570. This paper was particularly vocal in supporting a move towards censorship legislation and the problem of the "filth" of the English press. See also *The Leader* Vol. XLVIII, No. 11 (April 19, 1924), 246; *The Leader* Vol. XLVIII, No. 20 (June 1, 1924), 471; *The Leader* Vol. XLVIII, No. 23 (July 5, 1924), 521-3.

<sup>17</sup> "Report of the Committee on Evil Literature," JUS 7/3/4, NAI.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Letter from J. Thompson to J.P. Clare (Secretary to the Committee on Evil Literature), March 5, 1926, JUS 7/2/21, NAI

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Patrick A. Brett (Honourable Secretary of the IVA) to J.P. Clare, March 11, 1926, JUS 7/2/14, NAI.

<sup>21</sup> "Irish Vigilance Association," *The Leader* Vol. XLIX, No. 26 (January 24, 1925), 613.

<sup>22</sup> "Mr. W.B. Joyce, B.A., Head Master, Central Model Schools, Marlborough Street, representative of the Dublin Branch of the Irish National Teachers' Organization, examined," April 21, 1926, JUS 7/2/12, NAI.

<sup>23</sup> This relatively low incidence of youths being corrupted by literature is supported elsewhere. For example, in his testimony, Father Quinlan noted that since being connected with a school in 1909, he had only had one case where the reading materials of a youth were of a bad nature. "Revd. M. Quinlan, S.J., President of the Catholic Headmasters' Association, examined," April 21, 1926, JUS 7/2/3, NAI.

<sup>24</sup> "Mr. P. de Burca, of the Catholic Writers' Guild, examined," April 28, 1926, JUS 7/2/5, NAI.

<sup>25</sup> "Statement Submitted by Mr. P. de Burca of the Catholic Writers' Guild," JUS 7/2/5, NAI.

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<sup>26</sup> He did not mention a particular work by Stopes, but all of her books were eventually banned in Ireland. Rout's book *Sane Marriage* was treated with especial disdain.

<sup>27</sup> "Report of the Committee on Evil Literature," JUS 7/3/4, NAI.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. I. Herzog, the Chief Rabbi, was sent a letter from the Committee on March 12, 1926, but he never responded. See JUS 7/2/6, NAI. It is interesting that all groups that received special invitations to address the CEL were either representatives of the established Churches in Ireland or linked in some way to organised religions. No groups representing secular social causes or secular artistic movements were invited to provide testimony.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from the Commissioner of the Garda to the Secretary of the Department of Justice, May 17, 1926, JUS 7/2/11, NAI.

<sup>30</sup> Legislation in New Zealand, India, the provinces of Australia, Great Britain, France, the United States and Canada were examined, which testifies to the seriousness and professionalism of the CEL.

<sup>31</sup> "Report of the Committee on Evil Literature," JUS 7/3/4, NAI.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 25, July 19, 1928, 904-5.

<sup>35</sup> *The Leader* Vol. LIV, No. 8 (March 26, 1927), 175; *The Leader* Vol. LIV, No. 9 (April 2, 1927), 196; *The Leader* Vol. LIV, No. 17 (May 8, 1927), 390.

<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, *The Irish Statesman* had warned against the possibility of a zealous censorship that would make the country a cultural wasteland. The concern was that adults would be prevented access to challenging themes and subjects at the risk of children mistakenly becoming the audience. *The Irish Statesman* January 8, 1927, 420-1. For a more complete reaction of the journal's reaction against the Committee's report, see *The Irish Statesman* February 12, 1927, 542-4.

<sup>37</sup> "Modern Sex Novelists," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (February 1928), 142-5. This article also included a reprint of Douglas' article.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Kirkwood, "Unclean Literature Under Innocent Guises: Indirect Methods of Campaign," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXII, No. 4 (April 1928), 281-90.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 282-3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>44</sup> "The Evil Literature Bill," *The Standard*, June 30, 1928, 12.

<sup>45</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 26, October 18, 1928, 594-680.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, "Evil Literature Bill," *The Standard*, August 18, 1928, 10; "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, August 18, 1928, 12; "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, August 25, 1928, 12; "The Censorship Bill – A Flaw," *The Standard*, September 8, 1928, 12; Delta, "The Evil Literature Bill," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXII, No. 9 (September 1928), 705-8; Ch. D., "Notes on the Literature Bill," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXII, No. 10 (October 1928), 797-9.

<sup>47</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 26, October 18, 1928, 599.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 628-37.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 598.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 598-9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 599.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 602.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 610-1.

<sup>55</sup> For Rutledge's comments on the Bill, see *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 26, October 18, 1928, 611-6. For de Valera's see *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 26, October 18, 1928, 669-75. Most surprisingly for many students of de Valera and his political views was his suggestion that he actually thought women should have been represented on the Censorship Board. This could, of course, be read in two ways: 1) he had momentarily revised his famously sexist views and become more egalitarian, or 2) he felt that women should have been on the Censorship Board because he felt that they were more affected by evil literature owing to their weaker constitutions. Of course, if the second were the case, which it probably was, he used false logic because women, being understood as more susceptible to corruption, would therefore become corrupt censors incapable of performing their duties.

<sup>56</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 26, October 18, 1928, 637.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 622-3.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 626. For a similar argument made by Thrift, see *Ibid.*, 630.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 645.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 664-5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 668.

<sup>62</sup> Delta, "Flaws in the Censorship Bill," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXII, No. 11 (November 1928), 871-5.

<sup>63</sup> "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, October 20, 1928, 12; "False Alarms About the Censorship," *The Standard* October 20, 1928, 13; "Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, October 27, 1928, 1; "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, October 27, 1928, 12.

<sup>64</sup> W.B. Yeats, "The Irish Censorship," *The Spectator*, September 29, 1928, 391-2.

<sup>65</sup> Donald R. Pearce, Preface to *The Senate Speeches of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Donald R. Pearce (London: Prendeville, 2001), 163.

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- <sup>66</sup> W.B. Yeats, "The Irish Censorship," *The Spectator*, September 29, 1928, 391-2.
- <sup>67</sup> AE, "The Censorship Bill," *Irish Statesman*, October, 1928, 486-87.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> W.B. Yeats, "The Censorship and St. Thomas Aquinas," *Irish Statesman*, November 1928, 47-8.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *The Leader* Vol. L, No. 7 (March 21, 1925), 151-2.
- <sup>73</sup> George Bernard Shaw, "The Censorship," *Irish Statesman*, November 1928, 206-8.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>78</sup> "Mr. Shaw and the Censorship," *The Standard*, November 24, 1928, 12.
- <sup>79</sup> "Amending the Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, December 1, 1928; "Censorship Bogies Again," *The Standard*, January 19, 1929.
- <sup>80</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 28, February 20, 1929, 82-131.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, February 21, 1929, 213-77.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, February 27, 1929, 469-546.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, February 28, 1929, 674-735.
- <sup>84</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 12, April 10, 1929, 47-54.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, April 11, 1929, 55-129.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Cols. 55-6.
- <sup>87</sup> For Keane's opening speech, see *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 12, April 11, 1929, 55-71.
- <sup>88</sup> See, for example, his *Going Native* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940).
- <sup>89</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 12, April 25, 1929, 318.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, June 20, 1929, 838.
- <sup>91</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 31, July 11, 1929, 887-911.
- <sup>92</sup> Delta, "The Fraud of the Censorship Bill," *Irish Rosary* Vol. XXXIII, No. 5 (May 1929), 390-2.

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- <sup>93</sup> "Amendment of the Censorship Bill," *The Standard* March 2, 1929, 10.
- <sup>94</sup> "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, March 9, 1929, 10; "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard* April 20, 1929, 12; "The Censorship Bill," *The Standard*, June 22, 1929, 12.
- <sup>95</sup> "An Intensified Campaign," *The Standard*, June 15, 1929, 12; "Making the Censorship Difficult," June 22, 1929, 12.
- <sup>96</sup> "The Censorship Act," *The Standard*, July 20, 1929, 10.
- <sup>97</sup> *Censorship of Publications Act, 1929*, Article 2.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 3 (1-2).
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, (7).
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 6 (1).
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, (3) a-e.
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, (6).
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (5).
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 8 (1).
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, Articles 10 (2), 15 (1), 16 (2), 17 (2), and 18 (1).
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 14 (1).
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, (2).
- <sup>108</sup> "Decadent Literature," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1930, 4.
- <sup>109</sup> Peter P. Curry, "The Thing Called Realism," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 3, March 1930, 68.
- <sup>110</sup> Michael Walsh, "Catholics and Literature," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 7, July 1930, 185.
- <sup>111</sup> "The Foreign Press Menace," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 4, April, 1930, 92-3; "The British Press Menace," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1930, 101.
- <sup>112</sup> "Working the Censorship Act," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 5, May 1930, 132-3.
- <sup>113</sup> Letter from Francis O'Reilly to the Minister for Justice, October 8, 1930, s2325, NAI.
- <sup>114</sup> Letter from the Department of Justice to Francis O'Reilly, October 19, 1930, s2325, NAI.
- <sup>115</sup> Letter from Francis O'Reilly to William Cosgrave, October 25, 1929, s2325, NAI.
- <sup>116</sup> Letter from James Fitzgerald-Kenney to William Cosgrave, November 5, 1929, s2325, NAI.
- <sup>117</sup> Department of Justice Internal Memorandum, November 8, 1929, s2325, NAI.
- <sup>118</sup> Letter from George Sylvester Viereck to William Cosgrave, November 17, 1930, s2323, NAI.



<sup>119</sup> Letter from James Fitzgerald-Kenney to William Cosgrave, December 11, 1930, s2323, NAI.

<sup>120</sup> Letter from William Cosgrave to George Sylvester Viereck, January 29, 1931, s2323, NAI.

<sup>121</sup> Letter from George Sylvester Viereck to William Cosgrave, February 10, 1931, s2323, NAI.

<sup>122</sup> "Annual Report of the Censorship of Publications Board for the Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1931," s2324, NAI.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> The numbers provided here for formal complaints are based upon those that exist in the Government files located in the National Archives. Because of the incomplete nature of the archives, one cannot assume that these are the correct final totals, but they illustrate nicely the point made in the Censorship Board's first annual Report that the CTS was largely responsible for the vast majority of formal complaints when compared to those made by outside of the CTS.

<sup>125</sup> For the most thorough account of the play's banning and the decision to stage it in Ireland to circumvent the censors and thereby reveal the idiocy of the system, see Lucy McDiarmid, "Augusta Gregory, Bernard Shaw, and the Shewing-Up of Dublin Castle," *PMLA* Vol. 109, No. 1 (January 1994), 26-44. This essay was published as a chapter in McDiarmid's *The Irish Art of Controversy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>126</sup> G.B. Shaw, Preface to *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, in *The Doctor's Dilemma, Getting Married, and The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, by George Bernard Shaw (New York: Brentano's, 1922), 323.

<sup>127</sup> G.B. Shaw, Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, in *Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch*, by George Bernard Shaw (London: Constable, 1922), xiii.

<sup>128</sup> G.B. Shaw, Preface to *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, 335.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 346-7.

<sup>131</sup> Of Shaw, *The Irish Statesman* wrote that if he "had not gone to England we might have come to moral self-respect a generation earlier. We are afraid it is too late to kidnap him. His restoration should have been one of the articles of the Treaty. We had England on the run then and we might have got back our G.B.S.[sic] Now it would be as difficult as getting back the Lane pictures." For the one liberal Irish journal, Shaw was a national treasure whose absence represented an absence of Ireland's cultural heritage. *The Irish Statesman*, October 9, 1926, 101.

<sup>132</sup> Shaw's argument employs analogy effectively: "Prevent dentists and dramatists from fixing pain, and not only will our morals become as carious as our teeth, but toothache and the plagues that follow neglected morality will presently cause more agony than all the dentists and dramatists at their worst have caused since the world began." G.B. Shaw, Preface to *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, 398.

<sup>133</sup> "Academy of Immorality," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. III, No. 11, November, 1932, 247.

<sup>134</sup> Letter from G.B. Shaw to W.B. Yeats, September 20, 1932, in Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1926-1950* (New York: Max Reinhart, 1988), 308-9.

<sup>135</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *Shaw's People: From Victoria to Churchill* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 112.

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- <sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.
- <sup>137</sup> G.B. Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* (London: Constable, 1932), 7.
- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.
- <sup>139</sup> Warren Sylvester Smith, "The Adventures of Shaw, the Nun, and the Black Girl," *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* Vol.1 (1981), 215.
- <sup>140</sup> Leon Hugo, *Bernard Shaw's The Black Girl in Search of God: The Story Behind the Story* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), 58-9.
- <sup>141</sup> "Bee-Keepers and G.B.S.," *Irish Times*, Friday, December 30, 1932.
- <sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>143</sup> "Bee-Keepers and G.B.S.," *Irish Times*, Friday, January 27, 1933.
- <sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>146</sup> "Shaw the 'Prophet,'" *Times Literary Supplement*, December 8, 1932, 939.
- <sup>147</sup> John Farleigh, *Graven Image: An Autobiographical Textbook* (London: Macmillan, 1940), 369.
- <sup>148</sup> Letter from George Russell to P.J. Rutledge, May 22, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>149</sup> Internal memorandum between the Department of Justice and B. MacMahon, Secretary of the Censorship Board, H315/43, NAI. The sender of the memorandum is unknown as the signature is illegible. MacMahon's response is scrawled in the space beneath it.
- <sup>150</sup> Letter from Domhnall de Brun to G.W. Russell, May 24, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>151</sup> Letter from George Russell to P.J. Rutledge, May 26, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>152</sup> Letter from Domhnall de Brun to B. MacMahon, June 12, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>153</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to the Department of Justice, July 3, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>154</sup> Letter from the Department of Justice to B. MacMahon, July 4, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>157</sup> Letter from Conor A. Maguire to the Secretary of the Department of Justice, July 24, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>158</sup> Internal memorandum, Department of Justice, July 24, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>159</sup> Letter from F.R. Higgins to P.J. Rutledge, July 18, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>160</sup> Letter from F.R. Higgins to P.J. Rutledge, July 26, 1933, H315/43, NAI.

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- <sup>161</sup> Letter from Domhnall de Brun to F.R. Higgins, August 1, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>162</sup> Letter from F.R. Higgins to P.J. Rutledge, August 9, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>163</sup> Letter from Domhnall de Brun to F.R. Higgins, August 18, 1933, H315/43, NAI.
- <sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>165</sup> Letter from G.B. Shaw to Floryan Sobienioski, July 24, 1933, in Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1926-1950*, 347-8.
- <sup>166</sup> Letter from G.B. Shaw to W.B. Yeats, September 4, 1933, in Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1926-1950*, 352-3.
- <sup>167</sup> By this time the Catholic press had caught wind of the Academy's efforts and started its own counter campaign by further criticising the novella. See, for example, "The Academy and Censorship," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. IV, No. 8, August, 1933, 145. This article focused on what its writer perceived to be the blasphemous aspects of Shaw's work, aligning them with indecency, while failing to make any mention of the visual images.
- <sup>168</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *Vive Moi!* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), 350-65.
- <sup>169</sup> Letter from G.B. Shaw to W.B. Yeats, January 14, 1934, in Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1926-1950*, 360-1.
- <sup>170</sup> Letter from G.B. Shaw to W.B. Yeats, May 18, 1933, in Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1926-1950*, 339-40.
- <sup>171</sup> L.W. Conolly, "Mrs. Warren's Profession and the Lord Chamberlain," *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 24 (2004), 49-55.
- <sup>172</sup> Letter from G.B. Shaw to W.B. Yeats, September 4, 1933, in Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1926-1950*, 352-3.

### Chapter Three: The Culture of Informal Censorship

While Chapter Two highlights social reactions, support and critique of censorship, it is also illustrative of the tendency of research to focus on the practice of censorship at the institutional level. In so doing, censorship is provided an official narrative with little to no understanding of how it functions in the daily lives of writers, readers and those employed in the book business. This has the effect of reifying the power and silences that State censorship seeks to impose. In essence, the State's role is known while the impact it has on the lives of the people it controls is all but unknown. Just as these people were initially silenced by the State through the work of the Censorship Board, they are silenced once again because the narrative of the State is told while their stories remain untold. This chapter seeks to begin to fill this lacuna in the available research by providing the first sustained study of the role of informal agents of censorship, those who in Chapter One are referred to as "societal veto players."<sup>1</sup> By examining societal veto players, it will demonstrate that censorship is a complicated process that tends to function as a web of relations as opposed to merely power exerted from the top (the State and its institutions) upon those below (individuals and society). In effect, the State informs the citizenry of appropriate forms of national cultural expression inasmuch as unofficial censorship on the part of patriotic and concerned citizenry supports the State.

In 1956, after more than two decades of having fiercely fought against censorship as it was practised in Ireland, Sean O'Faolain referred to forms of censorship that constitute "a case of censorship by fear – a sort of psychosis which is not easy to lay one's hands on."<sup>2</sup> This fear, he theorised, is manifested in six forms of informal censorship that buoy the formal censorship of the State: 1) a librarian asks a bookseller if

a given book is okay; 2) a librarian reads it to decide its suitability; 3) a subsequent reader reports that the book should be removed from the library shelf; 4) extra-mural associate members of the Board tell the librarian which books are suitable; 5) the Library Committee reads a reported book; and 6) a critic reviews a book.<sup>3</sup> The importance of librarians and booksellers in ground-level censorship therefore cannot be underestimated.

As this chapter reveals, both librarians and booksellers were well aware of their importance in supporting State censorship from the outset and Irish citizens came to expect them to function as agents of informal censorship. It begins with an examination of the infamous Mayo Librarian crisis of the early 1930s to demonstrate how prevalent the belief was that librarians were largely defined as censors. From this case, the chapter undertakes a broader survey of how librarians throughout Ireland actively supported censorship. A heretofore unknown case involving Patrick Kavanagh and Dublin booksellers introduces the role of booksellers in censorship. Finally, the chapter analyses Liam O'Flaherty's *The Puritan*, a banned novel that criticises the culture of censorship, to demonstrate how informal censorship functioned both within and upon literature.

### *Librarians*

On October 28, 1930, the Co. Mayo Library Committee met in Castlebar to consider the Local Appointments Commissioners' designation of Miss Letitia Eileen Elizabeth Dunbar of Dublin as the County Librarian. The *Connaught Telegraph*, the local newspaper, reported in its weekly columns that "she hadn't the requisite knowledge of Irish and that in her case the Gaeltacht Order would apply, viz.: that she would get three years to study the language."<sup>4</sup> The committee voted ten to two "that no appointment be

made until a suitable candidate having a knowledge of Irish be recommended.”<sup>5</sup> As might be expected, such a small and routine matter of business was not reported in any of the country’s major newspapers. It was therefore a rather inauspicious beginning to what would prove to be one of the young State’s more controversial political crises.

On November 22, the Government’s response to the Library Committee was read out to the members of the County Council and those in attendance at the meeting. The *Local Officers Employments (Gaeltacht) Order, 1928*, stipulated that the council had to accept the recommendation of Miss Dunbar. Further, the *Local Authorities (Officers and Employees) Act, 1926*, mandated that the “recommendation” was compulsory. After some discussion between the council members, the matter was referred back to the Library Committee to accept the appointment.<sup>6</sup>

A rather raucous meeting of the Library Committee took place on December 1, 1930.<sup>7</sup> Monsignor D’Alton, Dean of Tuam, referred mockingly to Dunbar’s four qualifications: she had an elementary knowledge of Irish, had very little experience of library work, was a Protestant, and was a graduate of Trinity College. This led him to suggest that the Committee was being “asked to set up a Protestant Ascendancy in Mayo a hundred years after Catholic Emancipation, and every vestige of the Penal Laws wiped out.”<sup>8</sup> Although the original complaint had been that her lack of Irish language skills made her inadequate to serve a library situated in a Gaeltacht, her religion further placed her suitability into question.<sup>9</sup> A part of the responsibility for this occurrence would seem to lie in the composition of the Library Committee: in addition to the Dean of the Diocese of Tuam, it also included the Archdeacon of Tuam, the Bishop of Killala and his

Chancellor, and several priests.<sup>10</sup> What seemed a simple linguistic matter that was to be rectified through education quickly became a politicised sectarian crisis.

It was further suggested that the Government was acting as the British State had in its colonisation of Ireland. "Cromwell came to this country," one committee member said, "and our forefathers had no option but to go to hell or Connacht to make room for a class that was not of our race or religion, and a National Government has now given the people the option of becoming West Britons or going into the mountains and glens again, and leave knowledge aside in order to preserve what they hold more dear."<sup>11</sup> Because Dunbar was a Protestant, she was considered a West Briton and thus *ipso facto* in allegiance with England and not Ireland. As a result, she would "recommend books adverse to Irish national ideals and religion."<sup>12</sup> Irish national ideals were therefore contrary to English national ideals and they were aligned with Catholicism and contrary to Protestantism. A librarian, who is charged with the care of books, must share the community's ideals and can only do so by belonging to its dominant groups. Otherwise, the librarian will function as a fifth column that destroys the community from within. The choice is reduced to a matter between a librarian who is a rigid censor for and protector of the community and a librarian who is not aligned with the community's ideals and as such weakens its moral fibre and character.

As one journalist reporting on the events noted, "the Librarianship is not like an ordinary appointment. In fact, it is more in the nature of a teachership, or rather a literary instructor of the people, the most important function of which would be to select reading matter suitable to the national and Catholic needs of the people."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, *The Standard* was later to opine, "Everyone knows that in practice it is the librarian who gives a

popular library its character.”<sup>14</sup> Despite the facts that some members proposed that the appointment of Dunbar be accepted for constitutional reasons and ninety-five per cent of library’s books were in English, the Library Committee remained steadfast in voting ten to two against the recommendation.<sup>15</sup> The decision was supported by the County Council.<sup>16</sup>

By this time, the controversy was no longer contained to Co. Mayo. *The Standard* was particularly interested in the case, giving it the headline story the following week. It hoped that a Catholic would be chosen in Dunbar’s stead and applauded the stance of both the Library Committee and the County Council while it lamented the possibility that the council would be dissolved and a commissioner, or “dictator,” would take its place.<sup>17</sup> *The Catholic Mind* took a strictly sectarian view of the matter in its support of the council. It misleadingly argued that that Protestants, under the guise of the Christian Citizenship Council, appeared before the Committee on Evil Literature “to plead in the interests of social welfare for the maintenance of the ‘right’ to practise unnatural vice.”<sup>18</sup> It concluded that “Irish Protestantism, as far as it has been vocal, has taken its stand in the realm of books on the side of the new Paganism. That fact is of paramount importance in considering the case of the Mayo Library Committee’s refusal to appoint Miss Dunbar.”<sup>19</sup> The real problem, it was argued, was not her being a non-Irish speaker, which was framed as a Nationalist issue, but her religion. The position of librarian was too important to allow this issue to be dismissed, for a librarian’s influence “extends beyond the books on his own shelves; he can recommend books which the Committee refuses to keep. And he, *not the Committee*, has contact with the reading



public.”<sup>20</sup> This brought solace to the community which by this time saw itself as under siege by the Government in Dublin.<sup>21</sup>

The *Irish Times*, however, was not so praiseworthy of the local groups. Letters to the editor on the subject of the Mayo Librarianship were placed under the provocative title “The Unsuitable Protestant.”<sup>22</sup> The County Council came to be described by the paper as “having given double proof of its unfaith to the law of the land and to the spirit of progress” and, as such, the unavoidable “fate of the Mayo County Council will be a warning to any other public body which has like potentialities of bigotry and illiberalism.”<sup>23</sup> In a similar spirit, the *Irish Independent* noted that it was necessary to adopt the system of centralised appointments to avoid the bribery, jobbery and nepotism that had plagued Irish society for too long.<sup>24</sup> These various points of view were simultaneously being voiced in letters to the editor published in the *Irish Independent* that had in turn attracted the attention of the people of Mayo for how these events were being perceived elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

Richard Mulcahy, the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, received the news of the County Council with some gravity from Seumus MacLysaght, an inspector with the department who had been sent to Mayo to report on the council’s decision.<sup>26</sup> Mulcahy offered the council members another opportunity to consider the appointment, giving them until January 1 to submit the alternative response.<sup>27</sup> On December 27, the County Council met to reconsider the appointment. The emotion and suspense leading up to the meeting was such that there was an outburst of applause from the public at its opening. This support perhaps helped the council vote twenty-one to six to refuse the appointment after a lengthy discussion.<sup>28</sup> During the debate, one member

argued that the existence of institutional censorship proved that no bad book could be found in Ireland for a librarian to pass on unwittingly to a patron. But the majority of members, who believed that a librarian *is* a censor and must function as such, merely ignored the comment. As a result of the council's intransigence, the Minister for Local Government and Public Health was forced to abolish it.<sup>29</sup> As the last act in his first day as the commissioner to replace the Mayo County Council, Patrick J. Bartley signed the resolution requesting Dunbar to fill the appointment.<sup>30</sup>

With a possible election in the near future, politicians did much to fan the fires of controversy and exploit the opportunity. In a meeting at Irishtown on January 6, Eamon de Valera told an audience that "Fianna Fáil at no time stood for the Appointment Commission, believing that centralisation of power in Dublin was a mistake, and that the same intelligence could be found in County Councils."<sup>31</sup> De Valera's main concern was with Dunbar's lack of Irish, not her religion. Believing that a librarian is merely someone who hands out books, he argued that she could do no harm if a committee selected books for the library. However, he also provided the caveat that if the librarian is viewed as an educator the appointment should be sectarian, with Protestant communities receiving similar treatment. Paradoxically, he reasoned, in such cases no sectarian bigotry would be at play. But those in the Catholic press quickly dismissed his semantics; his real concern, it was argued, was the Nationalist language issue and he was charged with clumsily side-stepping the more pressing question of faith and morality.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, at the Cumann na nGaedhael Convention held in Dublin on January 21, a resolution was passed in a private session declaring that Dunbar's appointment was made in accordance with the law.<sup>33</sup> It was noted by one member that challenges to it by other parties were

merely grandstanding efforts to score cheap political points that would reap chaos where the Government had cultivated stability in a divided society.

Simultaneously, a grass roots protest movement began to spread across the country with local councils voicing their concerns over the lack of control they had in directing their own affairs and fearing a similar fate. The first such move was made in Louisburgh on December 15 when “thousands of peasants protested” against having a librarian who would not have an adequate knowledge of Irish.<sup>34</sup> The Ballina Library Committee, for one, dissolved itself upon hearing the news of the dissolution of the Mayo County Council.<sup>35</sup> Leix County Council took the tamer route of passing a resolution congratulating the Mayo County Council for taking a stand in the matter,<sup>36</sup> as did the county councils of Dublin,<sup>37</sup> Carlow,<sup>38</sup> and South Tipperary.<sup>39</sup> Amongst the festive atmosphere of large contingents of ratepayers and playing bands, the Leitrim County Council followed suit in passing on its congratulations.<sup>40</sup> Following the example of Ballina, the Castlebar Pioneer Library Committee sent in all of its books to the County courthouse, while in Charleston the local Library Committee also dissolved itself and returned all of the books in its possession to Castlebar.<sup>41</sup>

Bartley, filling in for the dismissed County Council, was placed in a position that was almost untenable and certainly must have been a tough slough for even the most effervescent optimist.<sup>42</sup> But he was well known in his native Co. Meath as someone capable of handling rural politics, and his experience as the editor of the monthly magazine *Sinn Féin* from 1901-12 would have made him well-suited to the combative role at hand.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, Dunbar, who by the time of her appointment was going by the name Dunbar-Harrison, had taken her place in the county library. She, perhaps even

more than Bartley, would have been the symbol of the Dublin Government's imposition and the target for the people's animosity as the one who had brought the problem to Mayo. Given her youth and position as a single Protestant woman she would have had considerably less experience at handling controversy and been more vulnerable to attacks. But despite the uproar that her appointment had caused throughout the country, Dunbar-Harrison took up her post with relative gusto. In an open letter to the community soon after her arrival, she invited the public to come and make the library theirs as both she and it were there to serve them. In a canny move that might have helped to endear her to some of the suspicious locals, she wrote that she hoped "very shortly to be able to send round lists of some of the more recent additions to our special sections, as well as a list of Irish Historical novels and novels by Catholic authors."<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, the ploy does not appear to have worked, for in May Tony Hamrock, the assistant librarian, was forced to resign because there was no longer a sufficient amount of work to warrant his position.<sup>45</sup> With the installation of Dunbar-Harrison and Bartley, the matter died down in the public sphere for the better part of a year. However, such was not the case behind the closed doors of Church-State relations.

The Government appointed an emissary, Sir Joseph Glynn, a prominent lawyer and member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the CTS, to visit with Rev. Dr. Gilmartin on February 8, 1931. As the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. Gilmartin was in charge of the archdiocese that included Mayo. However, owing to the absence of the Archbishop, Glynn spoke with Monsignor Walsh. Over the course of the meeting, Glynn defended the process and the ethics of the Selection Board in arriving at the decision to appoint Miss Dunbar-Harrison. On the question of minority rights, Glynn argued: "It

would not be fair to tax non-Catholics [sic] for the maintenance of the library rate if a non-Catholic [sic] could not receive an appointment.”<sup>46</sup> Walsh suggested that in areas where only one librarian could be appointed, such as Mayo, the librarian should be a Catholic and in areas where two or more were required, a non-Catholic might also be appointed. The possibility that Dunbar-Harrison could be appointed to the library in the Dáil or one of several in Dublin was raised but never resolved, implying that as a Protestant she would have been unnoticed in Dublin and that neither the Dáil nor the people of Dublin were in need of the protective and censorious care of a Catholic librarian – or that the Church in Mayo simply desired to be rid of her. Glynn ended his meeting with the Monsignor asking that the Archbishop “refrain from any pronouncement on the Mayo question in his Lenten Pastoral until such time as the President might have an opportunity of discussing with His Grace the whole Library question.”<sup>47</sup> For his part, the Monsignor agreed to excise any mention of the matter from the Pastoral.

Glynn was correct to note from the outset that the selection process was handled with the utmost professionalism. The Selection Committee was headed by James Montgomery, who at this time was better known as the Film Censor and thus provides another direct link between librarians and censorship; it was also composed of W.J. Williams, a lecturer at University College Dublin, and three librarians. The position search for Co. Mayo simply stated: “Applicants must be not less than 25 nor more than 40 years of age on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1930, with the provision that actual service as a Librarian not exceeding 2 years may be added to bring a candidate’s age up to the minimum limit of 25 years.”<sup>48</sup> Although Dunbar-Harrison was only twenty-four years and three months old at

the time of the search, her training in the Dublin County Library and Rathmines Public Library brought her age up to the twenty-five year limit. Because this was standard practice, the committee members were obliged to count it.<sup>49</sup> As a part of the selection process of any civil servant, an aptitude test of Irish was administered to all candidates who were in general competition for a number of open positions. One problem was that the three candidates who placed higher than Dunbar-Harrison chose the positions where Irish was emphasised in the job advertisements. Because Mayo had failed to note Irish as a necessary stipulation, only listing it as a favourable skill, and it was the next available position on Dunbar-Harrison's original list of preferred positions, she was, as the fourth place candidate, given that position, a reasoning that the *Irish Independent* had noted as early as December 9 and that Cosgrave had argued in a public statement widely reported on December 12.<sup>50</sup> Nowhere in the advertisement was religion listed and, in fact, it would have been against Irish law to discriminate as such in what was viewed as a secular governmental job. Glynn also left the Archbishop a copy of a statement made by the Local Appointments Commissioners that outlined the scores of those who were assessed based on general education, professional qualifications, practical library experience, special experience (County Library, knowledge of rural Ireland, knowledge of office organisation), and Irish.<sup>51</sup> The statement provided by the Local Appointments Commissioners also refuted the claims of Ellen Burke, who had begun a public campaign presenting herself as a competent Catholic librarian that had been passed over for political reasons, offering evidence that she performed extremely poorly during the examination process.<sup>52</sup>

Despite discussing this process with Monsignor Walsh and securing an agreement to excise any matter on the Mayo controversy from the Archbishop's Lenten Pastoral, the Archbishop disingenuously did so only in name. Aligning librarians, the struggles against "evil" literature, and the role of censorship in maintaining national distinctiveness, he wrote:

The modern world is teeming with all kinds of printed matter, books, more especially novels, reviews, magazines, papers – a few of them good, some of them indifferent, some of them positively immoral, many of them anti-christian, and many illustrated with indecent pictures. Now we all know the mind is formed by what it feeds upon. Hence you are invited to support the Catholic Truth Society which supplies wholesome and interesting matter and publishes catalogues of books that, speaking generally, it is safe to read. You are also exhorted to support and read our own Irish papers, especially our splendid Catholic weeklies, and to keep out of your homes that section of the foreign press, particularly the Sunday foreign press, which specialises in parading the crimes, the scandals, the filth, and the irreligion of the world.

Such being the influence of printed matter and the difficulty of discriminating between what is good and bad, it is gratifying to see how the representatives of our Catholic people are unwilling to subsidise libraries not under Catholic control. Not to speak of those who are alien to our Faith, it is not every Catholic who is fit to have charge of a public library for our Catholic readers. Such an onerous position should be assigned to an educated Catholic who would be as remarkable for his loyalty to his religion as for his library and intellectual attainments.<sup>53</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that the Government stepped up its efforts and increased its attention on the Hierarchy.

On February 25, Glynn visited the Archbishop again to discuss what had become simply known as "the Library Question." Meeting this time with the Archbishop himself, Glynn suggested that as the question could not be resolved, it should be entirely avoided. Instead, he proposed an amendment of the Libraries' Act that would abolish the County Libraries and create a Central Library formed in Dublin that would "consist of some 15,000 or 20,000 books, which would have been duly censored."<sup>54</sup> All County Councils

would have access to the books and services of this Library providing they levied a rate to maintain it, and upon application of a Parish Priest or Rector any number of these books would be sent to his Parochial Library. This library would be supplied with a full catalogue of the available titles and have its stock periodically renewed on requisition.<sup>55</sup> This proposition appealed to the Archbishop and the meeting ended cordially. The visit was swiftly followed up by a letter on March 2 from the Taoiseach, William Cosgrave, reminding the Archbishop that harmony between the Church and the State was needed but that the latter could not back down from its original stance for constitutional reasons.<sup>56</sup>

Cosgrave, hoping that all Irish bishops and priests would respect the State and its territory, also sent a letter on March 28 to the Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal MacRory, believing that he was the one best positioned to make such a harmonious relationship possible and asking him to ensure it.<sup>57</sup> He pointed out the damage done to the Government by the abusive attacks that had been lodged through the Catholic periodicals, suggesting that MacRory would be able to persuade them to cease this practice. The Catholic periodicals, those on the side of censorship and stricter moral codes, were therefore viewed by the State as a form of resistance literature. But they were not philosophically at odds with the State; they were merely overly zealous in their desires to impose greater restrictions. As the issue was by this time well out of the headlines and there does not appear to have been any more meetings or letters on the subject between members of the Government and Hierarchy, the subject was settled for the time being.

Meanwhile, the question was pursued in the Dáil. On June 17, the Government entered the Second Stage of the *Local Government Bill, 1931*.<sup>58</sup> The Bill was to provide



the relevant Minister with guidelines for dissolving county councils and grant him more clearly defined powers to do so. While the Bill was introduced with mention only given to the dissolution of the Dublin County Borough Council as having provoked the *Local Government Act, 1925*, no reason was provided by Cumann na nGaedhael as to why the current amending legislation was needed. Fianna Fáil challenged the government by raising the spectre of Mayo. The party refused to support the Bill until the Mayo County Council was restored. After much debate on the subject, the Government strong-armed the Bill through with a vote of seventy-three to sixty-two. In response, P.J. Rutledge, who at this time was in opposition as a Fianna Fáil member, tabled the motion that the Dáil disapproved of the actions of the Minister of Local Government and Public Health in dissolving the Mayo County Council and demanded its immediate restoration. But the motion was quickly defeated.<sup>59</sup>

The Library Question was finally put to rest the following year. A meeting of the Executive Council took place on December 22, 1931, from which a decision was rendered “in the public interest” to appoint Dunbar-Harrison to the post of Librarian in the Department of Defence.<sup>60</sup> On January 1, 1932, the *Irish Independent* spread the rumour that Dunbar-Harrison had decided to resign from her post,<sup>61</sup> which she categorically denied when questioned about it.<sup>62</sup> Speculation became rife when the library was closed on January 5 for two days to allow her to go to Dublin.<sup>63</sup> Five days later it was announced that she was slated to work in the Department of Defence,<sup>64</sup> the same day she handed in her resignation to Bartley.<sup>65</sup> This, according to *The Standard*, had brought the matter to a “satisfactory solution.”<sup>66</sup> As it was noted in the press, the Department of Defence Library, aside from some works of reference, was composed

purely of military works.<sup>67</sup> Religion was therefore assumed to not be an issue in her new position because the books were only those of specialised knowledge written specifically for those who would have access to them and, furthermore, all of her patrons would be adults with a relatively good amount of education.

In Mayo, the process of re-opening the 110 branches that had closed during the crux was slow, with only 39 of them open to the public by October. Special branches for children had simultaneously been established in order to train them as “healthy” readers of “useful literature.”<sup>68</sup> By this time, a permanent replacement for Dunbar-Harrison was found with the appointment of Miss Catherine M. Ronaldson, who had been recommended in exactly the same fashion as her predecessor but had a good knowledge of rural Ireland and was competent in Irish.<sup>69</sup> No public mention was made of her religion, but such an oversight suggests that her Catholicism was well known and an unspoken collective decision was made to omit it from press reports in the interests of avoiding more sectarian problems. In the end, then, nothing had changed in the process of how civil servants were selected and appointed. The only improvement was that the people of Mayo went back to using the limited resources of their local library branches that they had avoided during the crisis.

However, the problem of libraries and librarians would remain a thorny issue for the functioning of censorship. Small local libraries posed a particular problem. In an internal letter circulated in the Department of Justice on May 3, 1937, the Censorship Board raised several questions regarding these libraries which were rapidly increasing in number.<sup>70</sup> The concern for healthy books was two-fold: the unhygienic condition of the stocks of older books and the availability of undesirable literature. But the economic

discourse of the letter is disconcerting in how it belies an elitist attitude to these libraries: “While readers subscribing to a high class city library are usually in a position to recognise and respect their moral responsibilities, should they choose to do so, the patrons of the huckster library are in a less favoured category.”<sup>71</sup> Many works of “great literary and historical importance are quite unsuited for general circulation among juvenile or badly instructed readers.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, only a discriminating library and a discriminating librarian should be in possession of such books in order to determine who is capable of reading the given material.

The Censorship Board suggested that circulating libraries in small towns should be licensed at a rate of £1 per annum with the proceeds contributing to the creation of Library Inspectors. The duties of these inspectors would include touring and inspecting the libraries, removing and destroying books in unsanitary conditions or that had been banned and remained on shelves, referring questionable books to the Censorship Board, and providing an annual report on the state of libraries in smaller towns.<sup>73</sup> The Censorship Board felt compelled to compose this letter and draw up these suggestions because a copy of Liam O’Flaherty’s *Hollywood Cemetery* that had been circulating in the local libraries for more than two years had been recently submitted and banned. As will become evident in the final part of this chapter, it is apt that an O’Flaherty novel should have provoked the Censorship Board’s action.

The Department of Justice appears to have taken the matter quite seriously, submitting a copy of the letter to the Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health with the caveat that the Minister for Justice was not prepared to suggest the employment of such inspectors to the Department of Finance and that it

would be up to the discretion of the Local Public Health Authorities whether or not books that were likely to be a danger to health be destroyed.<sup>74</sup> The response from the Department of Local Government and Public Health cited Section 59 of the *Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907*, that prohibited the use of books from public and circulating libraries by persons suffering from infectious diseases, providing for the destruction of such books that were exposed to infection. "It is not considered that apart from infection," it concluded, "there is serious danger to the Public Health from the use of torn or soiled Library books."<sup>75</sup>

Despite the relatively rapid closure of the issue of *physical* literary hygiene, the question of *moral* literary hygiene appears to have taken longer to consider given that the Department of Justice did not respond to the Censorship Board's concerns until October 21,<sup>76</sup> a full four months after receiving word from the Department of Local Government and Public Health. While the Censorship Board was told that the question of physical hygiene was already adequately taken care of, the suggestions it made with regards to moral issues, after much deliberation and consideration by the Department of Justice, could not be undertaken without "legislation and the recruitment of a very considerable staff."<sup>77</sup> As a result, the structure of censorship remained unchanged and the Censorship Board was consoled with the knowledge that the Minister and the entire Department of Justice were aware of the burden the members carried in their voluntary capacities and would continue to consider any future suggestions.

Following the formation of a new Government in 1938, the Censorship Board passed and submitted a resolution to the Minister for Justice that an amendment to the *Censorship of Publications Act, 1929*, should be brought before the Oireachtas to account

for the circulating libraries which were believed to be “the main source of contamination by objectionable books.”<sup>78</sup> On September 20, an anonymous civil servant in the Department of Justice composed and submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Justice informing him at great length that he supported the Censorship Board’s proposed amendment to the existent legislation.<sup>79</sup> The civil servant’s first concern was to point out the difference between the classes of libraries in much the same fashion as the Censorship Board had in its original letter to the department. Public Libraries were not considered to pose any problem in terms of censorship as they were controlled by Committees that were “not likely to purchase any objectionable books.”<sup>80</sup> The bigger, more expensive libraries were not singled out as posing problems either, save for the fact that the books were replaced at regular intervals which, it was implied, would make inspection difficult to manage. The major problem was therefore posed by the thousands of small private libraries run by shopkeepers in towns across Ireland.

While the civil servant acknowledged the holes in the mechanics of censorship that allowed undesirable books to enter the country and circulate freely, he argued that censorship had not been a failure, noting the books that had been stopped. In particular, he highlighted those publications advocating birth control and “books by authors who are known to write objectionable books” which “are nearly always detected by the Board’s staff as soon as they are published.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, “[a]s well as keeping out the books actually prohibited, the system of censorship has acted as a deterrent on booksellers who might otherwise be tempted to import objectionable books.”<sup>82</sup> The civil servant, however, argued against inspections, mainly because the costs involved in establishing such a framework were prohibitive given the number of libraries in the country. Pointing

out both the growing number of people who were against the institutional censorship and the continued support of citizens for making the institution stricter, he advocated maintaining the mechanisms because censorship was “still in the experimental stage.”<sup>83</sup> The costs of instituting inspectors would not have outweighed the minimal damage such circulating libraries and their books had caused, which was demonstrated in the fact that so few complaints had originated from those sources. The fear was further raised that should inspectors be instituted and a better method of dealing with the problem was found later, the system would be somehow bound to the less effective system, demonstrating a perceptive regard for how institutional path dependency operates. In the end, the only way of ensuring a thorough examination of books would be to inspect all publications arriving at ports of entry as the majority of Ireland’s reading material was at this time imported. Although this would do nothing about the books already in the country, it would keep out objectionable books in the future.

On September 26, 1938, these suggestions were submitted in full by the Secretary of the Department of Justice to the Revenue Commissioners<sup>84</sup> and the Department of Local Government and Public Health.<sup>85</sup> The Minister of Local Government and Public Health responded on December 10 that he was of the opinion that the inspection of libraries by county librarians was not feasible owing to a lack of funds and available staff. He noted that “[t]he county library schemes are in a comparatively early stage of development and there are still two counties that have no county libraries.”<sup>86</sup> With only enough staff to provide a minimum service and many branches at great distances or in difficult to reach areas from the library depot at each county’s headquarters, the Minister refused to support the proposed systemic changes. However, the Office of the Revenue

Commissioners, the body that oversaw Customs Officers and the ports, did not believe that such a scheme would have presented much difficulty. As it was, most of the reading material imported into Ireland at this time came through Dublin and the only problem envisioned was some delay and inconvenience which could be “minimised if the importers were prepared to furnish complete lists of titles and authors at the time of importation.”<sup>87</sup>

Once again the matter was dropped until the Censorship Board was provoked on May 13, 1939, to raise it once again. This came after examining a book that had been re-released and entered the country in a cheaper edition.<sup>88</sup> The Department of Justice responded on May 20, stating that the Minister refused to table any legislation that would add expenses to the censorship. As well, he noted that he thought “that a system of inspection of libraries would not do much to solve the problem presented to the Board by cheap re-issues of objectionable books, which escaped the notice of the Board, while earlier editions were on sale.”<sup>89</sup> The only suggestion he felt at liberty to make was an echo of what he had first proposed in the letter of October 21, 1937: “that when such cheap editions come to their notice, the Board should have regard to the extent to which the cheap editions are likely to circulate, when considering whether they should recommend the making of prohibition orders.”<sup>90</sup>

In June 1939, the Minister submitted a memorandum to the Government stating the position that had been repeatedly presented by the Censorship Board and had, apparently, also been made to him by the CTS. While noting the suggestions made by these two bodies and his opinions in the matter of renewed, or at least amended, legislation to increase the size and scope of institutional censorship, the Minister allowed

for other members of the Government to submit their points of view in order to arrive at a consensus.<sup>91</sup> A drafted and unsent letter from the Department of Justice to the Censorship Board, dated July 20, reveals that the other members of the Government had agreed with the Minister's decision to refuse future legislation.<sup>92</sup>

But that was not the end of the Censorship Board's concern with libraries. On December 11, 1943, Brian MacMahon, the Secretary of the Censorship Board, wrote to the Minister for Justice notifying him that three of the novels recommended for prohibition the day before had been in circulation for some time "and in the ordinary course of events might be considered 'dead', and so ignored by the Board."<sup>93</sup> A.J. Cronin's *Hatter's Castle* posed a problem because it had been in circulation in public libraries. Though it had been published a while back, its continued circulation was reintroducing it to a new generation of readers. Eric Linklater's *Don Juan* and Liam O'Flaherty's *The Black Soul* were in similar situations, but posed further threats because they had just been re-issued in new editions. The Censorship Board, he wrote, "considers that their work would be made easier, and less open to attack by anti-censorship elements, if the Minister could prevail on the Minister for Local Government and Public Health to have a purge of such older, objectionable books from the Public Libraries and recommend stricter supervision by librarians and library committees."<sup>94</sup> A couple of months later a follow-up letter was sent by MacMahon restating the Censorship Board's dilemma, noting further correspondence and delay between the parties, and suggesting that neither the Minister for Justice nor the Minister for Local Government and Public Health were persuaded to change things as they were.<sup>95</sup> That no final response appears to



have been issued perhaps reveals that the politicians were stalling in the hope that time might diminish the concern.

Nearly a decade and a half after censorship had been institutionalised, it is curious to note that librarians, who were expected to help bolster it, appeared to be indifferent to its workings. Despite the fact that the Government published the lists of banned titles, many of them, especially in cases where they had already been in circulation for a while, were still on the shelves of libraries across the country and were being read by patrons throughout the land. This suggests a number of aspects of how censorship worked with regards to the libraries. One is that simply because of the large number of libraries, most of which were located in smaller towns that would have been difficult to get to, many librarians might have been far enough outside of the reaches of the mechanisms of institutional censorship in order to keep abreast of the most recently banned titles. Also, those works that had come to appear as threatening a few years after their release but had not been originally detected might have been allowed to circulate owing to permissive or unknowing Library Committees that had purchased them and librarians who had been wary of challenging their superiors' decisions. This might have been the case in many situations given that the members of Library Committees were often older established men of their communities whereas librarians tended to be young and from outside of the communities they served. However, it also might have been the fact that librarians had been using their own discretionary powers. For example, one could refer a potentially subversive book to the Censorship Board, but one could also keep it behind the counter under lock and key for only those patrons considered responsible enough to read it, leave it on the shelves but hidden away, leave it on the shelves in the place it would normally

occupy, leave it on the shelves and counsel those who ask for advice to read it, or make it a part of a display that features it as a must-read book for everyone. As such, the role that librarians played in censorship was perhaps misunderstood by those in charge of the institution who failed to account for the codes of practice within the profession.

One source that sheds light on the codes of practice that defined the profession is *An Leabharlann*, the journal of the Library Association of Ireland. The association promoted the welfare of libraries and co-operation between them, became an active force in legislation affecting libraries, encouraged the development and continuance of societies whose pursuits were aligned with the purpose of libraries (such as manuscript collectors, archive enthusiasts, and educational authorities), and improved upon the position and qualification of librarians.<sup>96</sup>

Demonstrating the importance the association placed on professionalism, the first three issues of the journal featured a three-part essay by the Jesuit priest Stephen J. Brown on the three principles that should guide book selection. The first, he said, was to “[d]etermine as best you can what books may reasonably be considered of advantage to, desirable, suitable for, the various types and classes of people in the district served by the library, and purchase these.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, librarians were discouraged from attempting to mould their reading public in unrealistic manners. They should know their constituents and try to cater to them and their interests and needs while elevating their standards in increments with realistic goals in mind. This was directly related to the second principle which was to “[d]iscover what it is that the people desire to read, and build up your library accordingly.”<sup>98</sup> Instead of merely surmising, librarians were instructed to set up a suggestion book for patrons, record oral requests, and maintain a list

of the use of books already in the library. The third principle was to be aware of one's budget and purchase books according to quality in order to balance the tendency to do so according to quantity.<sup>99</sup> The latter was a particular temptation in the face of new series of cheap editions or pulp fiction thrillers and romances that offered scores of books at low prices, but failed to offer anything of quality. There was nothing wrong with escapism and amusement, but "the aim should ever be to provide what is recreational, *plus something else*."<sup>100</sup> Book selection was considered the primary task of librarianship as it preceded all other tasks by determining the functioning of both the librarian and the library and how the patrons would use the books and services made available.<sup>101</sup> While he made several implicit comments on the importance of morality, it is curious that not once was Brown explicit. This suggests that morality was in all likelihood an assumed and unspoken principle in book selection, one that underlined the three principles he discussed.

Aside from questions of book selection, librarians were also faced with the daunting task of providing services in buildings that were not made to house libraries.<sup>102</sup> The buildings were often damp and ill-equipped, creating conditions wherein books deteriorated rapidly. Where structures were solid, the spaces were often not sufficient enough to stock the books or were in upper story rooms that made delivery of materials and access difficult. A good deal of this was due to the vast increase in the number of public libraries in the post-independence years.<sup>103</sup> In the decade from 1921 to 1931 alone, county library systems had been created in twenty-two of the Free State's twenty-six counties,<sup>104</sup> many of which had established networks of lending branches with a central depot to augment the services and needs of the smaller centres.<sup>105</sup> The failure to

establish county libraries in those four remaining counties was not the fault of the central Government or the Library Association, which had done their best to promote book reading and library services, but the counties themselves that had decided to forego the opportunity and “thus deprived their rural inhabitants of such benefits as may be derived from books.”<sup>106</sup> But even when funds were available, they were seldom adequate, making the tasks of selection and maintenance even more onerous.<sup>107</sup> And much of the funding that allowed them to operate was provided by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust as opposed to local sources which was problematic from a nationalist point of view as well as highlighting the concern of securing stable and renewable funding.<sup>108</sup>

In order to provide solidarity and helpful ideas to its members, the Library Association held its first conference in Cork from June 3 to 5, 1933.<sup>109</sup> The matter that dominated the conference was censorship.<sup>110</sup> This was perhaps as much a reflection of the times as it was the fact that the organiser of the event, Donal Cronin, the Cork County Librarian, spoke on the subject of book selection on a panel with Samuel Maguire, a librarian from the Galway County Library, who discussed censorship in Irish libraries.<sup>111</sup> Cronin’s paper argued that the librarian’s task to select books was increasingly daunting with the glut of publications that were issued and offered.<sup>112</sup> The librarian was therefore faced with two main difficulties: creating a general standard for novels and providing reliable guides to selection. Though the Censorship Board might have caused many to believe that the librarian’s responsibility had diminished in these cases, this was not the fact. The Censorship Board had made “a certain and not insignificant section of the people censorship-conscious,”<sup>113</sup> which therefore increased the pressure exerted on librarians by the public to make wise selections. Books, he argued, were objectionable

for one of several main reasons: because they were anti-religious, anti-national, silly, insincere, historically inaccurate, dealt with birth control, divorce, evolution, and sexual immorality, or were merely filth.<sup>114</sup> In order to minimise the possibility of making an unwise purchase, a librarian must consult several sources, such as, most obviously, the list of censored publications, book reviews, book jackets, titles, catalogues, and reader requests. And he surprisingly concluded by placing the onus of creating a cleaner national literature on librarians themselves: “[I]f Irishmen who respect Ireland are to find a market at home for their literary products we must endeavour to keep out of our libraries the cheap, sensational, and very often filthy type of novel which forms such a prominent feature of present-day publishing.”<sup>115</sup>

By this time, librarians had already been active in censoring their book shelves. In his paper, Maguire noted that shortly after the County Library scheme got under way, the Hierarchy pressured librarians to carefully examine their stocks.<sup>116</sup> The priests’ suspicions were warranted, as it was found that many libraries contained numerous books that were listed on the Roman Index of Prohibited Books and other works that were contrary to Canon Law. These were expurgated from the libraries and brought a promise that librarians would in future keep out books that were dangerous to faith and morality. But the purge did not take into account fictional works.

Maguire highlighted how novels were troublesome for the ways in which they could subtly disguise subversive propaganda, blasphemy, pornography, and “attacks on the universally recognized standards of what is honourable and decent and the sanctioned, honoured forms of social conduct.”<sup>117</sup> As such, modern novelists were “the Librarian’s bugbear.”<sup>118</sup> The problem, as Maguire saw it, was that there were no

established guidelines to assist librarians in determining what should be censored. While some believed that even a minor isolated passage was sufficient to warrant banning a book, others insisted that the tenor of the whole book must be considered. As a result, books left uncensored in one library but censored in another left the more permissive librarian, and by association all librarians, open to attacks. Clear principles were needed in order to allow librarians to reflect the State censorship and perform their jobs effectively without having to worry about others second-guessing their book selection. Maguire thus ended his paper with an appeal for those at the conference to establish such principles "to avoid the existing complexity and uncertainty which we know to be the features of censorship in Irish County Libraries."<sup>119</sup>

Much conversation and debate followed the two papers. One report of the conference noted the divide between the younger and older generations.<sup>120</sup> The former expressed anxiety with the enormity of the task set forth and the burden they felt they were under as censors, while the latter, as a result of their experience, noted that the pressures of censorship had always been a part of the profession and yet it continued to survive due largely to the diligence of its members. From this debate, another writer reported the general consensus that the State's censorship was inadequate; the problem was in how the matter of book selection could be resolved.<sup>121</sup> In the end, it was decided that an effort to establish a policy on book selection was a necessity for the Library Association, but any further action, such as the formation of a committee to pursue the matter, was nowhere noted.

Book selection and censorship remained topics of much concern to librarians throughout this period. James Barry, a librarian in the Dublin Municipal Libraries,

presented a paper at the association's conference a year later on the place of fiction in libraries.<sup>122</sup> Barry's paper covered much the same ground as Cronin and Maguire had the year before. The problem that he highlighted was that when fiction comes to dominate a library's stock in terms of the percentage of holdings, it causes the library to be looked upon with some suspicion by those who believe that its primary purpose is as an educational institution. As such, Barry appealed that tighter control on the amount of fiction a library held should become a general rule for all libraries. This in turn would minimise the amount of trouble for librarians because the threat of objectionable literature was, as Cronin had already demonstrated, through the disguise of artistry offered by fiction. Without the guidance of librarians, the reading public, once they were beyond their structured school years, would "drift into desultory reading, which, for many, invariably ends in their coming under the narcotic influence of the lighter and sensational fiction."<sup>123</sup> Because a library's primary aim is to educate, the stock of fiction must be limited to keep the public from drifting into such immorality. The discussion that followed renewed the solidarity on the part of librarians – and some booksellers who were also present – to continue in their efforts to provide another front of censorship to supplement that of the State.<sup>124</sup>

The following year, William Magennis addressed the conference on "The Difficulties of a Censor."<sup>125</sup> Noting the stress involved in arriving at whether to reject a given work, Magennis highlighted the necessity of institutional censorship because of the tendency of people to be attracted to that which they should not delight in. The apathy of the public was especially criticised, citing the duty of all citizens to report immoral publications to the Minister for Justice, as was the public's inability to understand how

and why censorship functioned. That the Library Association invited Magennis to present a paper provides further evidence connecting the informal censorship of librarians and the formal censorship of the State. Given the repeated concern discussed at the Library Association's first two conferences of censorship as a part of a librarian's duties, it was logical of them to ask the Chair of the Censorship Board to address them on the subject. That Magennis presented the paper reveals that he was counting on librarians to better understand institutional censorship and also their duties towards supporting it.

Clearly, many librarians understood their duties. On a number of occasions throughout the 1930s, librarians submitted official complaints to the Censorship Board, demonstrating a concern that some publications should be banned throughout Ireland and not just in their jurisdiction. Henry Crewe, the town hall librarian of Blackrock, complained of the portrayal of a prostitute and the vulgarity of sailors in W. Broadhurst's *Blow the Man Down*, though the Censorship Board refused to ban the book.<sup>126</sup> Daniel Doyle, the librarian and secretary of the Limerick County Library Committee, complained of O. Manning's *The Wind Changes* simply because it was set during the Anglo-Irish War.<sup>127</sup> Doyle later made equally questionable complaints against Gertrude Page's *Where the Strange Roads Go Down* and John Laurence's *A History of Capital Punishment*.<sup>128</sup> K.M. White, the librarian of the Leitrim Co. Library, was more successful in getting H.A. Bates' *Catherine Foster* banned.<sup>129</sup> And the librarian of the Argosy Circulating Library brought Nora Hoult's *Coming to the Fair* to the attention of his local priest, leading to the priest lodging a successful complaint against it.<sup>130</sup> The publication of the lists of recently banned books in each issue of *An Leabharlann* further cements the support librarians gave to institutional censorship.



It is curious that though the journal and the Library Association's conferences repeatedly discussed the issues of censorship and book selection, at no time during the period of the Mayo Librarian crisis was the name of Miss Dunbar-Harrison mentioned as a topic of discussion in the profession. Part of this might have been due to the fact that librarians were willing to keep the attention away from them and realised that they were put in a difficult position by the situation. In these circumstances, solidarity was needed and the discussion of such a contentious issue would have been likely to fan the flames of the language debates and sectarianism amongst its members. There might therefore have been an unspoken or overtly agreed upon moratorium on the issue amongst the association's membership, which would indicate a high level of self-censorship. Or, when the essays published in the association's journal and the papers presented at its conferences are considered, it might alternatively be concluded that the association, while it sympathised with the predicament of one of its members, was supportive of the principles of censorship that the community had argued in its defence. By arguing that Dunbar-Harrison could not be sensitive enough to the norms and mores of the community because she differed from the majority of the people in her constituency in terms of native language and religion, the people of Mayo, and those in other communities who supported them, illustrated that they were aware of the librarian's role as censor. And the passion with which they made their case demonstrates that they both wanted and needed more forms of censorship other than that which the institutional censorship of the State provided.

### *Booksellers*

Just as the Mayo Librarian crisis introduced the role of librarians as societal veto players, the heretofore untold fight between Patrick Kavanagh and Dublin booksellers over his autobiography *The Green Fool* introduces the similar role of booksellers. Published on May 23, 1938, the book was favourably received by critics. Writing in *The Dublin Magazine*, Padraic Fallon noted that though the book is not what one might call “fine literature,” “out of it there drifts, literally, the sights and sounds of the Monaghan farmlands, and a people whose very bloodbeat seems to come out of the soil.” Kavanagh “is of the people, a man with two eyes in his head, and a faculty for fine generous, lively conversations. A delightful book.”<sup>131</sup> The reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* was more reserved, calling the book “unequal and hasty at times in its conclusions. But he conveyed vividly to us the sense of a traditional life which has not entirely passed.”<sup>132</sup>

*The Green Fool* is indeed an anthropological record as much as a personal and literary work. Recounting his life growing up in Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan, Kavanagh describes local farming and religious practices, fishing, mumming, funerals, marriages, hiring fairs, pilgrimages, gambling, and folk tales and superstitions. The son of the local cobbler, he was often present in the kitchen where his father worked as travelling tradesmen and customers came in, pulled up their stools and told stories. This early appreciation for the story well-told might help account for the book’s fictional qualities, what John Nemo claims is Kavanagh’s tendency to allow the imagination to overpower fact.<sup>133</sup> And it also gave him many fine tales to mull over when he worked the fields his family later purchased for him.

But for all that Kavanagh holds local life and traditions in reverence, he does not fail to reveal and analyse the more hypocritical and hilarious aspects of his rural community, particularly in his light-hearted treatment of religion. Of age four he recalls that the most important subject in school was the catechism: "At cramming children with religion our teachers had few equals. For weeks before a religious examination nothing was taught but the catechism; which same had the result of nearly driving all orthodox piety out of me forever."<sup>134</sup> At six, he slips into the confessional for the first time and when he admits to having committed adultery, his penance is to serve mass for the priest.<sup>135</sup> From the altar, Father Pat, the curate, calls the designers of the newly fashionable low-necked blouse "[a] pack of flaming faggots,"<sup>136</sup> causing the congregation to erupt with laughter. Kavanagh claims that he attended the Nine Fridays not to ensure that doing so got him into Heaven, but because it got him out of school a half-hour early to go to confession.<sup>137</sup> The locals also intentionally eavesdrop on the confessional as they wait their turn in line, and one of the priests gives "long, hard penances to keep penitents away from his box."<sup>138</sup> These sorts of comments and stories would not endear Kavanagh to the Censorship Board, more religious-minded people, or those who sought to create and nurture notions of the Irish as a pure and pious people in contradistinction to the English. But it is a rather compelling description of how those who live with religion on a daily basis might come to see it as a part of their unified lives. In effect, the people of Kavanagh's Inniskeen treated religion with the same respect and humour as any other communal practice and knowledge as opposed to being something that is so sacred it must be kept apart and unhealthily compartmentalised.<sup>139</sup>

Despite all of this, in a television program transmitted on Radio Telefís Éireann on October 30, 1962, Kavanagh savaged his early work: "When under the evil aegis of the so-called Irish Literary Movement, I wrote a dreadful stage-Irish, so-called autobiography called *The Green Fool*, the common people of this country gobbled up this Stage-Irish lie."<sup>140</sup> Later critics unanimously disagree with this dismissive remark.<sup>141</sup> And given Kavanagh's own reaction in October 1938 to the book's treatment by Dublin booksellers, his later assessment of his work is particularly amusing.

On Tuesday, October 25, 1938, at 5:15 p.m., Patrick Kavanagh entered Fred Hanna Ltd., located at 29 Nassau Street, Dublin, and introduced himself to Arthur Hanna, the store's manager. According to Hanna, Kavanagh asked him if he had a copy of his recently released book, *The Green Fool*. When Hanna showed him a copy on the shelf, Kavanagh inquired as to why it was not in the window. Hanna told Kavanagh that, as the store's manager, he could put whatever he wanted to put in the window. To this Kavanagh shouted, "Buck Mulligan should not dictate to the trade," and left.<sup>142</sup>

The next day Kavanagh returned to Hanna's at 11 a.m. and said to him: "You have got fifteen minutes to put my book in the window. This is an ultimatum."<sup>143</sup> He left, and as promised he came back at 12:20 p.m., stormed up and down the centre of the shop demanding to see the manager, and began to throw books from a shelf onto the floor. Joseph McNeaney, an assistant in the store, caught Kavanagh by the arm and asked him to stop. Not appreciating this, Kavanagh asked McNeaney if it was a fight he wanted, which McNeaney declined while trying to calm him down. Said Kavanagh: "Do you know who I am? My name is Kavanagh and I am an Irish Poet. They are not giving my book a fair do. They are not displaying it in the window." When told that Hanna was

the one to whom he should talk and informed that he was currently at lunch, Kavanagh replied: "By God, I'll break his skull. I'll wreck the joint." With some effort, McNeaney claimed he was able to get Kavanagh to leave, although the poet exited shouting and smelled as though he had taken drink.<sup>144</sup>

For the third time that day, at 5:15 p.m., Kavanagh made an appearance at Hanna's. Finding Hanna, he said: "Thanks for putting the book in the window. Now see that you have twenty-four copies. I will be back next week." He left as quickly as he had appeared, accompanied by a man who was described as about twenty-five years of age, five foot six or seven inches tall, of medium build, having a dark complexion and dressed in a dust coat with no hat.<sup>145</sup> A rather poor selection if his role was to be the muscle to back up Kavanagh's threats.

It was not, however, anyone from Hanna's who notified the police of Kavanagh's behaviour. Earlier on the second day, October 26, he entered Hodges & Figgis, also of Nassau Street, at 10:30 a.m., where he confronted William Figgis, the store's proprietor. When Kavanagh asked if he carried any copies of *The Green Fool*, Figgis rummaged around and procured a copy from a table. Once again, Kavanagh demanded to know why it was not displayed in the store's window. When he was told that the store selected what went in its own window, he claimed they were hiding his book and before he left he made a vague threat to Figgis if he failed to place the book in the window.<sup>146</sup> As he had done in the case of Hanna's, Kavanagh returned at 1:15 p.m. and complained again about his book not being displayed in the window and threw some books on the floor, commenting on the trash people read. When James Jackson, the store's assistant who was in charge while Figgis was out on lunch, told him to be careful as he would be responsible for any

damage he caused, Kavanagh scoffed at him. "Be careful," he said, "I will break every bloody bookshop in the City up." Because of Kavanagh's agitated state, Jackson fetched a policeman on duty. They came across Kavanagh outside of Hanna's and Kavanagh was last heard by Jackson crying "that all the booksellers [sic] would have to display his book."<sup>147</sup> As Kavanagh made his last appearance at Hanna's later that day, it would seem that the policeman on duty did little to dissuade him from continuing his harassment of local booksellers.

In fact, Kavanagh was quite busy calling on several others. Marcus J. Noone, the manager of the book department of Messrs. Browne & Nolan, also in Nassau Street, claimed that Kavanagh entered his store at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Kavanagh asked whether or not the store was stocking his book, noting its "very large sale in America and England" and the flattering reviews it had received. Noone informed him that Browne & Nolan's was not stocking his book and that he would have to direct his concern in the matter to the store's publishing manager. This incensed Kavanagh, who screamed "This is a Fascist State" before uttering more vague threats about what would befall the store if the book were not displayed in its window by Saturday, in three days' time. The man who accompanied him later told Noone before leaving not to treat the matter as a joke as they were quite serious. It is small wonder that Noone later commented to police that he believed Kavanagh was "suffering from a delusion regarding the sale of his book."<sup>148</sup>

The police discovered another book store that Kavanagh had visited on October 26. Around 11 a.m., he entered the Grafton Book Shop, No. 1 Harry Street, and threatened the store's assistant, W.A. Waldron, to put his book in the window before he returned.<sup>149</sup> Kavanagh came back at 4:35 p.m. with his young thug in tow. He

complained again that his book had yet be displayed in the window and told Anthony Dempsey, the store's manager, that if the situation was not rectified, the two men would begin to litter the floor with books. Dempsey, however, was quite pragmatic in his defence, telling Kavanagh that "it would be an impossible state of affairs if every Irish Author came round and threatened me into stocking their books." Although Kavanagh backed off his aggressive stance, he again threatened to return on the Saturday.<sup>150</sup> One other book store was known to have been visited by Kavanagh on October 26, Messrs. Combridge & Co of Grafton Street, but the manager there refused to make any statement.<sup>151</sup> Perhaps he was intimidated into not supplying a deposition, which would ironically mean that Kavanagh's threats might have constituted a form of censorship in silencing another person. Whatever the case, despite his threatening promises he did not return to the book stores on the following Saturday.<sup>152</sup>

Given Kavanagh's reputation, it is not at all surprising that he was belligerent in his comportment with the booksellers. His gruff manner had yet to become the legend it would in later years, but it was clearly emerging at this moment while he made the transition from Monaghan farmer to Dublin poet. However, he might also have had a legitimate gripe. One Gardai Commissioner, G. Brennan, in looking over the statements, noted that only Browne & Nolan provided any sort of response to the charge of why the booksellers were not stocking or displaying the book in question. Noel Reynolds, the Garda who took down the statements of the booksellers, was therefore ordered back to interview the men again with the purpose of obtaining this information.<sup>153</sup>

Reynolds revisited the other men on November 14 with a mind to better inform his superiors. He reported:

Mr. Dempsey stated that having read the book he is of the opinion that it is anti-Catholic and would therefore be offensive to Priests and Nuns who comprise the majority of his customers, consequently he did not deem it prudent, both from a Catholic and business standpoint to either stock or display it.

Messrs. Hanna & Figgis stated that they stock and display the book, inasmuch as they each have one copy of it exhibited for sale on their premises. They added that they have no objection to stocking further copies provided there is a sufficient public demand for it.<sup>154</sup>

Hanna and Figgis were therefore not under the impression that the book was objectionable and, as such, were willing to stock and sell the item should the public have been willing to purchase it. If they were censoring the book, theirs was a censorship of the market. Essentially, they were not willing to devote the time, energy and valuable window space to a product that would not bring in a sufficient amount of financial capital in return for the effort they expended. As well, it was implied that because the Censorship Board had yet to issue a Prohibition Order for *The Green Fool*, neither Hanna nor Figgis had a problem with the book *per se*. Dempsey, however, was an entirely other case.

Whether Dempsey had read the book before or after the incident took place was not known – and no proof was shown that he had indeed read it by the time Reynolds talked with him again in mid-November other than his own word. Regardless of the reasons for not stocking the book in the first place, Dempsey said that he would not stock it for two reasons: the temporal material fear of losing business by offending the majority of his patrons in offering a product that was potentially offensive to their moral system, and the spiritual concern he expressed as a Catholic of stocking a book he viewed as anti-Catholic. There was no further mention about whether Dempsey had weighed the possibilities of stocking the book behind the counter so as to service those potential



clients who might have wished to purchase it and might not have shared his moral system while preventing the product from offending the Catholic religious who frequented his store. But this was his right as a manager: to stock what he wanted, when he wanted and how he wanted within the confines of the law. The market, the society he serviced, would determine whether he was adequate at his job. If he was not adequate, competitors would run him out of business, force him into supplying books for a narrow niche, or cause him to reassess his business strategy and sell such products at the risk of offending some segments of his clientele.

Brennan filed his own report on November 19, suggesting that the question of a Prohibition Order under the Censorship of Publications Act should be considered. He noted that “[t]he matter was brought to the notice of the Garda by the Reverend Father Senan . . . who considers the Book to be somewhat anti-Catholic in general tone.”<sup>155</sup>

What Brennan neglected to mention, but was included in an earlier report filed by Reynolds, was that Father Senan “desire[d] that the Garda would not institute proceedings against Kavanagh as it would, in his opinion, only give the publicity which he is obviously seeking.” Likewise, the booksellers saw some possible deeper motive at work in his actions, expressing “the view that Kavanagh is either obsessed with the idea that there was an organised attempt on the part of the booksellers generally to boycott the sale of the book by giving it little or no prominence, or alternatively that he was seeking notoriety or publicity by endeavouring to create a scene.”<sup>156</sup> Despite this, the report was then forwarded on to the Minister of Justice with a copy of *The Green Fool* that had been obtained at Eason & Sons, which is curious considering that it was not one of the book stores involved in the incident.<sup>157</sup> It is also noteworthy that further counsel was obtained

by canvassing a local priest for his moral opinion of the book even though the matter was one that would be examined by the State and no allowance was made in the Censorship of Publications Act for literature that was blasphemous or showed prejudice against a particular religion. However, although the Gardai pressed for the book to be considered by the Censorship Board, the recommendation was dismissed by senior bureaucrats: on the report submitted to the Minister of Justice on December 6, a hand-written note states that the book had been read by both the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of Justice. Their ruling: "There is nothing in it which necessitates referring it to the Censorship Board."<sup>158</sup>

The irony is that the book suffered another form of censorship when it was killed as the result of a successful libel suit Oliver St. John Gogarty filed in London. It is interesting to note that at one point on October 26, Kavanagh criticised the policy of the booksellers by lamenting the fact that Gogarty dictated to the trade. At this time, there is no evidence that Gogarty had read the book or was even considering legal action against it. Antoinette Quinn has claimed that Kavanagh only first heard of the case in the new year, which suggests that Kavanagh had heard stirrings of legal action earlier than what has been previously thought, or that he simply had it in for Gogarty.<sup>159</sup> The suit took place in early 1939, the court finding in Gogarty's favour on March 21 in the amount of £100; the book was immediately withdrawn from circulation. The libellous passage cited in the case occurs when Kavanagh recounts the first time he walked to Dublin from Monaghan to meet the literary establishment. Upon ringing at Gogarty's door, he writes: "I mistook Gogarty's white-robed maid for his wife – or his mistress. I expected every poet to have a spare wife."<sup>160</sup> Gogarty claimed that his wife was maligned by the

comment. However, his lawsuit against a young writer for such a petty throw-away line in a book that had sold only fairly well was viewed by many in literary circles as even more malicious than anything Kavanagh had written, and thereby reinforced his unkind portrayal as Buck Mulligan in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Quinn perceptively argues that the real motive might actually be found in the page preceding his ringing at Gogarty's house.<sup>161</sup> When he asked for AE's address upon arriving at the National Library, the staff, unable to locate the address, gave him Gogarty's as a substitute. To which Kavanagh remarked: "Is that the best you can do?"<sup>162</sup> The misfortune was not so much the lawsuit as the writing of the incident: Kavanagh later admitted that he had made it up. His autobiography was even more fictional than many had first supposed.

Meanwhile, in Kavanagh's native Inniskeen, the book suffered another form of censorship. Here too it was under threat of libel suits by several locals who claimed that though their names were not used, they were unflatteringly characterised. Peter Kavanagh, Patrick's younger brother, claims that in the end the book was kept off the shelves of the local library in order to calm the people down and undercut the hysteria it had created amongst the locals.<sup>163</sup> It is curious that here the library essentially decided to ban the book in order to protect the author; but perhaps the librarian was more concerned with the possible presence of irate readers causing damage to both the book and the library and chasing away its clientele in much the same way as Kavanagh had done in Dublin book stores.

Like librarians, booksellers were therefore responsible for censorship. This censorship is best evidenced in Anthony Dempsey's refusal to stock *The Green Fool* and more subtly in the decisions of the others to not give the book prominence in their display

windows. Official co-operation between booksellers and the State was actually in evidence from the time that Committee on Evil Literature was convened in 1926.

The Irish Retail Newsagents', Booksellers' and Stationers' Association (IRNBSA) submitted a statement to the CEL in advance of their appearance before it. It reads:

We the members of the Irish Retail Newsagents, Booksellers and Stationers Association much regret the circulation in our country of any literature, the reading of which is injurious to the minds or morals of our people and rejoice that at last some action is being taken by those in authority, which we hope will result in prohibiting the distribution of any such literature.

The question of deciding which publication is bad and which is not, is a very difficult one. One, which generally speaking, it has been impossible for members of our trade to deal with, owing to the same divergence of opinion existing amongst many people interested in the matter, and with whom we have discussed it. Some would hold a certain paper was bad, while others equally anxious to protect the people, could not see anything wrong in it.

Our trade has been much maligned on this question. We have been held up to public odium as making money by depraving the minds of our people, while (until recently) no one has ever come forward with a practical proposal for remedying the evil, or, with perhaps, one or two exceptions offered any real help to us. We as a trade, are catering for the public, and are not in a position to read or censor the publications which it demands. The most we could do in that way would be to refuse to handle any publication which we knew to be bad, and this has been generally done by us.

A scheme we had in mind for dealing with this important question was a committee, set up by the Government consisting of representatives of Publishers, Distributors, the different Religious bodies, and the public: sufficient funds to be provided to run a small office with a Secretary whose duty it would be to procure copies of all papers, periodicals, etc. from time to time, and get advance copies of all books, go through them, and submit to the committee any requiring to be dealt with, the committee having full powers to take whatever action might be necessary. We think this scheme would cost very little and be effective.

Mr. Jos. [?] Geoghegan, K.C. in a paper read at a meeting of the Catholic Truth Society a short time ago, put forward another scheme we would entirely approve of even in preference to our own.

We are very anxious to help the Commission to arrive at a proper finding, and if it requires any information which we can supply, we shall be most happy to supply it.<sup>164</sup>

However much the association's members hoped that the statement would clarify their position, it actually calls into question any sort of a unified voice on their part and where exactly their concerns lie.

At the outset, the association appeals to the CEL by stating openly its disdain for literature which is "injurious to the minds and morals of our people." But how is "injurious" being defined in this case? Questions of access also arise, for adults might be capable of handling materials that are thought to be injurious to children. And not all adults would have equally developed critical faculties or moral systems. There are further questions not raised about the potential good of such "injurious" material in terms of its function as a challenge to defining what is in fact "healthy." And this challenge might further allow for the development of critical thinking in forcing people to define what is healthy or injurious to one's mind and morals, which would in turn negate the necessity to have a censorship. But this notion of control and responsibility is underlined in the use of the term "our people" – here the paternalist bookseller, or censor, must protect the reading citizenry regardless of age, ability to think critically, and freedom to make one's own choices. Yet this difficulty is revealed in the second paragraph when the association admits the lack of agreement even in its membership to define "bad" literature. And this admission in turn undermines the labelling of certain literature in the first paragraph as "injurious" as the association now says it has no common definition. Literature defined as "injurious" and "bad" functions here as an empty signifier that is

given meaning in the minds of the audience. And given the paternalist role of the members of the CEL, these terms come to be understood in the broadest definitions.

The concern for the booksellers, however, is finally touched upon in the third paragraph. Being men of business, trade comes first and foremost. If the Government would take the responsibility to censor, the booksellers would not be under pressure by lay societies, religious groups and zealous fanatics to monitor everything they stock and sell. In effect, their concern is that their business should run unfettered from public interference and that a Government body would deflect the responsibility to allow them to conduct their affairs more efficiently and profitably. Intense public scrutiny would instead be focused on the Government and the threat of economic sanctions would disappear or in the least diminish. When the association states that “no one has ever come forward with a practical proposal for remedying the evil,” it is unclear whether the evil referred to is the “injurious” literature discussed earlier or the subject of the paragraph and sentence in which the comment appears: the maligning and hampering of their trade.

Furthermore, there is reference made to a scheme that Geoghegan has suggested, but there is no mention of what it actually consists. It is noted, however, that Geoghegan presented the scheme at a meeting of the Catholic Truth Society. Though Geoghegan’s scheme was not mentioned in the statement, given the audience he addressed one can safely assume that it would have been far tougher on offending publications, booksellers and consumers than the scheme that is put forth by the booksellers.

On May 26, 1926, Messrs. D. Bridgman and James J. Hart represented the association before the CEL. In response to why the association would want a

Government body to undertake censorship and not leave it to the voluntary action of individuals, Bridgman argued that such a framework, or lack thereof, “would be a hopeless failure.”<sup>165</sup> Voluntary efforts had been appealed to in the past, but they had left bad feelings between the vendors and the public as they were not efficient enough. A centralised machinery must be put into effect, especially as the association had no control over street sellers and even within the association there were no means of obliging members to follow guidelines.

It is interesting that when put to the question, Bridgman stated his belief that the extent of bad publications “is exaggerated by the vigilance people.” Instead of following up on this response, the Chairman of the CEL changed direction, asking Bridgman if he had seen the text of the Bill that was making its way through the British House of Commons that was to regulate the reporting of divorce cases. The fact that the need for censorship might be exaggerated by vocal sections of the public, specifically the vigilance groups, was not inquired into. This is especially telling in that the CEL had before it two people whose livelihoods were made by the trade of publications. Perhaps the response was viewed as typical: a merchant defending his business and hoping that it would run more smoothly. But it could also have raised some questions that had yet to be spoken of before the Committee. For example, was there an actual threat of bad literature or was this being exaggerated? If it was being exaggerated, who was doing the exaggerating? And why might these people have had the need or desire to exaggerate this threat? These are the sorts of questions, however, that were being silenced in Ireland. Essentially, people were told not to poke into the nature and functioning of power. The structure, supported by the twin pillars of Church and State, was set up to maintain power

in the hands of those who wielded it, not distribute it more evenly or change hands to others.

With attention switched towards Britain, Bridgman proclaimed his allegiance to Ireland. He admitted that British newspapers published events that were sordid and could not possibly happen in Ireland while differentiating between the cultures of the two nations. Bridgman stated: "My idea is that all sordid and objectionable details in reports should be prohibited here. This is a Catholic country. We have not the same public for that class of literature as in England."<sup>166</sup> He then distinguished between the "genuine" newspapers and those publications that catered for a public hungry for "sensational and morbid reading," admitting that while the majority of papers were of the former variety, some control, such as the association suggested would best come from the Government, would help to ensure the prohibition of the latter sort of materials.

After a discussion of the association's statement in which its scheme was articulated once again, Father Dempsey, a member of the CEL, complicated Bridgman's suggestion that offending newspapers should have been prohibited while the more respectable ones passed. If, for example, he said, "the Daily Mail once in a while publishes something of an objectionable character is there any way in which it can be held up before it comes into the hands of the public?"<sup>167</sup> Bridgman admitted that he did not envision any measure that would work, stating precedence: "We had a censorship during the war but even then if the newspaper proprietors were prepared to face the consequences they could have published anything and put their papers on sale before there would be time for action."<sup>168</sup> Hart added: "The publishers should be held



responsible and if they felt aggrieved by the section of the committee they would have an opportunity of appealing to the Minister for Justice.”<sup>169</sup>

Here, once again, nation became an issue in terms of censorship. The booksellers in question were Irish. They merely sold the product and did not, could not possibly, have any control over what it contained. The offending publishers, who were English, were those who should be held accountable. A Government body would therefore protect the Irish booksellers from the harm that the English publishers were causing to their business. In effect, just as the booksellers had acted in the past as paternal censors for their customers, they appealed to the Government to institute a Censorship Board to act as a paternal censor for them. In a sense, then, the Government would take on the responsibility to select what they could sell. In the case of Patrick Kavanagh’s fight with Dublin booksellers, the managers were partly wrong when they stated that they would choose what they displayed in the windows or stocked in their stores. Yes, they had some choice. But that choice had been limited beforehand by the work of the Censorship Board which had prohibited them from displaying and stocking certain books and newspapers.

One aspect that was complicated in the association’s statement was broached by Deputy O’Connell. He noted that in “Northern Ireland *An Phoblacht* is prohibited. Suppose you have a board of censors here who could prohibit a paper on the ground that it is immoral might they not say that gambling is immoral and stop papers publishing racing news and tips?”<sup>170</sup> Father Dempsey interjected at this moment to add that “Gambling *is* immoral.”<sup>171</sup> Bridgman, however, stated that gambling was not immoral: “It is generally regarded as a national industry.” As such, he would only pass before the

Censorship Board a publication that was “immoral in the sense that it relates to sex matters or morbid sensationalism.”<sup>172</sup> Again, there was a great disparity between what should be censored even amongst these men who were clearly in favour of a censorship and who represented somewhat of an elite section of Irish society. While Bridgman claimed that gambling was out of the purview of that which was immoral, his own definition of immorality as being delimited by that which related to sex and morbid sensationalism was still vague. It is also curious that Bridgman corrected the priest in a question of morality, both for the fact that he did it in the first place and for the fact that no member of the CEL, including Father Dempsey, chastised him for so doing.

In the end, Bridgman reiterated the economic concern that faced the association. He noted again that the trade was subjected to much criticism without a body to appeal to in terms of what was and was not fit to be sold. Bridgman suggested that perhaps the agents of wholesalers should be contacted and notified of prohibitions so that they did not distribute them to the booksellers. Agents, he informed the CEL, were the ones who picked up the newspapers and books at the boat, the most important of these being Eason & Son. Hart concluded their appearance by echoing their financial concern:

Our trade is willing to submit to any reasonable control and while we have tried and are anxious to carry out a voluntary control at present we are faced with the competition of the uncontrolled street vendors. We would urge that any arrangements made to prevent the sale of certain publications should apply to them as well.<sup>173</sup>

In the end, one is left with the impression that the protection and maintenance of public morality was not the pressing concern on the part of the association. The street vendors, who were not picketed as were the more respectable stores, were left alone to hawk all sorts of publications while the vigilance societies focused their energies on the bigger

enterprises. The effect was that the booksellers were pressured by these lay and religious groups to censor their stock and sell only “healthy” materials. Meanwhile the street vendors, who carried on relatively unchecked, continued to trade in “injurious” materials, and therefore drew customers away from the bigger stores through unfair trade advantage. The appearance of the association can therefore be viewed as an attempt to take more control of the marketplace. The work of Eason & Son, Ireland’s biggest wholesaler of newspapers and books, would eventually come into alliance with the Censorship Board. But the decision made by Eason to assist the Government was, like the appearance of the association before the CEL, not exactly motivated by an altruistic concern for Irish society.

Charles Eason, the family patriarch, was born to a Baptist family in Somerset, England, and emigrated in later years to Dublin to head W.H. Smith’s operations in Ireland. With Smith’s rise to a parliamentary seat and his disdain for the Parnell-led Irish Party, he severed his connection with Ireland in 1886, selling Eason the Irish wing of his business. L.M. Cullen, the historian of the Eason firm, writes that from the outset the internal selection and censorship of books “was taken for granted, and far from attracting hostile criticism, was considered one of the proofs that the firm was discharging its moral responsibilities seriously.”<sup>174</sup> Being a Protestant-owned firm in a largely Catholic country, it was only good business to be more vigilant than the lay and religious groups. When the IVA began its campaign in 1911 against the trade in anti-national and evil literature, boycotting and publicly protesting stores, Eason more or less joined their ranks. The firm participated willingly, maintaining close contacts with IVA organisers. Eason & Son also published Catholic prayer books, which helped to assuage the fears of

some nationalist Catholics. Oddly enough, this was not reported to have been business as usual, the firm exploiting a niche market as it would any other, and that their participation might have been a means of ensuring that this market was not insulted by their business practices. In their co-operation with the IVA, especially during the campaign against objectionable literature in 1913, Eason made papers available to the group, asking them to specify their objections. Says Cullen:

Where the objections were valid, Eason's corresponded with the publishers of the papers concerned to see if the objectionable feature or advertisements could be withdrawn. In some cases Charles Eason disagreed quite sharply with committees and their sweeping demands, and pointed out that the committees were indiscriminating in the very way they included acceptable as well as objectionable papers in their ban.<sup>175</sup>

Eason's occasional confrontation with the IVA was apparent in his displeasure with the *Censorship of Publications Act, 1929*. His concern was that the Act did not have a more open process to allow for a defence of the material in question. Essentially, he was not against censorship: he was against a secretive censorship that operated behind closed doors and did not allow for an appeal mechanism. This is all the more surprising considering how closely the firm later worked with that secretive Censorship Board.

Once the 1929 Act was passed, the matter of censorship fell to Robert Eason, the son, who was in regular contact with Brian MacMahon, the Secretary of the Censorship Board. In the 1930s J.C.M. Eason, the grandson, became the final arbiter in dealing with the Government. He was co-operative with the law and advised against distribution in borderline cases, preferring to err on the side of caution. In private he was against censorship as it was practised, but he was practical enough to see how it lightened his responsibilities as a moral guardian.<sup>176</sup>

The first record of a deal between Eason's and the Minister for Justice is noted in a letter from the Department of Justice to Charles Eason dated June 14, 1930:

Sometime ago you suggested that in cases in which the Censorship of Publications Board found periodicals to contain some objectionable matter it might be possible, if you were informed unofficially of the facts, that you might be in a position to take the matter up with Publishers and to secure the removal of the offending matter.<sup>177</sup>

The Department of Justice informed Eason that it was willing to take him up on his offer to assist them with a preventative censorship that reached beyond the powers of the law.<sup>178</sup> Eason was asked to take action with regards to *Cage Birds* and *Boxing, Racing and Football*, and in particular to get them to cease publishing advertisements that advocated "the unnatural prevention of conception." Eason later wrote back to the Department that he had been assured by the publishers that the advertisements in question would not appear in future Irish editions of the papers.<sup>179</sup> Records of at least two other similar occurrences of the Department of Justice contacting Eason exist: once with regards to the *Locomotive Journal*,<sup>180</sup> though Eason wrote back to say that the firm did not carry this publication and so did not deal with the publishers,<sup>181</sup> and the second time with regards to *The Spectator*.<sup>182</sup> In both of these cases, like the one before, the complaints were made by Francis O'Reilly on behalf of the CTS because the publications contained advertisements that were believed to promote birth control. Given the sketchy and incomplete nature of the existent available records of the Censorship Board, one might infer that many more cases of such correspondence between the Department of Justice and Eason & Son took place.

What this deal illustrates is that even the formal censorship of the State worked in informal ways. This second, secretive layer allowed the formal mechanism to function

more smoothly. In effect, by getting publishers to change the content in their Irish editions, the Censorship Board was assured that these publications would not come before them again three months later once the ban on them expired. This banning of a period of three months was the case with newspapers, as compared to books which when banned had no time limitation. In return for its help, Eason & Son was assured that business would run as smoothly as possible and that no clients were alienated by finding their favourite publications banned – they would not, of course, have the “injurious” English edition against which they could compare their “healthy” Irish edition. And Eason’s might expect that the Government would do everything it could to ensure that the trade of publications continued to prosper through its desire to maintain its good relationship with the wholesaler.

Given this close relationship, it is no wonder that when a copy of *The Green Fool* was needed to provide the Department of Justice with a copy for its consideration to forward on to the Censorship Board, it was obtained at Eason & Son and not at one of the rival Dublin book stores that was visited and threatened by Patrick Kavanagh. And it further reveals that Kavanagh was right to think that there was some form of collusion and connection between the Government’s official institutional censorship and the censorship being practised by booksellers. However delusional he was at the time he made a nuisance of himself, the culture of unofficial, informal censorship went even deeper than he thought.

*The Indictment of Informal Censorship in Liam O'Flaherty's The Puritan*

In *The Puritan*, Liam O'Flaherty takes direct aim at institutional censorship, bitterly skewering Irish society for having brought the practice upon itself and creating a network of informal censorship to support it.<sup>183</sup> The novel was published shortly after the legislation had passed and O'Flaherty became the first Irish writer to have a book banned in Ireland for *The House of Gold*. Not surprisingly, the censors, who would suffer no criticism, banned *The Puritan*. That the book was banned for its critique of censorship makes it an exception to the many others that were banned for their tendency to "corrupt and deprave," thus making for an excellent *point d'appui* by which one might further analyse how censorship functioned informally in the early decades of the Irish State.

Francis Ferriter, the puritanical protagonist of the book who seeks to "ferret" out the perverts and hypocrites in Irish society, is the vehicle through which Liam O'Flaherty explores the consciousness of the censorious mind. James O'Brien claims that the "novel fits the traditional pattern of puritan consciousness in which the attack that an aggressive individual makes against the sins of others blinds him to his own faults."<sup>184</sup> P.A. Doyle similarly describes the book: "In addition to being a psychoanalytic study of one figure, the novel is also an attempt to demonstrate the horror of modern Irish puritanism and in O'Flaherty's own words, 'the Fascist tendency to regimentation which is characteristic of Puritanism.'"<sup>185</sup> The concern is that Puritanism, like fascism, demands hardened conformity. In this way, censorship is aligned with the creation of a "stable" and "normal" society.

Francis Ferriter, however, is neither "stable" nor "normal." The novel follows him for the twenty-four hours after his murder of Teresa Burke, a prostitute with whom

he is subconsciously in love, and his descent into madness and despair. Looking upon the body of the stabbed and bleeding woman, he reveals not horror but sexual prudery:

He dropped the dagger to the floor, drew back his foot and picked up the skirt of the kimono, to wipe the blood from his slipper. When he had done so, he dropped the skirt and then flushed with shame, seeing that the dead woman's naked thigh was exposed. With his face turned away, lest he might look again upon her nakedness, he drew the skirt gently down as far as it would reach.<sup>186</sup>

He then leaves her apartment, taking with him a photo of her as a young girl wearing a Child of Mary medal,<sup>187</sup> as though he had reclaimed her from her fallen state and returned her virtue. The shame that flushes Ferriter's face is not caused by one who has blushed in embarrassment at the sin he has committed; rather, it arises from the indiscretion of a naked thigh. The perversion of his murderous act is paled by the sight of uncovered flesh. Blood, that which carries life, leaks away causing no concern compared to the body, the empty vessel. A hierarchy of sin is therefore rationalised by Ferriter in which the naked flesh must always remain hidden while murder can be justified through the pseudo-religious chicanery of his treatise "The Sacrifice of Blood." Read as an analogy, O'Flaherty thus implicates the puritanical drive to censor as murderous of natural instincts, for it is the censorious puritan who murders the prostitute, the overtly sexual being.<sup>188</sup>

One of the first officials upon the crime scene is Chief Superintendent John Lavan, a young upstanding officer who represents the sobriety and efficiency of the new State's regime. Lavan remembers Ferriter from two years earlier when he raided a bookshop, which he notes was something common at the time. Says Ferriter: "The books we burned were immoral and a danger to the community."<sup>189</sup> He was a member of the vigilance society and he claims his acts were only a defence of the community:



“The Censorship Bill would never have become law were it not for the moral courage of the young men who showed the government that they were determined to protect the community from corruption by the printed filth that was being sold.”<sup>190</sup> Ferriter feels justified because he was protecting the community, specifically those people who were not capable of defending themselves from the immoral literature on sale. This mentality reveals the classic paradox of censorship: if the literature banned or burned is immoral, it must have been read by at least one person who has defined it as such. If it is immoral, then what happens to the reader, the censor who has stood in judgement and been subjected to the immoral ideas? That is, what makes the censor immune to immoral literature while the rest of society is considered in danger of perversion? The simple justification of the censor is that he is morally incorruptible and intelligent enough to digest and analyse the material without being affected by it. But Lavan adds an interesting caveat, stating that “these vigilance societies, acting on the best motives, might lead people into activities altogether, you might say, criminal and more dangerous than the activities they try to suppress.”<sup>191</sup> The implication here is that the censored ideas might be less of a perversion of the “normal” than are the motives and activities of the censor. If so, then the censor becomes the “pervert” and the censored becomes the “normal.”

The inversion of perversion is evident in the book’s narrative. Ferriter “had gone to church in his spare time, as other young men seek women, games, dancing or the theatre.”<sup>192</sup> His religious zealotry is read as an unnatural repression or transference of his libidinous instincts. The Church, the final place in “proper” society to which he turns before his full descent into madness and despair, is even described in sexually fecund

terms: "It had been the house of God, its air pregnant with God's spirit, an oasis in the desert of materialism, a place of miracles and sweet music and mercy, where the soul became exalted and the eye of Heaven shone with a clear image of eternal beauty."<sup>193</sup> He has come for "succour,"<sup>194</sup> making the Freudian return to the womb or breast of his mother, the Mother Church. It is here that he is revealed to perhaps be a latent homosexual, for the boys of his school days called him "Dolly" because of his delicate health, "a nickname given at the school to boys who were not athletic, who aroused the affectionate interest of the masters by their good looks, or who differed from the general herd by an objectionable degree of intelligence and refinement."<sup>195</sup> His zealotry and Puritanism are therefore directly linked with repression of perversion, something he admits both to himself and the priest to whom he confesses his crime:

'I pretended to believe that I listened [at Teresa's door] in disgust, or simply through a sense of duty, because I belonged at that time to a vigilance society and it was part of our duty to report cases of immorality. I really listened for personal reasons. I wanted to hear her voice, because it was particularly soft and melodious, and it gave me an intense and passionate pleasure, even though I lay awake at night afterwards, hating it for the pleasure it gave me.'<sup>196</sup>

Ferriter, the censor, therefore reveals himself to be the pervert he claimed others had been. The priest is similarly described as erotically moved by Ferriter in the confessional, his questions dwelling only on whether or not Teresa had, in one of their encounters, fondled Ferriter "indecently" and if he had become "friendly" with her in an "improper" way.<sup>197</sup> Ferriter, however, is "irritated by the vulgar interest which the priest displayed in his story."<sup>198</sup> The priest thus becomes, or has always been, the censor-pervert that Ferriter was.

Ferriter leaves the confessional, angered by the hypocritical priest, and spends the evening hours in a depraved state of drunkenness amongst whores. He is appropriately caught when he confesses his crime to a young prostitute who runs screaming from the room. Ferriter confesses to Lavan in the police station that the idea of “The Sacrifice of Blood,” the treatise that he has written to rationalise his crusade to purify Irish society, was stolen from a zealot named Brabazon who had proposed to kill the writer of “an obscene and blasphemous book.”<sup>199</sup> Brabazon, however, was at that time incarcerated in a lunatic asylum having tried to kill his sister. Again, the censor, Brabazon as with the priest and Ferriter, is described as the one who is not within the norms of society, who cannot reconcile himself to difference and must therefore attempt to force others into conforming or destroy them in failure. The perversion of the censor and censorship is thus aligned with the perversion of nature, the repression of natural instincts and the fear of new ideas and the unknown. It is through this lens that O’Flaherty analyses religion and charges the Church with complicity in maintaining the State’s power structure.

Harold Gardiner, a Jesuit priest, effectively articulates the Catholic Church’s viewpoint on censorship. For the Church, says Gardiner, authority “is an object of love”<sup>200</sup> because it is that which facilitates the working of the composite parts of society towards a common goal of harmony and enrichment. The State, according to Church philosophy, is therefore a “natural” institution:

This means that man, by his very nature, spontaneously but inevitably forms a community with his fellow men; that man is, of his very nature, a ‘social’ being. Since man’s nature comes from God, and since man’s impulses toward communal living are a natural consequence of his being man, this gravitation is also God-given.<sup>201</sup>

If the State and its authority are “natural,” then its subsidiary institutions, such as the Censorship Board, are *ipso facto* “natural” and, as such, legitimate guardians and assessors of the norms towards which one must strive. Gardiner also defends and promotes “coercion” when it is in “the common good” without actually spelling out what “coercion” might entail or how one might define “the common good.”<sup>202</sup> He warns against coercion turning into tyranny and injustice, but he fails to differentiate between these terms so that one might understand when in fact coercion becomes tyranny and injustice. The definition of these terms, like defining what is censurable, is left to those who are “best suited” to do so:

The Church, by reason of its divine mandate, has not only the right but the *duty* of safeguarding the faith and morals of its subjects. This it does through such positive legislation as demanding observance of Sundays and holy days of obligation, abstinence and fasting at certain times, and – what we are concerned with – the restriction, under certain definite circumstances, of specific books and certain types of reading matter.<sup>203</sup>

These acts of devotion, the routine of dogmatic worship, can also make people more malleable to future authority. In this light, the statement that authority is natural is therefore a mistaken analysis of how authority in such circumstances functions for, in the Foucauldian manner, it reinforces itself. Because it is the authority, people listen to it and do what they are told which in turn perpetuates the aura and power of the authority. As opposed to teaching and learning by rote, it would seem that a more ethical and effective pedagogy would emphasise analytical skills. By doing so, the reader/learner might be able to discern whether the material is immoral for him or herself and use the supposedly “divine” ability to reason.

This matter of the ability to reason versus the Church's promotion of censorship strikes at the heart of the relationship the Catholic Church has had with the Irish people.

Sociologist Tom Inglis says:

The strength of the institutional faith was such that Irish Catholics did not experience, think about or question religion for themselves. There was a close correspondence between the official doctrine of the Church and the way Catholics read, understood and acted in the world religiously. The unquestioning centre of their religious habitus, the orthodoxy, corresponded to the orthodoxy of the institutional Church.<sup>204</sup>

When John Whyte concludes that the Church's power, authority and influence on the Irish State can be measured by the number of occasions in which the Hierarchy was involved in some way with the formation of State legislation, he neglects to take the religious *habitus* of the people into account. Indeed, Inglis argues that Whyte's conclusion is an inaccurate reduction for this very reason.<sup>205</sup> It is curious that Whyte ignores this aspect considering that he quotes from Sean O'Faolain's article "The Dáil and the Bishops" at length, in which O'Faolain argues that the Church is not merely another special interest group in Irish society because it wields "the weapon of the sacraments."<sup>206</sup> Even if one were not entirely a believer, the threat of the withdrawal of the sacraments and excommunication, and the resulting social ostracism these acts represent, would certainly have accounted for some adherence to Catholic social doctrine both when passing legislation and in daily life.

Of course, the Catholic Church's interest in censorship is well documented in the study thus far. When the Irish State later passed the Emergency Powers Act of 1939 to tighten censorship and ensure Irish neutrality during World War Two, the Church found itself in the ironic position of being censored. Donal Ó Drisceoil describes how ecclesiastical pronouncements, Vatican statements and influential Catholic publications

were censored because they were regarded as possibly inflammatory in their commentary on the war.<sup>207</sup> Even the Catholic press that had fought and argued in favour of censorship against the secular mainstream press fell under the watchful eye of the wartime censors. Though these events angered some members of the Hierarchy, they had little recourse to action because of their long-time support of both censorship and the State, as the arguments made by Harold Gardiner illustrate.

It is fitting, then, that Francis Ferriter is employed as a reporter by the *Morning Star*. The paper is described as “the official organ of the new Puritanism which began to sweep the country,”<sup>208</sup> and the voice of the Catholic Hierarchy. Likewise, Ferriter writes stories for the *Catholic Vanguard*, one of the many religious periodicals that were common at that time. Both of these outlets refuse to publish Ferriter’s story of the murder, for he seeks to implicate Dr. Michael O’Leary, a prominent member of society. O’Leary, however, in discussing Ferriter with Lavan, admits to his sexual relationship with Teresa but denies any responsibility for the murder. Of Ferriter, he says: “it’s the work of all these cursed religious maniacs that are making life a misery in this city. If they had their way they’d prosecute a man for going to bed with his wife.”<sup>209</sup> Similarly, Callahan, one of Ferriter’s reporter colleagues, believes he is “one of the crew that are trying to turn this country into a bloody monastery.”<sup>210</sup> The frustration and anger that O’Leary expresses is echoed later on by an unknown lawyer who watches Ferriter’s debauched final hours in nighttown. The lawyer, whom Ferriter had once chastised for defending the performance of an “immoral” play, now chastises Ferriter:

‘You damned hypocrite! It’s on a par with the stockbroker that turned his dead son’s photograph to the wall when he had a lady to bed with him. You sex-starved slave! You can’t drink without making a pig of yourself, and then you’ll go to confession to-morrow, become purified by the

waving of a thumb and forefinger and then . . . lo and behold! You're all ready to start again burning books, raiding soldiers and their tarts on the canal banks, prying into chemists' shops for contraceptives.'<sup>211</sup>

He then neatly twists the responsibility for the sin in the world, claiming that puritans such as Ferriter do not actually believe in Heaven, but are merely motivated by the fear that those who are not believers and do not abide by Church doctrine might escape punishment in the next world. He concludes: "It's not I but you and your kind that bring brothels and whores into existence, shebeens and slums and crime and disease. All these things grow out of your miserable greed, your cruelty and meanness."<sup>212</sup>

By this time, Ferriter has already realised the hypocrisy of the Church and its followers, his epiphany leading to his degenerate state in the pub surrounded by prostitutes and drunkards. In his confession with the priest, he goes so far as to call Father Moran, the editor of the *Catholic Vanguard*, and by extension of him all priests, "a miserable hypocrite in whom I once believed."<sup>213</sup> Ferriter, like the lawyer, blames the priests and all people in power for having caused both Teresa Burke to fall to prostitution and her eventual death: "You drove her into the gutter. You all turned away from her after one of you had ruined her. . . . You are all of the same herd, you parasites. The blood of the poor is on your own hands and you devour their flesh, you jackals."<sup>214</sup> Here Ferriter and the lawyer have begun to touch upon the fact that the impure and degraded people, the lower classes and immoral unbelievers (who are often presented as one and the same in the text), are necessary for those in power to have their power and authority. These impure and degraded people, then, are the internal Other that the ruling elites can hold up as examples of what *not* to be. The middle and upper classes, those who are implied to be virtuous, are what one should strive towards.

The construction of class is bound up with religion, especially in the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. This relationship is evident in Gardiner's defence of authority and the *status quo*. The normalising drive of censorship can be read as an attack on the lower classes by those in power. Lee Dunne, a working-class writer of working-class culture who was censored throughout the sixties and seventies, claimed that the Censorship Board was elitist by nature because its members were all of the upper middle class.<sup>215</sup> Liam O'Flaherty, in an article written on Irish censorship in 1931, was less sparing in his analysis of the relationship between the Church and the State and censorship's effects on the poor:

The tyranny of the Irish Church and its associate parasites, the upstart Irish bourgeoisie, the last posthumous child from the wrinkled womb of European capitalism, maintains itself by the culture of dung, superstition and ignoble poverty among the masses. And the censorship of literature was imposed, lest men like me could teach the Irish masses that contact with dung is demoralizing, that ignorance is ignoble and that poverty, instead of being a passport to Heaven, makes this earth a monotonous Hell. The soutaned bullies of the Lord, fortified in their dung-encrusted towns, hurl the accusation of sexual indecency at any book that might plant the desire for civilization and freedom in the breasts of their wretched victims.<sup>216</sup>

Ireland had become, he said, "a surly, sick bitch biting the hand that fed her."<sup>217</sup>

Long before censorship was institutionalised, O'Flaherty was a well-known crusader for the Irish poor. On January 18, 1922, he led several unemployed men to seize the Rotunda in Dublin, over which they hoisted the red flag. After three days, when an attack was threatened, they capitulated to the Free State forces in order to avoid bloodshed. P.A. Doyle provides two possible interpretations of this act: 1) O'Flaherty wished to start a proletarian revolution; or 2) he wished only to draw attention to the plight of the urban poor.<sup>218</sup> Given that over the course of his youth O'Flaherty was



involved with the Republican forces during the various independence struggles, the revolutionary ideal might very well have appealed to him at this time.<sup>219</sup> However, later during the civil war he became disenchanted with Republicanism, seeing it as both a misguided cause and a racket for middle-class profiteers. This disenchantment led him towards communist and socialist movements and to criticise the bourgeoisie that had risen to power in the Free State. It is therefore of little surprise that O'Flaherty was quick to view censorship as an attack on the poor by the ruling classes. The puritanical claims made by those in favour of censorship were actually a political form of smoke-and-mirrors, obscuring the materialism of the ruling elites by constantly pointing to the evils of immoral (read: sexual, sexualised, or sexually explicit) literature. Ó Drisceoil argues that the suffering of the poor at this time was perhaps worse than at any other in the years after independence and that this suffering was hidden behind pictures and images of a quaint and united society.<sup>220</sup> The few vocal critics that existed believed that censorship was a hindrance to the social advancement of the poor and was also a problem that went beyond the lower classes. Indeed, censorship threatened the very existence of Ireland by refusing to allow the critique that was necessary for a modern society to adapt to and survive in an increasingly changing world.

The cultural, political and economic spheres thus intertwine to form an oppressive atmosphere that pervades *The Puritan* and is symbolic of the informal network that institutional censorship helps maintain and legitimise. Francis Ferriter lives in Lower Gardiner Street, "once a fashionable thoroughfare and now rapidly degenerating into a slum."<sup>221</sup> He notes the poverty of the buildings and views the district's uncleanness as "the symbol of spiritual degradation."<sup>222</sup> If the people were more holy, this line of

thinking implies, then they would be wealthier. This thought process is exactly what John McGahern strikes against when he states that censoring literature in order to make society better is putting the cart before the horse.<sup>223</sup> In effect, it is easy to have morals when one lives in comfort; those morals and virtues valued by society are in fact middle and upper class values, and these both reinforce and are the result of economic standing more than a reflection of inner spirituality. O'Flaherty illustrates this in the descriptions of the people that assemble outside of Ferriter's building once news of the murder has spread:

The crowd, being mainly composed of slum dwellers, was exceedingly violent against the murderer. They were of the opinion that an injury had been done to one of their class by some rich person. . . . It must be understood that the economic condition of that district had suffered considerably since the closing of the brothel quarter by the government after the revolution. For this reason, the crowd associated the police with murder. Among the poor, the police are never regarded as the upholders of the common law, but as agents of the rich to oppress those without property.<sup>224</sup>

The relationship is thus established that the laws are created by the ruling elites, mainly to protect the *status quo* and thus their property, and enforced by the police. Because of their marginalised position to the political process and the ranks of power, the poorer classes, according to O'Flaherty, are further marginalised by legislation when they stand in the way of the interests of those in power. Read in this way, censorship legislation is not actually *ipso facto* against the poorer classes. Yes, it works in favour of the ruling elites, but just because it represents the interests of the ruling classes does not make it necessarily against those who are ruled. O'Flaherty's narrator can thus make the claim that "the Free State Government began to set the affairs of the country in order, ensuring peace and stability by rigid measures, without however introducing that Utopia for the

wretched common people which had been promised by the Catholic middle class in its struggle for power.”<sup>225</sup> Phrased this way, the blame for the conditions of “the wretched common people” is aimed towards the middle classes, but there is enough ambiguity that the blame is not placed directly upon them. The failure of the utopia that had been promised is the failure of post-colonial nations everywhere.<sup>226</sup>

Echoing this belief, Kieran Woodman argues that Irish censorship, while it might have insidious implications, is in fact intended as a good measure. However, he mentions neither for whose good it operates nor even how “good” might be measured. But he puts the legislation into perspective by equating it to other coercive legislation that is well intended, such as social welfare participation and education.<sup>227</sup> What Woodman fails to acknowledge is that there is a decided difference here in who is being helped by what: social welfare participation helps the poorer classes gain access to otherwise expensive yet essential services; compulsory education provides greater life choices for the individual and also indoctrinates people into the dominant culture;<sup>228</sup> and censorship, though it might protect those who are more susceptible to “immoral” influences, can shelter people from libertarian ideas and being responsible for their own critical analysis in deciding what they should or should not read.

Where Woodman’s analysis of censorship is most interesting is in his statement that Irish laws should be critiqued in relation to the documents the State later signed internationally, such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [1948] and the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* [1950]. He argues that there is an inherent contradiction in the maintenance of censorship and a monopoly of broadcasting throughout this period by a State that had signed agreements

that were supposed to uphold peoples' rights to the freedom of expression.<sup>229</sup> But, as Tom Inglis has shown, the importance of narrowly defined Catholic pieties as religious capital in the early decades of the Irish Free State could very well have been an overriding factor in the enactment and acceptance of social legislation such as censorship. In effect, acquiring religious capital was a means by which one might achieve political, economic and/or social capital.<sup>230</sup> By accumulating capital, one could gain access to greater prestige and power in society and by virtue of this power, if one so desired, affect legislation.

The interconnectedness of the various forms of capital in Irish society is neither seen nor understood by Francis Ferriter. Ferriter has long stopped associating with the vigilance society because of its *realpolitik*: Tim O'Leary's son, Michael O'Leary, had visited Teresa Burke regularly and Tim O'Leary was a respected member of the society. As a result, the society refused to take action on Ferriter's complaint that the son had been regularly patronising a prostitute.<sup>231</sup> Similarly, when Ferriter takes news of Teresa's death and O'Leary's relationship with her to Patrick Corish, the editor of the *Morning Star*, Corish tries to silence him because Tim O'Leary is a prominent citizen and "a leading member of many religious organizations."<sup>232</sup> Essentially, as the editor of the leading Catholic paper, Corish would threaten both his job and the paper's future with the scandal that would ensue and might scare advertising money away by exposing his supporters in sordid stories. And Father Moran, the editor of the *Catholic Vanguard*, tells Ferriter that muck-raking will only dirty everyone involved and that he would do best to leave the story alone.<sup>233</sup>

Three times, then, Ferriter runs up against what he finally realises is the hypocritical morality and twisted informal censorship of the ruling elites. This epiphany precipitates Ferriter's descent into madness: he comes to understand that he has been used as a puritanical foot soldier in the same way that the poorer classes outside of the murdered Teresa's apartment view the police as the State's military foot soldiers.<sup>234</sup> What is odd is that he has written this in his treatise even before committing the murder: "The corruption of materialism has even spread into the Church, giving to the State prerogatives that belong to God's representatives. Sin is treated with courtesy and its freedom is merely curtailed in order to permit the smooth functioning of the State machine."<sup>235</sup> However, he does not fully understand the meaning of these words until he has been rejected, not just by the vigilance society, but by all of his outlets: Patrick Corish, Father Moran, his family. When he finally confesses his crime to a prostitute, she runs screaming from him, completing his rejection by all classes and parts of society and his descent into a spiritual and emotional abyss. Ferriter is left with nothing but a surreal delusion that plays out *ad infinitum* before him: "again and again, forever without end, [Teresa] dropped into the centre of the arena [dressed in a blue silk kimono with a blood-stained dagger sticking from her back] and [grave scholars who looked identical to Ferriter] rushed forth, waving their manuscripts and crying: 'There is no God, but man has a divine destiny.'<sup>236</sup> The rupture of his belief system has thus brought the puritan to the level of madness and to refute the authority he feels has abandoned him.

Because Ferriter had envisioned the world to run on strictly puritanical principles, the Manichean struggle of good versus evil, he suffers a severe breakdown when he realises that all is intertwined and inseparable. Good and evil co-exist, indeed must co-

exist, in a both/and as opposed to an either/or relationship. This both/and understanding of the world is a matter that is lost on censorship, which functions with a view of literature, ideas and images as an either/or relationship: either it is evil or it is good, immoral or moral, censored or not censored. And so the zealots and the censors align themselves against the perverts, without understanding that all three identities inhabit the same body as much as they inhabit the same society. The strength of *The Puritan* is not in its aesthetic merits but in its analysis and critique of the censorious mind and the society that fosters it. It effectively demonstrates that once a culture of censorship has been established it pervades all aspects of the society and works in warped and insidious ways. Just as the State's institutionalisation of censorship began with a demand amongst its citizens, its existence further generates censorship at the levels of its citizens in unofficial forms.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> No book-length studies or essays have yet to be published on the subject of booksellers and their roles in censorship. This is not the case, however, for the role that libraries play in censorship. For example, see Frances M. Jones, *Defusing Censorship: The Librarian's Guide to Handling Censorship Conflict* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1983); Alvin M. Schroeder, *Fear of Words: Censorship and the Public Libraries of Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Library Association, 1995); and Eli M. Oboler *Defending Intellectual Freedom: The Library and the Censor* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Irish Association of Civil Liberty, April 21, 1956, AB8/BXXV, DDA.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "County Librarian," *Connaught Telegraph*, November 1, 1930.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "The County Library: Appointment of Librarian," *Connaught Telegraph*, November 29, 1930.

<sup>7</sup> "A Librarian for Mayo," *Irish Times*, December 2, 1930.

<sup>8</sup> "The Librarianship," *Connaught Telegraph*, December 6, 1930.

<sup>9</sup> Fianna Fáil members of the council wished from the outset to separate the two issues, refusing the sectarian argument but supporting the linguistic argument. See "Mayo Librarian Controversy," *Irish Times*, December 8, 1930.

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- <sup>10</sup> "The Unsuitable Protestant," *Irish Times*, December 9, 1930.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> "An Unfortunate Clash," *Connaught Telegraph*, December 6, 1930.
- <sup>14</sup> "The County Mayo Librarianship," *The Standard*, December 27, 1930.
- <sup>15</sup> "The Librarianship," *Connaught Telegraph*, December 6, 1930. In reading the reported debates, it appears that the two Library Committee members who supported the appointment and voted against the majority were Dr. McBride and the Reverend J. Jackson. McBride argued that the appointment should be accepted for constitutional reasons, while Reverend Jackson argued against the language requirement because at least ninety-five percent of the library's books were in English.
- <sup>16</sup> "Will the County Council Be Abolished?" *Connaught Telegraph*, December 13, 1930.
- <sup>17</sup> "Will the Catholics of Mayo Be Over-Ruled?" *The Standard*, December 13, 1930.
- <sup>18</sup> "The Mayo Library Case," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. II, No. 1, January 1931.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> "The Library Question," *Connaught Telegraph*, December 13, 1930.
- <sup>22</sup> See, for example, the newspaper on December 3, 5, 6, and 8, 1930. This title was taken from the subtitle of the first article on the subject that appeared in the paper on December 2, 1930.
- <sup>23</sup> "County Mayo Challenge," *Irish Times*, December 29, 1930.
- <sup>24</sup> "Clerkship Crux in Mayo," *Irish Independent*, December 19, 1930.
- <sup>25</sup> "Mayo Librarianship," *Connaught Telegraph*, December 20, 1930.
- <sup>26</sup> "County Mayo Librarianship," *The Standard*, December 27, 1930. It is interesting to note that the first mention of MacLysaght referred to his first name as "James," the anglicised form of Seumus, perhaps indicating that both he and the Government were keen to shore up his Irish credentials to defend against those who argued for the refusal of Dunbar on linguistic grounds. See "Mayo Librarian," *Irish Times*, December 10, 1930.
- <sup>27</sup> "Mayo Librarianship," *Connaught Telegraph*, December 27, 1930; "Respite for Council," *Irish Independent*, December 20, 1930.
- <sup>28</sup> "Mayo Librarianship," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 3, 1931.
- <sup>29</sup> "Mayo County Council," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 3, 1931.
- <sup>30</sup> "The Commissioner Takes Up Duty," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 10, 1931. His first day on the job was the week before, on January 3.
- <sup>31</sup> "The Librarianship: Mr. de Valera Gives His Views," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 10, 1931.

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- <sup>32</sup> "The 'Standard' Sells the Pass," *The Catholic Mind*, Vol. II, No. 2, February, 1931.
- <sup>33</sup> "Meeting of Government Party Delegates," *Irish Times*, January 22, 1931.
- <sup>34</sup> "The Librarianship Crux: Protests by Peasants," *Irish Independent*, December 16, 1930.
- <sup>35</sup> "Ballina Library Committee Resign as Protest," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 10, 1931.
- <sup>36</sup> "'Simon Pure True Blues': The Mayo Volcano Still Active," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 17, 1931.
- <sup>37</sup> "The Library Question," *Connaught Telegraph*, February 7, 1931.
- <sup>38</sup> "Carlow Approves of Mayo's Attitude," *Irish Times*, January 16, 1931.
- <sup>39</sup> "Mayo Librarianship," *Irish Times*, January 21, 1931.
- <sup>40</sup> "New Library Controversy," *Irish Independent*, January 6, 1931.
- <sup>41</sup> "Mayo Library Crux," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 17, 1931.
- <sup>42</sup> Despite the public focus on the Library Question, Bartley was quite industrious in his first weeks with managing other affairs of the disbanded council, from inaugurating school meals, instituting blind pensions, providing for home assistance, and allocating funds and contracts for public works projects. See "Mayo's Manager Issues a Warning," *Irish Times*, January 13, 1931.
- <sup>43</sup> "Abolition of Mayo Co. Council," *Irish Independent*, December 31, 1930.
- <sup>44</sup> L.E.A. Harrison, "Library Notes," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 24, 1931.
- <sup>45</sup> "Library Movements," *Connaught Telegraph*, May 16, 1931.
- <sup>46</sup> Memorandum of Meeting Between Sir Joseph Glynn and Monsignor Walsh, February 8, 1931, s2547a, NAI.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> This was made public relatively early in the crisis. See *Irish Times*, December 27, 1930, s2547b, NAI.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> See "Mayo Council's Challenge," *Irish Independent*, December 9, 1930, and "Librarianship in Mayo," *Irish Times*, December 12, 1930. Cosgrave's reported comments were taken from his response to a member's question in the Dáil. See *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 36, December 11, 1930, 1340-2.
- <sup>51</sup> "Statement Prepared by the Local Appointments Commissioners for the Information of the President," s2547a, NAI.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> "Lenten Pastoral of Tuam, 1931," s2547, NAI.
- <sup>54</sup> Memorandum of Meeting Between Sir Joseph Glynn and the Archbishop of Tuam, February 26, 1931, s2547a, NAI.



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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Liam MacCosgair to the Archbishop of Tuam, March 2, 1931, s2547a, NAI.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Liam MacCosgair to the Archbishop of Armagh, March 28, 1931, s2547b, NAI.

<sup>58</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 39, June 17, 1931, 418-550.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 551-2.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from M. MacDonnchadha to the Private Secretary, Minister for Industry and Commerce, December 24, 1931, s2547b, NAI.

<sup>61</sup> "Surprise in Mayo Library Dispute," *Irish Independent*, January 1, 1932.

<sup>62</sup> "Sensational Development in Library Dispute," *Irish Press*, January 2, 1932.

<sup>63</sup> "County Librarianship: Rumours and Contradictions," *Connaught Telegraph*, January 9, 1932.

<sup>64</sup> "New Post for County Mayo Librarian," *Irish Independent*, January 6, 1932.

<sup>65</sup> "Co. Mayo Librarian's Farewell," *Irish Independent*, January 7, 1932.

<sup>66</sup> "Mayo Librarianship," *The Standard*, January 16, 1932.

<sup>67</sup> "Miss Harrison Ill," *Irish Press*, January 14, 1932.

<sup>68</sup> "Mayo County Library Scheme," *Connaught Telegraph*, October 8, 1932.

<sup>69</sup> "New Librarian for Mayo," *Connaught Telegraph*, October 8, 1932.

<sup>70</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to the Department of Justice, May 3, 1937, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Letter from S.A. Roche to the Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, June 7, 1937, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from the Department of Local Government and Public Health to the Department of Justice, June 19, 1937, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from S.A. Roche to B. MacMahon, October 21, 1937, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to the Department of Justice, July 4, 1938, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>79</sup> Internal Memorandum to the Secretary of Justice, September 20, 1938, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Letter from S.A. Roche to the Revenue Commissioners, September 26, 1938, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>85</sup> Letter from S.A. Roche to the Department of Local Government and Public Health, September 26, 1938, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from the Department of Local Government and Public Health to the Department of Justice, December 10, 1938, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners to the Department of Justice, January 18, 1939, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to the Department of Justice, May 13, 1939, JUS 90/102/233, NAI. The book in question was the Pocket Library edition of Michael Arlen's *Young Man in Love*. No action was taken two years previously when an older edition of the book was submitted because of the book's age and the many reprints it had since gone through. However, the new edition would ensure a renewed life for the novel.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from the Department of Justice to the Censorship Board, May 20, 1939, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Memorandum for the Government, June 1939, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>92</sup> Unsent Letter from the Department of Justice to the Censorship Board, July 20, 1939, JUS 90/102/233, NAI.

<sup>93</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to the Minister for Justice, December 11, 1943, JUS 90/102/212, NAI.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to the Minister for Justice, February 7, 1944, JUS 90/102/212, NAI.

<sup>96</sup> See the Library Association of Ireland's "Constitution," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 2, Nos. 3 and 4, November 1932, 76-9.

<sup>97</sup> Stephen J. Brown, S.J., "On Book Selection," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 1930, 34.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 37

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>101</sup> Stephen J. Brown, S.J., "On Book Selection," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1930, 59-61. This is supported by more recent studies of librarians and libraries that attempt to make a distinction between selection and censorship. Briefly put, selection is framed by demand and budget whereas censorship is guided by norms and mores.

<sup>102</sup> S.J. Maguire, "County Library Headquarters in An Saorstát," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 1930, 51.

<sup>103</sup> "Publicity for Public Libraries," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1930, 76.

<sup>104</sup> The non-operative counties were Limerick, Longford, Louth and Westmeath. See The Library Association of Ireland's "Fourth Annual Report, 1931-1932," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 2, Nos. 3 and 4, November 1932, 70-5.

<sup>105</sup> "'As Others See Us,'" *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 2, No. 1, October 1931, 10-11.

<sup>106</sup> Stephen J. Brown, "Town Libraries in Ireland," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 2, Nos. 3 and 4, November 1932, 63.

<sup>107</sup> "'As Others See Us,'" *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 2, No. 1, October 1931, 10-11.

<sup>108</sup> Stephen J. Brown, "Town Libraries in Ireland," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 2, Nos. 3 and 4, November 1932, 66.

<sup>109</sup> "Conference at Cork," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1933, 44-5.

<sup>110</sup> "Notes and Comments," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1933, 55.

<sup>111</sup> Of interest to some might be the fact that the banned writer and Dublin librarian Frank O'Connor, under his real name, Michael O Donnabhain, presented a paper in Irish on the work done by *An Gúm* for Irish Literature. Another presenter was Daniel Corkery, professor of Irish at University College Cork, former mentor of both O'Connor and his childhood friend (and fellow banned writer) Sean O'Faolain, who had been a champion of the Irish-Ireland movement and who many viewed (and still view) as a major proponent for the social and cultural projects of the newly independent State. Corkery's paper, which appealed to libraries to provide "books suitable to the cultural aspects and traditions of the people," was accorded much respect and drew an enthusiastic and appreciative response from the other delegates. See Christina Keogh, "The Cork Conference," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1933, 66. For a transcript of Corkery's paper, see Daniel Corkery, "Live Libraries," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 4, December 1933, 141-8.

<sup>112</sup> His paper was reprinted as "The Problem of Book Selection in Irish Libraries," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 4, December 1933, 118-24.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>116</sup> His paper was reprinted as "Censorship in Irish County Libraries," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 4, December 1933, 125-8.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>120</sup> M.K. MacNevin, "Impressions of the Cork Conference," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1933, 68-9.

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- <sup>121</sup> Christina Keogh, "The Cork Conference," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1933, 62-7.
- <sup>122</sup> Published as James Barry, "The Place of Fiction in the Public Library," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 4, No. 2, November 1934, 88-93.
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.
- <sup>124</sup> *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 4, No. 2, November 1934, 93-4.
- <sup>125</sup> "Second Paper," *An Leabharlann*, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1935, 47.
- <sup>126</sup> H315/9, NAI.
- <sup>127</sup> JUS 90/102/12, NAI.
- <sup>128</sup> JUS 90/102/82, NAI.
- <sup>129</sup> JUS 90/102/36, NAI.
- <sup>130</sup> JUS 90/102/116, NAI.
- <sup>131</sup> Padraic Fallon, review of *The Green Fool*, *The Dublin Magazine* V. 13, N. 4 (October-December 1938), 68-9.
- <sup>132</sup> "Irish Poet," review of *The Green Fool*, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 22, 1938, 680.
- <sup>133</sup> John Nemo, *Patrick Kavanagh* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 56.
- <sup>134</sup> Patrick Kavanagh, *The Green Fool* (London: Michael Joseph, 1938), 33-4.
- <sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.
- <sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.
- <sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-3.
- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-6.
- <sup>139</sup> Harvard social anthropologists Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, noted this quality in their examination of Irish rural society in the years after Irish independence: "The 'earthiness' and the ribaldry of the country people is not an antithesis to their strict moral code. Rather it reinforces it. It gives its pietistic and too-respectable, churchy and town-bourgeois aspects an authentic, indigenous touch. Even more important, it makes for a modification of the conventional attitudes which fit them for the country people's social life." Conrad Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 207.
- <sup>140</sup> Patrick Kavanagh, *Patrick Kavanagh: Self-Portrait* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1975). This publication is a transcription of the program as it originally aired.
- <sup>141</sup> D'Arcy O'Brien, for one, argues that "[t]here is nothing of the stage-Irish lie here, the observations are too precise for that. We get a sharply focused picture of a specific region and proof that there are not one or two but hundreds of Irelands tucked away among low hills or high mountains, black-soiled valleys or white-stoned coasts." D'Arcy O'Brien, *Patrick Kavanagh* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1975), 32. Alan Warner claims that it "has considerable interest and value as sociological document

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describing a way of life that has now passed away, but it is also a portrait of the artist." Alan Warner, *Clay is the Word: Patrick Kavanagh, 1904-1967* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1973), 32.

<sup>142</sup> Statement of Arthur Hanna, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Statement of Joseph McNeaney, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>145</sup> Statement of Arthur Hanna, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>146</sup> Statement of William F. Figgis, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>147</sup> Statement of James Jackson, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>148</sup> Statement of Marcus J. Noone, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>149</sup> Statement of W.A. Waldron, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>150</sup> Statement of Anthony Dempsey, October 28, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>151</sup> Report by Noel C. Reynolds, November 4, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Letter from G. Brennan to Noel C. Reynolds, November 10, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>154</sup> Report by Noel C. Reynolds, November 15, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>155</sup> Report by G. Brennan, November 19, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>156</sup> Report by Noel C. Reynolds, November 4, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>157</sup> The location of Eason & Son most probably contributed to it being spared a visit by Kavanagh. At this time Eason's was located in O'Connell Street on the north side of the River Liffey. The stores that Kavanagh visited on October 26 were all on the south side, in the area between Trinity College and St. Stephen's Green.

<sup>158</sup> Report filed by illegible member of the Gardai, December 6, 1938, JUS 90/102/151, NAI.

<sup>159</sup> Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2001), 112. Quinn also discusses the lawsuit in her earlier work *Patrick Kavanagh: A Critical Study* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 59-60.

<sup>160</sup> Kavanagh, *The Green Fool*, 300.

<sup>161</sup> Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*, 112-3.

<sup>162</sup> Kavanagh, *The Green Fool*, 299.

<sup>163</sup> Peter Kavanagh, ed. *Lapped Furrows: Correspondence 1933-1967 Between Patrick Kavanagh and Peter Kavanagh with Other Documents* (New York: Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1969), 42-3.

<sup>164</sup> Statement Submitted by the Irish Retail Newsagents', Booksellers' and Stationers' Association, JUS 7/2/13, NAI.

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<sup>165</sup> Representatives of the Irish Retail Newsagents', Booksellers, and Stationers' Association: Messrs. D. Bridgman and James J. Hart, May 26, 1926, JUS 7/2/13, NAI.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* [original emphasis].

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> L.M. Cullen, *Eason & Son: A History* (Dublin: Eason & Son, 1989), 246.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-9.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-70.

<sup>177</sup> Letter from the Department of Justice to Charles Eason, June 14, 1930, H315/12, NAI.

<sup>178</sup> There is no record of this earlier letter in the National Archives.

<sup>179</sup> Letter from Charles Eason to the Department of Justice, June 30, 1930, H315/13, NAI.

<sup>180</sup> Letter from Department of Justice to Eason & Son, December 5, 1930, JUS H315/40, NAI.

<sup>181</sup> Letter from Eason & Son to Department of Justice, December 6, 1930, H315/40, NAI.

<sup>182</sup> Letter from the Department of Justice to J.C.M. Eason, April 25, 1931, H315/52, NAI.

<sup>183</sup> A.A. Kelly rather more diplomatically refers to the book as "an ironic satire on the conventional morals of Irish Catholic society" and, less so, as "a study of hypocrisy." A.A. Kelley, *Liam O'Flaherty the Storyteller* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 104 and 124.

<sup>184</sup> James H. O'Brien, *Liam O'Flaherty* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1973), 85.

<sup>185</sup> P.A. Doyle, *Liam O'Flaherty* (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1971), 75.

<sup>186</sup> Liam O'Flaherty, *The Puritan* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), 26.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-8.

<sup>188</sup> O'Flaherty is perhaps best known as a short story writer, particularly stories that focus on animals and the peasants of his native Aran Islands, those closest to nature. A.A. Kelly argues that the importance O'Flaherty gives to nature is "an attempt to redress the unity between man and nature which had been weakened or overthrown by Christian interpretation particularly by the contemporary doctrinal tendencies

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of the Roman Catholic Church whereby the supernatural replaced the natural instead of reinforcing it.” Kelly, *Liam O’Flaherty*, 68. This is one of the conflicts O’Flaherty had with censorship.

<sup>189</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Puritan*, 48.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>197</sup> In Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, the priest, as much as the State and the field of medicine, has pathologised sexuality through his control of the knowledge-power matrix via Church doctrine and the confessional.

<sup>198</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Puritan*, 218.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>200</sup> Harold C. Gardiner, *Catholic Viewpoint on Censorship* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1958), 22.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>204</sup> Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-82.

<sup>206</sup> Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland*, 248-50. This article originally appeared in *The Bell*, June 1951.

<sup>207</sup> Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, 220-33.

<sup>208</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Puritan*, 78.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-2.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>215</sup> Carlson, *Banned in Ireland*, 90.

<sup>216</sup> This excerpt is taken from Carlson's reprint of the article. It originally appeared in *The American Spectator* in 1932. Carlson, *Banned in Ireland*, 140.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Doyle, *Liam O'Flaherty*, 21.

<sup>219</sup> O'Flaherty's family had a tradition of revolutionary action: his father was a Fenian.

<sup>220</sup> Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, 244.

<sup>221</sup> O'Flaherty, *The Puritan*, 11.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>223</sup> Carlson, *Banned in Ireland*, 62.

<sup>224</sup> O'Flaherty, *The Puritan*, 69.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>226</sup> Frantz Fanon provides perhaps the most influential, or at least the most fashionable, analysis of the failure of the post-colonial state to live up to its pre-independence expectations. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

<sup>227</sup> Woodman, *Media Control in Ireland*, 130.

<sup>228</sup> As noted in Chapter One, according to Ernest Gellner education does little more than indoctrinate citizens to the official nationalism of the State and provide the labour force of the next generation. See his *Nationalism and Nations and Nationalism*.

<sup>229</sup> Woodman, *Media Control in Ireland*, 26-7.

<sup>230</sup> Says Inglis: "Religious capital enabled people to attain the symbolic power of the Church, to be seen as just, moral and good Catholics and, consequently, to be perceived as rightful inheritors and possessors of economic and political capital and of their position in society." Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, 68.

<sup>231</sup> O'Flaherty, *The Puritan*, p. 53. In his confessional scene with the priest, Ferriter discusses his reasons for leaving the vigilance society when it refused to help him and Teresa Burke: "I was enraged with society and thought our city was another Sodom without any consciousness of God. Until then I had been active in the Catholic movement and I firmly believed that all Catholics were essentially faithful to the principles of Christian philosophy. Now I saw that the Catholic community itself was rotten and must be destroyed with the rest." *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.



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<sup>234</sup> Lavan himself makes a similar analogy: "Yours is the type we want in order to build up the country. If I may say so, although it's going beyond my usual custom to express any opinion on such a controversial matter, we need a healthy and constructive sort of Puritanism in our present stage of social development. A young community like ours needs stern discipline in its morals and in its social character. . . . There are many abuses that we need to root out of our social system. Young men like you are the very stuff to do it. I may tell you that it was on that account that I was loath to take any action when you raided the bookshop on the quays and burned that poor man's property. . . . We had in this country for too long a tradition of antagonism to the State and to the servants of the State. That was only to be expected from a people governed for centuries by a foreign ruling caste. We have also come to regard the State as the enemy of the Church. All this has had many evil results." *Ibid.*, 304-6.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326. John Zneimer states that because Ferriter has lost his relationship with God and has not found "the salvation of humility and acceptance," his "fate is madness." John Zneimer, *The Literary Vision of Liam O'Flaherty* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 85-6. Likewise, Patrick Sheeran notes the Dostoyevskian "association between murder and the problem of the existence of God." Patrick Sheeran, *The Novels of Liam O'Flaherty* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1976), 297. The comparison of O'Flaherty to Dostoyevsky, particularly between *The Puritan* and *Crime and Punishment*, abound in studies of his work. However, no critic has yet to make the essential distinction between the two books based upon the protagonists' motives for their murders.

#### **Chapter Four: The Politics of Resistance Literature**

In employing postcolonial theory to explain the bottom-up resistance to institutional censorship in an Irish context, there are some active, and tiresome, debates the scholar must first wade through in order to arrive at the central argument. These debates are tiresome because of both their duration and their repetitiveness that arise from a failure on the part of most of those involved, on all sides, to understand how postcolonialism functions. Briefly put, while the debates have focused on establishing whether or not Ireland was a colony and how justified Irish nationalism has been in resisting British imperialism, postcolonial theory has become the whipping post against which all sides are pummelled. From the revisionist point of view, postcolonial theory is suspect for how it attempts to apply a generalised and misplaced model onto the complexities of Irish society, and those who employ it are merely closeted nationalists. From the post-revisionist point of view, postcolonial theory justifies the drive towards Irish institutional independence and sovereignty for the Irish people, and those who debunk it are merely closeted unionists. In their own ways, both of these camps fall short of grasping the enormously liberational potential of postcolonial theory. This chapter begins with a critical examination of these points of view and moves into a discussion of postcolonialism to demonstrate how the larger arguments of both sides are flawed. In effect, it is argued that postcolonial theory is compatible with the revisionist point of view when post-independence Ireland is the subject under investigation.

To further this thesis, the writings of Sean O'Faolain are examined. O'Faolain is important as a case study because of the relationship his work and his criticism of post-independence Irish society have with revisionist scholarship. O'Faolain was no fan of the

dominant and official nationalism of the State and the Church, which will become clear in the discussion of his creative fiction, his historical studies and his polemical journalism. His antagonistic stance as a critic of the official nationalism of the Irish State, and specifically in his long war against institutional censorship, is exemplary. He is cited by many scholars of this era in Irish history as having been the most sustained, eloquent, compelling and popular of those who spoke out against the tyrannies of nationalism and the petty, anti-dynamic, and xenophobic aspects of Irish society and culture.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, he is the Irish postcolonial critic *par excellence*. The argument is made that O'Faolain's revisionism is in fact understandable in the context, and explainable through the theoretical underpinnings, of postcolonialism.

#### *Postcolonial Theory in the Irish Context*

The introduction of postcolonial theory to Irish Studies was largely undertaken by several scholars and artists assembled around Seamus Deane who became collectively known as the Field Day group. The watershed year was 1988, when Field Day attracted internationally renowned literary theorists to write on Ireland. The invitation produced Terry Eagleton's *Nationalism, Irony and Commitment*, Frederic Jameson's *Modernism and Imperialism*, and Edward Said's *Yeats and Decolonization*.<sup>2</sup> Though not directly related to Field Day, the appearance of David Cairns and Shaun Richards' influential postcolonial intervention *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* was also issued in 1988.<sup>3</sup> These four texts brought cutting edge literary and cultural theory to bear on Irish Studies and Irish Studies to the world of cutting edge scholars and interested researchers. In some ways, these interventions deprovincialised Irish Studies as it had

been practised in recent years. They opened the field up to foreign scholars and worldviews that had been circulating around Irish Studies, though had never penetrated its protective and insular shell. However, these works also ironically helped to re-provincialise Irish Studies by providing the field's practitioners with a ready-made lens through which one could analyse culture and politics.<sup>4</sup>

Seamus Deane, as the leader of Field Day, has come under particularly harsh criticism for what some have viewed as his abuse of high literary theory to gloss over his nationalist politics. Stephen Howe, who has been one of the foremost of these critics, has gone so far as to state that there is a direct link between Irish postcolonialists with the republican tradition.<sup>5</sup> Howe refers to Deane as "a noted poet and novelist," suggesting implicitly that Deane's literary and cultural criticism is undermined by and perhaps indicative of his ventures in the realm of fiction and fantasy.<sup>6</sup> Along with Deane he charges Declan Kiberd and David Lloyd as purveyors of skewed and misleading postcolonial analysis of Ireland. But Howe is not alone in his criticism of the work undertaken by these scholars. Francis Mulhern has taken Luke Gibbons, a belated member of Field Day and a colleague of Deane's at Notre Dame University, similarly to task as a closeted nationalist. Gibbons is presented as an apologist for the abuses of the post-independence Irish State by blaming the residual effects of colonialism, thereby implying that the British are responsible for the abuses after the fact.<sup>7</sup> Mulhern has also made the common lament that the entire Field Day Anthology is exemplary of an overt cultural nationalism.<sup>8</sup>

Though he advances a different viewpoint than that of Howe's and Mulhern's blend of unionist politics and phobia of Irish postcolonialism, Colin Graham critiques the

Field Day project for its use of postcolonial theory. However, Graham's complaint is not based upon the fact that postcolonial theory is employed in the Irish context, but that it is not *sufficiently* employed. While the Field Day group has been adept at analysing the anti-colonial struggle of the pre-independence era of the Celtic Revival, Graham argues that its nationalism is evident in its failure to analyse the post-independence State with the same theoretical force. Essentially, though the Field Day group admits that the Irish State is oppressive and repressive, this is reasoned as being understandable because Irish nationalism was modelled on and a reaction to British imperialism and nationalism. The result is that the Irish alone are benign and the British are to blame for any of their shortcomings.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the primary problem has been with "the unsystematic, *ad hoc* and tendentious ways in which the theories of postcolonial criticism have been applied to Ireland."<sup>10</sup> The responsibility for the unwarranted abuse that postcolonialism has suffered at the hands of the revisionists is laid squarely at the feet of the theory's Irish practitioners. In effect, postcolonial theory has only been forcefully applied to readings of Irish culture in a manner that sees the "national" as relevant for Irish postcolonial discourse, which merely reiterates earlier Irish cultural criticism and identity politics but with the panache of high literary theory.

Given this situation, it is no wonder that revisionists have been openly sceptical and outright antagonistic of the use of postcolonial theory in an Irish context. But they in turn have perpetuated the old debates by arguing with the critics who have abused the theory without turning to the theory with the intention of understanding what it does and seeks to do. As a result, postcolonial theory has been wronged on two counts: it has been used to support nationalist claims of liberation without being used by these same critics to

examine how nationalism subsumes and oppresses other discourses of liberation, and it has simultaneously been attacked as a tool for nationalist aspirations and oppressions. In the end, the debates have become debased enough that the relevance of postcolonial theory in the Irish context has become dependent upon whether or not one believes, or is able to prove, that Ireland was or was not a colony.<sup>11</sup>

The abuse of postcolonial theory by those who approvingly introduced it to Irish Studies is therefore replicated in the later criticism of both those who adhere to and those who are critical of the initial perspective. Liam Kennedy offers perhaps the best example of such a view. He argues that by using postcolonial theory, which *ipso facto* categorises Irish society as postcolonial, critics imply that Ireland was a colony similar to those in Africa and Asia.<sup>12</sup> Kennedy statistically compares Ireland to former colonies in these continents in terms of historical and current industrialisation, Gross Domestic Production, infant mortality rates, the number of people per physician, life expectancy and adult literacy. While the levels are homogeneously poor in the former Asian and African colonies, Ireland is comparatively vastly superior. What Kennedy fails to note is what Kevin Kenny and Alvin Jackson have claimed elsewhere: namely, that Ireland's position changed according to time and context, as was the case with all colonies, and that there is no absolute unchanging colonial model to serve as an unproblematic ideal.<sup>13</sup> Instead, scholars who employ postcolonial theory in the Irish context are accused of having ulterior motives that go well beyond their nationalist leanings. "Like jackdaws to shiny objects," Kennedy argues, "literary and cultural critics seem to be drawn to labels and packaging. Assertion becomes a low-cost substitute for evidence. Metaphors masquerade as theory. And theory is a good thing, particularly for *homo academicus* on

the make.”<sup>14</sup> Theory is therefore cynically viewed as a trick or a means of acquiring status and forms of capital; it is not actually capable of doing anything productive beyond furthering the practitioner’s career. Given the lucrative positions of the most prominent of those who are criticised for using postcolonial theory in an Irish context – David Lloyd, Declan Kiberd, Seamus Deane, Luke Gibbons – it is no wonder that such a cynical view is taken. And such a view goes beyond simple jealousy – it is the result of a fundamental misunderstanding of postcolonialism that is predicated on its misuse at the hands of the initial practitioner.

As the most sophisticated of those who have argued against the use of postcolonial theory in an Irish context, it is worth examining Stephen Howe’s highly critical and highly flawed *Ireland and Empire*. In probing the historiography of Ireland, Howe justifiably refutes the Manichean nationalist views of Ireland, by revealing the complex hybridity and heterogeneity of Irish society; but he fails to interrogate unionist views for the same reason.<sup>15</sup> The post-revisionists who espouse postcolonial theory are criticised because they discuss pre-independence Ireland as a colony despite the fact that British historians of imperialism do not include the country in their studies. This, he argues, is proof of the insularity of Irish postcolonial studies, its inflated sense of self-importance and its wrongheadedness.<sup>16</sup> In addition to committing this sin, Declan Kiberd is accused of having been further mistaken when he claims in *Inventing Ireland* that the English needed the Irish as an Other against which it could define itself. This, Howe insists, is supported by prominent British historians, foremost amongst them Linda Colley, Gerald Newman and Raphael Samuel, who emphasise the importance of France as England’s, or Britain’s, Other.<sup>17</sup> But Howe undermines this point by not positing

possible reasons these British historians would have for ignoring the Irish case, such as the fact that it would have muddled their theses by presenting an Other that was at once external and internal and whose historical relationship is not a matter of two powers battling it out over centuries, but one powerful people controlling a less powerful people. However, what is most astounding is Howe's conclusion. Insisting on a turn away from and a need to go beyond the Irish/English binary, he writes:

We need to think Irishness and Englishness also in relation to Welshness and Scottishness, Yorkshireness and Kerryiness, as well as the multiple, non-territorial other social identifications in which individuals engage, the compound identities developing beyond nationalism, and forming sites of resistance to exclusivist nationalism's current global revival.<sup>18</sup>

Postcolonialism offers critics precisely the tool to challenge such essentialist national identities. Howe knows this, and he admits as much, but instead of offering readers the possibility of making such a positive move towards discussing Irish culture and politics, he opts for beating the nationalist horse for the entirety of his book. As a result, he fails to rescue postcolonialism as a force for resistance and liberation and leaves it for others to continue using it as a whipping post in the tired debates between revisionists and post-revisionists.

At the outset of the twenty-first century, Edna Longley provided the first instance of a revisionist move towards the possibilities postcolonial theory offers to critics of Irish nationalism. Her essay "Postcolonial *versus* European (and Post-ukanian) Frameworks for Irish Literature" opens by rehearsing the old complaint that Irish literary history is too often viewed through an anti-colonial lens of Irish-British relations, in this case to the detriment of ignoring continental connections that existed long before the rise of the Celtic Tiger. Furthermore, in Irish Studies the use of postcolonial theory has become an



end game in that it has been fused to the question of Northern Ireland through the work of Deane and Lloyd. Indeed, Lloyd is charged with suffering from “unsatisfied Marxist Republicanism.”<sup>19</sup> The fault of Deane and Lloyd, and their adherents, is that they remain influenced by Edward Said as opposed to “the latterday ‘revisionism’ of Homi Bhabha or Aijaz Ahmad.”<sup>20</sup> Given the well-known conflicts between the works of these latter two critics, especially in Ahmad’s thorough critique of Bhabha, the coupling of them is odd.<sup>21</sup> But it represents an important admission on the part of Longley, an influential critic herself, that postcolonial theory does indeed have various strands and is not a homogeneously nationalist conspiracy. Bhabha’s work in particular is revisionist in its refusal to adhere to and support *any* essentialist tyrannies, whether they are supported by an imperial or national State. The problem for Longley is that the work of the Field Day group has marginalised mid-century intellectuals, such as Sean O’Faolain and Hubert Butler, “whose work should have provided a more sustained basis for Irish cultural criticism.”<sup>22</sup> Field Day has systematically “caricatured” O’Faolain “as a proto-revisionist and neo-colonialist” in its attempts to contain his criticism of the nationalist project.<sup>23</sup> O’Faolain and other mid-century critics are therefore celebrated by Longley as *true* postcolonial critics.<sup>24</sup> It is in this critical vein that two of the most interesting practitioners of postcolonial theory who are engaged with Irish Studies, Colin Graham and Joe Cleary, have emerged.

Graham has attempted to return postcolonial Irish Studies to its more poststructuralist and liberational politics. Noting Fanon’s view of nationalism as only a step in the process of full liberation, Graham refers to the postcolonialism practised by the Indian Subaltern Studies group as exemplary for its criticism of nationalism.<sup>25</sup> In

particular, he is drawn to the group's critique of nationalism's tendency to marginalise and occlude internal "Others."<sup>26</sup> By following this model, postcolonial Irish Studies could liberate itself from the tedious persistence of positioning the colonised against the coloniser and begin "to discuss the ideological restrictions which a culture imposes upon itself."<sup>27</sup> Despite the thrashing that Lloyd takes at the hands of revisionist scholars, Graham points towards an influential essay of his written in the late 1990s that was similar to Longley in beginning a reconciliation of the postcolonial and revisionist perspectives.

Lloyd's essay "Nationalisms Against the State" is effective for its recognition of the fact that the official and dominant nationalism contains alternative social movements.<sup>28</sup> The people and ideologies that are bounded by the State's borders and cannot be included in the State's definitions of the nation are its "excess" which becomes designated as immoral, irrational and criminal. The duty of the State is to "expunge, through ideological or repressive state apparatuses, cultural or social forms which are in excess of its own rationality and whose rationale is other to its own."<sup>29</sup> According to Longley, Lloyd fails in this critique by placing the blame once again on the British State for the legacy of exclusion to power imbricated in imperialism and not the Irish people who undertake the marginalisation of the State's "excess" in the post-independence era. Unlike Lloyd, Graham interrogates the role and responsibility of the Irish people and State in the construction of an abusive, racist and insular society.

Similar to Graham, Joe Cleary fails to see the interest in continuing the old debates. Cleary eschews the revisionist and post-revisionist camps for a more thorough understanding of the liberational potential of postcolonialism. Nationalism, he notes, has

its limits as an oppositional discourse and this is most evident in the post-independence Irish State.<sup>30</sup> “Postcolonial readings of Irish culture,” he argues,

have the capacity not only to critique established versions of Irish literary history, but also to extend the scope of inquiry to engage with the cultural dilemmas of subaltern groups – such as women, workers, and emigrants – that were typically either elided or under-represented within nationalist literary history. Irish postcolonial analysis is conceived here, therefore, not as a renovated cultural nationalism but as the most expansive and outward-looking of the various modes of socio-cultural analysis currently shaping Irish studies.<sup>31</sup>

Cleary explicitly links the projects of revisionism and postcolonialism in his discussion of what he refers to as the Counter Revival, the period from the late 1920s to the mid-1960s. This era has been conspicuously absent in postcolonial analyses of Irish culture, with the anti-colonial struggle of the Revival and the Troubles in Northern Ireland having garnered much of the theoretical attention. He implies that the underlying reason for this is that while much of the literature of the latter two periods celebrates nationalism, the literature of the Counter Revival emphasises neither heroic nor revolutionary achievements, but the victims and atrocities perpetuated by the dominant culture and the State. There is, in the literature of the Counter Revival, a sense of betrayal, which, though Cleary does not mention it, is symptomatic of postcolonial critics in most post-independence societies who are faced with the failures of the anti-colonial and nationalist struggles to achieve the greatness they once promised. Postcolonialism does not therefore advocate the nationalist State as an end, but rather as a means towards the promises of full liberation that had been made during the years of struggle; again, it works against the tyrannies of the State and the dominant culture, regardless of whether that State and culture are imperialist or nationalist.

The challenge O'Faolain poses to how postcolonialism as a theory and politics of resistance has been abused in Irish Studies thus becomes clearer. O'Faolain was a nationalist, as is evidenced in his work as a bomb-maker and propagandist for the IRA during the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War. It is also evident in the fact that when he could have abandoned Ireland once he had become disillusioned by the unfulfilled promises of post-independence realities, he opted to stay and work in Ireland, to write about Ireland, to work tirelessly as a reformer who sought to change the system and Irish society for the better. Had he not been a nationalist to some extent, he would have stayed away and remained in England instead of returning in the 1930s and carved out his existence as yet another Irish writer who felt forced into exile by the pettiness, anti-dynamism and insularity of his native land. But he returned and his criticism of the official nationalism reveals a genuine commitment to the ideals of postcolonialism that have been ignored for too long by postcolonial practitioners of Irish Studies. By turning towards his writings that are critical of post-independence Ireland and inflecting these readings with postcolonial analysis, one begins to understand how his revisionism is compatible with postcolonialism, especially in his battles against the ultramontane Catholicism and xenophobic constructs of Irishness that dominated the society and were perpetuated by the State. These battles came to a head in his antagonism to institutional censorship; as such, the analysis of his revisionism must begin with a discussion of the banning of his own work.

*O'Faolain's Censored Writings*

Over the course of his career, O'Faolain had three works banned by the Censorship Board: *Midsummer Night Madness*, *Bird Alone* and *A Purse of Coppers*. All of these were written and banned at the outset of his career, from 1932 to 1937, which only reinforced the alienation he felt from Irish society after having spent several years in the United States and England. In effect, the bannings heightened his sense that injustice and intolerance were firmly embedded in the new State's institutions and the wider society. All three of the aforementioned works challenged the prevailing norms and mores of post-independence Ireland through their representations of history and contemporary society and the refusal to separate and compartmentalise sexuality from other aspects of life. O'Faolain wrote about Ireland and his Ireland, despite the official line, was a place in which sexual acts occurred and patriots sinned – and not always with guilty consciences that were later administered to in confessionals.

*Midsummer Night Madness*, a collection of short stories that marked O'Faolain's debut as a serious writer, recounts the struggles of IRA members as they fight the British and, later, Free State forces. Contemporary critics received it favourably. Reviewing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Austin Clarke praised O'Faolain for showing “human nature distorted by political, religious and racial passions” and depicting “objectively a mental world of distorted values, a world in which a cowardly murder may pass as patriotism while a sexual sin is regarded with sanctimonious horror.”<sup>32</sup> The *Irish Times* labelled it “one of the most remarkable books that have come out of Ireland in the past ten years.”<sup>33</sup> And *The Dublin Magazine* lauded O'Faolain's craft and analysis of contemporary Irish society.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the good reviews, the collection was banned almost immediately after it appeared on the country's bookshelves. Francis O'Reilly, on behalf of the CTS, submitted an official complaint on March 14, 1932.<sup>35</sup> Several passages were marked on the copy that was appended to the complaint form; though the marked copy does not exist, the page numbers listed on the complaint form provide the reader with a guide to which passages were most likely to have drawn the attention of the CTS and the Censorship Board. By examining these passages, one can gain some insight into why exactly the book was banned on April 19 other than the vague claim that it was considered "in its general tendency indecent."<sup>36</sup>

Though none of the marked pages noted on the complaint form implicate Edward Garnett's Foreword, the renowned editor's rant against Ireland and praise of O'Faolain could not have boded well. In fact, it might very well have drawn attention to the possibility that the book was in some way or other indecent.<sup>37</sup> Garnett referred to Ireland as "the most backward nation in Europe," and the Irish people as the "most indifferent to literature and art, and least aware of critical standards."<sup>38</sup> Their indifference had led their writers who had any talent to go into exile to find welcome abroad. The lack of respect for good literature, he argued, was evidenced in the burning of Shaw's books in Galway, the dismantling of the rural library scheme in Mayo because of the employment of a Protestant librarian, and institutional censorship. "How, we are asked, can literature flourish in such a sterile, apathetic, rigid atmosphere?"<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps more than most editors, Garnett had the right to be angered with Irish society's treatment of its leading authors. He was himself a member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy working out of London for the English publisher Jonathan Cape and had in

his stable of writers Liam O'Flaherty who had actually facilitated O'Faolain's relationship with Garnett. Given that O'Flaherty had recently had the honour of being the first banned Irish writer for the *House of Gold*, a Jonathan Cape book edited by Garnett, Garnett's Foreword can be understood as someone lashing out against a system that had personally affected him. It was not, however, a wise tactical move on his part to sell O'Faolain to the Irish – unless the point was to sell him to the people of other nations as an example of yet another brave and worthy Irish writer who had suffered under and raised himself above the petty pieties of his native land.

The reviews in both the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Irish Times* actually began with discussions of the Foreword, noting its well-founded though provocative and antagonistic views. That these reviews appeared in the days just before Francis O'Reilly submitted his complaint form and only as the book was appearing in stores suggests the possibility that the attention of the CTS might have been drawn to the book because of the Foreword.<sup>40</sup> If so, Garnett's attempted defence of O'Faolain was a failure despite the fact that his comments were justified given the banning of the book that followed. Towards the end of the Foreword, he openly challenged the Irish people: "Here, with the publication of *Midsummer Night Madness* an opportunity is given to rebut [the charges of Irish sterility and apathy], to show that all sections, lay and clerical, can recognize a fine piece of literature frankly Irish in both atmosphere and character and an author essentially Irish in spirit."<sup>41</sup> With the banning of the book, the CTS, the Censorship Board and, implicated through association, the Irish people and the State, proved themselves to Garnett and other liberals to be incapable of accepting literature about Ireland by an Irish writer that might in some way challenge the dominant and official norms and mores.

In comparing the pages listed on the complaint form, the most offensive story in the collection, in terms of the number of marked passages, was “The Small Lady.” The story, which is 59 pages in length, represents 23.6% of the text. However, 13 of the book’s 25 marked pages, or 52% of the purportedly obscene and indecent material, are included in “The Small Lady.” Even if one accounts for the fact that the listing of objectionable pages indicates that the final two stories of the collection are not marked and leaving the possibility that they were left unread, the length of “The Small Lady” would account for 31.5% of the read text. These figures reveal that the story was disproportionately objectionable to the rest of the material. While such number crunching is helpful to demonstrate how thoroughly, or quantitatively, objectionable the story was to the complainant, it cannot shed light on how qualitatively objectionable the material was; that is, while it might have had a higher percentage of objectionable passages than the other stories, these passages might have been thought less offensive than those that were marked elsewhere. But the centrality of the story – it is the fourth of seven – and the fact that it is the longest and most panoramic in the collection, speaks to its importance in understanding the others and the author’s intent. That it alone was singled out and praised in all three of the aforementioned reviews further indicates how contemporary opinion believed it was the most important and compelling of the book. For all of the reasons stated above, and because of the complexities involved in discussing the seven stories separately, “The Small Lady” is analysed here as both representative and exemplary of the collection as a whole.

The opening sentence of the story signals the censorious environment in which it circulated. O’Faolain’s narrator writes: “Three days after the disappearance of Mrs.



Sydney Browne this scandalous ballad – I dare not give it in full – was being sung in every market town in Munster.”<sup>42</sup> Because of the coarse and vulgar nature of some of the ballad’s verses, the narrator has censored it for the reader. The potential audience of the story, it is assumed, would take offence at both the words and images evoked should the full version be provided. Even the people who listened to it being sung in the town “listened with averted faces.”<sup>43</sup> They were thus ashamed of delighting in such ribaldry and so looked elsewhere, but they could not stop themselves from listening. In fact, when the ballad was sung, “there would be a scramble for copies of the song and everyone would then move quickly away.”<sup>44</sup> The women hid “the green sheet of the ballad between their breasts,” while the men stuffed “it into their clasped purses among the silver and the dirty notes.”<sup>45</sup> It was highly valued for its obscenity and indecency, and yet those very characteristics made it a thing of scandal and shame.

The ballad in question, entitled “On the Six Sinn Fein Boys Shot in Cork Barracks by Drum Head Court Martial,” recounts the story of Mrs. Sydney Browne, or Bella, a local member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy who sold knowledge of the location of members of the IRA to the Crown forces. In effect, it provides a rough outline of the story itself, beginning with the abduction of the small lady, so called because she was only five feet tall, and ending with her own death in revenge for the six she caused by informing to the authorities. The night that she is stolen away into the mountains by a column of irregulars, they actually sing the very song to her with frivolity. Aside from her height, the only description of Bella includes repeated mention of her wearing a scarlet gown, drawing an ominous parallel with Hester Prynne, the heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* who dared to commit adultery in Puritan New England.<sup>46</sup>

Bella differs from the large part of the population in terms of her class and religion but, more to the point in puritanical Ireland, it is her unabashed sensuality that distinguishes her from the others.

As the car motors up the hilly road, Bella, noticing the mist rising from the valley below, pulls off her hat and bares “her throat to the breasts” to feel “the gentle pricking rain.” She shivers as the water trickles “across her lips and down the channel of her breasts.”<sup>47</sup> They bring her to a monastery where the men will hide out for the evening before continuing on the next day. The cloistered building is cold, made of brick, a place where men have sequestered themselves away from the world of bodily and earthly desires; here men have devoted themselves to abstinence and the denial of nature and the natural world in which Bella delights. As well, their arrival comes on a Lenten Friday, when even the denial of pleasures, no matter how innocent, is emphasised in ritual fasting and prayer. Despite these surroundings, or perhaps because of them, Bella, in a fit of passion, tears off her clothes in the privacy of the bedroom set aside for her to face the moon and open fields.<sup>48</sup> Only the night before, she had gone out naked onto her balcony to feel the heavy rain on her body. But she was not ashamed at the sensuality, linking it instead to a spiritual or divine experience: ““It was godly. I shall do it again.””<sup>49</sup> Indeed, it is not only her overt sensuality but also the utter absence of guilt that sets her apart from the other characters.

Over the course of the night in the monastery, Bella seduces Denis, the young and inexperienced irregular in whose charge she is placed. The first time she fully takes notice of him, she lets “her eyes wander over his long tapering hands that clasped his rifle, his waist like a colt or a greyhound, back to his eyes that looked at her with a frank

and open look.”<sup>50</sup> Though nothing is overtly objectionable in this passage, its suggestiveness caused the complainant to draw the Censorship Board’s attention to it. The young man is animalised; his natural desires that have been suppressed by the Catholic Church are reattributed to him, despite the fact that these desires are redirected and manifested in the violence that his rifle represents. At the same time, her desire for flesh is sinful and this sinfulness is only heightened by the fact that her desire is felt in a monastery on a Lenten Friday. She looks at him “with what her male friends had dubbed her ‘please-please eyes,’” drawing him further into her.<sup>51</sup> When he first comes to her room in the darkness of night and finds her standing naked in the moonlight, he has her get dressed.<sup>52</sup> On his return some time later, she draws him down to the bed and kisses him and he does not resist. They make love and afterwards he leaves, hearing the choir begin their songs and prayers in the chapel below.<sup>53</sup> While she remains to luxuriate in the afterglow of sex, he steals away to take his place in the pews. But the purity of the place and the holiness of the monks cause him to become disgusted with himself. Whereas Bella feels alive in the act of love, Denis sees only sin and death. The typed script tacked to the wall above Bella’s bed asks: “Will *you* barter the brief lusts and passing pleasures of the few moments of this life to be in the flames of Hell for all ETERNITY, ETERNITY, ETERNITY?”<sup>54</sup> She thinks of this suffocating mantra as hateful and it incites her to claim her humanity through sex; but for Denis, the sentiments represent his religious beliefs and in having sex he denies his humanity by reducing himself to fulfilling his animal desires.

In the morning, Denis and his column move Bella further away, hiking through the hills until they arrive at a rather dilapidated cabin in which she is to stay. While

waiting for the decision from the command on her fate, Denis wanders about the area. He happens upon a priest to whom he appeals for a confession. He tells of his having been with Bella the night before, thinking of it as “coarse and ugly.”<sup>55</sup> After, cleansed of his sin, “he almost choked with happiness.”<sup>56</sup> Liberation for Bella is found in the carnal pleasures of sex, of the feeling of being alive that sensuality brings her; liberation for Denis is found in the knowledge that he has been absolved of his earthly sins – or at least the guilt they had induced.

The next day, while Bella awaits her execution, Denis descends the valley to attend Mass having been excused by the others from being a further part of her death. He denies himself even the pleasure of thinking of their love making, refusing to do so as the priest had instructed him. Instead, life is conceived of as a hard struggle that must be undertaken with the help of God, and with whose help he would strive for the purity he had formerly had. At the door of the church he hands his rifle to a boy standing outside so he can enter and take his place amongst the parishioners. As the service winds to its close, the echoes of gunshots ring throughout the valley, signalling her death.

Denis climbs back up into the hills and has to help his column in a battle with the British forces that have since found the hideout. In the course of the action, he takes cold calculated aim at a conspicuously tall officer. After several attempts, one of his shots kills the man. Denis escapes with a comrade from his column and the story ends with them running off to another homestead tucked far away in the folds of the mountains where a “domn fine girrl” awaits them.

Austin Clarke’s review of the collection is the most relevant here for how he focuses on the hypocritical nature of Irish society. Sex is agonised over by Denis, yet he

does not think twice about killing a man. Brother John, the guestmaster at the monastery, readily opens his door to the IRA and hides Bella in a chamber, but he rails at a local drunkard about the sins of the flesh and the need to deny one's nature and desires. The priest to whom Denis confesses knows that he is in the IRA, but he does not pass judgment on his paramilitary activities; instead, he focuses on his sexual transgressions and asks him to deny his sexual impulses. Likewise, the boy outside the church holds the gun for Denis while he attends Mass, but he would surely not be allowed to aid and abet Denis to sexually transgress. Denis, when he meets up with his comrade after killing the British officer, readily brags about his exploit. In fact, just after killing the officer, he feels "elated at his success."<sup>57</sup> And arriving at the hidden homestead, he finds himself "in a gay mood, rejoicing in the loveliness of the night" and "the promise of infinite days yet to come."<sup>58</sup> The fact that he has just killed does not weigh at all on Denis' conscience, which sits in stark contrast with the tortured anguish and guilt he felt after having sexually transgressed with Bella. In Ireland, as O'Faolain understood it, there was an acceptance of murder while there was a demonising of sex and sexuality. And the complaint form submitted by Francis O'Reilly confirms this: while every page that has any mention of sex or nudity is marked as objectionable, not one of the pages that details Denis' violence and his killing of the officer is similarly marked.

The implication is that O'Faolain challenges the norms and mores of Irish society. He questions the level of violence done in the act of love making versus the violence perpetrated by those who deny themselves and others their own natural desires and the violence involved in taking the life of another person. These misplaced values are evident in Denis' murder of the British officer, but also in the contrasting descriptions of

the story's two sexually charged acts: the tender love making of Bella and Denis, which is discreetly told, and the attempts of Brother John to tame his lust, which are graphically told. The monk has deformed himself through decades of fasting, prayer, silence and flagellations with his cincture until he bled freely.<sup>59</sup> O'Reilly also marked the pages on which the pains and details of flagellation undertaken to deny one's natural desires are recounted. The scene, it should be recognised, is sexual in how Brother John appears proud of the long duration of his flagellations and the relish with which he relates them to others. Irish society is not negatively affected, according to the story's characters, by the violent acts of the IRA or the flagellations of Brother John; but it is by the presence of such sensual and sexual women as Bella, who tempt and seduce Irish men. In this light, her betrayal of the six irregulars to the British forces is analogous to her luring Denis to betray his puritanically Irish Catholic beliefs. However, over the course of the action, O'Faolain reveals just how skewed these beliefs are.

Just as the Censorship Board in banning the book demonstrated the official disapproval of the State, the IRA voiced its anger over it. The IRA was said to have been provoked by O'Faolain's "generally unflattering portrayal of the rebels" and thus "ordered him to appear before a court-martial."<sup>60</sup> O'Faolain ignored the order and, knowing how the IRA tended to feel about these sorts of things, stayed away from Cork for some time afterward.<sup>61</sup> Apparently the IRA never forgave him, though neither physical harm nor threat came to O'Faolain as a result. In attacking the shibboleths of Irish society, he had managed to insult and irritate two otherwise antagonistic parties: the Irish State and the IRA. In his own strange way, then, O'Faolain helped bring the two

sides that had been divided by the Anglo-Irish Treaty for more than a decade to an accord of opinion.

His novel *Bird Alone*, with its treatment of both Church and physical force nationalism, treads along this same ground. But while *Midsummer Night Madness* examines the period of 1919 to 1923, *Bird Alone* offers a less contemporary era in the time leading up to and following the fall of Parnell. A case could be made that O'Faolain was attempting to circumvent the censorship by framing his tale in a similarly divided Irish society but one that was set in a past distant enough to avoid the passions more immediate experience might have raised. The societal division in which one of many paths could have been taken was necessary as a backdrop to demonstrate that more liberal elements were at work in Irish society but that the dominant narrative that emerged was once again the more oppressively conservative strain. More specifically, understanding both the fall and the person of Parnell is essential for one to arrive at a deeper appreciation of O'Faolain's revisionist project.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a precursor of O'Faolain's treatment of the fall of Parnell. Key scenes in both novels take place around a dinner table with family members and friends present. Much division occurs amongst the guests as people take sides either for or against Parnell as the leader of the Irish people. Corney Crone, like Stephen Dedalus, is the young narrator and protagonist who finds himself awkwardly placed between the two camps but will eventually take the side of the fallen hero. It is a choice that becomes viewed as a more secular nationalism versus the Catholic Church, individual freedom versus the tyrannical conformity of the collective, humanity and nature versus denial and piety. Corney sides with his maternal

aunt Virginia, who is visiting from London and in whose honour the dinner is held, and his paternal grandfather or “grander,” who is constantly at odds with his parents and respectable Cork society. The three characters see Parnell, whose downfall is only rumoured at this time, as the deliverer of the Irish people from British governance into freedom. While grander argues that Home Rule will bring Ireland untold prosperity, Corney’s father and his friend Foran suggest that Parnell’s a bit of a drinker. The Canon, meanwhile, does not trust Parnell because ““he isn’t one of our class. And he isn’t one of our persuasion.””<sup>62</sup> In such circumstances, the later abandonment of Parnell when the Kitty O’Shea divorce case became public fact instead of rumour has been justified in advance. Because of Parnell’s religion, lineage and questionable morality, he is not truly Irish and is therefore held under suspicion. Arthur Coppinger, the chairman of the city council, makes a half-hearted defence of Parnell that demonstrates his belief in the man’s political mission and his desires to separate the private and public spheres of the politician’s life (perhaps not surprising given that it is also his profession) and remain in office by not committing himself to a too-spirited defence.

Grander and Virginia make an impassioned plea for Parnell by noting that he has long served Ireland in London and that as London is quite different from Ireland those who live there should be held accountable to a different morality. To this, Murphy-MacCarthy, the Canon’s assistant, rises to condemn the defenders, linking their defence of Parnell with a defence of their own morality. In this way, the supporters of Parnell are linked with immorality. After all, Virginia, he notes, knows all too well the different morality of London: he charges that she is a high class prostitute, a fact that is unspoken though acknowledged by all of the other characters up to this point. From here, the



dinner ends in acrimony though the tension is displaced – and the scene thereby weakened – by the interruption of a man who confronts some of the characters about the workings of a failing housing scheme. The implication of the dinner and the debate over Parnell is found in the characters of the defenders. Grander is an old unrepentant Fenian and Virginia is an independent and wealthy prostitute who loves to gamble and lives in London. Both have fought against and withdrawn from the society that is dominated by those who attack Parnell most spiritedly: the bourgeois businessmen and leaders of the Catholic Church. Neither Grander nor Virginia seeks the acceptance of respectable Irish society; in fact, they openly rebel against it.

With Virginia back in London and the O'Shea case publicly confirmed, Grander and Corney make a habit of going to Church even though they are not believers. Church attendance is for them a show of defiance, an offering of proof to the community that though Parnell was castigated by many as an adulterer, Parnellites could be as Catholic as his detractors. In effect, they sought to separate the question of Parnell's leadership from morality and instead maintain it as a secular political issue. But the political and the moral in Ireland, Corney and Grander quickly realise, cannot be so easily separated. They learn from a monk outside of the devotions that Parnell has died and though the monk had earlier asked Father Burke to join him in prayer for his soul, the priest brushed the request aside. Hearing of the meanness of the priest causes Grander to break down. "It was the end of our piety," says Corney. "All the bitterness of the miserable years after Parnell saved us both – made us full of hatred and contempt."<sup>63</sup> Paradoxically, they are saved through their rejection of the Church; they become independent of its influence and

tyrannies. At this point, Corney claims, he became a “bird alone,” one who is largely without allegiance and companionship.

The night that Parnell dies, Corney meets with his sweetheart, Elsie Sherlock. Coming from a staunchly Catholic family, Elsie differs from Corney in her unswaying devotion to her religion. But despite her piety, Corney is able to convince her to slip away with him that night to the secrecy of the woods where they make out – and they meet there for the same reasons over much of the next week until Elsie is sent to visit her priest brother in London.<sup>64</sup> In the time that follows their separation, Corney is implicated in the assault of a police officer. Upon her return to Ireland, Elsie defends Corney by stating that he was with her in the woods at the time of the attack. This indiscretion leads to her father banning Corney and his family from having any future dealings with the Sherlocks. Corney, through the romantic space created by the death of the heroic outcast Parnell, begins his seduction of Elsie. In this moment, then, Corney goes beyond mere political support of his fallen hero to actually attempting to recreate, to some extent, the betrayal and sexuality that Parnell represented for many people. This, for O’Faolain, is the further attraction of setting the story in this earlier period.

Almost two decades after the publication of *Bird Alone*, Donat O’Donnell wrote that O’Faolain was marked by “parnellism.” Distinct from “Parnellism,” “parnellism” is defined as the “connection between the separate ideas of national, spiritual, and sexual emancipation.”<sup>65</sup> In effect, it mirrors Parnell’s own struggles against the Church, State and sexual prohibition of the Victorian era that made him an icon of rebellion. This is precisely why Lawrence McCaffrey is misguided to argue against “parnellism” as the defining feature of O’Faolain; instead, McCaffrey suggests that it is more accurate to

speak of O'Faolain's "O'Connellism."<sup>66</sup> In so doing, McCaffrey dismisses the importance of sexuality to O'Faolain as a means of rebellion in Irish society and, simultaneously, the importance of sexuality to his characters. The relationships that O'Faolain's characters have towards their sexuality define their political and philosophical beliefs, with the three of these intricately linked. The more sexually active and guiltless of his or her own sexuality one is, the less allegiance he or she has to Ireland, the Catholic Church and any other collective that seeks to subsume the individual. In effect, these characters are not as easily controlled by authorities. This is emphasised in Corney's attitude towards his own sexuality and his desire to seduce Elsie and get her to relinquish her Catholic morality. That the relationship becomes physical on the night of Parnell's death explicitly ties Corney's rebellion to that of his dead hero.

The struggle against tyranny more than the struggle for an independent Ireland ties the novel's rebellious figures together. In London with grander to visit Christy, the man indicted and imprisoned for assaulting the police officer, Corney meets with other Fenians who have long since been forgotten by Irish politicians – save for John Redmond, who remains supportive of those who have worked for the same cause as he though in other ways. As coincidence has it, Elsie is again visiting her brother at this time and Corney takes her out. After a night amongst the sentimental ex-patriot Irish community that gathers in the dingy pubs along the quays, Elsie and Corney retreat to the priest's house where they make love for the first and last time. Once free of the pieties of Ireland and the censorious atmosphere of Irish society, Elsie allows herself to be seduced by Corney despite the fact that their relationship is consummated in the house of a priest. In so doing, the implication is that though priests exist in other societies, it is only in

Ireland that the Church's presence is oppressive enough to wholly thwart sexuality. Instead of setting the seduction in Ireland, where Irish sexuality might have become a part of the landscape, O'Faolain sets it in London, in effect supporting the case that immorality is foreign to Ireland. But Corney and others like him would readily have sex in their native land were it more available; the need was to remove the pious Elsie from the claustrophobic Irish society so that she would be freer to express her natural desires. Back in Cork, their relationship tainted by her public testimony, they would not have been able to meet under similar conditions.

When they return to Ireland, Corney and Elsie remain distant, as convention and her father dictate. On a trip out to Youghal, Corney meets Stella, a young English painter and artist who has rented a local cottage. Having invited Corney to her place, she shows her paintings and argues for the place of people in art, while Corney argues for the place of landscapes. Both of them make the place for the same thing: the importance of nature. However, while people represent nature and life for Stella, Corney shuns people. People have constructed an Irish society that for him is wholly negative; he seeks a turn away from the shackles of society towards a natural world, as represented by landscapes, that is entirely absent of humans and their constructs. But he does not finally realise this until the end of the book, when he has an epiphany during a Lenten Mass in which he understands that "it was not that I did not believe in men, but that I could not believe in what men believed."<sup>67</sup> Stella as an outsider has already diagnosed Irish society as a series of controlling structures that have killed the nature and natural desires of the people – including those such as Corney who rebel against it.<sup>68</sup> Regardless of his struggles, it is implied that Corney will remain imprisoned by Irish society because he will always

define himself by the position he takes with regards to the dominant culture's norms and mores.

His refusal to amend and repent for his ways and the controlling structures of Irish society cost him the possibility of a future life with Elsie. Once she returns to Ireland, she informs him that she has confessed her sins to a priest who took a perverse delight in the details of their tryst. The ordeal of the confession has left her even more guilt-ridden than before. To contrast, Corney remains steadfast in his antagonistic position: "I could not admit what I did not believe – that our love had been evil."<sup>69</sup> Compounding matters, Elsie soon discovers that she is pregnant and while she tells Corney, she hides the fact from her family for fear of their judgment and rejection. Corney's solution, to get married, is not the stuff of rebellion – but it is the only way he sees to circumvent what Elsie views as the tragedy of the situation. However, Elsie's father, still ignorant of her pregnancy, refuses to agree to the marriage as Corney has yet to have risen high enough in the world. Corney is rejected for his lack of money, not his immorality. Corney and Elsie's relationship is thus doomed by Irish society on two levels: its immorality as dictated by the priest in the confessional, and its economic impossibility. In this way, the materialist bourgeois structure of Irish society is implicated as being as crushing of human nature and desire as the Catholic Church is through its ultramontane social teachings.

To protect Elsie, Corney enlists Marion, a friend of Stella's, to help him get her away to the cottage in Youghal where she can hide away until the birth of the child. Though she has confessed to having had sex with Corney, Elsie has remained as silent in the confessional with regards to her pregnancy as she has been with her family. But

because she must call their act, and therefore the unborn child, a sin, she cannot bring herself to confess and alleviate her guilt. This she mentions to Corney, who blames both of them as much as the larger society for the predicament: “It is a sin, for you, Elsie. I didn’t understand that for you it would always be a sin.”<sup>70</sup>

As a result of the growing burden, Elsie tries to drown herself. Corney pulls her out of the ocean only partly revived. Though he finds a doctor, she dies in childbirth only minutes before uttering her final confession to Corney. His family and the community shun him, but in the end he confesses “that our love was a sin, was evil, was bestial.”<sup>71</sup> This he does, however, not out of a belief in the truth of it, but because he seeks God’s pity for Elsie. Corney ends up a journeyman carpenter, wandering the country in search of work and not committed to any particular local pieties, moving through communities too quickly to set down roots in and be affected by them. There is therefore a sort of moral imperative to the story’s conclusion, the implication being that one cannot sin without retribution if one refuses to repent and remains too proud. If understood as such, the novel is a morality tale that should have reinforced the official narrative of the State, thus causing it to be celebrated, not banned. But one would have to ignore the “indecent” scene of their lovemaking and Virginia’s profession as an unrepentant prostitute. Likewise, Corney does not come to embrace the Church. He feels *obliged* to pray and confess in order to help Elsie, not his own soul, and there is no indication that he has accepted Church doctrine. Furthermore, and this was in all probability the interpretation of the Censorship Board members if they considered the book in its entirety, there is the possible reading of Elsie’s death and Corney’s unhappiness as an indictment of the tyrannies of Irish society.

Unlike *Midsummer Night Madness*, *Bird Alone* did not receive much critical praise. In fact, the reviewers for the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Irish Times* and *The Dublin Magazine* all voiced disappointment at O'Faolain's failure to live up to the promise of his earlier work.<sup>72</sup> While his craftsmanship of language was viewed as still strong, his ability to write a full-length novel was called into question. Given that later critical assessments of his work have tended to focus on the short story as his exemplary genre, these reviews were either extremely astute or crucial in moulding the opinions of successive generations. O'Faolain implicitly admitted his relative failure as a novelist compared to his work as a short story writer; in his study of the genre of the short story, one of his central arguments is that post-independence Irish society was not dynamic and diverse enough to provide the material for novelists.<sup>73</sup> This might further explain why he felt the need to write of the past in novel form while more contemporary Ireland received his attention as a writer of short stories. Or it might be read as a sophisticated self-defence of why he was not a successful practitioner of the novel – it is easier to blame the culture than take the responsibility for one's self.

Despite the lack of critical acclaim and the possibility of reading *Bird Alone* as a morality tale, the Censorship Board issued a Prohibition Order on August 29, 1936.<sup>74</sup> In the immediate wake of the banning, there was no public scandal; however, upon his return from a trip to Italy some three weeks later, Frank O'Connor wrote a letter of protest to the *Irish Times*.<sup>75</sup> O'Connor noted his shock at the novel's banning, and his astonishment that it had not provoked outrage on the part of citizens "against a step which is obviously not intended to protect the Irish people against evil literature, but to destroy the character and prospects of Irish writers in their own country."<sup>76</sup> There is not,

he claimed, an indecent line in whole of the book. "I admit," he wrote, "that by adopting the profession of literature O'Faolain has put himself outside the pale of decent society, and shown himself unworthy of our great Gaelic heritage of intolerance and illiteracy; but does not the law go too far in denying him the rights accorded to a murderer?"<sup>77</sup> It would be a step up from the current state of affairs in Ireland, he argued, should writers be raised to criminal status by at least having the possibility of being publicly tried before one's peers. Even in an Italy that suffered under a Fascist regime, he had been able to purchase many books that were banned in Ireland and others that were openly critical of Mussolini's dictatorship.

O'Connor's letter sparked a brief campaign of protest from several quarters in the pages of the *Irish Times*. The writer Lynn Doyle wrote in support of O'Connor's letter and O'Faolain's book, referring to the Censorship Board as a "secret tribunal."<sup>78</sup> Andrew Malone, the Organising Secretary of the Irish chapter of PEN (Poets, Essayists, Novelists), claimed that the censorship in general amounted to little more than "legalised slander."<sup>79</sup> An anonymous writer argued that the banning proved the fact that the Censorship Board was composed of "the more prurient of adolescent minds" in taking scandal with historical novels like *Bird Alone*.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, if the novel *I Cladius*, which had been likewise banned for a few passing references to the orgies that took place in ancient Rome, what serious history of the period – or indeed any period – would escape censure? Other concerned citizens with no affiliations to writers' organisations and who were not writers themselves, made similar remarks to the extent that they were baffled that *Bird Alone*, "the creation of a devout, Catholic imagination," could be banned without any recourse to appeal the injustice and made offers to contribute to any group



that would take up the case in a court of law.<sup>81</sup> However, there was unfortunately no concerted and sustained action taken as a result of the protest. O'Faolain's writing, which was highly critical of Irish society, had further demonstrated its value as resistance literature by providing the platform for other people to publicly voice their own discontent with the system. But the opportunity to coalesce active political and legal resistance and mount a challenge to the structure of institutional censorship was missed.

After receiving lukewarm response to his novelistic attempts, O'Faolain turned back to the short story for his next book. *A Purse of Coppers* proved to be a critical success.<sup>82</sup> Reviewers specifically lauded the courage behind O'Faolain's unflinching examination of Ireland's provincialism. Whereas *Bird Alone* is set against the history of the late nineteenth century and *Midsummer Night Madness* uses the period of the Anglo-Irish War and Irish Civil War as a backdrop, the stories of *A Purse of Coppers* are set in post-independence Ireland and offer critiques of contemporary Irish society. Each story presents the reader with a vignette of some aspect or corner of Ireland, offering a harsh glimpse into the cold and sterile life the new State helped to create and nurture.

In "A Broken World," the first story in the collection and the title of which encapsulates O'Faolain's view of Ireland, a priest relates to other passengers his diagnosis on what ails the country. Irish life, he argues, has decayed and lost its claims to its former dynamism. Whereas at least in pre-independence Ireland the landlords and the aristocracy maintained some form of unity, post-independence Ireland suffers from stagnation, isolated pockets of people without leaders to guide them. The narrator later learns from a local farmer that the priest had been silenced by the Hierarchy for his views, specifically his attempted politicisation of the people around the issue of

nationalisation of the land. With independence and the departure of the landlords and aristocracy, the land had remained untilled and unproductive and, thus, so too had the people. While the Government promised to nationalise the land, the process moved too slowly and as a result, as the priest notes on several occasions, the haemorrhaging of the people through mass emigration had been facilitated. Ireland, it is charged, has been ill affected by *both* English *and* Irish rule. The responsibility for the breaking of the Irish world is with the Irish Government and leaders because they are the ones who have been empowered with fixing the existing inequalities. The solutions, such as the nationalisation of the land, are at their disposal, but their refusal to implement them reveals their torpor and, perhaps underlying this torpor but more difficult to prove, their indifference to the people they lead. As the spiritual leader of the people, the Catholic Church thus supports the political leaders by silencing one of its priests who is critical of the State's policies.

The hypocrisy of Irish Catholicism is further examined from the points of view of both practicans and celebrants. The Canon of the story "Sinners" regularly throws people out of the confessional because he knows they are lying to him and has little patience with those who use their time there to seek sympathy and understanding in absence of contrition and the intention to repent afterwards. The priests of "My Son Austin" celebrate with a bottle of sherry in the presbytery the night that Austin Fagan marries Lily Long because, Father Tom notes, she "was the loose lady of the parish, and she had us crucified running after her."<sup>83</sup> In "The Confessional," a priest catches three youths presiding over their own confessions and he multiplies their outrageous penances by three as punishment; but they run away, yelling that it is "all a cod."<sup>84</sup> And in

“Discord,” after a day of being led around by a priest on a tour of Dublin, a young honeymooning couple, in the privacy of their room, laugh at the religious man’s wallowing on history and nationalism, both of which are dead and lifeless to them, and shed all restraint in giving themselves up to sexual passion.

Irish Puritanism is criticised in “The Old Master” in which a Russian ballet company visits a town and is picketed by the local lay societies led by the Canon. As the protestors take down the names of those who dare to support indecent art, many people keep away and are in fact incorporated into the protest to prove their decency. The main character of the story is John O’Sullivan, a local lawyer who supports the arts and delights in showing his “naughty prints of Ingres’ *La Source* (the naked girl with the pitcher), or Fragonard’s *The Swing* (the shepherdess-lady being swung much too high above the gentlemen in silk knee-breeches and ribboned shirt).”<sup>85</sup> He slips into the back of the theatre to apologise to the artists; the protestors are, he tells them, “Worse than Communists! Perhaps you might call them Fascists. Or Nationalists.”<sup>86</sup> Although he informs them he will confront the protestors, he gets cajoled into joining the Canon. As O’Sullivan attempts to reason with him that the performance is safe for adults, the Canon argues that while that might be the case, it is not safe for children and adults must provide good models by not attending the performance. Fearing his job should he anger the Canon, he cowardly joins the protest, impotent to fight for what he believes in.<sup>87</sup> “A Born Genius” is similar in that the arts are held under suspicion by the moral guardians of the community. When a local bachelor and married woman take to singing opera together and finally perform before their town, their passionate singing of passionate songs causes the priests to rise in anger and costs the husband a building contract with the

Church. As a result, the singers do not venture to see one another any more, fearing reprisals and the temptation of their artistic partnership.

Throughout *Midsummer Night Madness*, *Bird Alone* and *A Purse of Coppers*, O'Faolain is highly critical of Irish society. If he treats contemporary Ireland with little respect for the way it crushes individuals and voices that are dissonant to the ideology of the majority, he does not shy away from holding the past up to the same analytical lens. This is particularly evident in the histories he wrote in the same decade as his three banned books. In fact, his histories and his fictional writings share many commonalities; the most notable of these is their tendency to demythologise the shibboleths of official Irish nationalism by providing a counter-narrative to the dominant historiography of early post-independence Ireland.<sup>88</sup>

#### *O'Faolain's Historical Writings*

Though O'Faolain is typically labelled a revisionist, his first foray into historical scholarship, a biography of Eamon de Valera, defies this label. *The Life Story of Eamon de Valera*, published in 1933, could perhaps be considered revisionist if one thinks of the study in terms of its challenging the dominant views of Irish society. Though he had led Fianna Fáil to victory in the general election of 1932, after five years in opposition and five more spent in abstaining from constitutional politics, de Valera and his party had been demonised in the press over much of this period. O'Faolain, however, revealing his inner rebel, wrote an extremely hagiographic and nationalist biography to rebut the man's detractors.<sup>89</sup>

At times, the book veers into a primordialist celebration of de Valera as the exemplary Irishman who has heroically risen to lead his people. “Out of what matrix has this man come,” asks O’Faolain, “out of what rock – for no other image is possible – was he hewn?”<sup>90</sup> The mytho-poetic prose belies the romantic primordialism of O’Faolain’s youth, but this is somewhat undercut – though also simultaneously reinforced – by admitting the man’s mixed-blood ancestry:

Fittingly, when one recalls the course of Irish history, he was born of a Spanish father and an Irish-American mother, born under the shadows of those New York mammoth spires that have out-done all the fabled towers of Babylon and the plains of Chaldea. The fire of Spain and the warmth of Ireland were spilled into his blood, and in his childish mind ancient memories of Spanish galleons sailing across Biscay to the help of Dark Rosaleen may well have lain smouldering like a seed of fire that can be blown, by any chance breath of wind, into a raging flame.<sup>91</sup>

The breathless historical references to New York birthing the man bestow on him the greatness heralded by his surroundings. He is an Arthurian figure, his coming foretold in the histories of the past when the Spanish came from across the seas to struggle alongside the Irish in their battles against tyranny. His future had been written in his blood, evoking the link between kin, national consciousness and the soil emphasised by primordialists. And this connection is highlighted in his Irish past, when as a boy he was raised in pastoral Ireland where “the ghosts of that famous company of songsters, the Poets of the Maigue, went rollicking at night beneath his window, singing their enigmatical songs to the Poor Old Woman for whom he was to fight and all but die.”<sup>92</sup> The man is even described as coming to physically bear the struggles of his country: “Every crisis in the history of Ireland during the past sixteen years has sculptured itself in lines upon his faces – and that awful week [Easter 1916], amongst others, has left its indelible mark.”<sup>93</sup>

The biography is replete with such writing at the expense of omitting serious critical analysis of de Valera's motives and policies. For O'Faolain, de Valera embodies Ireland and its struggles and this somehow bestows upon him the legitimacy of rule and the authority to direct the State. While de Valera "unsheathed his sword for Ireland," the "hatchet face of Edward Carson was leading the Orangemen into open anarchy."<sup>94</sup> The former leader of the majority population in Northern Ireland is described physically in less attractive terms: he does not wear the glorified struggles of his people upon his face, but is disfigured, a reflection of both the sinister aspect of his character and the misguided politics he tricked his constituents into believing. There is no broaching of the possibility that Carson had higher ideals and desires for his people any more than there is questioning of de Valera's as being anything less than an altruistic manifestation of the will of the Irish people. To ensure that this contrast is maintained, O'Faolain favourably compares and links de Valera throughout the biography with the pantheon of nationalist figures: Charles Parnell, Terence MacSwiney, Daniel O'Connell, Robert Emmet and Theodore Wolfe Tone.

When O'Faolain discusses the more questionable moments of de Valera's decisions, he writes of them as an apologist. As the leader of the anti-Treaty faction that walked out of the Dáil, "it is most cruelly unjust to blame him" for the Civil War that followed.<sup>95</sup> Instead, O'Faolain prefers to lay the fault with the more militant quarters of the IRA. He fails to recognise that by closing down public dialogue the political leaders in effect sidelined themselves and contributed to the rise of the physical force advocates as the new leaders to whom disillusioned Republicans looked. And never once is the hypocrisy of his eventual entry into the Dáil and acceptance of constitutional politics

mentioned; O'Faolain prefers to celebrate this as an example of his "immense moral courage" and not at all a recognition of possible opportunism.<sup>96</sup> The blame is thus once again left for the extremists in Sinn Fein and the IRA who had only served to delay the decision. In this way, O'Faolain maintains de Valera's more radical credentials while appealing to the more conservative sectors of Irish society that were still suspicious of him. The man has been unfairly made the victim by both sides: labelled by conservative constitutionalists as being too radical and militant and labelled by radical militants as being too conservative and constitutionalist. Instead, de Valera is offered as the father of a "constitutional Republicanism," a political philosophy that accepts the principles of democracy and debate within parliament while pushing a nationalist platform that stresses the Sinn Fein doctrine of separatism and self-reliance in politics into the spheres of culture, education and economics.<sup>97</sup> In so doing, de Valera helped to isolate the more extremist elements of Irish society and thereby unify the country.

O'Faolain is said to have felt almost instant unease with the resulting biography.<sup>98</sup> This might very well account for why he undertook a revision of his opinions in the form of a second biography of de Valera only six years later. *De Valera* is significantly more critical of his subject than is the first biography and reveals in the process a disillusioned view of post-independence Irish society.<sup>99</sup> This is understandable: while the first book was written as de Valera was only just coming to power riding the hopes of those who believed he would create a much more dynamic Ireland than had been forged under the former Government, the second was written after six years of stagnation in which the hopes for dynamism had been slowly crushed beneath the weight and torpor of parliamentary politics.

The opening of the second biography makes for a stark contrast with the mythopoetic prose of the first: "In 1942, Eamonn de Valera will be sixty."<sup>100</sup> The age of his subject, projected three years into the future, makes for the image of a frail and worn man. New York, the place of his birth, is no longer compared with Babylon or Chaldea, but rather as providing the background for the "drab life" of hard working immigrants.<sup>101</sup> Gone are the descriptions of a man who physically represents his selfless commitment to the nation: by thirty-six years of age, in the time between the Easter Rising and the signing of the Treaty, his eyes are described as "closing, but not yet quite closed, on self-possession."<sup>102</sup> And at one point O'Faolain even offers the reader a coded apology for the romanticism of the first biography, claiming that those of the younger men who, like himself, had lived and fought through the revolutionary period took years to realise that de Valera, like all political leaders, was at base a common man dilated by circumstances.<sup>103</sup>

Revolutionary Ireland, and therefore de Valera, is also differently described. Whereas the first biography has all of Ireland lined up behind the IRB and Sinn Fein against the British forces, O'Faolain mentions in the second the fact that over fifty thousand Irishmen had enlisted in the British Army during the Great War.<sup>104</sup> As opposed to being characterised as a gung-ho patriot hell bent on destroying any British advances on Boland's Mills during the Easter Rising, de Valera is portrayed as disapproving of the military intervention despite the chaos, taking up his position only on orders to do so.<sup>105</sup> And the heroics of de Valera during the siege of Boland's Mills are called into question as legend distorting the truth.<sup>106</sup>



The second biography also questions de Valera's ability to lead. His style is to command without swaying from his beliefs, holding to them for too long even when he knows they will lead to failure. As a result, he "keeps his followers from growing up themselves. The typical adoring de-Valera-ite talks like a schoolboy, or a neophyte who has received the Gospel and will not dare question it." His "bland assurance, very near to priggishness, is maddening."<sup>107</sup> By not accepting the terms of the Treaty, de Valera demonstrated that he was too much of an idealist to lead the country. His idealism caused him to completely ignore the hard realities around him in post-Civil War Ireland as evidenced in his clinging to the notion of a Second Dáil while the Third and Fourth Dáils ruled with the legitimacy bestowed upon them by the majority of the Irish populace.<sup>108</sup> His rise to victory was therefore not the result of his own shrewd political manoeuvres but a host of outside factors: the failure of the Boundary Commission in 1925, the sluggish global economy, IRA activities, and the boring realities of governing that his party challenged through its representation of pre-independence hopes.<sup>109</sup>

However, despite the overall criticism, de Valera's policies once in power garner some support. While the economic isolationism had brought hardships upon Ireland, O'Faolain is largely laudatory of it, surprisingly going so far as to call it "a complete success."<sup>110</sup> Likewise, social policies such as land redistribution, pensions for widows and orphans, and housing unemployment insurance are viewed as positive legislative interventions.<sup>111</sup> And in the end, de Valera is credited with having steered Ireland away from being spiritually and politically bound to Britain through his obstinate refusal to recognise it as having a legitimate role in Irish life and politics, as was the intention of the Treaty.<sup>112</sup>

This much more moderate view of de Valera demonstrates that O'Faolain was capable of revising not only popularly held assumptions, but also those that he had once held dearly. The failure that he sees in Irish society, however, is one that has trickled down from the country's leader. Whereas the great Irish leaders throughout history, such as Tone and O'Connell, had an outlook that encompassed and considered Europe, this aspect was noticeably absent in de Valera. He had, O'Faolain notes, only been to the Abbey Theatre once and his educational policy that would shape future minds lacked any sort of imagination. As a result of this insular vision, he concludes, de Valera "forgets all that Europe has achieved, and all that Ireland has not even begun to achieve."<sup>113</sup> This neglect of the world outside of Ireland that was symptomatic of the leaders of post-independence Ireland, and therefore of the society as a whole, was precisely why in the years between the two biographies of de Valera, O'Faolain produced a biography of Daniel O'Connell.<sup>114</sup>

Published in 1938, *King of the Beggars* is as much about O'Connell and Ireland's past as it is about contemporary Ireland. The man is credited with leading the people from the moribund life of the eighteenth century and modernising a dying society. "He, a Kerry peasant, one of the people, to be acknowledged and entitled *The Man of the People*, took the beggars of Limerick and gave them a kingdom of the mind. All he said to them was that they were not a rabble, and that they could, out of their own strength, make themselves into a nation."<sup>115</sup> Gaeldom, according to O'Faolain, symbolised a failed way of life and O'Connell's role was to emancipate his people from the loyalties forced on them by *both* the British *and* their own ancestors. "Having no political sense," O'Faolain argues, "no absolute sense of *themselves* as a nation, they might have become,

but for him, like the Welsh and Scots, picturesque appendages of England. O'Connell abandoned the picturesque, the outer trappings of Gaeldom. He held and developed the distinctive mind."<sup>116</sup> O'Connell organised the Irish, politicised them *as a nation* and, as such, created the modern Irish nation.

Whereas de Valera and the leaders of contemporary Ireland wished to thrust the people back into the eighteenth century, O'Connell sought to bring them into modern Europe as a modern people. O'Connell's drive was to internationalise Ireland; de Valera's drive was to Hibernicise it. Unlike contemporary Irish leaders, who exploited sectarianism and openly and readily linked religion to nationality, O'Connell's vision of Ireland cut across sectarianism to speak of Irish nationality in more civic terms, in keeping with the philosophy of Tone and the United Irishmen.<sup>117</sup> For, O'Faolain argues, though O'Connell was publicly Catholic, personally, and in some ways politically, he rejected Rome.<sup>118</sup> There was therefore in him an admirable distinction between the personal, religious *habitus* and the public, political *habitus*.<sup>119</sup>

The importance of O'Connell compared to contemporary Irish leaders is that he became a renowned figure throughout Europe and indeed the world. Other countries were interested in him for various reasons. France, for example, was attracted to him because of the country's Anglophobia, while Belgium, given its religious problems with the Netherlands, its more powerful Protestant neighbour, was curious to see how he affected change and negotiated political relationships with the English.<sup>120</sup> Ireland, though it had been the source of world-wide attention during its struggles for independence, had come into disrepute and was ignored in the post-independence era for failing to live up to its promises and turning in towards itself instead of out towards others. Whereas post-

independence Ireland could have provided a positive model for other countries suffering through their own independence struggles, its lack of imagination and dynamism caused it to be ignored. The fault of this is laid squarely at the feet of the leaders.

In *The Great O'Neill*, published in 1942, O'Faolain continued this argument while delving further into Ireland's past. Simultaneously, he sought to debunk the popular nationalist concept of Hugh O'Neill as a product of the Gaelic world who was only too ready to attack the English. The fact of the matter was, O'Faolain argues, "he never desired to attack England, and avoided the clash for over twenty-five years of his life, more than a quarter of a century. His life proves once again that, to be intelligible, history must be taken on a lower key than patriotism."<sup>121</sup> The difficulty for O'Faolain lies in the conflicting and pervasive views of the English/Irish colonial binary relation. These views promoted by the coloniser and the colonised ignore the complex realities of colonisation. Both "the oversimplified story of the victor and the oversimplified memories of the defeated" must therefore be challenged.<sup>122</sup>

Of the 1500s, O'Faolain readily admits that "[t]here was a Gaelic people." However, he adds, "There was not a Gaelic nation. O'Neill was the first modern man who gave that people a form, by giving it a speech that it could understand and which made it realize itself intelligently."<sup>123</sup> This was a people even less civilised than the people O'Connell led in the time after the Act of Union. O'Neill was responsible for articulating the Irish nation that O'Connell would later draw upon to bring Ireland politically into the modern era. The similarities O'Faolain draws between the two men are alarming. Whereas Ireland before O'Connell "was like a body dragging itself with one half already dead,"<sup>124</sup> Ireland before O'Neill was suffering from "a terrible disease of

the body which may be vulgarly described as forgetting how to breathe.”<sup>125</sup> O’Connell played the role of the surgeon, cutting away the dead half, the Gaelic anti-modern world, to allow the other half to live and move on unimpeded in its progress, while O’Neill played the role of physician, breathing life into the suffocating Ireland of his time.

For O’Faolain, O’Neill differed from O’Connell in his commitment to and understanding of Europe and as a result his reputation on the continent was even more impressive. He had been schooled from a young age in England and his time there appears to have made him indifferent to religion. On his return to Ireland, he worked with British forces in order to advance his position in Ulster which was at this time more important to him than any nationalist designs on Ireland. His attack against Elizabeth is therefore best understood as coming from *within* her realm, not as one outside on the margins, for he had always been a part of the system and had indeed profited handsomely from it.<sup>126</sup> As he dealt with diplomats from the English court, he corresponded with Philip II of Spain in his attempts to hold on to his power. In so doing, he helped draw Ireland into Europe. While personal reasons, most notably power and money, drove him into conflict, these became aligned with broader issues in Ireland and, soon, abroad. Following the campaign of 1598 against English forces, his name was celebrated by Philip, the Pope and generals across the continent. The Irish struggle “was now watched from abroad as a phase of the whole European conflict of which the wars of the Low Countries, the Armada, Bartholomew’s Day, the internal conflicts of France, the Scottish scene, the conspiracies of the Papacy were all a part.”<sup>127</sup>

While contemporary Ireland was shrouded in the mists of its policy of neutrality during World War II, such a figure cut a contrasting image against the leaders of the day.

O'Faolain bemoaned the loss of O'Neill as a figure of European history and the fact that he had become only "part of a merely local piety."<sup>128</sup> He was brought down not by England, but by Ireland, "by its deep atavism and inbreeding, so characteristic of abortive and arrested cultures in all ages of the world's history; after his death he was misrepresented because his people resolutely refused to learn his lesson. . . . They made him an island patriot, as isolated from the world as themselves."<sup>129</sup> This then is the tragedy of the nationalist narrative, for O'Faolain wished the Irish to have "the courage to live, like Tyrone, through Ireland into Europe, out of this remote island into the ubiquitous and contemporaneous world of civilised mind."<sup>130</sup> But he realised the inability of the people to do so when their leaders refused to show them the way.<sup>131</sup>

*The Irish* is in many ways O'Faolain's response to this situation. The ideas and arguments that he puts forth were first hinted in a November 1942 article that appeared in *The Bell* in which O'Faolain noted that he had at the time just finished reading Charles Seignobos' *History of the French People*. Seignobos is praised for having created "a long, complex, formative story of the life and growth and consolidation of a free people" that "carefully indicated the many varieties (Gascon, Fleming, Norman, etc.) that exist inside the general bracket of their ultimate synthesis."<sup>132</sup> Even a people as apparently homogenous and self-assured in its identity as the French is a composite, or mongrel, nationality. Comparatively, the Irish "possess some ancient traditions, but we do not possess, are not possessed by, one clear Tradition. That synthesis is not yet, and it will not be for many centuries to come."<sup>133</sup> The problem with definitions of a typical Irishman and notions of a coherent sense of Irish national identity is that such things do not exist. While O'Faolain fails to make the competing point that a typical Frenchman

does not exist either, his thesis is that the Irish, having been free to develop a national identity for only two decades, have not had a history independent of foreign rule long enough to have cultivated a distinct character. The constructs of the State and the Gaelic enthusiasts are therefore false images of Irishness; these people “are trying to squeeze us, as the feet of Chinese women used to be squeezed, into an ideological show. And some have not the slightest objection to mutilating us in the process.”<sup>134</sup> He charges cultural critics, specifically Daniel Corkery and Michael Tierney, with disregarding “the mixed nature of our blood” in preferring to discuss the Irish people of yore as wholly Gaelic while arguing for the fact that the Anglo-Irish should be abandoned and ignored. Groups such as the Gaelic League that attempt to define Irishness in narrow terms put them at risk of “digging their own graves,” for other groups could develop competing definitions of Irishness that would exclude them.<sup>135</sup>

O’Faolain therefore argues for a more inclusive definition of Irishness. To make his point, he lists several Irishmen of repute who differed widely in their outlooks and backgrounds: Archbishop Croke, J.K.L., Thomas Davis, Daniel O’Connell, Edward Martyn, Michael Collins, Jo Biggar, Charles Parnell, and W.B. Yeats. There is, in this group, no such thing as a commonality save for the fact that they were, in their different ways, Irish. Because many people are trapped in the mentality of differentiating between Irish and British, what he refers to as “the psychosis of the Besieged City,” they cannot get around the fact that no such sharp division exists.<sup>136</sup> Ireland is a hybrid country and Irishness a hybrid identity; granted they have their local particularities, but they are the products of exchange and acculturation. “The danger,” he concludes, “is not merely to pre-define. The danger, at this stage, is to define at all. Most of the things to which we

object, such as the Literary Censorship, arise from that. They are the efforts of small groups to impose their narrow-minded definitions on the rest of us.”<sup>137</sup> By emphasising postcolonial hybridity, O’Faolain therefore strikes against Irish nationalism and the institutional censorship that supported it. Taking the lead from Seignobos, O’Faolain again takes up the refrain against homogeneous national constructs in *The Irish*.

Indeed, *The Irish* is a study of the historical development of Ireland and Irish identity. O’Faolain argues against the nationalist concept of Ireland as a bulwark of Gaelic society that fended off years of attacks launched by foreign enemies. The book is, he notes:

a creative history of the growth of a racial mind; or one might call it a psychological history; or, if the term were not far too large and grandiose, the story of the development of a national civilization; although what has happened to the Irish mind is not an undisturbed local expansion but a complex process of assimilation at the end of which Ireland enters with her own distinctive qualifications, into the great general stream of European culture.<sup>138</sup>

The hybridity of Irishness is emphasised throughout, challenging the primordialist notions that there is such as thing as “pure” Irishness. Whereas the patriotic view is to envision Irish civilisation as being conquered and destroyed by British civilisation, O’Faolain argues that Ireland did not have a civilisation *per se*. Instead, it was a society highly marked by regionalism. It took the Normans and the Danes to lay the foundations of the ports, roads and towns that effectively prepared the way for the Tudor State. The Celtic system was individualist, while these early invaders brought Ireland its legal rights and restrictions.<sup>139</sup>

Here O’Faolain runs into dangerous territory by suggesting that the people who existed in Ireland before these other peoples invaded deserved to be “civilised” by



colonial rule. The result of this argument is that he becomes an apologist for colonialism, viewing only its positive aspects while glossing over and at times completely ignoring the violent consequences such invasions entailed. However, his intention is not to challenge these tyrannies of the past but rather challenge the tyrannies of the present, most notably the nationalist notions of racial purity and the celebration of the pre-conquest past as being a prelapsarian Garden of Eden. Irishness, his thesis maintains, cannot be returned to these supposedly ideal moments even had they existed because Irish society and the Irish character have become too changed over time through acculturation and hybridity. In this sense, his argument parallels his championing of O'Connell and O'Neill for cutting away the deadened Gaelic world. The intention is not to belittle Gaelic culture, but to challenge those who wish to resuscitate it, to give it *artificial* respiration, such as those who adhere to and support the State's policy of enforcing the Irish people to learn and speak the Gaelic language. This is the point missed by critics such as Seamus Deane who argue wholly against O'Faolain's interpretation of the past without taking the historical context in which he wrote into account.<sup>140</sup> The importance of O'Faolain's own historical context is better understood in his attribution of the stunted growth in Irish society over the one hundred and fifty years before the Tudor arrival to the *lack* of contact with others, not as the result of earlier invasions that had changed it.<sup>141</sup> The comment is passed not only on Irish society in this particular historical period preceding the Tudors, but on contemporary Irish society and culture that had stagnated and suffered from its own stunted growth during the period of economic and political isolation over the course of the 1930s and 1940s. It is a matter of writing and reading the past from the

lens of the present and if one ignores O'Faolain's "present," then one does so at one's own peril – and to the detriment of one's own analysis.<sup>142</sup>

Though O'Faolain is quick to argue against the notion of a "typical" Irishman, he locates six "types" himself: the peasantry, the Anglo-Irish, the rebels, the priests, the writers, and the politicians. One of the problems he runs into in providing this typology is that he merely substitutes one typology for another, despite the move towards pluralism. The Anglo-Irish, for example, are almost wholly credited with creating modern Irish culture. Here he runs the risk of contradicting the fact that his larger argument favours acculturation, which cannot happen if a culture, such as that shared by the people before the arrival of the Anglo-Irish, is considered wholly displaced or crushed. In effect, Irish culture was the product of both of these groups, the Gaels and the Anglo-Irish, amongst others – such as the Scandinavians and the Normans – with each contributing to the larger whole even where, or perhaps especially where, assimilation took place. Politically and socially, however, the Anglo-Irish are accused of having been wholesale "wicked, indifferent, or sheer failures."<sup>143</sup> O'Faolain is again guilty of the crime of generalising that he criticises in others. This is evident in his inability to reconcile his assessment of the political and social failings of the Anglo-Irish with his glowing references to Parnell, Douglas Hyde, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Robert Emmet and Thomas Davis only two paragraphs later.<sup>144</sup> He experiences the same problem in his discussion of priests by essentially demonising all of them for the sins of the Catholic Church and the Hierarchy. But these generalisations again fail to register with O'Faolain as they go to the point that the Church, and thereby all priests, was

instrumental in helping to erect the walls of censorship throughout Ireland to arrest and imprison the critical faculties of the people.<sup>145</sup>

O'Faolain's own politics and his assessment of contemporary Ireland become clearest in his critique of the present through the lens of the past. He does this in his discussion of politicians, towards which all else leads:

Instead of thinking of [culture] as an all-inclusive way of life, which often takes centuries to construct, [politicians] keep on thinking of it as a bonus stuck like a stamp on the envelope of life. To them culture is a picture on the wall, a book on the shelf, a symphony orchestra, a new theatre building, a new convention-hall, something always midway between a private possession and a useful, state-sponsored tourist attraction.<sup>146</sup>

O'Faolain's concern is that culture is being forced on the people. He readily admits that it is constructed, but he differentiates between a culture constructed by the people over time and a culture imposed upon the people by the State. It is the critique of culture forced from the top-down at the risk of crushing culture created from the bottom-up. For O'Faolain, culture must be nurtured by the State, not legislated through the mandatory learning of Gaelic or the banning of writers because their works somehow challenge the pieties of official nationalism. Such thinking and policies lead to the sort of isolationism that has too often led to the downfall of Irish society. By opening the country to outside influences and allowing it to influence others, politicians would help to energise Irish culture and bring it the sort of renown that Irish-Europeans such as Joyce, Yeats, Synge and O'Casey did the generation before and Swift and Goldsmith did in earlier times. Without such writers, he argues, Irish literature would be little more than "an interesting regionalist literature."<sup>147</sup> Instead, by encouraging socio-cultural xenophobia through such institutions as censorship, contemporary politicians had failed to live up to the heroism of O'Connell and O'Neill. Essentially, they were ensuring the slow death of Irish society

and culture. They were therefore paradoxically harming the Irish people they claimed to protect.

The politics behind the arguments in O’Faolain’s historical writings are therefore contemporary, that is, motivated by the conditions, influences and prevailing ideology of the Irish society of his day. His attempts to educate readers where, when and how the country had gone wrong and had improved were meant to promote critique of contemporary Ireland and point to positive solutions for how to change society for the better. In conjunction with this more historical project, he wrote passionately and directly about contemporary Irish society. This project he undertook in the form of polemical journalism, most recognisably – and famously – in the pages of the periodical he edited: *The Bell*.

#### *O’Faolain’s Journalism*

*The Bell* was the major cultural journal that critiqued most areas of Irish society and Government policy throughout the 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>148</sup> O’Faolain chose the title, he announced in his first editorial, because it was a “sparse and hard and simple word . . . with a minimum of associations.”<sup>149</sup> The old nationalist symbols were dead, representing a time when Ireland struggled in defeat, killed by the arrival of the future. This was why he patently refused to have the word “Irish” in the title – the journal was to come from an Irish perspective but discuss matters of greater importance. Readers were encouraged to help form the journal’s content and direction, to finger the rope and send out a cry: “Some man who knows how to ring a proper peal will make the clapper shout.”<sup>150</sup> It was to be a force for change that would stand in opposition to the dominant anti-

intellectualism of Irish society and be inclusive of all Irish people, not merely those of the majority or a niche group. His conclusive appeal summarises this: "Whoever you are, then, O reader, Gentile or Jew, Protestant or Catholic, priest or layman, Big House or Small House – *The Bell* is yours."<sup>151</sup>

Six years later, when he stepped down as editor, O'Faolain sounded a rather gloomy note in assessing his legacy. By this time he had "grown a little weary of abusing our bourgeoisie, Little Irelanders, chauvinists, puritans, stuffed-shirts, pietists, Tartuffes, Anglophobes, Celtophiles, *et alii hujus generis*."<sup>152</sup> He regretted "that we were born into this thorny time when our task has been less that of cultivating our garden than of clearing away the brambles."<sup>153</sup> His biggest failure, he lamented, was in not being able to produce an artistic magazine of quality – which seems rather harsh considering that he had published works by himself, Frank O'Connor, Flann O'Brien and Patrick Kavanagh, amongst others. But his point was that *The Bell* had by necessity become a polemical journal in order to create the space in which the literature of such writers and those who would follow in their footsteps could flourish. The pages devoted to waging battles came at the expense of pages that could have been devoted to discussing aesthetics and showcasing other writers.<sup>154</sup> But he sounded a positive note in conclusion, hoping that the end of the war would entail an opening up of the world in which Ireland would take part.

Despite his assessment of his editorial reign as a failure, O'Faolain had founded the pre-eminent counter-cultural organ of opinion in Ireland. *The Bell* itself became synonymous with a permissive liberalism as evidenced in its early printing of a series of excerpts from Eric Cross' *The Tailor and Ansty* before the book was banned by the State.

From the outset, the journal had taken on issues as diverse as urban poverty, economic policy, the role of cultural groups, the Catholic Church and the Gaelic language in Irish society, agricultural concerns and practices, and institutional censorship. O'Faolain had already laid some of the groundwork for Ireland to open up to the world in his regular feature "One World" that discussed events of interest in countries abroad, including the war itself. His editorials were influential and controversial, drawing much fire and praise. Along with his short stories, critics have made the case that it is for these incisive, trenchant, analytical and combative articles that he will, and should, be best remembered by posterity.<sup>155</sup>

Aside from the feature "One World," O'Faolain wrote several other pieces that attacked Irish provincialism and attempted to provide a better understanding of how and why it was important for the country to be less politically and culturally insular. His article "Ireland and the Modern World" was especially critical of the insular, navel-gazing regard of Ireland.<sup>156</sup> Though the words Sinn Fein had provided much inspiration in the past, their concept, Ourselves Alone, had lost much of its former glamour. They had come to mean Ourselves *All* Alone. He argued:

Self-reliance has taken on the astonishing implication of estrangement from the world. We have become, that is to say, alienated from Europe to such an extent that we sometimes seem less to belong to it than barely to adhere to it – as if by no more than a mere accident of physical propinquity.<sup>157</sup>

The problem was that the "neo-puritans" and "neo-nationalists" feared contamination from the outside world and thus erected mental and physical barriers, forcing the country "to retire to a funk-hole from the traffic of ideas."<sup>158</sup> The solution to maintain or create dynamism in Ireland, according to O'Faolain, was not to move away from, but to move

towards Europe. As he later argued in *The Irish*, he pointed out that the history of Ireland demonstrated that the country was at its weakest when it failed to be internationally-minded. It was folly for nationalists to believe that Ireland had ever been, or could ever be, pure as the history of the world was one of interchange. By retreating into a nationalist *coquille*, or “funk-hole,” the Irish were perilously close to retreating from what O’Faolain viewed as the positive modernising forces of history and the global circulation of ideas. He therefore accused the post-independence State, which was run by puritans and nationalists, of resenting and checking the “natural process of human development.”<sup>159</sup>

However, O’Faolain was not blind to the possible tyrannies that the unquestioned opening up of borders might facilitate. “An Internationalism that tries to stifle national egos is inhuman,” he argued. “We have never tolerated it. It is Imperialism.”<sup>160</sup> But he warned that the opposite extreme, an exclusivist nationalism, should likewise not be tolerated. Such nationalism was merely a localised form of imperialism. Only by abiding to an inclusive nationalism, which had to remain open to the world beyond its borders in order to ensure its inclusiveness and receptiveness to new ideas, could Ireland do so. O’Faolain therefore proposed an Irish nationalism that was based more on the European-inflected Republicanism of Wolfe Tone and rejected the narrower view of what had come to inform Irish Republicanism.

Eight years later, long after he had stepped down from the editorship of *The Bell* but had remained an active contributor, he produced what is probably his best known article against Little Irelanders, “Autoantiamericanism.” The article was as noteworthy for its attacks of Irish insularity as much as for its support of the nascent neo-liberal

economic philosophy that came to global prominence in the post-war era. In the wake of the stirrings of the Keynesian revolution and the installation of the Marshall Plan, O'Faolain noted the beginning of controversy in Ireland over the possible co-operation between Irish industrialists, who were supported by the Irish Development Agency (IDA), and American industrialist experts. Instead of taking the view of those who saw the possibility of this co-operation weakening Irish autonomy and encouraging the exploitation of Irish labour and resources, O'Faolain, believing that this was the philosophy of insular nationalists, labelled these people as xenophobes and bigots, the sort who gave in to knee-jerk emotionalism when rationalisation was most needed. He supported the co-operation, claiming those who did not suffered from "Auto-anti-ism," and in particular "Autoantiamericanism."<sup>161</sup> It was a highly rhetorical flourish, refusing to understand and admit the possible problems that opponents might have had that could not be simply subsumed under the rubric of an exclusive nationalism.

O'Faolain argued that there were four origins of Autoantiamericanism. The first of these was the residue of British influences. It is interesting that O'Faolain did not suggest that the Irish had been conditioned to think of an outside power intervening in national affairs as leading to suspicion. Instead, he claimed that the Irish, being for so long attached to Britain and affected by British journalism and media, had a shared sense of diminished importance in the post-war world and had therefore come to be jealous of the United States. The second source of anti-American resentment was the existential disbelief that O'Faolain regarded as being pervasive throughout the world, a time in which nobody any longer believed in anybody. He argued that in Calabria, which he had visited just the year before and later documented more fully in his travel book *An Autumn*



*in Italy*, the Americans had no vested interest, yet the Marshall plan had done wonders in transforming the poor and backward region by allowing peasants to begin taking ownership of the land. Given that O'Faolain had an amazing grasp of Irish history, it is curious that he missed the opportunity here to draw a parallel to how the improvement in Calabria instigated by the Marshall Plan was reminiscent of the improvement made to the socio-economic standing of the Irish peasantry following the 1903 Wyndham Land Act – but perhaps he strayed away from this comparison because of the possibility that nationalists would then associate it with the Conservative Government's attempts to kill Home Rule with kindness. As such, he regarded the third origin as being suspicion, in which people believed that the Americans were undertaking this program merely because they believed that they would get more out of it than what they had put in. Using Government-provided statistics, O'Faolain counter argued that over the course of the previous few years Americans had actually put more into Ireland than they had taken out. He considered this proof that altruism played a part in the Americans' more recent ventures. The final source of Autoantiamericanism was therefore patriotism, which he viewed as being the most dominant factor. Patriots, he argued, most feared losing sovereignty to the United States by becoming complicit with its economic policy and, conjointly, they feared becoming "Americanised." O'Faolain dismissed these fears as ridiculous, noting how despite the fact that Ireland had become Anglicised over the centuries, it still had "a normal power of resistance."<sup>162</sup> He concluded that if Ireland's Autoantiamericanism held sway over the people and their leaders, they would continue "snoring gently behind the Green Curtain that we have been rigging up for the last thirty years – Thought-proof, World-proof, Life-proof. . . . It seems to me to be no more than

one more clever dodge to manoeuvre our people into a cowardly neutrality, which will then be paraded as a 'robust patriotism.'"<sup>163</sup> The responsibility for erecting and maintaining this Green Curtain was laid directly upon those who propagated the Cult of the Gael.

O'Faolain viewed Daniel Corkery as the leader of this Cult, or at least as the one who gave it an authoritative voice through his academic writings. Having once studied Gaelic under Corkery, O'Faolain's later turn against him is in some ways the classic rebellion of a student against his master. It might also be a case of sour grapes: O'Faolain was beaten out by Corkery for the position of Professor of Irish at University College Cork in the early 1930s. But there is also a deep-seeded conflict on the theoretical level. For example, in his 1925 study of Gaelic Munster, *The Hidden Ireland*, Corkery celebrated the Irish language literature of the eighteenth century as a purely national and therefore native literature. To a degree his argument can be best understood if it is placed in its context as a rebuttal of W.E.H. Lecky's influential *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* that Corkery considered completely ignorant of Irish language writing because it had been conflated with a lack of progress.<sup>164</sup> Corkery's viewpoint did much to humanise the Irish peasantry as something other than an unruly mob that had to be civilised. But he did so at the risk of making the parallel argument that any other form of literature or expression of the people was somehow foreign and un-Irish.

Corkery further developed his argument six years later in *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature*, which differentiated Irish and Anglo-Irish Literature in ways that went beyond language as a medium. For Corkery, the medium was the message, as the Irish language

was believed to be the true expression of the Irish people and somehow tapped into the repository of the primordial Irish nation. But he also championed Synge, who was a part of the Ascendancy and wrote in English. His chief reason for supporting Synge and Irish language writers was that they celebrated Ireland and the Irish people and lived amongst the peasantry. To contrast, Anglo-Irish literature, despite the provenance of the writers, was not Irish:

It shows itself scornful of the judgement of this country, such as it maybe, shows itself indeed utterly provincial in its overwrought desire to be assessed and spoken well of by the critics of another people. It is therefore not normal, for a national literature while welcoming the criticism of outsiders neither lives nor dies by such criticism. It abides the judgement of its own people, and by that judgement lives or dies. If this literature then be not a normal literature it is not a national literature, for normal and national are synonymous in literary criticism.<sup>165</sup>

Corkery then posited his infamous triumvirate of subjects with which literature must be concerned in order for it to be considered Irish: “(1) The Religious Consciousness of the People; (2) Irish Nationalism; and (3) The Land.”<sup>166</sup> Irish literature therefore had to engage with specified themes and engage them in an uncritical manner that only sought to celebrate. Criticism, or scorn for Corkery, was understood as weakening the nation and the national imaginary and was thus viewed as an attack that had to be repulsed. At its roots, then, this was the argument that gave rise to and legitimated an institutional censorship protective of the spiritual health of the nation.

While O’Faolain refuted Corkery’s glowing portrayal of eighteenth-century Ireland in his biography of O’Connell, the development of these views can be traced back to an earlier article that appeared in *The Dublin Magazine*.<sup>167</sup> Writing in 1936, O’Faolain noted how influential and indicative Corkery was of the prevailing attitude in Irish life and criticism. O’Faolain accused Corkery of idealising “what he had observed from a

distance, and worst of all, to idealise it according to a certain set of a priori ideas about life and literature which were wandering around Ireland at the time, waiting to be articulated by some able man.”<sup>168</sup> Corkery’s argument, he claimed, could, with a little alteration, “equally well trumpet encouragement to all Nazis, Fascists, Communists, and every other type of exclusivist for whom the essential test of literature is a political, racial, or religious test.”<sup>169</sup> The socialisation of art is a part of Corkery’s attempts to nationalise culture; a real artist, O’Faolain argued, writes not for a national as opposed to a foreign audience, but for no other audience than him- or herself. The problem was that Corkery’s views were dated: they were the romantic stuff of the Celtic Twilight which he ironically despised. While Corkery was out of step with the realist school of Irish letters that had been dominant in the post-independence era, O’Faolain lamented that his former mentor had been able to “influence our political evangelists considerably: all that is behind our system of education in the modern Ireland, much that enthuses and supports all our more fervent politics has come out of his books and lecturings.”<sup>170</sup> It was on this note, then, that he continued his sustained criticism of the Cult of the Gael in his journalistic writing in *The Bell*.

Although Corkery was taken to task for helping to legitimate the insular and anti-intellectual policies of the independent State, O’Faolain directed his criticism at others as well. The Gaelic Athletic Association, for example, had at the outset of 1943 proposed that the Minister for Defence be removed from office not because he had been grossly remiss in his work, but because some members of the Army played non-national games such as golf, hockey and soccer instead of national games like Gaelic football and hurling. With World War II raging around Ireland, O’Faolain considered this, “of all

Celtic lunacies, the most lunatic that I have ever met.”<sup>171</sup> Likewise, a proposition had been recently floated at the Corporation that all details of unpleasant crimes should be censored because in Holy Ireland, such things did not happen; the Censorship Board had banned Marcel Proust’s last two volumes of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* in a country where “about .02 of the population ever heard of Proust, and where the rest (in the old joke) think Sodom has something to do with Begorrah”; and a man in Limerick O’Faolain referred to as “the anti-Marx brother” had complained that the Readers’ Union of London refused to send him any more books because he had initially refused to send out certain titles feeling that it was his duty to act as a censor.<sup>172</sup>

O’Faolain concluded that the crises of 1913 – the Lockout of Dublin workers, Carson’s defiance of the British Government, the formation of the Irish Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers – had created a schism in Irish society that was cracked wide open in 1922, “and that what came crawling out of it was an appalling and quite alien, stuffed-shirt, middle-class mentality.”<sup>173</sup> As the farmers had profited from the successes of the Land League, the townspeople had profited from the successes of Sinn Fein. The farmers’ sons took a corresponding step in post-independence Ireland to become the new industrialists, businessmen, professionals and Civil Servants. It was a middle-class *putsch* of the Revolution, one that created not a society, but a class. And, he argued, “Everything was so swallowed up by the middle-class *putsch* that by the time Mr. de Valera – who had so far resisted it – came into power it swallowed him and his ‘republicans’ up, too.”<sup>174</sup> Most of the powerful social groups – the Gaelic League, the CTS, the Censorship Board, the Aiseirghe, the Knights of St. Columbanus and the Legion of Mary – were completely indistinguishable in their conservative ethos. In the *putsch*,

the members of these and other like-minded groups saw “a bulwark against those final changes that they naturally fear and would do anything to prevent.”<sup>175</sup> The argument put forth by the GAA in proposing the Minister for Defence’s removal was, together with all such moves by these groups in their defence of Irish morality and purity, no more than a “smoke-screen sent up to hide the corruption of this bastard thing that we have unforeseeingly created out of martyrdom and blood.”<sup>176</sup>

The Gaelic Cult was therefore no more than the creation of a bourgeoisie that was out to protect its own interests. In another article that specifically criticised this group, O’Faolain traced out much of the argument he later developed in *The Irish*. He accused them of attempting to make the complex history of Ireland into a facile narrative, one that propounded “a neatly bounded stream of purely local event” that flowed “from start to finish to one single sea” instead of as a part of tributary system that ended in “the great river which is the story of the world.”<sup>177</sup> The effect of these efforts to simplify and unify was the creation of both Nationalist and Imperialist histories which he considered two sides of the same coin. Both of these histories perpetuated lies that “inevitably and invariably produce wildly passionate exhalations that obfuscate and madden like a drug – cults and myths and mystiques in the adoration of which all rational thought and all pity for human life is forgotten.”<sup>178</sup> O’Faolain compared the notion of a primordial Gaelic nation to the Nationalist Socialist mythology of the Pure Aryan: both were constructed with no basis in reality. The use of the term “Gaelic” was in this case differentiated from Irish: while Irish referred to a more civic and plural conception of Ireland that allowed for all people who were born and/or lived in Ireland, “Gaelic” was representative of the notion of an ethnic group that defined the Irish nation. None of the great Irish leaders,

O'Faolain argued, had ever referred to the people of Ireland as Gaelic. Not once, he claimed, could you find the word "Gaelic" or reference to a Gaelic nation in Jonathan Swift, William Moynaux, Henry Grattan, Wolfe Tone, Lord Edward, Robert Emmet, Daniel O'Connell, John Mitchel, Michael Doheny, Fintan Lalor, Michael Davitt, Charles Parnell, John Redmond or Arthur Griffith. These men all spoke of Ireland and Irish people.<sup>179</sup> He therefore concluded that "the Gaelic Nation as a political theory has no pedigree."<sup>180</sup> What Corkery missed in arguing that the people of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries looked to the Gaelic poets of the time was that they did not – they looked to O'Connell because he articulated their desires more effectively.

One of O'Faolain's main points was that the notion of a Republic was antithetical, not commiserate, to the Gael. He argued that the Gaels would have fought to the death against the notion of a Republic while the men who first initiated the idea of Republicanism in Ireland knew nothing about the antique Gaels and would have actually been appalled by their living conditions. The effect of perpetuating the notion of a Gaelic nation is "wholly negative and inhibitory."<sup>181</sup> Meanwhile, everything of any significance that had been achieved – the Shannon Electric Scheme, improved rural housing, the growing of wheat, migratory schemes to lessen unemployment, and the development of air transport and tourism – had been achieved without any mention of or assistance from the Gaelic nation. Therefore, the mystique of the Gaelic nation "is the opponent of all modernisations and improvisations" because it is "terrified of the modern world, afraid of modern life, inbred in thought, and, so, utterly narrow in outlook. All its ideas are mediaeval."<sup>182</sup> A system of education that propagates "an uncritical adoration of Finn MacCool" over taking an interest "in encouraging, let alone in producing, young

technicians” is bound to fail.<sup>183</sup> The literary censorship is thus explained as the manifestation of a society that “strives to keep out anything that savours of a bold facing-up to modern problems.”<sup>184</sup> It is only by instigating and creating choices for people, by allowing them to be critical and analytical, not by forcing them to conform, that society can advance.

To contrast the propagators of the Gaelic Cult, O’Faolain published a celebratory eulogy of Eoin MacNeill.<sup>185</sup> Writing in December 1945, with the war and neutrality now behind Ireland, O’Faolain was more optimistic for the future of the country.<sup>186</sup> He referred to O’Neill as “one of the greatest modern Irishmen,” for though he believed in “the continuity of the old Gaelic tradition in Irish life and nature,” he differed from most “Gaels” in that “he was too much of a humanist not to admire and desire, also, the invigoration of the great stream of European and world-civilisation.”<sup>187</sup> O’Neill was held up as a model for how one could turn to the Gaelic language and still be a part of the larger world – a scholar of admirable ability in the Gaelic language himself, O’Faolain believed that the Gaelic language did not necessitate an inward turn. One could be *both* Irish *and* a citizen of the world, have an Irish outlook *and* still be receptive to ideas and influences from beyond the State’s borders. This, he argued, was what was missing in the Manichean mentality of the Gaelic Cult. The countries that had mastered the technique of borrowing and adapting foreign practices and ideas – Germany, Spain, France, Britain – were those who had become the most creative and re-creative: “The old wine in the new bottles made them magic bottles.”<sup>188</sup> The modern Gael had to be ignored because it had ignored the larger picture: the failure of the Gaelic Cult was in its admiration of the bottleneck and its refusal to see the bottle and its contents. In this way,



the legacy of Eoin O'Neill had been tarnished during his lifetime and O'Faolain's eulogy was an attempt to rescue him from the "ignorant chauvinists" who had misused him "to breed evil instead of good."<sup>189</sup>

The other major body that O'Faolain believed had likewise hindered the progress and development of Ireland was the Catholic Church. In "The University Question," which appeared in April 1944, O'Faolain dared to openly challenge the authority and sense of His Grace the most Reverend Dr. John McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin.<sup>190</sup> McQuaid's Lenten Regulations earlier in the year stipulated that all Catholics within the Dublin diocese were no longer allowed to attend Trinity College. It was a decision that, O'Faolain argued, effectively closed the college to all Irish Catholics because of the Hierarchy's tendency to support its members and the massive influence McQuaid had outside of Dublin. Furthermore, because the Catholic Church demanded its adherents to faithfully observe and follow the dictates of the priests, the matter was not up for debate. O'Faolain criticised the fact the Church had the power to control every aspect and area of its adherents' lives, from birth to death, including those matters, such as attending a given university, that might normally be considered outside of the spiritual sphere. The result of the decision, he argued, would cause a serious schism in Irish society:

We cannot, to give a homely example, tell our children not to mix with our neighbours' children on religious grounds, and at the same time expect our neighbours to believe that we have no personal objection to them. Irish Protestants would have to be angels, not human beings, not to feel a sub-implication that there is something sinister about their creed and their society.<sup>191</sup>

By not allowing Catholic students to matriculate at a Protestant institution, McQuaid had effectively divided the Irish population into two: the Holy Catholic Irish and the heathens. He did not openly state that Protestants and others were irreligious, but the

implication is there when one denies that the teachings of one group are not moral enough for one's own people. The problem, as O'Faolain saw it, was strictly a question of politics, of McQuaid lashing out against an institution that refused to let him have his way in terms of approving and censoring professors and the curriculum. The folly of this action was that it had broader consequences in its divisive identity politics.

In a somewhat less direct route, O'Faolain later questioned the power and authority of the Hierarchy in his article "The Dáil and the Bishops."<sup>192</sup> The piece was written in the wake of the failed Mother and Child Scheme of 1951, in which the Church pressured the Government to remove Dr. Noel Browne from his position as Minister for Health and the legislation was withdrawn because it represented the intervention of the State into the question of reproductive rights, which the Church considered its domain. O'Faolain posited that the crisis proved that Ireland actually had two parliaments: one in Dublin (the Dáil) and one in Maynooth (the Church). The result was that there had been a weakening of democracy since the inception of the independent State because of the power of the Church to influence Government policy. While he did not see any reason to object to the Hierarchy commenting on legislation and suggesting amendments as any other group would when its interests were thought to be affected, his objection was to the fact that the Church did not comment: it commanded. Because of the unquestioning loyalty it demanded, it had to be obeyed. Otherwise, there were consequences for straying from the fold. The Maynooth parliament held a weapon that the Dublin parliament and the Church of England lacked: "the weapon of the Sacraments."<sup>193</sup> Politicians, the majority of whom in Ireland were Catholics, were thus made to toe the line in fear of being excommunicated should they not adhere to the Hierarchy's demands;

this would be a spiritual kiss of death, but it would also represent death in other spheres for the value that religious capital had in post-independence Ireland in determining the access people would have to cultural, social, economic and political capital.<sup>194</sup>

O'Faolain's critique of the Church while living in Ireland was therefore an extremely courageous undertaking.<sup>195</sup>

O'Faolain argued that the Government only weakened its own authority and legitimated the Hierarchy's control by holding secret negotiations. The process, he claimed, would have at least had some democratic aspects if the Hierarchy's demands had been made public and the Government responded to them publicly. And the Government would have stood a chance against the demands of the Hierarchy if the public had been witness to the process. Instead, Dr. Browne, the Dáil and democracy were sold "down the river."<sup>196</sup> O'Faolain concluded that in the future O'Connell should serve as the exemplary model for Dáil deputies to follow and a statue of the man should be erected outside of the Oireachtas:

For his concept of democracy is the only one that has lasted; and not only, and not least because he worked with the Church but because when occasion demanded it could, and did, resist to the limit in the name of the struggling poor whom, like a Vulcan manufacturing thousands, he hammered into the shape of a nation.<sup>197</sup>

The man known as "The Liberator" would therefore represent liberation from all tyranny, regardless of whether it was tyranny practised at the hands of a foreign imperial State, a native State, or the dictates of an autocratic Church. And politicians would free themselves to undertake their duties as they were meant to undertake them: in the best interests of the people.

As though to prove O'Faolain's point, the Bishop of Galway, at a conference of university students, singled out Northern Irish Orangemen, the *Irish Times* and *The Bell* as refusing to see the divine in the Church. Because of his critical views of the Church, O'Faolain was portrayed "as a venomous, hostile or rancourous anti-Catholic," or at least in "ill-conceived hostility" to the Church as co-operating with such people.<sup>198</sup> In return, O'Faolain concluded: "The moral of all this is that it is obviously impossible to develop a Catholic intelligentsia in any country where motives, instead of being respected, are immediately and persistently suspected."<sup>199</sup> Catholic writers such as Graham Greene, François Mauriac, Georges Bernanos, Charles Péguy, Emmanuel Mounier and Pierre Emmanuel could not have lived in Ireland; all manner of questioning and expression of individuality was systematically repressed. This was his most pressing problem with institutional censorship, which had long been supported by the Hierarchy and, he believed, had similar effects in eroding democracy and retarding the development of Irish society.

O'Faolain analysed the negative effects of censorship in his article "The Mart of Ideas."<sup>200</sup> He argued that it was a dangerous illusion for those in power to believe that they could "starve the public mind and keep its conscience alive."<sup>201</sup> A society in Ireland had been created where such a phenomenon had occurred, where people were asked to boycott a black market in material goods while those in power ran a black market of ideas.<sup>202</sup> He detected pleasure on the part of those in power when they looked upon this general ignorance of the population that had been created and nurtured by censorship and in turn noticed that the public demonstrated a repeated indifference towards if not outright support of this censorship that helped maintain its ignorance. Those in power, he

argued, belittled the intelligentsia because it dared to think and criticise the system, labelling its members “pseudo-intellectuals,” “the literary cliques,” and “our scribbling journalists.” The intended effect of this was to contain and minimise their influence.

O’Faolain argued that by ensuring a general level of public ignorance, society would one day crack beyond repair. This crack would begin to form when the ignorant public would finally be confronted with a difficult issue or task that concerned it. The result would be a revolution of sorts, because the masses would not be able to understand or appreciate the reasoned pleas from those in power. Instead, the people in power would be faced with “a brainless morale, a moronic mass to which [they] can make no intelligent appeal whatever.”<sup>203</sup> He thus problematically made the case for reducing ignorance so that the level and duration of exploitation of the masses could be increased. But this was nothing more than a twisted rhetorical flourish in his appeal for augmenting the level of public debate and justifying the dismantling of the machinery of censorship.

It was beyond doubt that this type of ignorant populace existed in Ireland. As proof O’Faolain asked his readers how long it had been since they had heard, or heard of, a frank public discussion on any three of the following subjects: birth control, freemasonry, the Knights of St. Columbanus, unmarried mothers, illegitimacy, divorce, homosexuality, the rhythm method, lunacy, euthanasia, prostitution and venereal disease. It was up to the public to be selective in whom it listened to, for everyone who opened his or her “mouth in public is a legitimate broker.”<sup>204</sup> Only in the absence of censorship could the public be assured it was being wholly informed, for the censorship “does not propose to defend fair-trading in ideas. It does not aim at making ideas more easily marketable. It does not aim at establishing a smooth machinery for their interchange but

rather, a smooth machinery to prevent their interchange.”<sup>205</sup> O’Faolain’s use of business terminology here was a brilliant rhetorical manoeuvre. In effect, he appealed to the bourgeoisie and gombeen men, those who had some degree of power in the post-independence State and could affect positive change, by addressing them in a language they could understand. He abandoned the heightened legal, moral, ethical and philosophical language and substituted it with the language of the business classes. By referring to censorship as a form of Government and aristocratic monopoly of ideas, he attempted to tap into the business-running and propertied middle-classes who would appreciate the effect such tyrannical State practices would have on their professional successes and livelihoods.<sup>206</sup>

O’Faolain therefore demonstrated to his audience just how destructive these practices and policies had been on writers. Censorship, he pointed out, is “supposed to open up negotiations with authors and publishers. It never does. It could take into account the aims and intentions of writers, and again is supposed to do so, but does not. It may revise its decisions – but never once, in the case of a book, has it done this.”<sup>207</sup> The machinery of censorship was therefore doubly destructive: it weakened the society it purported to protect and it harmed the livelihoods of writers and publishers. The implication was that similar legislation could be enacted in other spheres of society given the apathy of the general public and if those who were able to act did not, they would have only themselves to blame should they become negatively affected.

At times, O’Faolain could be more adversarial and provocative. For example, in “Our Nasty Novelists,”<sup>208</sup> he argued that the morality often put forth by advocates of censorships in other countries had been injected, in Ireland, “with the additional zeal of

nationalism.”<sup>209</sup> Thus while Irish people who supported censorship drew attention to smutty novels, they further libelled Irish novelists by claiming that they and their books were not typical of the Irish race. As a result, it had never dawned on these zealots that writers such as Joyce, Yeats, Synge, O’Casey and O’Flaherty had “done something to eradicate from American opinion the idea that Irishmen make good cops, excellent ward-bosses, and moderate gangsters, and nothing much besides.”<sup>210</sup> O’Faolain labelled such thinking as uncritical, for it was based upon the falsehood of national constructs that he had elsewhere decried. His position was clear: “On the ‘typical’ argument I should not care to have to defend any Irish character from Queen Maeve to Parnell. To ask that a work of art be ‘typical’ of anything is patriotism gone balmy.”<sup>211</sup> The patriot-censors failed to recognise the hybridity of Irish society, refused to allow any discussion or acknowledgment of it into the realm of public discourse. As a result, the real problem, he presciently argued, would come in about twenty years’ time, when the Dáil would suddenly realise that it had banned every Irish writer of merit and would be unable to rescind the Prohibition Orders “without exposing the patriots of 1929 for the silly idiots they were – and are. . . . When the conventions of this rather tiresome Ireland of to-day grow up people will make jokes about it all. . . . The Censor, like the Law, is always an ass.”<sup>212</sup> For O’Faolain, the figure of the Nationalist, his own convenient and rhetorical construct, embodied more than any other the asinine qualities of the censor and the law because it was the Nationalist that had created and supported the oppressive aspects of Irish society and its political system.

Writing in 1951, O’Faolain believed that the problem with nationalism in Ireland was that “its rise was frustrated by a stubborn, short-sighted policy of clinging to an

outmoded, antique past” which had come to be uncritically idolised.<sup>213</sup> For him, nationalism was an idolatry that substituted nationalist idols for intelligence and rationalism. The force of a great nationalist like O’Connell is that he was able to fuse nationalism with the concept of change and effectively adapt his politics to the needs of the times, which in turn modernised Irish society and culture and allowed it to survive. In this vein, nationalism was positive and progressive whereas the dominant nationalism of post-independence Ireland was anti-modern in its antiquarianism that looked merely to the past without even glancing at the future and demanded its adherents to do likewise.

O’Faolain feared that Ireland was drifting out of the migratory routes of ideas and influences that had come to shape the modern world. For him, censorship was indicative of this drift. While Ireland sought to protect itself, it was doing a disservice to its people, infantilising them by not allowing them to make decisions for themselves and encouraging the development of the critical and analytical faculties they would need to make informed decisions. He sought the full liberation of the Irish people in terms of their rights as citizens and adults of the world. His resistance was to the tyranny of an oppressive nationalism just as in his youth he had fought against the tyranny of an oppressive colonialism. In this way, his philosophy echoed that of postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, seeing nationalism as a means and not an end, believing that if society remained in the throes of nationalism in the post-independence era, it would stagnate. For O’Faolain, the central evil of nationalism was that it “ossifies the mind.”<sup>214</sup> The country therefore had to be open to outside influences and continue its movement towards a full liberation of the people instead of settling into the materialist demands of the bourgeoisie. His resistance was therefore the continuation of the postcolonial



resistance that had attracted him to nationalism in the first place and it links him to the poststructuralist strain of postcolonial theory that both the revisionists and post-revisionists have ignored in their tired debates over whether or not the tyrannies of British colonialism justify the tyrannies of Irish nationalism.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Terence Brown, *Ireland*, 158 and 198-200; James M. Cahalan, *The Irish Novel: A Critical History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers: 1988), 199; and Benedict Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction: A Critique* (Dublin: Golden Eagle, 1950), 116-21.

<sup>2</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Nationalism, Irony and Commitment* (Derry, Northern Ireland: Field Day Publications, 1988); Frederic Jameson, *Modernism and Imperialism* (Derry, Northern Ireland: Field Day Publications, 1988); Edward Said, *Yeats and Decolonization* (Derry, Northern Ireland: Field Day Publications, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Deepika Bahri makes the argument that Irish Studies can likewise help to deprovincialise how much of postcolonial studies is practised. Her concern is that postcolonial studies has become mired in questions of recognisable racial markers, specifically skin colour, and that the case of Ireland serves to challenge these uncritical works that fail to understand the liberational impulses of postcolonialism for *all* peoples. Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 55-87.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Howe, "Historiography," in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 220-1. In his earlier work *Ireland and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), though he claims that there is no direct link between postcolonial theory and the IRA, he expends much effort to demonstrate that such a link does indeed exist.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Mulhern, *The Present Lasts a Long Time: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 158-63. For background on what Mulhern argues against, see Luke Gibbons, "Challenging the Canon: Revisionism and Cultural Criticism," in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 3, ed. Seamus Deane (Derry, Northern Ireland: Field Day Publications, 1991), 561-8. O'Faolain comes under particularly harsh criticism for arguing against nationalism. If Luke Gibbons is considered the chief apologist of the abuses of the post-independence State, he has his match in Brian Fallon. Completely dismissive of the balance of evidence, Fallon argues that while there was evidence of insularity in mid-century Ireland, there was also a great deal of openness and reception of outside influences. Brian Fallon, *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture, 1930-1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Franice Mulhern, *The Present Lasts a Long Time*, 147-57. Edna Longley was particularly vocal in her criticism of the anthology as an unapologetically nationalist project. She argued, for example, that Terence Brown had been given an inadequate amount of space in which to deal with the era of "Provinciality and Censorship" in post-independence Ireland. Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature & Revisionism in Ireland*, pp. 22-44. Terence Brown's introduction to the section he edited on post-independence Irish prose is sympathetic with O'Faolain and thus stands in tense contrast to the perspective of Luke Gibbons and Seamus Deane. Terence Brown, "The Counter Revival: Provincialism and Censorship 1930-65," in *The*

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*Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 3, ed. Seamus Deane (Derry, Northern Ireland: Field Day Publications, 1991), 89-93.

<sup>9</sup> Colin Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 87-94.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>11</sup> Such studies are legion. For a recent example, see Terrence McDonough, ed., *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Liam Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1996), 167.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Kenny, "Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction," *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-25; Alvin Jackson, "Ireland, the Union, and the Empire, 1800-1960," *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 123-53. Further to this point, Clare Carroll reiterates Joep Leerssen's call to avoid the pitfalls of binary castings of Ireland as or as not a colony. Instead, she appeals for the complexities of the both/and approach. See Clare Carroll, "Introduction: The Nation and Postcolonial Theory," In *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Clare Carroll and Patricia King (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 1-15.

<sup>14</sup> Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland*, 179.

<sup>15</sup> Howe, *Ireland and Empire*, 21-42.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 121. See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1720-1830* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987); and Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Howe, *Ireland and Empire*, 240.

<sup>19</sup> Edna Longley, "Postcolonial versus European (and Post-ukanian) Frameworks for Irish Literature," *Irish Review* 25 (1999/2000), 77.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> See Ahmad's *In Theory* for a particularly critical treatment of Bhabha. While Ahmad and Bhabha could both be said to be revisionist, their theoretical difference is that Ahmad is Marxist while Bhabha is poststructuralist. Ahmad is also highly critical of Said's support of Third World nationalisms that is blind to the tyrannies of such movements.

<sup>22</sup> Edna Longley, "Postcolonial versus European (and Post-ukanian) Frameworks for Irish Literature," *Irish Review* 25 (1999/2000), 86.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 87. Ciaran Brady locates O'Faolain at the vanguard of post-independence revisionism, leading the way for the more academic interventions of T.W. Moody and R.D. Edwards. Ciaran Brady, "'Constructive and Instrumental': The Dilemma of Ireland's First 'New Historians,'" in *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938-1994*, ed. Ciaran Brady (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), 20-1.

<sup>24</sup> While Longley is discussed here as the first revisionist to make accommodations for the place of postcolonialism in Irish Studies, Conor Cruise O'Brien might have been the first to be critical of postcolonial critics. In 1972, O'Brien criticised the tendency of Manichean concepts of *le colon* and *le colonisé* to be tossed around without any recognition of the complexity of colonial societies. Correspondingly, he argued that Ireland was composed of six, not two groups: 1) the actual peasants (pre-colonial, untouched); 2) country people affected by modernization and anglicisation (*colonisés*); 3) urbanised children of *les colonisés*, the middle class; 4) alienated descendants of the settlers (Protestants who were not Unionists); 5) descendants of settlers holding settler Unionist ideology; 6) the English. Conor Cruise O'Brien, *States of Ireland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 72-4. Here O'Brien undertakes a complicating of the binary relations and identities that is similar in spirit to the more poststructuralist strain of postcolonialism. However, each of these groups could be likewise problematised as constructs that are not as homogeneous as he portrays them.

<sup>25</sup> This suggestion has also been made by Shakir Mustafa, who views Subaltern Studies as offering Irish Studies a Third Way (the revisionist and nationalist/post-revisionist camps providing the first two ways) for how it directs postcolonial criticism at the State's failures to fully liberate and decolonise. Shakir Mustafa, "Demythologizing Ireland: Revisionism and the Irish Colonial Experience," in *Irish and Postcolonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Gleen Hooper and Colin Graham (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 77-80.

<sup>26</sup> Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland*, 81-4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>28</sup> David Lloyd, *Ireland After History* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 19-36.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-6.

<sup>30</sup> Joe Cleary, "'Misplaced Ideas'?: Colonialism, Location, and Dislocation in Irish Studies," in *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Clare Carroll and Patricia King (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 27.

<sup>31</sup> Joe Cleary, "Postcolonial Ireland," in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 251-2.

<sup>32</sup> Austin Clarke, Review of *Midsummer Night Madness*, *Times Literary Supplement*, March 3, 1932, 152.

<sup>33</sup> Review of *Midsummer Night Madness*, *Irish Times*, March 12, 1932.

<sup>34</sup> F. O'C., review of *Midsummer Night Madness*, *The Dublin Magazine*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April-June, 1932, 86-7. Given the reviewer's initials, the probable author was Frank O'Connor, O'Faolain's long-time friend from Cork and fellow master craftsman of the Irish short story.

<sup>35</sup> Complaint form submitted by Francis O'Reilly against *Midsummer Night Madness*, March 14, 1932, H315/114, NAI.

<sup>36</sup> Censorship Board decision, April 14, 1932; Prohibition Order, April 19, 1932, H315/114, NAI.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice Harmon claims that O'Faolain was actually more anxious over Garnett's Foreword in terms of his critical and personal reception in Ireland than he was of the stories. Maurice Harmon, *Sean O'Faolain: A Life* (London: Constable, 1994), 88-9.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Garnett, Foreword to *Midsummer Night Madness & Other Stories*, by Sean O'Faolain (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), 11.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> The title might also have drawn their attention: "Midsummer" might have been suggestive of heat and passion; "Night" suggestive of concealed romance which would be emphasized by the protective foliage of midsummer; and "Madness" suggestive of deviance.

<sup>41</sup> Garnett, Foreword, 13-4.

<sup>42</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *Midsummer Night Madness & Other Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), 117.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> O'Faolain was well-acquainted with Hawthorne's work and drew a direct comparison between Puritan New England and post-independence Ireland by referring to Ireland as a "thin society," implying that its social composition was as thinly composed as was that of Hawthorne's New England, where there was an inadequate number of subjects that had the scope novels demanded. John Cronin, *Irish Fiction, 1900-40* (Belfast: Appletree, 1992), 15.

<sup>47</sup> O'Faolain, *Midsummer Night Madness*, 120-1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-4.

<sup>60</sup> Harmon, *Sean O'Faolain: A Life*, 98.

<sup>61</sup> O'Faolain mentions this in his autobiography. However, it was not the summons of the IRA that weighed most upon him. At this time, censorship was still a relative novelty and front-page news. He, his wife and his mother all received threatening letters from people across the country denouncing him as indecent and obscene and as having sullied Ireland's reputation, which depressed and worried him greatly. However, once he returned to live in Ireland after years away and saw how powerful the Catholic Church

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had become in its near absolute dominance of post-independence Irish society, he felt relieved. In effect, the problem, as he diagnosed it, was not with him but with the society. Sean O'Faolain, *Vive Moi!*, 342.

<sup>62</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *Bird Alone* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), 109.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-52.

<sup>65</sup> Donat O'Donnell, *Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954), 103.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence J McCaffrey, "Sean O'Faolain and Irish Identity," *New Hibernia Review* Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 2005), 147.

<sup>67</sup> O'Faolain, *Bird Alone*, 296.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-4.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>72</sup> Austin Clarke, "A Spiritual Rebel," review of *Bird Alone*, *Times Literary Supplement*, July 4, 1936; anonymous, review of *Bird Alone*, *Irish Times*, July 11, 1936; Padraic Fallon, review of *Bird Alone*, *The Dublin Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October-December, 1936), 90-1. The one positive review appeared in the *Irish Press*: "It's one of Mr. O'Faolain's merits, and they are many, that he can make the reader know and feel and live intensely in the persons of his characters. To read *Bird Alone* is to experience several lives and a racking tragedy." F. MacM., "Irish Novelist's New Work," review of *Bird Alone*, *Irish Press*, July 21, 1936.

<sup>73</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Short Story* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1951).

<sup>74</sup> Logbook in the Office of the Censorship of Publications.

<sup>75</sup> Frank O'Connor, "A Protest," *Irish Times*, September 21, 1936.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Lynn Doyle, "A Protest," *Irish Times*, September 22, 1936. The point is interesting as Doyle later sat on the Censorship Board only to resign in protest a few months after accepting the appointment owing to the lack of consideration books were given based on their artistic merits

<sup>79</sup> Andrew E. Malone, "A Protest," *Irish Times*, September 24, 1936. Malone went even further, drawing parallels between *Bird Alone* and Francis Hackett's *The Green Lion* (London: I. Nicholson and Watson, 1936), another study of Irish boyhood set in the Parnell years that had also been banned.

<sup>80</sup> F.P.F., "A Protest," *Irish Times*, September 28, 1936.

<sup>81</sup> Irene Haugh, "A Protest," *Irish Times*, September 28, 1936; and William M. Glynn, "A Protest," *Irish Times*, September 28, 1936.

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<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Austin Clarke, "Tales of Irish Life," review of *A Purse of Coppers*, *Times Literary Supplement*, November 20, 1937; Anonymous, review of *A Purse of Coppers*, *Irish Times*, December 11, 1937.

<sup>83</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *A Purse of Coppers* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 130.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>87</sup> The story could be read as a draft of his play *She Had to do Something* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), in which a wealthy lady attempts to bring a Russian ballet company to her local town only to face the hostilities of the local Catholic priests and lay societies, who eventually force her to close the production.

<sup>88</sup> Maurice Harmon has made the most spirited defence of the biographies. He argues that O'Faolain concentrates on a particular person in order to illuminate a historical period. "Each is an attempt at understanding how a great figure emerges from his background, at calculating to what degree he is a personification of the people's instinctive or explicit needs and at determining the extent and nature of the heritage he created for subsequent Irishmen." Maurice Harmon, *Sean O'Faolain: A Critical Introduction* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 3. Despite this, Paul Doyle claims that O'Faolain's work as a historian and biographer was a "minor phase" of his career, though he never offers an explanation or analysis of why he believes this to be the case. Paul A. Doyle, *Sean O'Faolain* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1968), 7.

<sup>89</sup> Most contemporary reviewers of the biography were critical of O'Faolain's study for these very reasons. See, for example, "Eamon de Valera," review of *The Life Story of Eamon de Valera*, *Irish Times*, March 25, 1933; T.C.M., "Mr. De Valera's Life: Another Biography," review of *The Life Story of Eamon de Valera*, *Irish Independent*, March 27, 1933; Anonymous, review of *The Life Story of Eamon de Valera*, *Times Literary Supplement*, April 27, 1933, 296. It is interesting, however, that the reviewer for the *Irish Press*, the paper founded by de Valera, thought that the biography was largely a balanced study. Henry O'Neill, "Another 'Life-Story' of Eamon de Valera," review of *The Life Story of Eamon de Valera*, *Irish Press*, March 27, 1933.

<sup>90</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Life Story of Eamon de Valera* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1933), 15.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-6.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-8.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-9.

<sup>98</sup> Harmon, *Sean O'Faolain: A Life*, 104-5.

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<sup>99</sup> One review noted that O'Faolain was "sympathetic to Mr. De Valera's aims but contemptuous of his methods." Review of *De Valera*, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 28, 1939, 630.

<sup>100</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *De Valera* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-9.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-31.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-4.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-4.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-24.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-9.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-45.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-70.

<sup>114</sup> O'Faolain later wrote on de Valera, though his views were still in line with his revised opinions as encapsulated in the second biography. The occasion of his comments on de Valera was a lengthy review (that turned into an editorial) of M.J. MacManus' *Eamon de Valera* in which O'Faolain accused MacManus of not being critical enough of his subject. Sean O'Faolain, "Eamon de Valera," review of M.J. MacManus' *Eamon de Valera*, *The Bell*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (April 1945), 1-18. Two months later, *The Bell* printed MacManus' response to O'Faolain in the form of a letter, interspersed with O'Faolain's editorial interjections and arguments with a fuller response by O'Faolain following it. In his letter, MacManus made the argument that O'Faolain's first biography was closer to the version of the truth than was his second. Sean O'Faolain, "Principles and Propaganda," *The Bell*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (June 1945), 189-205.

<sup>115</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O'Connell, the Irish Liberator, in a Study of the Rise of the Modern Irish Democracy (1775-1847)* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1938), 20.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-95.

<sup>119</sup> Arland Usher made this same critique of post-independence Ireland though by comparing it with the republicanism of Wolfe Tone. Whereas a Tone-led and French-sponsored republic would have been guided by "the Goddess of Reason," the Republic of Ireland was guided by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Arland Usher, *The Face and Mind of Ireland* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), 23.

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<sup>120</sup> O'Faolain, *King of the Beggars*, 240.

<sup>121</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Great O'Neill: A Biography of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, 1550-1616* (London: Longmans, 1942), vi.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>124</sup> O'Faolain, *King of the Beggars*, 12.

<sup>125</sup> O'Faolain, *The Great O'Neill*, 32.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> It is interesting to note the level of engagement with O'Faolain's challenge to the orthodox nationalist historiography in contemporary reviews of the book. The reviewers for *The Dublin Magazine* and *The Dublin Review* applauded his argument that O'Neill should be read in the broader context of the Europe of his time, whereas the reviewer for the *Irish Times*, which one would normally expect to sympathise with this viewpoint, took O'Faolain to task for his denigration and slighting of the Gaelic world. The reviewer for the English-based *Times Literary Supplement* simply provided a lengthy summary of the book. Beda, "The Great O'Neill," review of *The Great O'Neill*, *Irish Times*, February 20, 1943; E. St. John Brooks, "Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone," review of *The Great O'Neill*, *Times Literary Supplement*, February 20, 1943; F. MacM., review of *The Great O'Neill*, *The Dublin Magazine*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (April-June 1943), 65-6; and S.L., review of *The Great O'Neill*, *The Dublin Review*, Vol. 212, No. 425 (April-June 1943), 178-80.

<sup>132</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "That Typical Irishman," *The Bell*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (November 1942), 77.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>138</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Irish* (New York: Penguin: 1981), 9.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-6.

<sup>140</sup> Deane takes O'Faolain to task for arguing, in *King of the Beggars*, that Gaelic Ireland was a ruined civilisation and that modernisation led by Daniel O'Connell was the only option: "Thus colonialism entered only to redeem an already broken civilization from chaos and myth; even if it be argued that colonialism actually broke that civilization, the response is that this only revealed its inner weakness, its incapacity to



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survive in the modern world of which colonization was the harbinger." Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish writing Since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 191-2.

<sup>141</sup> O'Faolain, *The Irish*, 56-7.

<sup>142</sup> Contemporary opinion was mixed, generally falling along the lines of whether one was more open-minded to the possibility of Irish hybridity – what in this case gets labeled as revisionism – or accepts the nationalist orthodoxy that O'Faolain challenges. The *Times Literary Supplement*, for example, was supportive of O'Faolain's attempts to rewrite Irish history, referring to his part in the new Irish intellectual school that was "more concerned with internal injustices than with the traditional imported brands." Alfred Patrick Ryan, "The New Celtic Twilight," review of *The Irish*, *Times Literary Supplement*, June 26, 1948, 360. *The Irish Press*, however, was considerably less enamoured: "As the title of Mr. O'Faolain's booklet shows it is written primarily for readers in other countries, namely Britain. There is much internal evidence of this. They are given not Irish history but what Mr. O'Faolain thinks is the kind of Irish history they will like. He writes as one conscious of being out of his depth and as one consciously concealing his ignorance by being 'profound.' The book might have been injured had there been any learning in it. There is none. . . 'The Mere Irish' would have been a better title." Donal Og, "Ireland for the Stranger," review of *The Irish*, *Irish Press*, June 3, 1948.

<sup>143</sup> O'Faolain, *The Irish*, 88.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-9.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-21.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>148</sup> Terence Brown argues that, in 1940, having "exhausted the possibilities of realistic fiction in the Irish context," O'Faolain "turned to documentary journalism and polemic." Terence Brown, *Ireland's Literature: Selected Essays* (Mullingar, Ireland: Lilliput Press, 1988), 112.

<sup>149</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "This Is Your Magazine," *The Bell*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1940), 5.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>152</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Bell*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (April 1946), 1.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Only a few years after stepping down in this manner, Benedict Kiely wrote: "Mr O'Faolain's weakness for being foolishly irritated is balanced by his amazing capacity for irritating the foolish." Benedict Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction*, 43. John Hildebidle argues: "His editorship of *The Bell* confirmed O'Faolain's place within Ireland as the predominant voice of his generation, and the intellectual godfather of subsequent generations." John Hildebidle, *Five Irish Writers: The Errand of Keeping Alive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), 6.

<sup>155</sup> Lawrence McCaffrey is the most recent of critics to argue this point. See also Marie Arndt *A Critical Study of Sean O'Faolain's Life and Work* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001) and Maurice Harmon.

<sup>156</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "Ireland and the Modern World," *The Bell*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (March 1943), 423-8.

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- <sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.
- <sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 424.
- <sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 426.
- <sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>161</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "Autoantiamericanism," *The Bell*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (March 1951), 8.
- <sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.
- <sup>164</sup> Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Gill, 1924), x-xiii.
- <sup>165</sup> Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature: A Study* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 3.
- <sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>167</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "Daniel Corkery," *The Dublin Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (April-June 1936), 49-61.
- <sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.
- <sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.
- <sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.
- <sup>171</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Stuffed-Shirts," *The Bell*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (June 1943), 181.
- <sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-2.
- <sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.
- <sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.
- <sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.
- <sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>177</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Gaelic Cult," *The Bell*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (December 1944), 185.
- <sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.
- <sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.
- <sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.
- <sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.
- <sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.
- <sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> O'Faolain also contrasted the spirit of the Gaelic Cult with the spirit of Wolfe Tone in contrasting their brands of nationalism in a later article. Tone was praised for his civic Republican nationalism while the Gaelic Cult was heavily criticised for its anti-modern and exclusivist nationalism. Sean O'Faolain, "Rebel by Vocation," *The Bell*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (November 1946), 97-114.

<sup>186</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "All Things Considered -2," *The Bell*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (December 1945), 761-9.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 761-2.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 769.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The University Question," *The Bell*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (April 1944), 1-12.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>192</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Dáil and the Bishops," *The Bell*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (June 1951), 5-13.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>194</sup> See Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, for an excellent discussion of religious capital and habitus in modern Ireland. Elsewhere, Inglis echoes O'Faolain, arguing that "while the Republic did not become a theocracy, the special position of the Catholic Church ensured that it became the leading interest group in Irish society." Tom Inglis, "Religion, Identity, State and Society," in *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Culture*, ed. Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 67. In his autobiography, O'Faolain describes the role of religious capital and how desperate – and hypocritical – one could be in one's attempts to accumulate it: "[I]f any man were known in his loyalty to be a Mass-misser he would be regarded as unfit for any responsible position; for which reason, if for no other, he would be at considerable pains not only to not to miss Sunday mass visibly, but to attend Mass as visibly as possible." O'Faolain, *Vive Moil!*, 103-4. Having been excommunicated for his IRA activities and had a reputation of immorality thrust upon him because of his banned books, O'Faolain well understood the value and pressures of religious capital in Ireland.

<sup>195</sup> For a contemporary appraisal of O'Faolain's work that extolled the virtues and courage of his writings and political interventions, see Neville Braybrooke, "Sean O'Faolain: A Study," *The Dublin Magazine*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April-June 1955), 22-7.

<sup>196</sup> O'Faolain, "The Dáil and the Bishops," 9.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>198</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Bishop and *The Bell*," *The Bell*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (September 1951), 15-7.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>200</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Mart of Ideas," *The Bell*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (June 1942), 153-7.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>202</sup> In reviewing the names of internationally renowned authors who had been banned in Ireland, Arland Usher appealed to people to see the censorship as the joke it had become. The censors, who had deemed

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that most of the world's great modern writers were indecent or obscene, were accused of having "the mental age of a schoolboy – and a dull and unpleasant schoolboy at that." The result was that this ignorance on the part of the leaders had trickled down to the people. This differs significantly from O'Faolain's critique in its refusal to condemn the people in power as knowingly and purposely fostering public ignorance. Usher, *The Face and Mind of Ireland*, 98.

<sup>203</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Mart of Ideas," 155.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> Writing in 1935, Lynn Doyle employed the same strategy by appealing to the socio-economic consequences of censorship. He argued against the censorship having the "power to persecute a writer whose works circulate mainly in Ireland by taking part of his living from him. . . . It is an adroit way of bringing back a lost sheep. The warmth of the unfortunate writer's imagination will be chastened by hunger." Lynn Doyle, *The Spirit of Ireland* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1935), 26.

<sup>207</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Mart of Ideas," 156.

<sup>208</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "Our Nasty Novelists," *The Bell*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (August 1941), 5-12.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. O'Faolain later argued that the censor-patriots were no better than Fascists, drawing the analogy between them and Nazi ideology. Sean O'Faolain, "All Things Considered –1," *The Bell*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (November 1945), 654-5.

<sup>210</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "Our Nasty Novelists," 6.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. O'Faolain made many of these arguments again in "Ireland After Yeats," which argued that the post-independence era had witnessed a pause or decline in the level of aesthetic achievement after the glory days of the Celtic Twilight which stretched roughly from 1890 to 1920. He blamed this stagnation of the arts on the lack of dynamism in the political and social spheres coupled with the oppressive measures of censorship. Sean O'Faolain, "Ireland After Yeats," *The Bell*, Vol. 18, No. 11 (Summer 1953), 37-48.

<sup>213</sup> Sean O'Faolain, "The Death of Nationalism," *The Bell*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1951), 44-53.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

## **Chapter Five: Institutional Censorship and Theorising Change**

While studies of Irish censorship describe and explain how change has occurred to the structure and mechanisms of institutions, this change has yet to be theorised in any meaningful way. Additionally, although there has been much debate of the concept of institutional change by political scientists, censorship has been largely written about by historians who have shied away from theory. This chapter focuses on two examples of institutional change and one example of institutional stability that are important for how they both illustrate and challenge how change has been theorised by the practitioners of institutionalism.

The first of these moments of institutional change was the passing of the *Censorship of Publications Act, 1946*. This Act affected the structure of censorship by creating an Appeal Board. The Appeal Board was supposed to alleviate the pressures upon the Censorship Board and provide writers and publishers with a means of contesting decisions to ban works. By establishing an Appeal Board, the goal, it might be inferred, was to generate a space for debate and possibly create a more liberal censorship – or at least one that adopted more democratic principles. However, as it will become clear, the opposite course was taken and censorship entered its most draconian period.

By the late 1950s, with record numbers of bannings and the censorship in effect running out of control, a much different form of change took place. Members of the Censorship Board became engaged in a stand off with two factions – one liberal, one conservative – refusing to budge in the other's direction. This situation eventually caused the Minister for Justice to intervene and change the composition of the Board by dismissing and replacing members. The effects of this decision had a significant impact

on the way that censorship would come to operate in the future. In the wake of this second change, the institution demonstrated the ability to resist change in the face of the last great campaign waged against evil literature in the winter of 1957-8.

While the amendment of legislation in 1946 and the stability of 1957-8 can be accounted for by institutionalism, the replacement of personnel in the late 1950s that caused censorship to function differently poses a serious challenge to how change is theorised by institutionalists. This chapter argues that the problem behind the challenge is not necessarily in the way that change is conceived; rather, the problem is endemic to how institutions are conceived. To answer the challenge, this chapter posits the possibility of distinguishing between institutions. In particular, it argues that institutionalism has conceived of institutions as “hard” institutions, those more resistant to change such as systems of health care and education. Meanwhile, “soft” institutions, those less resistant to change such as censorship, have yet to be adequately theorised.

#### *Towards the Censorship of Publications Act of 1946*

While calls for reforming the censorship had been scattered over the first decade of its existence and Sean O’Faolain had done much in the early 1940s to coalesce liberal voices in the pages of *The Bell*, it was Senator Sir John B. Keane who functioned as a fifth column. Keane, who had raised concern in the debates over the original Bill, launched the reform movement from within parliamentary circles in November 1942. But he was perhaps instigated by a public outcry against censorship that was raised a month earlier.

O’Faolain, as one might have expected, was the chief influence on Keane and the instigator of the protest. In a letter to the *Irish Times* on October 19, 1942, O’Faolain

argued: "The banning of 'The Tailor and Ansty' is merely one further proof that the Censorship, in its present form, is an embarrassment to the Government and a humiliation to the people."<sup>1</sup> He further complained of the banning of Halliday Sutherland's *The Laws of Life*, a case that, like *The Tailor and Ansty*, would be scrutinised in the political debates to follow. O'Faolain's letter caused others to voice support for him and criticise censorship as it was currently being practised; most notable amongst these supporters was the Irish Society for Intellectual Freedom.<sup>2</sup> The ground swell raised by O'Faolain caused deputies to discuss the matter during a meeting of the Committee of Public Accounts, despite the fact that this group had absolutely nothing to do with the running of censorship, and forced S.A. Roche, the Secretary of the Department of Justice, to explain and defend how the institution worked.<sup>3</sup> This in turn caused another correspondent to shame the Censorship Board by pointing out the ridiculous nature of banning books on birth control when nearly 26 000 *families* in Dublin alone lived in *one room* apartments.<sup>4</sup>

Keane's campaign for censorship reform began with a motion he introduced to the Seanad on November 18, 1942. The motion read: "That, in the opinion of Seanad Eireann, the Censorship of Publications Board appointed by the Minister for Justice under the Censorship of Publications Act, 1929, has ceased to retain public confidence, and that steps should be taken by the Minister to reconstitute the board."<sup>5</sup> To illustrate his argument, he chose to focus on three books, each one having been, in his estimation, egregiously banned: Eric Cross' *The Tailor and Ansty*, Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices*, and Halliday Sutherland's *The Laws of Life*.

*The Tailor and Ansty*, which Keane described as a book about the pastoral lives and racy fireside banter of an elderly couple from Co. Cork, could be compared to

Kavanagh's *The Green Fool* in that it is somewhat of an anthropological work on the disappearing folkways of the Irish people. Keane argued that the banning of the book had "aroused more indignation . . . on the part of those who are interested in the domestic literature and genius of our people than on the part of those interested in that of the wider world."<sup>6</sup> To make his case, Keane read a lengthy excerpt from the book. However, the passage he read is not included in the parliamentary records and in its stead is the phrase, placed in parentheses, "*Here the Senator quoted from the book,*"<sup>7</sup> a substitution that appears throughout the records. The reason for expunging the record was provided by Senator William Magennis who at this time was the Chairman of the Censorship Board. Magennis argued that the official reporters should not record the passages from a banned book because he feared the inclusion of "some of the vilest obscenity" in the records and that the Official Reports could be bought for only a few pence, thus allowing for the cheap availability of portions of a banned text to be published and sold by the Government.<sup>8</sup> His worries on this matter, while seeming extreme, proved to be well-founded: the *Irish Times* later reported that Keane's criticisms of the Censorship Board were so popular that it was impossible to obtain a copy of the debates and that the State's Stationary Office was forced to ask inquirers to place orders with payment made in advance.<sup>9</sup> Magennis also tried to intervene by asking Keane to refrain from quoting the book, which Keane claimed was a further example of the work of the "literary Gestapo," a term to which he would return often over the course of the debates.<sup>10</sup> In the end, he defended the book as being Rabelaisian, not indecent, and that it was not written with the intention to corrupt or deprave or to excite others to sexual passion or unnatural vice.<sup>11</sup>



While the banning of *The Tailor and Ansty* was ridiculed as the banning of aspects of Irish life, the banning of *The Land of Spices* was what Keane called “a most astounding case.”<sup>12</sup> The book is about a “noble character” who enters the convent when she discovers her father’s homosexuality, becomes the Reverend Mother of an Irish convent, and eventually is named Mother-General of the international Order to which she belongs. For one phrase, Keane contended, the one that alludes to the homosexuality of the nun’s father, the entire book was banned.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, despite the fact that the Irish Free State’s position on birth control mirrored that of the Catholic Church’s social teachings, Halliday Sutherland’s *The Laws of Life* was banned.<sup>14</sup> Sutherland’s book had been issued *permissu superiorum* by the Archbishop of Westminster and was printed by the English Catholic publisher Sheed and Ward. The focus of the debate was the book’s discussion of the rhythm method which, it was argued, was the only aspect of the book that could have possibly brought it under the censor’s wrath – despite the fact that the rhythm method had long been taught by the Catholic Church.

Keane’s main argument against such bannings was that the censors had been inadequately attending to their duties, censoring almost 1 600 books in the thirteen years since censorship had been institutionalised. The problem with this, he claimed, was that no unpaid volunteer that held down a job and had a social life could responsibly and attentively read an average of three books a week and pass decision on them, not to mention the others that had been considered and were not banned.<sup>15</sup> A further problem was the composition of the Censorship Board itself, the members of which Keane believed to be “too academic and detached from the stream of life and the outlook of

youth.”<sup>16</sup> Their standards, he claimed, were governed by a Victorian prudery that was at odds with the changing morality of the nation. Another issue he raised was that by banning books that had long been in circulation, the stocks of librarians and booksellers were placed into jeopardy and these people were left with items that represented a loss of money – in the case of librarians the budget money misspent and in the case of booksellers stock that had already been purchased.<sup>17</sup> But the biggest loss would be to the literary heritage of Ireland.

Not only had many of the world’s literary masters been banned, causing the Irish to lose touch with global artistic movements, many of the leading Irish writers of the modern age had likewise suffered. The result was that the current generation of writers was being constrained through the censorship of their works and that future generations were being robbed of their culture because these works would not be available for them under the existing system. Had such an institution been in place fifty years earlier, Keane argued, Ireland would not have had the inspirational works of the great writer George Moore. In that event, the current generation of writers – and all Irish people – would have been the poorer for it.<sup>18</sup> The reputation of Ireland was therefore threatened by a censorship that acted irresponsibly through measures that were too draconian and the residual effects this would have by creating a paucity of internationally known writers in the succeeding generations.

There was some support for Keane’s motion and his comments. Keane’s staunchest supporter was Professor Joseph Johnston, a Senator representing Trinity College.<sup>19</sup> Johnston suggested that Keane’s views might actually have been representative of more people than had been heard in society, the implication being that

they would have been heard more frequently if there had not have been a network of informal censorship and a culture that punished, implicitly and explicitly, those who deviated from the norms of the censorious mentality. Modern literature, Johnston argued, was no worse than that of the ancients. In the end, different standards of decency were needed in art when compared to the standards of decency in society. The Venus de Milo, for example, was what many might describe as an “indecent” statue because of the “inadequately clad” female form, but it was a major artistic achievement. Likewise, some of the banned books might have been considered indecent by societal standards, but decent by literary standards, and as such they should not have been censored.

Similarly, Desmond Fitzgerald, the former Cumann na nGaedhael Minister for External Affairs and Minister for Defence, made a persuasive case for dismantling the censorship, though he was against the motion as it was impossible to measure the nation’s confidence in the work of the Censorship Board.<sup>20</sup> Fitzgerald argued against the nationalist view of Irish virtuous exceptionalism, stating that censorship was necessary precisely because the Irish were as morally lax as others and shared the same perverse curiosity. If they were more moral than other peoples, there would be no need for censorship because the Irish would be virtuous enough to police themselves. The problem, as he saw it, was that the State had inadequately educated the populace. By promoting literacy, the State had given the people the tools to read but it had not educated them on *how* to read effectively and be discriminating in their tastes, leading to lazy reading habits. The people were therefore infantilised by their own State on two fronts: first, by being undereducated and, second, by being subjected to a censorship that was based upon what children should be allowed to read. Books that might cause harm to

some people, he said, were not necessarily “bad” because for others they might not cause any harm at all. And, finally, those who argued that Irish writers should be especially subjected to censorship for how they represent the nation were ignorant of the Act as such provisions were not included. This was a direct response to the concern voiced by senators that some Irish writers belittled their country and religion merely in order to be championed in England. These sorts of comments, Fitzgerald argued, revealed an inferiority complex on the part of the commentators more than they said something about the potentially subversive books themselves.

Not surprisingly, William Magennis came down hardest against the motion with the overwhelming support of the Seanad. As a firm champion of the original legislation when it first passed through the Oireachtas, a leading member of the CTS, and the current Chairman of the Censorship Board, his defence of the institution was expected.<sup>21</sup> Magennis portrayed Keane as a member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and, as such, having allegiance to England, not Ireland. He offered as evidence Keane’s service during World War One and his efforts to abolish the censorship.<sup>22</sup> *The Tailor and Ansty* came under harsh treatment, Magennis considering Ansty a “moron” and the Tailor “sex-besotted.” The book, he claimed, was “blasphemous” for the way it fantastically ended with them shunning heaven for hell because of the livelier company there. It was also propaganda, he argued, “to show the English-speaking world what manner of man the Irish peasant is who is the citizen of Éire.”<sup>23</sup> The problem as he saw it was that those Irish writers who were banned were short story writers who merely padded their tales with sex and smut in order to suit their English publishers and flesh out their writing. This was ironic considering the strength of the Irish short story at this time and the

number of its most popular and artful practitioners who had their works banned – most conspicuously amongst them Frank O’Connor, Sean O’Faolain and Liam O’Flaherty. Magennis might very well have been justified in a bizarre addendum to O’Faolain’s contention that Irish society as it was composed in the post-independence years was not conducive to the writer of novels but rather the writer of short stories owing to its lack of dynamism and social stratification.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, in respect to *The Land of Spices*, the sentence quoted as being the reason for its banning was not an isolated passage, as it had been suggested, because of its centrality; the act of sodomy that it described caused all else to follow as it provided the impetus for the nun to take her vows. Sodomy, Magennis asked his colleagues to remember, was illegal, though he offered no such indictment of novels that portrayed murder or theft.

Sutherland’s book was likewise discussed after an exacting description of the differences between *imprimatur* and *permissu superiorum*, detailing how the book was cleared by the Archbishop of Westminster’s censor *after* the first edition had been in print and only based upon the revised second edition. The banning of the book was therefore in keeping with the control of information that had not been vetted by a Church censor. It is interesting that there was no effort expended to differentiate between the responsibilities of Church and State and defend the censorship as a secular institution despite the arguments Magennis had made earlier to dissuade the Seanad that there was a conspiracy between the Censorship Board and the Hierarchy.

Magennis’ main preoccupation as censor was what he referred to as “Lecher-  
ature.”<sup>25</sup> To demonstrate how tortured the Censorship Board was in arriving at its

decisions, he held up Liam O'Flaherty's *Famine* as an example of a book that was "very strong meat" yet passed for untold reasons.<sup>26</sup> Despite this, the more liberal elements in Irish society had chosen to focus on the borderline cases that had been banned, noting Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain "and their associates" as the ringleaders of this cohort.<sup>27</sup> And he remained unapologetic for writers who, like Nora Hoult, had been forced into exile; the responsibility was placed upon her for having written "horrible and revolting" material for English publishers.<sup>28</sup> He reasoned that it was not the fault of the police or the magistrate if the arrested criminal broke the law.

Dr. Robert Rowlette, another Senator representing Trinity, challenged Magennis in questioning whether the Censorship Board had *ever* had the public's confidence.<sup>29</sup> His problem with institutional censorship was not with its mechanisms but with the principle itself. And being against censorship, he pointed out to Magennis, did not necessarily imply being against the State. The censorship was useless and counter to the wishes of a significant portion of the Irish nation because it attempted to stem the tide of "unhealthy" literature that was being supplied to fill the demands of the people.<sup>30</sup> *Bird Alone* in particular was held up as being what he viewed as an excellent book whose banning was puzzling. He argued:

I could not think that any reasonable man of normal mind, such as I am sure the censors possess – and I have no reason to think otherwise – could find anything in the book to justify the verdict that it was 'in its general tendency indecent or obscene.' There may be passages which one would not read aloud in the family circle, but there are many things that one would not do in the family circle which are not indecent or obscene. . . . That book appeared to me to have literary and artistic merit that should carry weight with the censors, whether it was in its general tendency indecent or obscene. I regarded it as a highly moral book, in which not an unusual sin was followed by a period of great punishment, where the moral was impressed, as it was read from that incident right to the end.<sup>31</sup>

Rowlette reasoned that the problem with censorship was completely foreign to the pre-independence struggles of the nation. As opposed to a movement towards greater freedom, the Irish people had created shackles with which to control their independent impulses. There was therefore a drive towards collective freedom but a shunning of individual freedom; the latter spawned the former by subsuming individual glory to the good of the whole. But this was antithetical to Rowlette's concept of individual rights: he intended to defeat the motion because he did not believe the Censorship Board should have been reconstituted – it should have been completely eradicated as a mechanism.

Ross McGillicuddy, a Co. Kerry farmer elected to the Senate, claimed sympathy with the Censorship Board for the onerous task it had to undertake.<sup>32</sup> While he believed censorship was necessary, he argued against the attempts of those who understood its purpose as being one of purification. In a statement that could very well prove its own point, he argued: “[N]o censorship will turn what I call a Dirty Dick into a clean one. He will find something obscene and depraving in almost every sentence that he reads, but those Dirty Dicks are few and far between.”<sup>33</sup> Professor Michael Tierney, a Senator representing University College Dublin, also came out against the censorship as it was presently constituted, stating that had he been a member of the Censorship Board, he would not have banned *The Tailor and Ansty*.<sup>34</sup> While he believed that the book was too unimportant to warrant being banned, he also felt that it was not obscene. “Does not anybody who walks the streets of Dublin,” he asserted, “know that you will find children under 12 years of age using language both blasphemous and indecent, just as bad as anything in *The Tailor and Ansty*?”<sup>35</sup> The mild indecency of the book's language was therefore not foreign to Ireland despite protests to the contrary; the characters in the book

were actually representative, not exceptional. Tierney also questioned the binary tendencies of the debate to compartmentalise Ireland and England and to equate them respectively wholesale with virtue and immorality. While Ireland had a distinct culture, that should not give those in positions of authority and power the right to defend and promote a xenophobic ignorance of the world. Harm might very well be caused by “evil” literature, but censorship was a double-edged sword: excessive censorship could also cause harm. Because of this tendency towards zealotry, Tierney raised the suggestion of creating an Appeal Board to deal with borderline cases such as *Bird Alone*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *The Laws of Life*. He argued that such a mechanism might ensure that the Censorship Board would act more responsibly in its decision-making process. This was later supported by James Douglas, an Independent Senator who believed that morality was not the place of the State and that some *in camera* process should be set up to allow for the appeal of Irish writers.<sup>36</sup>

Seán O’Donovan, however, voiced the opposing view, proposing that, because censorship was one of the most important issues in Ireland, an amendment was needed to make the institution more rigid.<sup>37</sup> O’Donovan, a de Valera-appointed Senator, appealed for the prosecution of writers to follow the decision to ban their works in order to prevent people from writing smut in the first place. He contended that the Irish had to have higher standards in order to combat the legacy of the stage Irishman.<sup>38</sup> According to this logic, the censorship was therefore formed in order to protect the Irish from being subjected to indecency and obscenity; additionally, it provided proof to the world that the Irish were not the feckless and immoral buffoons as they had been portrayed by others, but rather were a serious and moral people who took charge of their own spiritual well-



being. Several senators voiced similar disapproval of Keane's motion, denounced his politics, and commended the members of the Censorship Board for their tireless efforts in defending public morality.

In his final address on the matter of his motion, Keane defended his point of view from the attacks that had been launched at him from both within and without the Seanad.<sup>39</sup> He openly admitted to representing a very small minority in his stance, believing that more than ninety percent of the country would not have ever read, or even encountered, the books that had been discussed. But standards of morality were not immutable, despite the protests made by many of the senators in their speeches, and it was necessary to reflect the changing society with a changed institution. His intention in tabling the motion was to promote an open discussion on the subject, regarding debate as healthy. In terms of illegitimate births and instances of infanticide, he claimed that Ireland was as bad as any country and it would be wrong to swath it in a cloak of censorship to make it appear as though it were righteous and moral. He argued that the 1857 Act created by the British was better than the 1929 Act created by the Irish because it allowed for prosecution and an open process in which individuals could defend and appeal their cases before the courts. Instead, Ireland had created a place where adults were denied certain books because these books *might* cause harm to young and unformed minds. When the motion was put to a vote, it was defeated by a count of 34 to 2. However, these numbers are deceptive. As the debate demonstrated, there was a growing faction of people that was dissatisfied with the censorship; the problem was what the motion offered, or failed to offer, as a suitable alternative.

In the intervening time, those opposed to the censorship took time to reflect upon such an alternative. A new proposal was first mentioned in the Seanad on April 19, 1944, in the form of the *Censorship of Publications (Amendment) Bill, 1944*.<sup>40</sup> However, on June 20 Keane proposed to withdraw it because the Government was intending to legislate in the matter and to provide more adequately for the principle of appeal that his Bill incorporated.<sup>41</sup> He feared that by pursuing debate on his Bill, the Seanad would waste valuable time and energy – and the taxpayers' money – on an issue that was simultaneously being considered by the Dáil. The Bill was allowed to be unconditionally withdrawn.<sup>42</sup> Keane had therefore forced the Government's hand to lead in the movement for reform as opposed to having the reform thrust upon it.

The *Censorship of Publications Bill, 1945*, was accordingly introduced to the Dáil on October 10.<sup>43</sup> Gerald Boland, the Minister for Justice, claimed that the purpose of the Bill was “to effect changes in the machinery of censorship which experience of the working of the 1929 Act has shown to be desirable.”<sup>44</sup> The measure was considered necessary because the Minister for Justice was the official censor, with the Censorship Board only recommending prohibition, and simultaneously the only means for appeal. An Appeal Board would therefore be established under the new Bill and the legislation would give the responsibility of issuing Prohibition Orders to the Censorship Board. This would allow the Minister for Justice to avoid controversy and to intervene only in cases of extreme conflict. However, while introducing the measures that were to change the existing structure of institutional censorship, Boland mentioned that although appeal might be exercised only rarely, “the mere existence of that right” was considered the important aspect.<sup>45</sup> In this case, appeal was to provide the appearance of change while

that change was actually considered cosmetic by the architects of the machinery. It was more important that the appeal mechanism existed than the fact that it might function efficiently or fairly.

Difficulties with the Bill were immediately raised. The first concern was over the number of members of both the Censorship and Appeal Boards. The belief that there was no logic in having an Appeal Board of three members while the Censorship Board had five was expressed throughout the debates in both houses.<sup>46</sup> Showing a regard for path dependency, Boland explained that the number of those serving on the Censorship Board was to remain static because the institution had already been established; the Appeal Board, which had no legacy, was to have only three members because he thought that a fit number to have. Boland was further pressed on the question of the increased role that Customs Officials would have under the legislation. Another repeated concern throughout the debates was the power a given official had to confiscate a book carried by a person, whether a national or non-national, citizen or tourist, with only a glance at the cover and title of the publication.<sup>47</sup> When pressed on this and asked to provide how many books the customs authorities had seized in the past, Boland could not provide the Dáil with a firm figure, but acknowledged that the number was in the hundreds.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Boland assured the Dáil that not only would Prohibition Orders remain in effect for previously banned works, but that these banned books could also be considered for appeal under the new legislation.<sup>49</sup> After further reassurance that the customs authorities neither could nor would abuse their powers with respect to their treatment of people entering Ireland with questionable personal reading materials, the matter was passed to the Seanad.

The Seanad first discussed the Bill at some length on November 14, 1945.<sup>50</sup> Not surprisingly, William Magennis was critical of the Bill.<sup>51</sup> Justifiably citing his eleven and a half years as a member of the Censorship Board as qualifying him to speak on the shortcomings of the machinery of censorship, the new legislation, he believed, would ameliorate the relationship between the Censorship Board and the Minister for Justice. Admitting that frequent friction had been caused over the Minister's questioning of the Censorship Board's decisions both initially and upon appeal, he claimed that this friction was not the result of differences of opinion as to the definitions of obscenity and indecency, but rather out of the Minister's confusing role as both the censor and means of appeal. Under the terms of the new Bill, it was hoped that censorship would run more smoothly. Despite these amending benefits of the proposed legislation, Magennis noted that it was illogical for only three people to serve on the Appeal Board because it meant that in the case where a majority would be needed to revoke a Prohibition Order, two members would effectively overrule the five members of the Censorship Board. Moreover, he expressed concern that because banned publishers and authors would in all likelihood be without scruples as purveyors and writers of immoral literature, they would go to great lengths to appeal decisions and something should be introduced to prevent this from occurring. Rising to support Magennis, another Senator went so far as to praise Ireland as "a backwater" for the ways in which it tended to remain outside the circulation routes of such literature.

Theodore Kingsmill Moore, a Senator representing Trinity College, voiced his opposition to Magennis. Though he was against censorship because it tended to do more harm than good, Kingsmill Moore welcomed the Bill as making an unworkable and

laughable system more workable and less laughable.<sup>52</sup> He noted the hypocrisy of the Censorship Board and its defenders in their claims that they promoted morality and banned immorality, citing cases where despite the fact that some publications had received the blessing of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin for general readership in order to *improve* morality, they had been banned in Ireland. Protestant values and morality, it was implied, were therefore being censored by the State through the work of the Censorship Board. Irish writers had also been particularly targeted. Kingsmill Moore noted that forty-four Irish writers had collectively had one hundred and seventy books banned. Comparatively, though many pro-censorship crusaders equated England with immorality, only sixty-seven English authors had been banned. When the populations of the two countries were taken into account, Irish writers were either a major focus of the censorship, or else they were proportionately more immoral, indecent and obscene. His final suggestion was to publish the names of the complainants in order to demonstrate that they had the courage of their convictions. This was certainly the most provocative point if only because it was the least likely to be accounted for in an amendment as it would weaken the censorship and place fear in people who wished to assist the State.

After such debates, the Bill was enacted on February 13, 1946. Foremost amongst the changes was the increase in the number of Appeal Board members from three to five.<sup>53</sup> Any five members of the Oireachtas could lodge an appeal,<sup>54</sup> as could the author or publisher of a given work provided a £5 deposit was submitted with the request to be returned if the appeal was determined not to be frivolous.<sup>55</sup> Also, potentially obscene books – not to be confused with books already banned and thus determined

obscene – were permitted entrance into the country without threat of seizure by Customs Officials if they were for personal use.<sup>56</sup> Books were also no longer to be considered in their general tendency as this was understood to be too permissive of publications that had indecent and obscene passages that in and of themselves were enough to corrupt and deprave individuals, but aesthetic merit was still to be accounted for.<sup>57</sup> In the end, the new legislation made what appeared to be some significant changes to the institution.

The changes to the mechanisms of censorship described above challenge institutionalism's ability to account for change. For one, the changes cannot be explained in terms of the concept of punctuated equilibrium. Punctuated equilibrium represents an extreme change in the direction of an institution's path due mainly to a massive exogenous shock, such as large scale economic depression or military conflict that envelopes not only the country under examination but those around it as well. Granted, the 1946 Act was passed within a year of the end of World War Two which itself followed on the heels of the economic depression of the 1930s; the 1929 Act had passed before either of these dramatic events had swept the globe so one might argue that the amendments were made to account for shifts caused during this period. Ireland had also suffered through these crises differently than other countries, largely owing to its insular foreign policy: its economic downturn in the 1930s was a product of its tariff war with Britain and it had been spared massive military costs during the war because of its declared neutrality. As Boland stated when he introduced the 1945 Bill to the Dáil, the impetus for the amending legislation was the failure of certain aspects of the mechanisms themselves that had become apparent to those within Irish society – or had been apparent

from the start, depending upon one's views. The changes were therefore created as a result of endogenous demands, not exogenous pressures.

The weakness in institutionalism, particularly its historical strand, is in explaining such subtle change. Institutions are stable structures and, as such, they are the opposite of change, providing a bulwark against the ebb and flows within and without society. The principle of appeal, from this point of view, and in examining the debates and legislation, is in no way new and does not represent massive changes to the structure of the institution. Appeal was allowed for in the past because the Minister for Justice could be sought out in cases when a party thought that a decision to ban was wrong or inappropriate. The 1946 Act merely refined the Minister's role. Instead of operating as the means through which appeal could be lodged, appeals would now go through the Appeal Board. Likewise, books, once they were examined by the Censorship Board and determined to be indecent or obscene, would still be subject to Prohibition Orders, only now instead of merely recommending them for prohibition, the Censorship Board would issue the orders itself. As Siobhán Harty has argued, institutions are stable because they are adaptable.<sup>58</sup> According to this view, the new mechanisms were institutional adaptations. It could be further argued that the new legislation was merely an attempt to align the mechanisms of the two institutional censorships, Films and Publications, so that they came to reflect one another more closely. The creation of an Appeal Board therefore already had its precedent in the mechanisms of another institution, one that had been in existence for longer and had been subject to less scandal and controversy; its adoption by the Censorship of Publications was an alignment of the two institutions' dependent paths.

Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen have posited some concepts that can more adequately explain this institutional change that occurs within a society with the absence of massive shock. They correspondingly propose a typology of five modes of institutional change.<sup>59</sup> First, displacement is a source of change in which “new models emerge and diffuse which call into question existing, previously taken-for-granted organisational forms and practices.”<sup>60</sup> According to this model, most of the change emanates from shifts in the societal balance of power. The second model, layering, accounts for overlapping responsibilities and roles with other institutions that cause one institution to affect another. The third, drift, is defined by moments when an institution is left alone to become irrelevant, making it prone to change and eventual eradication. Fourth, conversion, is defined by institutions transforming to undertake new purposes. And fifth, exhaustion, accounts for systemic incompatibility and the erosion of resources.

In terms of the 1946 Act, the changes that came about were the results of displacement, owing to the growing numbers of important people who were dissatisfied with the functioning of the institution. In order to prevent drift and exhaustion, changes were made to account more adequately for what were perceived to be the institution's failures. To some extent, layering was also a factor because of the conflicting roles that the Minister for Justice held as both censor and the means of appeal, as well as the increased demands that the censorship had upon his time and energy in distracting him from what might have been determined to be more important duties to other institutions.

The costs of change and the concept of increasing returns that Paul Pierson has persuasively theorised also factored into the changes that the 1946 Act imposed.<sup>61</sup> In effect, the institution as it was run under the 1929 Act was considered somewhat of a



failure. To continue along the path that had been set out in the original legislation would have cost the State in terms of the Government's decreased legitimacy. If too much of the population, or too many powerful segments of it, had complained for too long, the censorship would have made itself irrelevant, thereby providing a greater case for displacement and drift as reasons for instigating change. The cost of change was therefore diminished by the costs that would have been exacted had the censorship continued to function as it was. However, as the Minister for Justice was already the means for appeal, Boland was right to suggest that the creation of the Appeal Board was largely cosmetic – it gave the appearance of drastic change where no real change had occurred and thus silenced the State's critics for some time. The real change that was provoked was not, as it might be assumed, in the functioning of the Appeal Board as forcing some responsibility and care upon the Censorship Board in its initial decisions and in providing the public with a more visible counter-mechanism. Instead, the changes led to the Censorship Board's increased powers to ban with impunity.

*Towards the Breakdown of Institutional Censorship and its 1957 Reform*

The winds of change could be said to have blown through the Censorship Board just before the 1946 was passed into law. Upon the death of William Magennis at the beginning of the year, J.J. Pigott was named as his replacement on April 1. While Magennis had publicly demonstrated a concerted and ardent interest in censorship and a passionate understanding of literature, Pigott, a professor at St. Patrick's College in Drumcondra, was to be more secretive. Perhaps owing to Magennis' time spent as a member of the Oireachtas, there was a feeling that he should, to a certain extent, be

transparent in his discussions of censorship. His time and effort in the debates on the relevant legislation also made him aware of, and perhaps even sensitive to, the more liberal elements in Irish society in his regular debates with Keane. In contrast, Pigott had not the same level of investment in the institution and experience in being publicly confronted with oppositional views. As a professor at the leading teacher's college in Ireland that was rigidly under Church control, there would have been physical, material, emotional and spiritual reminders of whose norms and mores should dictate the lives of the Irish people.<sup>62</sup>

While Pigott took Magennis' empty seat, Father Joseph Deery, who had only joined the Censorship Board in February 1945, was appointed Chairman in March 1946. Although members would come and go over the following years, the three other main ones would be District Judge T.G. O'Sullivan, Christopher J. O'Reilly, and Dermot J. O'Flynn.<sup>63</sup> With these five members, the Censorship Board fell under the control of a cabal of the Knights of St. Columbanus, a conservative Catholic middle class group with direct ties to the Hierarchy.<sup>64</sup> Knights had always been an influential part of the Oireachtas. The organisation's biographer, Evelyn Bolster, has commented that their numbers and ideology affected the passing of the *Censorship of Publications Act*, the *Public Dance Halls Act, 1935*, and the budget levy of 1933.<sup>65</sup> Amongst the prominent politicians on the early roll call of the Knights were Sean T. O'Kelly, Gerald Boland, William Magennis, and Michael Tierney.<sup>66</sup> Gerard Whelan has argued that the group of Knights appointed to the Censorship Board in the 1950s was influential in affecting the direction the censorship took, but he did not have access to the Knights of St. Columbanus' headquarters in Ely House where a large dossier exists detailing the group's

efforts and interest in institutional censorship.<sup>67</sup> This dossier, when coupled with the materials found in other archival sources such as the National Archives and the Archives of the Dublin Diocese, shows the extent to which the organisation dictated the action of the Censorship Board and, in the end, ironically helped to liberalise the institution.

To understand just how much this new group affected the workings of the Censorship Board, it helps to detail the numbers of bannings involved. These figures are represented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Figures for the Censorship Board, 1946-54<sup>68</sup>

Year	Number of Books Examined	Number of Books Banned
1946	285	116
1947	317	164
1948	329	181
1949	304	166
1950	671	410
1951	717	539
1952	838	640
1953	1023	766
1954	1217	1034

For 1946, out of the 285 books that were examined, 116 were prohibited, figures that were much in keeping with the first fifteen years of the Censorship Board; the one appeal that was lodged, on behalf of Frank O'Connor's translation of *The Midnight Court*, was dismissed. For 1947, out of the 317 books that were examined, 164 were prohibited; the 136 appeals that were lodged brought about the revocation of 33, amongst them Sean O'Faolain's *Bird Alone*, Liam O'Flaherty's *The Puritan*, Sean O'Casey's *Pictures in the Hallway* and *I Knock at the Door*, and Austin Clarke's *The Singing-Men At Cashel*. The numbers were similar in 1948 and 1949. However, in the early 1950s, the numbers grew significantly, indicating that the Censorship Board was spiralling out of control. This

came to a head in 1954, what liberals looked on with shock as their *annus horribilus*: of the 1217 books examined, 1034 were banned.<sup>69</sup> For an unpaid group of volunteers who held paid positions of responsibility, this number represents an astonishing average of reading, or at least considering, more than three books per day. The Censorship Board could not have possibly examined so many books in their entirety and taken into consideration the potential merits of each work; as such, it is not surprising that so much analysis has focused on the Censorship Board in terms of its responsibilities and composite Catholic *habitus*.<sup>70</sup> But no study has focused on the increased numbers of books that had been submitted to the Censorship Board. By accounting for these two aspects together, one can begin to work towards a better understanding of how institutional censorship functioned.

As early as November 22, 1945, a directive was issued from Ely House ordering all Knights of St. Columbanus throughout Ireland to be aware that it was their collective “clear-cut duty” to notify the Supreme Executive of any obscene or indecent publications encountered.<sup>71</sup> In the wake of this directive, many of the Order’s lodges set up Evil Literature Committees.<sup>72</sup> While the Waterford Council feared that it would have to foot the expense of purchasing books for submissions with its complaints, it was reassured by a member of the Censorship Board that it only needed to complete the complaint form and the Censorship Board would obtain its own copy from a library and check the passages in question. This was undertaken because the Censorship Board was sensitive to the fact that the Waterford Council was “submitting so many books at a fairly heavy cost.”<sup>73</sup> The Knights assumed that because the complaints were being sent in centrally by the council’s secretary, in much the same manner as had been done under Francis

O'Reilly with the CTS, the Censorship Board was more flexible with regards to the process of submitting official complaints. In addition, the Waterford Council was also vigilant in its surveillance of local libraries and bookshops to ensure that the trade in and distribution of banned publications were being thwarted.

A more direct link between the activities of the Knights of St. Columbanus and the Censorship Board is evident in the correspondence of the autumn of 1949. On September 15, T.A. Buckley, a lawyer and member of the Order's Cork Council, wrote to Eugene Kavanagh, the Supreme Secretary, notifying him of an issue of *The Bookseller*.<sup>74</sup> In the August 13 issue, a report had quoted a British publisher as saying that the appeal mechanism was easily accessed and that a revocation was a foregone conclusion for only the cost of the deposit, which was promptly refunded, and six copies of the book in question. Kavanagh's response was blunt: "The Supreme Knight is taking a keen interest in this Censorship business. By the way, the Board consists of four members of the Order and one other – all Catholic. I shall forward your note to one of the Brothers for a reply and shall communicate with you when I hear from him."<sup>75</sup> The same day that Kavanagh responded to Buckley, he fired off a copy of his letter with the article to Professor B.F. Shields.<sup>76</sup> At this time, Shields was one of the members of the Censorship Board who was also a Knight. Shields confirmed that all publishers had had an easy time of appealing bans, providing a statistical chart that detailed which publishers had been successful. Of the fifteen applications for revocations received by publishers, thirteen had succeeded.<sup>77</sup> No mention was made of what the Cork Council did upon receiving news of this from Kavanagh, but it might be inferred from the increased numbers of publications submitted in the following years that some concerted effort went into

sending in a barrage of potentially obscene and indecent books to make up for the trickle of publications that were successfully appealed. In other words, if the appeal mechanism was going to function liberally, the conservative groups would swamp the Censorship Board and force it to act as a counter-balance. That the Supreme Knight from 1951 to 1957, Christopher J. O'Reilly, was a member of the Censorship Board during these same six years, suggests that there was a direct connection between the two groups and how they viewed themselves and their duties.

Buckley was involved in a similar case at the outset of 1951 when *The Bookseller* produced an article claiming that Nevil Shute's *A Town Like Alice*, which was possibly the biggest fiction seller of 1950, had had its Prohibition Order revoked when booksellers complained to the authorities that they had been stuck with hundreds of copies in stock.<sup>78</sup> Kavanagh forwarded the concern that booksellers and commerce were contravening law and morality to J.J. Pigott who in turn asked Brian MacMahon for some explanation. By this time working as the Secretary to both the Censorship Board and the Appeal Board, MacMahon called the report a "ridiculous fabrication," noting that under both the 1929 and 1946 Acts booksellers were not able to lodge appeals and that alerting authorities to stocks of banned books would have resulted in prosecution, not sympathetic lobbying on their behalf.<sup>79</sup> When other concerns warranted examination, Kavanagh sent his inquiries directly to MacMahon who then provided detailed responses, thereby suggesting that the Secretary of the censorship was either sympathetic to the Knights or a member himself.<sup>80</sup> While no follow up correspondence exists to show how exactly the Knights were promoting censorship and fighting evil literature on the ground level, the second instance of such concern expressed over the working of the Appeal Board demonstrates that there

was a degree of anxiety felt on the part of the Knights. The Appeal Board was therefore closely watched in the event it failed in its duties to the public. The suspicion in which the Knights held the Appeal Board was again apparent over the case of the periodical *Lilliput*, which had already been banned on two prior occasions and was complained of for a third in October 1951.<sup>81</sup> It was banned again, the Knights collectively expressing some frustration with the mechanisms of appeal and the censorship in not making the prohibition of periodicals permanent.<sup>82</sup>

Further concern about combating the more liberal elements in Irish society was raised in 1950. A member of the Order's Tyrone Council alerted Ely House that *The Bell* was to be issued again under the editorship of Peadar O'Donnell. "We have a suspicion that this magazine *may* not be up to the requirements of the Catholic Church," wrote C.E. Doherty, "and *we would appreciate your views on same.*"<sup>83</sup> Kavanagh responded: "If and when this magazine is published we shall keep a strict watch on its outlook."<sup>84</sup> Liberals were not only fought, they were held under suspicion as potential fifth columnists and, as such, their activities were closely monitored.<sup>85</sup>

Not surprisingly, a sort of informal censorship sprang up within the Knights. On November 13, 1952, D.J Ryan, a lawyer and Knight from Cork, expressed concern about a book entitled *The Encounter* that he had received as a member of The Catholic Book Club. He wrote:

I formed the opinion that it belonged to a type of literature that could not be passed on to the members of the family generally for the purpose of enjoyable and healthy reading. I also considered that it was the type of book which would could create in the minds of weak Catholics – even apart from non-Catholics – a poor opinion of our Catholic priests abroad. In short it is not the type of book which one would expect to receive from a really Catholic Book Club and it certainly falls far short of the standard

of any of the books by the Author referred to on the loose cover attached to same.

I would appreciate if you *would suggest to the Supreme Chaplain* to kindly let me have *his opinion* on the book, which has been referred to at our recent Council meeting at *CK 123*, and the members of which Council have requested me to let them have the report of *the Supreme Chaplain* when received.

Incidentally I am wondering *who exactly are the members of this Catholic Book Club Selection Committee* and if it would be possible to have included in same any members of our Organisation. Another member of our Council related that he had discontinued as a member some years ago as some of the books were so 'sexy' that he was afraid some of his children would read them.<sup>86</sup>

Michael J. Halloran, the Supreme Chaplain of the Knights, responded that the book was "unutterable tripe," an opinion that was seconded by another priest whose opinion he had solicited.<sup>87</sup> Because he believed that the Censorship Board would not condemn it, Halloran counselled members to ignore it, thereby displaying a degree of savvy on the part of the Knights who refused to give free publicity to a questionable book.

By 1954, the Knights had a well-organised secretive network functioning across the country in support of the censorship. On April 12, a Dublin Council submitted a list of eight proposals that were to lead to the more effective control of books and periodicals.<sup>88</sup> Amongst these proposals were possible amendments to the existing legislation that would include the licensing of bookshops and libraries, allowing the Censorship Board to examine publications on its own initiative, the obligation of all wholesalers and distributors of books and periodicals to have in their possession a current Register of Prohibited Publications with penalties applied to offending parties, the decentralisation of the Censorship Board to increase the interest of people in other parts of the country and facilitate submissions, tighter regulations for the importation of publications that would force parties to provide full inventories of their shipments to



officials with lists of authors and titles, and increased Gardai attention to enforce the existing laws. Reference to a 1951 plan was made, with details of how local groups could be better organised and put increased pressure on people in their areas to conform to the rigid literary morality sought and imposed by the Knights.<sup>89</sup> While no other mention to this plan exists in the Knights' dossier on censorship, because 1951 corresponds with the formation of the new Censorship Board that was controlled by the Knights and the massive increase in the number of examined and banned publications, the plan most likely outlined the procedures that local councils should take to submit questionable publications for consideration of prohibition. The proposals in the 1954 report went even further, asking members and councils to garner more interest and support at the ground level by selecting residents from their parishes to assist them with ferreting out evil literature and pressuring those who undermined the censorship through the sale and distribution of immoral publications to change their ways. Given the record bannings in the early 1950s, the Knights were far more effective at manipulating and supporting the censorship than was the CTS, although this stranglehold began to weaken in 1956 and was finally relinquished in 1957.

Coterminous to the efforts of the Knights was the work of other societies. In 1950, the Minister for Industry and Commerce had received deputations from the Periodicals' Association, the Catholic Writers' Association, Conradh na Gaeilge, and the National Protest Committee. The Minister was sympathetic to their concerns that Ireland was being swamped by immoral foreign publications that were hampering the success of native business and threatening the public. He correspondingly issued directives ordering restrictions on imported newspapers and periodicals and an increase in tariffs on these

goods.<sup>90</sup> However, these were challenged by the Minister for Justice who believed that the 1946 Act was a sufficient safeguard and that the authorities had been effectively carrying out their duties.<sup>91</sup> Another organisation, Boycott Objectionable Foreign Literature, was formed and met with the Taoiseach on May 20, 1953, to make a similar complaint and ask for increased State action. The Taoiseach, admitting that the problem of the importation of immoral publications existed, did not offer any solutions, noting only the failure of the group to have suggested its own concrete measures. The Minister for Justice, who was also present at the meeting, made the rather surprising claim “that the problem was one jointly for the Home, the School and the Church and he felt that if they could not solve it the State could not.”<sup>92</sup>

At this time, Archbishop John McQuaid took it upon himself to address de Valera directly. On November 14, 1953, he wrote a letter stating that at the recent general meeting of the Hierarchy he was deputed to ask the Taoiseach for a personal audience on “a matter of grave social import.”<sup>93</sup> A month later, de Valera responded that Customs Officers had received instructions to submit suspected publications to the Department of Justice and detain imports pending decisions from the Censorship Board and that the Gardai had been instructed to remind booksellers of their legal obligations to not sell prohibited books.<sup>94</sup> Though there is some indication that the two had met in the intervening time, there is no memorandum of this event. McQuaid wrote back to thank de Valera and note that he would pass on the information of these measures to the other bishops at the next meeting of the Standing Committee of the Hierarchy.<sup>95</sup>

McQuaid’s interest in censorship had been long-standing. In the two years before he was named as Archbishop in 1940, he submitted formal complaints about several

books to the Censorship Board. He marked up many of the pages of Hilde Spiel's *Flute and Drums*, calling it "[a] disquieting story of the amours of an amoral creature."<sup>96</sup> That same week in April 1939, he also submitted a marked copy of Howard Spring's *My Son! My Son!*, though without any comments appended.<sup>97</sup> In November, Louis Bromfield's *The Rain Came* was condemned for being "[a] very wretched work."<sup>98</sup> However, this was not enough to turn McQuaid away from ever attempting to read another book by Bromfield, for eleven months later he submitted a complaint about his *Night in Bombay* which he concluded was "[a] disquieting book of minimum morality."<sup>99</sup> Hugh Walpole's *The Sea Tower*, which he complained about the month before he became the Archbishop of Dublin, was the target of his most detailed and thoughtful critique:

The book is, of course, well written: a novel of character rather than of incident. The emphasis on things sexual in the outlook and character of the persons portrayed is quite undue and, at times, is very unpleasantly coarse. It varies, according to the persons described: sexual frustrations, (the maid), abandonment (the Captain), Lesbianism (the mother and daughter-in-law), needless references to married life's relations, and to irregular relations.<sup>100</sup>

The Censorship Board was of the same opinion on all five of the books; Prohibition Orders were issued for each one.

The close interest in the workings of censorship by the Archbishop of Dublin dated from the institution's origins. On being offered a position on the first Censorship Board, Father Patrick Boylan wrote to then Archbishop Edward Byrne to ask for his advice and guidance in the matter before accepting or refusing the offer.<sup>101</sup> Boylan wrote again a few years later asking the same when he was offered the position of Chairman of the Censorship Board.<sup>102</sup> On January 29, 1942, Gerald Boland wrote to Archbishop McQuaid asking for a nominee to replace Father Boylan.<sup>103</sup> McQuaid responded by

forwarding the name of Father J.P. Camac, who was promptly appointed.<sup>104</sup> And on May 19, 1945, the Department of Justice wrote asking McQuaid to nominate a successor to the late Father Camac.<sup>105</sup> Less than two weeks later, Boland appointed McQuaid's nominee, Father Joseph Deery.<sup>106</sup>

The main opponent that the Hierarchy and Catholic lay groups faced in the years following the passing of the 1946 Act was undoubtedly the importation, distribution and sale of immoral literature. However, one organisation that was native to Ireland soon gave them a reason for further concern: the Irish Association for Civil Liberty (IACL). Sean O'Faolain founded the IACL in 1948 in large part to combat the increasing strength of institutional censorship and the activities of the zealous, conservative sections of Irish society.<sup>107</sup> Much of the activities of the IACL are not documented, although they increasingly became the focus of the Hierarchy and the Knights of St. Columbanus.<sup>108</sup> In fact, what little exists in the way of documentation of the group's activities exists largely in the National Archives and, as though to offer further proof of the Church's anxiety, the Dublin Diocesan Archives.

The first mention of the IACL in either of these archives is not until eight years after its formation. In March and April of 1956, the IACL sent a letter to concerned citizens stating that it considered that there was a definite problem with the censorship, specifically with the banning of publications that had some literary merit. Accordingly, it attached a petition to the Taoiseach that asked people to sign and return to the IACL.<sup>109</sup> On April 21, they used the momentum generated by the campaign to hold a meeting at Dublin's famed Mansion House. The event was billed as a discussion on the theory and practice of censorship. Admission was free with the list of speakers including O'Faolain,

the playwright Denis Johnston, Professor James D. Smyth, a former member of the Censorship Board, Thomas Finlay, a member of the Oireachtas, Dr. Owen Sheehy-Skeffington, and Father Robert Burke-Savage, the censor of the Dublin Archdiocese.<sup>110</sup>

O'Faolain opened the meeting by emphasising that both he and the IACL accepted the principle of censorship in theory, but that they were against it as it was practiced institutionally in Ireland. Finlay claimed the State should use censorship as a defensive and not an offensive weapon. Censorship was necessary to protect the literate masses who had no formal education as their reading habits were in advance of their critical functioning. Smyth referred to his stint of three months on the Censorship Board in 1949 as necessarily coming to an end because of the way in which the other members interpreted and administered the Act. He noted that he had abstained from voting on at least two occasions because he had not read the novels in their entirety and spoke of the pressures placed upon the Censorship Board to read only the marked passages because of the volume of books before it. Johnston's main point was that he was absolutely against censorship, in both theory and practice, and claimed that the "conspiracy of silence" that pervaded at the time in Ireland that caused people not to discuss issues and matters of importance was a worse form of censorship than that practised by the State. Not surprisingly, Father Burke-Savage defended censorship, though he provided the caveat that his support was conditioned on it working "properly." The Censorship Board at that time was, according to him, functioning in this manner.<sup>111</sup>

Sheehy-Skeffington then stood to refute some of the typical arguments in support of censorship. Against the notion that the State must ban certain publications in order to protect the people's mental health, he argued that if such were the case then the State

should likewise ban everything that endangers physical health, such as cars, surgical instruments, and even canals and rivers. He then wondered how one could justify virtue being State-imposed, decrying the mistaken belief that people can make others virtuous by legislation and force. "I wonder how the Almighty, when he placed the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, did not have a committee of five sitting round Him," he said. "I would go so far as to say that I believe the power to resist temptation is a necessary part of virtue and it might even be part of the Eternal Plan which tolerates evil – evil could not exist if a Divine Creator did not tolerate it."<sup>112</sup>

O'Faolain ended the evening by denouncing the prevailing culture of informal censorship, what he referred to as "a sort of psychosis." Instead of the present structure of institutional censorship, he appealed for a return to the procedures of the British law in which an offending writer was brought before a judge and jury and had the right to face his accuser and defend himself and his work. He objected "strongly that the right given to an embezzler, a murderer or a prostitute should be denied to Irish writers." Furthermore, "It is not good for a country if the writers are not integrated into the life of the country. . . . That means that there is something radically wrong with a country."<sup>113</sup>

The IACL maintained its efforts in the months following this meeting. On July 6, Edgar Deale, the IACL's Secretary, sent John Costello, then the Taoiseach, the approximately 850 signatures of those who supported the organisation's petition that had been distributed in March and April.<sup>114</sup> In addition to repeating the request to initiate an investigation into the workings of the censorship, the IACL submitted a list of reputable authors and classic books that had been censored as well as a memorandum pertaining to the list. The memorandum consisted of five main points. First, the IACL pointed out

that “the serious reading public” resented the banning of such works but that it remained silent because of the acrimony conservative sections of Irish society would bring upon individuals who dared to openly challenge the system. Second, the practice was inoperable given the number of submissions the members of the Censorship Board were expected to read. Third, while the general public knew of such moral and social tensions as were presented in the list of banned books, the prohibition of these works suggested that the Censorship Board was out of touch with the realities of Irish life. Fourth, because large numbers of young people were forced to emigrate from Ireland annually, the Censorship might protect them and preserve their innocence in Ireland, but that this led to a dangerous ignorance when these people were exposed to the greater world. And fifth, the censorship as it was at this time functioning had brought international disrepute to Ireland, making it appear to be intolerant of freedom of expression and opinion.<sup>115</sup>

Deale sent Costello another letter on August 10 that included a report drawn up by the Legal Sub-Committee of the IACL containing suggestions for improvements to the legislation.<sup>116</sup> Amongst these was the suggestion that when a decision to ban a book was made by the Censorship Board, the author and publisher should be notified of the decision and have ten days to lodge an appeal. If the appeal were lodged within the given time, the Prohibition Order would not be published in *Iris Oifigiuil* until the appeal would be determined. This would allow the author and publisher to defend themselves before being publicly declared guilty. One of Father Burke-Savage’s suggestions from the April meeting also merited some consideration: that two Censorship Boards be created, one for periodicals and newspapers and the other for “more serious literature.” This would cut down on the immense responsibility of the Censorship Board and the number of books it

currently had to examine. Furthermore, members of the Censorship Board should not be allowed to serve more than one five-year term and the terms of each member should end on different years, therefore making for greater independence and less chance of a cabal forming. And finally, the illogical situation of demanding only one copy of a suspected book be submitted to the Censorship Board but six copies being demanded in order to legitimate an appeal made the matter of appeal economically inequitable.<sup>117</sup>

On September 3, the Minister of Justice responded to the Taoiseach on the matter of the IACL's campaign once he had the opportunity to examine its demands. While some of the propositions were dismissed as subversive attempts to undermine the censorship, others were thought to be good, though merely minor, cosmetic suggestions. These latter aspects were also dismissed, the reason being that they were *too* minor and therefore not warranting the time and effort that altering the Act would take.<sup>118</sup> The Department of the Taoiseach drafted a letter in response to the IACL on September 5, but Costello took more than two months to consider its contents. In the end, he opted to defer a response indefinitely unless the IACL contacted him again on the matter.<sup>119</sup> Although there is no letter to suggest that the IACL tried to contact the Taoiseach again, the negative tone of the unsent drafted letter suggests that the response that would have eventually been sent would not have met the expectations for change. However, by this time the IACL had turned to a different tactic.

In November, Christopher Gore-Grimes, a council member of the IACL, mentioned in a lecture to the Criterion Club in Dublin that he was hopeful that at least one of the two vacant positions on the Censorship Board would go to a religious minority as by this time Catholics had been solely represented on it for the past ten years.



Protestant representation, he noted, was in keeping with the traditional composition of the Censorship Board.<sup>120</sup> This was in response to the fact that Father Deery's position had been available since his last meeting on June 6 and T.G. O'Sullivan's since March 9. In the stead of these staunch, conservative Catholics with links to the Knights of St. Columbanus, two more liberal men were appointed on December 5: R.R. Figgis and A.F. Comyn.<sup>121</sup> Because only two dissenting voices were needed to overturn the decision of three members to ban a publication, this created a seismic shift in the way that the Censorship Board came to operate.

Over the course of the following months, the Censorship became divided into two factions: one composed of the old guard of conservative Knights of St. Columbanus accounting for Pigott, O'Reilly and O'Flynn, and the other composed of the more liberal Figgis and Comyn. Though the public was not at the time aware of it, these two factions came to loggerheads over the interpretation of how their duties were defined and how they viewed what was and was not indecent and obscene. The major sticking point was that Comyn and Figgis wished to read books in their entirety and take literary merit into account, whereas the other three men believed that an isolated questionable passage was reason enough to ban a book wholesale. In an undated, anonymous memorandum written in the early part of 1957 for McQuaid,<sup>122</sup> it was mentioned that a directive was issued to make the Catholic Action Societies sensitive to the efforts of the IACL to impede the working of the Censorship Board. The memorandum noted the fact that vacancies were created by the resignation of Father Deery and the death of O'Sullivan, believing that the purpose of the IACL's campaign had been to fill the vacancies with its nominees. "I am reliably informed that is what happened," the writer informed McQuaid. "And as matters

stand, the said two members, *are there*, to block (*or veto*) a majority decision. The number of prohibition-orders are nothing to what they were formally.”<sup>123</sup> Another anonymous, undated letter drafted around the same time noted the “campaign of vilification” against the Censorship Board by the IACL. Comyn and Figgis, it was charged, “seem to consider that their main duty is, not to protect the public from indecent literature, but to protect the authors and publishers of such from censorship, where any loophole or means of evasion can be found.”<sup>124</sup> Their decisions, that artistic merit should override moral matters, were based on their interpretation of Section 6 (2) of the 1946 Act that allowed for aesthetics to be considered. In the opinion of the author of the memorandum, “the presence of these two gentlemen on the Board at the same time, (or any two of the same kidney, for that matter) would mean a slow and painful (but not too slow) death for censorship.”<sup>125</sup>

By May 8, the more conservative faction of the Censorship Board could no longer sit in the same room with Figgis and Comyn because of their divergent views on how the institution should function. As Chairman, Pigott refused to hold any further meetings until things could somehow be resolved to align the views of the two factions or the Minister for Justice intervened. By this time, the Censorship Board had come under attack from all sections of society. The IACL had continued its campaign throughout the greater part of 1956 to have the composition of the Censorship Board changed to allow for more liberal views that were sympathetic to the arts and simultaneously criticised the system as unworkable. Choosing the lesser of the two evils the Minister for Justice had appointed Comyn and Figgis. Meanwhile, because there were not enough members of the Censorship Board to have a quorum from June to December, the number of

submissions and complaints of questionable publications had piled up. With the newly composed Censorship Board, decisions could not keep up with submissions because the new members refused to make decisions until they had read publications in their entirety. When Pigott chose to no longer hold Censorship Board meetings out of protest after May 1957, the summer dragged on without any further decisions rendered. Understandably, conservative pro-censorship sections of Irish society were infuriated at what they viewed as a year of wasted opportunity and the failure of the institution to properly function.<sup>126</sup> In this environment, censorship, which had always had its critics for being either too harsh or not harsh enough, was made into a farce. The authority of and confidence in Oscar Traynor, the Minister for Justice, would have been entirely eroded had this continued. But by September he had had enough and called Pigott into his office to rectify the situation.

While no record of Traynor's account of the meeting exists, Pigott submitted his version to McQuaid soon after Traynor had forced his resignation. Pigott appealed to the fact that meetings of the Censorship Board had not been called in four months because of the intransigence of Figgis and Comyn. These two men were accused of sharing the views of the IACL to consider works in their entirety as opposed to focusing on the marked passages, as had been the practice of the Censorship Board since Pigott had been a member. Comyn and Figgis, he emphasised, therefore regularly voted against the other three members. "If the authors happened to be persons of the standing of, say, Steinbeck or Huxley," wrote Pigott, "their names were sufficient to give them a free passage, however filthy the matter. It must be said, however, that in the case of books openly deriding chastity the two recalcitrant members voted with us and banned them."<sup>127</sup> Here,

recalcitrance is defined as a refusal to allow censorship to function smoothly by debating matters for too long as opposed to being rooted in a refusal to debate and discuss other aspects of a publication than what one might deem an indecent or obscene passage. He revealed that the difficulty arose mostly over “Freudian inspired novels where the obscenity was presented under the cloak of some social, political or military cause.”<sup>128</sup> The origins of indecency and obscenity were therefore being debated. The question was: were they a product of a writer or a given individual in society, or were they a product of that society? The more liberal members clearly held the latter viewpoint whereas the conservative members held the former. At issue, then, was whether this debate would be allowed into the greater reaches of Irish society so that questions could be raised as to how that society was structured or whether individuals would continue to be victimised, castigated, punished and rejected by their society for differing from its ideal norms.

Another point of debate was the question of omnibus volumes. The refusal of Comyn and Figgis to ban an omnibus volume that included already banned material by Steinbeck and Hemingway became the moment of truth for the Censorship Board. Pigott appealed to the Attorney General who informed the Censorship Board that it had to ban the book because “a publication which incorporates a prohibited book, clearly identifiable as such, is *ipso facto* itself a prohibited book.”<sup>129</sup> However, between the Censorship Board members this situation remained unresolved.<sup>130</sup> As such, Pigott met with Traynor in June regarding the intransigence of Comyn and Figgis.<sup>131</sup> Pigott reportedly showed Traynor some passages from books that Comyn and Figgis had refused to ban; apparently, Traynor was not impressed with Comyn and Figgis’ decisions.

Pigott claimed that this led to him asking the Minister to force the resignation of the other two men. But Traynor stated that, according to the law, he could not do so.

As no meetings were called over the summer, Traynor took matters into his own hands and summoned Pigott at the beginning of September. They discussed the matter of the deadlock, and at the end of their conversation, Traynor asked Pigott for his resignation. Pigott noted that he could not ask for a member's resignation, as he had stated at their last meeting. Traynor then asked Pigott what the attitude of O'Reilly and O'Flynn would be if Pigott were to resign, to which he responded that they would in all probability resign in protest of his treatment. At the end of their meeting, Traynor said he might be forced to dissolve and recompose the Censorship Board.<sup>132</sup>

The Government was apparently feeling some pressure to change the composition of the membership and, therefore, the working of the institution. A good deal of this pressure was felt from the IACL, but the attitude of the Fianna Fáil Government that took office in March was completely different to those that had preceded it. The Government elected in 1957 would, in the coming year, usher in the *First Programme for Economic Expansion* which saw Ireland make a concerted effort to attract business from abroad for the first time since independence. The opening of its borders would have to be aligned with a more open cultural mentality that a conservative Censorship Board would fight against. If Ireland was seen to be culturally insular and xenophobic, this might hurt the chances it had to bring multinational companies and transnational capital to its shores, thereby continuing the downward spiral of economic sluggishness and enforced mass emigration of the unemployed.

On September 9, Traynor wrote to Pigott asking him for his resignation.<sup>133</sup> Pigott submitted his resignation and Traynor accepted it. In the weeks afterwards, O'Reilly and O'Flynn also handed in their resignations. In the stead of these three men, Judge J.C. Conroy, F.T. O'Reilly, and Emma Bodkin were appointed on October 28. This was of significance: the members of the Knights of St. Columbanus had effectively relinquished the organisation's control of the Censorship Board by submitting their resignations. But given the line of questioning Traynor followed in the September meeting with Pigott, O'Reilly and O'Flynn would not have been reappointed when their terms were up: their eventual dismissal was a foregone conclusion. As such, their resignations as protests of the direction the institution of censorship was taking could be seen as a publicity stunt as much as a moral stance on what they viewed as a matter of grave importance to the spiritual well-being of Irish society. Furthermore, the appointment of Emma Bodkin was a radical departure from the past in that for the first time in the nearly three decades of its existence, a woman was incorporated into the structure of institutional censorship. The ramifications of this were its real and symbolic importance: not only was a woman being treated as equal as men in her ability to determine the degree to which a book was or was not obscene and indecent, she was also not considered needing protection by men from the potentially harmful effects of being exposed to such literature. In the eleven year period after the passing of the 1946 Act, the institution had therefore undergone further changes without the need of legislative amendments.

The changes that affected the institution of censorship during this period were the results of changes in personnel as opposed to the structure and machinery of the censorship. However, the creation of the Appeal Board might account for some of the

increased numbers of bannings that occurred in the wake of the 1946 Act. By allowing for a more visible appeal mechanism that, unlike the Minister for Justice under the 1929 Act, was not conflicted in its duties, the new legislation perhaps gave the Censorship Board a sense that being overly tough on literature in issuing Prohibition Orders was acceptable because authors and publishers now had a clearly defined means to lodge an appeal and have the decision overturned. If the Censorship Board's actions were inappropriate, the Appeal Board would rectify this afterwards. Such a mentality might be labeled "ban 'em all and ask questions later." But there are other extenuating circumstances that also need to be considered.

The increase in bannings was in large part the direct result of an increase in the number of complaints submitted to the Censorship Board. This suggests one of two possibilities: either there was a definite increase in the amount of questionable publications or there was a large and zealous section of Irish society that took its duties to submit claims about such publications seriously. The answer to which is correct actually lies somewhere between the two: in the post World War II era paper and printing technology were cheaper and more abundant than they had been during the war years, thus allowing for more people to produce more materials, and, as the efforts of the Knights throughout the 1940s and 1950s show, there was a concerted effort on their part to combat evil literature.

The change in personnel in 1956, with the appointments of Figgis and Comyn, was simply in keeping with the way the institution had been run in other years, people replaced once they stepped down. It was up to the discretion of the Minister for Justice whom he should appoint in their stead. Though the actions of the IACL would have

helped provide an impetus for the appointments of these two men, there had to have been a widespread call for a more liberal society. A part of this might have been the residual disgust elicited in some corners over the fallout of the Mother and Child Scheme of 1951 in which Dr. Noel Browne's attempts to institute a form of universal health care was crushed by the Hierarchy because of its fears of losing control and authority over the female reproductive system.<sup>134</sup> A clearer division between Church and State was needed to placate a growing number of people in Irish society who saw their civic rights being infringed upon by a group that was supposed to be the guardian of the spiritual health of its followers. Furthermore, because of the massive number of bannings, most glaringly in the first five years of the 1950s, the institution was beginning to lose its legitimacy as it was impossible for members of the Censorship Board to say that they had truly given thoughtful consideration to that many books in such a constrained period of time. The changes that occurred in the composition of the Censorship Board were therefore the result of both internal factors (the resignation and death of members) and external factors (the appointment of new members by the Minister for Justice and the louder call for a more liberal institution).

The challenge that this scenario presents for institutionalists is evident. How is one to explain the ease with which the institution was changed if institutions are defined by their ability to withstand change? Again, the concept of a punctuated equilibrium can be rejected. There was no massive external shock that altered Irish society and caused it to change the institution to make it workable under these changed circumstances. The changes that occurred to the institution came from within Ireland. In some respect, the notion of increasing returns can explain why the change in personnel to make the



Censorship Board more liberal was required. With Irish society becoming increasingly more liberal itself and with Government policy adopting neo-liberal economic reforms, the institution had to come into alignment with this outlook in order to maintain its legitimacy; had it continued along the same path of the early 1950s, it would have become an anachronism and the site of some form of cultural revolution.

But how could it have changed in its workings so radically that it was banning but a fraction of the books it was only a few years earlier with only the change to its personnel? If an institution is as stable as theorists claim it is, should it not be able to continue functioning in the same manner despite personnel changes? The answer to these questions is that one of the primary weaknesses of institutional theory and the literature that applies to empirical evidence is that studies of institutions have been confined to focus on what might be defined as "hard institutions." Hard institutions include systems of health and education. Because of their sheer size, they are hard, more readily resistant to change. What one hospital administrator or a group of doctors or nurses or orderlies does has very little effect upon how the overall institution of public health functions. Small changes might be evident in the environment directly surrounding these people as a result of their actions or beliefs, but the system itself remains unchanged as a whole unless, with time and proven results, a domino effect occurs.

To contrast, censorship should be thought of as a "soft institution." A soft institution differs from a hard one in terms of the numbers of people involved in it; it is more readily affected by changes in its personnel because there are so few. In the case of censorship, only five people form the Censorship Board and only four are needed for a quorum. Only three people decide to ban a book and only two are needed to challenge

and overturn this decision. Likewise, the Appeal Board only needs four people to have a quorum and three to issue a Revocation Order. The change of even one member can cause a shift in the way that the institution works, making it either more or less conservative. Because of this, soft institutions are much more susceptible to change than are hard ones. But this does not mean that they are without any structure and stability. As the 1929 and 1946 Acts demonstrate, there are very clear rules that guide the actions of the institution. And the fact that the various Censorship Boards acted in the same manner over the course of the first sixteen years reveals that there was a high degree of stability, at least in terms of the number and percentages of books banned annually. Furthermore, the massive bannings that were attributed to the Censorship Board of the early 1950s could, as stated earlier, be just as easily attributed to the increased number of submissions as it could to the belief system of the members.

It must be remembered that the *habitus* that guides members is partly that which has formed them in their daily lives. This is to be expected, especially when one accounts for the subjective nature of defining the terms “obscene” and “indecent” that informs one’s interpretation of the publications under consideration and one’s duties to the larger society served in the position of censor. But the seriousness that the members, regardless of their political, philosophical or religious beliefs, displayed at different moments reveals that there was an institutional *habitus* at work too, one that dictated a high degree of professionalism in deciding the moral and legal fitness of a given publication and weighing the possible effects of allowing the given work to circulate amongst their fellow citizens.

*Weathering the Final Campaign Against Evil Literature*

With the appointments of the new members of the Censorship Board in October, the stirrings of trouble quickly took the form of a tidal wave. Hints of this coming trouble can be traced to a letter of November 7 in which one of the provincial councils of the Knights of St. Columbanus sent a letter to Ely House asking for the reason behind the resignation of the three Knights from the Censorship Board.<sup>135</sup> There was a sense that the Knights in question had betrayed the membership which was confused over the relinquishment of control. The letter also demonstrates that the Knights' control of the Censorship Board was an open secret that the more conservative sections of Irish society counted on in order to further shape and influence the national culture. The response to this inquiry is also telling: it noted that the three members resigned in order to call into question the legitimacy of the current Censorship Board and hopefully force the Minister to dissolve it and reconstitute a new one along the lines of the old one.<sup>136</sup> As this did not occur, a new strategy was needed. Some hints of this strategy were mentioned in a letter of November 29 issued from Ely House, in which Dermot O'Flynn was said to be very concerned with and energised by the increased presence of doubtful literature. By this time, he had already "contacted Schools, Unions and various societies and bodies in an effort to create a certain amount of public opinion," and anything that members could do to help create "this public opinion would be very welcome."<sup>137</sup> This was followed by a directive sent to the Grand Knights of councils across the country to ensure that their members were vigilant in their respective communities by continuing their duties to ferret out evil publications in libraries and bookshops.<sup>138</sup>

McQuaid finally emerged from the shadows and publicly launched a new campaign against evil literature on December 3. Speaking to a conference of the leaders of the Catholic Youth organisations of Dublin, which catered to more than twenty thousand children, he mentioned the increasing number of “foul books” on sale in the city. In response, a resolution urging the authorities to take immediate and direct action against this threat was passed unanimously.<sup>139</sup> The next day, Pigott issued a press release in the form of an interview with the *Irish Independent*. Much of the text of the interview was a recapitulation of the memorandum Pigott had submitted to McQuaid, with the one difference being that he publicly referred to the IACL as “the traditional enemies of censorship.”<sup>140</sup> This fact, coupled with the timing of the interview one day after McQuaid made the first public charge against a renewed influx of evil literature that was inundating Ireland, suggests that Pigott’s memorandum in conjunction with the composition of the new Censorship Board had spurred McQuaid to action. In turn, it seems that McQuaid had convinced Pigott to take his story public to garner the momentum needed to wage a successful campaign.

The success of the campaign’s launch is evident in the reaction it evoked from politicians. Phelim Calleary, a deputy in the Fianna Fáil Government, broached the subject in the Dáil on the same day as Pigott gave his statement, asking Traynor, his own Minister for Justice, about the Censorship Board, specifically how many publications had been banned by it in the years since 1954. Traynor, who was barraged with more questions about the effectiveness of the Censorship Board as it was currently composed, announced that the figures for the number of publications banned in 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957 were 1045, 537, 323 and 75, respectively. When pressed on the fact that these

figures revealed a decreasing efficiency, he responded that the machinery remained unchanged during these years and that the numbers dropped starkly because there were very few Censorship Board meetings held during the previous two years. He reminded his colleagues that this was due to the fact that at different times there were not enough members to have a quorum and the Chairman refused to hold meetings. The current Censorship Board had Traynor's full confidence and, he believed, would justify his confidence once it was given enough time to demonstrate its professionalism.<sup>141</sup>

In a statement to the press, O'Faolain issued a counter-attack by refuting Pigott's claims. He criticised Pigott for labelling the IACL as an enemy of censorship, noting how the organisation had always stated its acceptance of some form of censorship as being necessary, especially with the growth of the pornography industry; however, it had long been critical of how the censorship was structured and functioned in Ireland, citing the prohibition of books by twelve Nobel Laureates and scores of authors of world repute as evidence of the institution's shortcomings. He then praised the Minister for Justice for upholding and defending the Act from those who ignored its central tenet that demanded that censors seriously consider works for their aesthetic qualities.<sup>142</sup>

A series of letters to the editor brought the debate between Pigott and the IACL to the public over the course of the next month.<sup>143</sup> Owen Sheehy-Skeffington, a prominent member of the IACL and a senator, questioned the professionalism of Pigott and the work of the Censorship Board when he was a member, noting the impossible task of reading all of the books that had been submitted during that period in their entirety.<sup>144</sup> Edgar Deale, the IACL's secretary, corrected Pigott's comment in his press release that claimed that the IACL now controlled the Censorship Board, noting that none of the five

censors were members.<sup>145</sup> Pigott responded to Sheehy-Skeffington, charging that he belonged “to the liberal school of thought – that school which would substitute the authority of man for that of God and asserts that every individual is free to do whatever he wishes, provided it is not obviously against the common good.”<sup>146</sup> Sheehy-Skeffington readily accepted the label of liberal, and claimed that Pigott must have secretly deplored “the Creator’s behaviour in making the forbidden fruit so freely and dangerously accessible in the Garden of Eden, contenting Himself with bestowing a liberal free will on Adam and Eve and actually enjoining and expecting them to be virtuous by free choice.”<sup>147</sup> He then facetiously pointed out that every book MacMahon had passed him for consideration he banned: “In such circumstances, I am surprised that he never absentmindedly banned the board’s minute book instead of signing it.”<sup>148</sup> Not surprisingly, Pigott took exception to this description of him.<sup>149</sup> Sheehy-Skeffington, however, refused to relent: “Professor Pigott must allow me to assure him that liberalism no more necessarily leads to the sexual orgies of his fevered imagination than the acceptance of Catholicism necessarily leads to burning women alive as a public spectacle for the greater glory of God.”<sup>150</sup> The “anti-liberal totalitarians of Church and State,” he concluded, did more to foster evil than to fight it.<sup>151</sup> Pigott, perhaps realising the futility of his position given the direction in which Irish society was changing, conceded that the two men were so far apart in opinion that any further debate was pointless.<sup>152</sup>

At the time that this debate was taking place, the Government was being swamped by sections of the public that sided with McQuaid as a part of a renewed campaign against evil literature. Letters poured into the Taoiseach’s office from the Catholic Youth groups that were present for McQuaid’s lecture on December 3. Amongst those who

protested were the Father Aloysius Girls Club,<sup>153</sup> the Catholic Youth Council (which represented the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Boys' Clubs, Society of St. John Bosco Boys' Clubs, Legion of Mary Boys' Clubs, and Parish and Special Boys' Clubs),<sup>154</sup> Christ the King Girls' Club,<sup>155</sup> St. Philomena's Girls' Club,<sup>156</sup> the Dominican College Past Pupils' Union,<sup>157</sup> the Dominican Convent Cabra Past Pupils' Union,<sup>158</sup> and the St. Joseph's Catholic Boys' Brigade.<sup>159</sup> The Minister for Justice was placed in charge with responding to these letters. The form-letter response noted that the Gardai were as informed as ever in their duties to be on the look out for indecent and obscene publications and that the reality of the matter was that there was no evidence to sustain the claims being made that there was evil literature being sold in Ireland. Each group was asked to provide hard evidence if it had it. In the end, the groups were told that now that the Censorship Board was operable again, the potential for the circulation of questionable literature would be diminished.<sup>160</sup>

The Government, aware that its letters of response would do little to dissuade these groups, held a meeting on December 31 to discuss the matter. De Valera asked those present for their advice in how best to proceed, suggesting that perhaps a public statement should be issued and that the Gardai should visit bookshops suspected of selling immoral publications and prosecute offenders. No decision was reached and the matter was left alone until January 6, 1958, when de Valera spoke with Traynor about the possibility of instructing the Gardai to increase their presence in bookshops. Traynor was against the idea, stating that the Gardai had enough work at present and that if the public was interested and concerned in such literature, people only had to submit complaints to the Censorship Board.<sup>161</sup>

Regardless as to the action that the Government was taking or was going to take, the Knights of St. Columbanus continued its campaign throughout the country. Letters reporting on the successful lobbying of booksellers were sent to Ely House throughout January and February. The Youghal Council, for one, noted that its members had investigated locally and though they had yet to find anything incriminating they would remain vigilant.<sup>162</sup> Similar letters were sent in from Nenagh,<sup>163</sup> Castleblayney,<sup>164</sup> Athlone,<sup>165</sup> Navan,<sup>166</sup> Tralee,<sup>167</sup> and Belmullet.<sup>168</sup> The Knights also enlisted the help of D.J. Bridgeman, who was the Secretary of the Irish Retail Newsagents', Booksellers' and Stationers' Association (IRNBSA) and had spoken on the organisation's behalf over thirty years earlier when he appeared before the Committee on Evil Literature in 1926. Bridgeman assured the Knights that on the matter of evil publications he was working "in his own quiet way" to support the Knights' cause.<sup>169</sup> On January 22, the IRNBSA issued a public statement that its members were against evil publications and would continue to help combat the menace. It further suggested that importers should have to be licensed to ensure that no such publications mistakenly found their way onto their shelves.<sup>170</sup> At the end of February, another directive was issued from Ely House encouraging local councils to remain active and to send any questionable publications to the Censorship Board.<sup>171</sup>

By this time, other groups had begun to get involved. On January 16, Dublin City Council adopted a resolution stating that its members were concerned with the harmful effects of the increasing amount of undesirable literature being imported into the country, asking the Government to take the necessary measures to rectify the situation.<sup>172</sup> In a letter sent on January 30, William MacNeely and James Fergus, the Bishops of Raphoe and Achonry, respectively, wrote to de Valera on behalf of the Hierarchy. During the



meeting of the Standing Committee of the Hierarchy held on January 14, the issue of evil publications was given much consideration. While the bishops were aware that the existing legislation was adequate, they felt that the regulations to enforce it were not being energetically applied by the present Censorship Board. In order to remedy this situation, the bishops suggested several possible amendments to the legislation, amongst them increasing the membership of the Censorship Board to twenty people and having several committees of three decide the fate of books in order to cope with the number of complaints submitted.<sup>173</sup> The letter was a surprisingly clumsy effort on the part of the Hierarchy to affect the workings of the institution. Given that the suggested amendments to the legislation resembled in some ways those from other groups who in the past had sought to change the institution but to no avail, there was little chance that the Government would supplicate itself before the Hierarchy. Despite this, de Valera sent an immediate response to MacNeely and Fergus saying that he was carefully considering the subject and suggestions of their letter.<sup>174</sup>

Meanwhile, the Hierarchy continued to wage the campaign against evil literature in the public sphere. At the same time as they sent their letter to de Valera, MacNeely and Fergus issued a statement on behalf of the Hierarchy to the press. Contrary to all reports and Government papers, they noted that the complaints of an increase in evil publications in Ireland were "confirmed by the strongest evidence."<sup>175</sup> They made the further unfounded link of literature to the growth of juvenile delinquency and the decline of moral standards in Ireland. Stating the belief that Irish Catholics were especially moral, they concluded by reminding parents to be vigilant in warning their children about the dangers of evil books to their spiritual welfare and keeping them under close

supervision.<sup>176</sup> Two weeks later, in his Lenten pastoral Dr. Lucy, the Archbishop of Cork and the Apostolic Administrator of Ross, “warned that it was grievously sinful to write, and it might lead to grievous sin to read, any book or paper that was in any way indecent.”<sup>177</sup> The Lenten pastoral of Dr. Rodgers, the Bishop of Killaloe, gave similar warning, also singling out travelling vendors of the Bible and books that purported to deal with spiritual matters.<sup>178</sup> The concern seems to have been that these books might have been subversive because they had yet to pass through the proper channels to receive the *imprimatur*. Other bishops, such as those of Killala and Clonfert, made more indirect attacks against evil literature by addressing the rise of immorality and materialism and the need for Catholics to reject temptation.<sup>179</sup> The Government, however, was trying to remain out of the public spotlight and figure out the best way in which it should proceed.

There was some examination of the Censorship Board and its members at this time, suggesting that the Government wished to assure itself that it was protected from charges against it being weak on censorship and in effect abetting the importation, sale and circulation of evil literature. On February 4, Traynor wrote to de Valera to state his belief that there was no increased threat; rather, it was a conspiracy created and supported by the Catholic organisations that were whipped into their frenzy by McQuaid’s lecture on December 3. McQuaid, Traynor believed, was acting out of pettiness, feeling slighted at not being consulted on the recent appointments. Traynor counselled that unless the campaign was met with full force by the Government, it would do serious damage to it. In reviewing the bishops’ letter of January 30, Traynor noted that the initial criticism of the Censorship Board was directed at the appointments of Comyn and Figgis, who were given the positions under the Fine Gael Government led by Costello. By showing

Costello this attack of his decision-making, de Valera, Traynor suggested, could enlist the other major party in the Dáil to help counter the power that the Hierarchy held. He noted that it was important for “the responsible members of the various parties in the Dáil to the support of the institutions of the State so that the Hierarchy may be led to see at the outset that this Government and those which preceded it were carrying out their duties faithfully in accordance with the powers conferred on them.”<sup>180</sup> Traynor ended by assuring de Valera that he “took particular pains to select persons to whom the Church authorities could not possibly take exception.”<sup>181</sup> It is therefore understandable that one internal memorandum on the matter noted that the crisis was yet “[a]nother Coalition mess left behind for Fianna Fáil to clear up.”<sup>182</sup>

Taking Traynor’s advice, de Valera held a private meeting with Costello on February 10. Costello assured de Valera that he had confidence in the Censorship Board as it was currently constituted, implying that he would support the Government and not resort to political opportunism by criticising its decisions in the matter.<sup>183</sup> The following month, on March 8, de Valera sent a long and thoughtful letter to Archbishop Fergus. While he noted that there was no evidence to conclusively prove that there had been an increase in the number of evil publications in Ireland, he believed that if this were the case it was because of the difficulties concerning the membership and functioning of the Censorship Board. The Hierarchy would not have been able to dispute this claim and in fact it placed some of the responsibility for the problem on those they had supported because there were meetings not held owing to the intransigence of Pigott when he was Chairman. The Gardai were also defended as performing their jobs with exemplary professionalism, as was the Censorship Board which, de Valera said, was working

“harmoniously” since its reconstitution in October 1957, and each member was conscientious in undertaking his and her duties. The suggestion that more members should work in groups was untenable, as it would then be difficult for the institution to maintain uniformity in its decisions and would therefore open it up to adverse criticism. In the end, the onus for making the problem of obscene and indecent literature disappear was placed on the Hierarchy and its followers, for they were told that if they would make complaints, the Censorship Board would give them serious consideration.<sup>184</sup>

Unfortunately for Traynor, Joseph Blowick, a deputy representing Clann na Talmhúain, the farmers’ party, was not reined in by either Costello or de Valera. On May 1, he asked Traynor during question period to state the number of books and periodicals waiting consideration by the Censorship Board as of October 1, 1957, and April 1, 1958, and submitted and dealt with from October 1957 to March 1958. The figures Traynor provided in response demonstrated that the Censorship Board had not been able to keep up with the amount of publications being submitted to it.<sup>185</sup> On May 20, Blowick asked Traynor if, considering the figures he provided, he believed the Censorship Board was adequate to deal expeditiously with the number of works referred to it. Traynor reiterated his confidence in the Censorship Board, noting that sometimes delays could not be avoided owing to logistics, but that this was not the fault of the censors themselves.<sup>186</sup> On July 10, Blowick made one last attempt to make leeway in the matter, asking Traynor to provide amending legislation to combat the increased circulation of evil literature; again, Traynor noted that the machinery was sufficient, that the Censorship Board was capable as it was currently composed, and that any complaints about specific cases should be submitted for consideration.<sup>187</sup> While Blowick’s actions might be thought to

be the product of an independent spirit who was not of either of the two major parties and therefore out of the sphere of influence of both Costello and de Valera, his questions were actually a part of the Knights' final attempts to discredit the Censorship Board. On May 16, a letter was sent from M.L. Burke, the Knights' Supreme Secretary at the time, to Blowick that included the comments and questions he had agreed to ask in the Dáil on the organisation's behalf. Blowick, it turns out, was a member in good standing of the Knights' Claremorris Council.<sup>188</sup>

The efforts by Blowick were merely the fizzling out of the last great campaign waged against evil literature by the conservative Catholic sections of Irish society. After de Valera's letter to the Hierarchy on March 8, McQuaid and his colleagues no longer pursued the Government. Their Lenten Pastorals in mid-February were the last public statements in support of the campaign. The fact that after this time few letters were sent to de Valera from the various Catholic organisations and lay groups suggests that they were reconciled to the Government's position. Traynor's strategy of staying on message and displaying continued solidarity amongst the two major parties had won out. Being politically savvy people, the bishops would have understood this and decided to wait and see what the results of the new Censorship Board would be if it was given time to prove itself. In the end, it would not be liberal in a contemporary sense, but it was liberal relative to how the preceding Censorship Boards had operated.<sup>189</sup> In the meantime, the bishops, especially McQuaid, were busy in another censorship controversy: the refusal to bless the 1958 *An Tóstal* theatre festival. The festival's decision to stage Sean O'Casey's *The Drums of Father Ned* and a dramatic adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* led to its ultimate collapse.<sup>190</sup> Perhaps the Hierarchy was merely flexing its muscles in this milieu

having realised that it had indefinitely lost control of and influence with the Censorship Board and feeling the need to have its power publicly acknowledged. For the bishops, the censorship was thereafter resistant to their whims.

While the institution of censorship had shown itself to be somewhat malleable during the changes that took place to its composition in 1956 and 1957, it demonstrated a degree of stability in weathering the attacks launched at it during the campaign in the winter of 1957-8. This stability was the result of several factors. First, the new Censorship Board was not exactly libertarian: in its first five years, from 1958 to 1962, it banned an average of 395 books per year.<sup>191</sup> These numbers were closer to how the Censorship Board of the late 1940s performed, with the caveat that the percentage of books banned out of those examined had shrunk significantly. The newly composed Censorship Board was therefore not all that much different to those that had come before it in terms of its willingness to ban books, only now it took artistic and literary merit into account in its decisions which caused it to ban fewer modern classics. There was therefore a high degree of institutional stability despite a more liberal outlook on the part of the censors. Because of this, the Government could justify its confidence in the new Censorship Board as not in any way undermining the institution.

Second, there was a closing of ranks in Government circles led by Oscar Traynor, who as Minister for Justice was responsible for the workings of the Censorship Board and the appointment of its membership. Censorship had already proven itself to be a "soft" institution and Traynor, well aware of this fact, sought to protect it from outside manipulation. Gone was the cabal of the Knights of St. Columbanus and, as Edgar Deale had pointed out, no members of the IACL were represented either. Censors would not be

immune from the pressures of groups within their communities, and castigation and ostracism were real threats from those who strayed too far away from the still fairly conservative norms of Irish society. However, members, in not being closely associated with any of the major social organisations that professed interest in the functioning of censorship, would more likely take on the *habitus* of the institution in their decision-making process than that of either the Knights or the IACL. There would still be the religious *habitus* to contend with for those censors whose notions of indecency and obscenity were guided by the rules of the Church as opposed to the laws of the State. But if these became problematic for the institution, the Government had demonstrated that it would act quickly to rectify the matter in attempting to ensure that decisions were dictated by a secular and civic concept of morality, and not a morality guided by a religious body.

By ensuring the stability of the institution, the Government ensured its own legitimacy and stability. It showed that it could stand up to the moral authority of the powerful Catholic Church and win in an area that was defined by norms and mores and in turn further defined the norms and mores of Irish society. The dividing line between what was and was not banned, however imperfect it might have been drawn owing to changes in the composition of the Censorship Board and the dependence upon books being submitted in official complaints, helped determine how Irish identity was being constructed by the State. The relative stability of the institution, in terms of the numbers of pornographic books prohibited, demonstrates that there were unchanging norms and mores. Equally, the more subtle changes that occurred over time, in terms of the percentages of books banned to those examined and the consideration of aesthetic merit,

reveal fault lines in which the definition of what it meant to be Irish was constantly shifting, however slightly.

The institution of censorship was both a lodestar and a litmus test: it enforced the official State definition of Irishness upon the people but it was simultaneously shaped and informed by the norms and mores of the society it served. This easy ebb and flow between the institution and society, the ready manipulation and reform of the institution by the Government, and the enormous impact of so few people within the institution all lead to the definition of censorship as a “soft” institution. Being widely recognised as a “soft” institution, one that could be affected relatively easily by pressure and influence, it became the site of much cultural debate and struggle. Its importance as a means of both shaping and reflecting the nation’s culture is measured in the length and heatedness of the debates and struggles it engendered, and the cast of characters – leading politicians, Church authorities and artists – who dedicated to it so much of their time and energy.

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<sup>1</sup> Sean O’Faolain, “Letter to the Editor,” *Irish Times*, October 19, 1942. O’Faolain continued his attacks during the debates, which he followed closely. See Sean O’Faolain, “Letter to the Editor,” *Irish Times*, December 8, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> R. Jacob, “Letter to the Editor,” *Irish Times*, October 21, 1942.

<sup>3</sup> “Censorship of Books: How System Works,” *Irish Times*, October 28, 1942.

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Lalor, “Letter to the Editor,” *Irish Times*, October 30, 1942. Another writer supported Lalor’s comments. See “Meself,” “Letter to the Editor,” *Irish Times*, November 2, 1942. “Meself” was even more direct than Lalor, explicitly shaming the Government and society for focusing on a cultural matter while much more pressing social evils, such as poverty and starvation, were left unattended to.

<sup>5</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 27, November 18, 1942, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-1.

<sup>9</sup> “State’s Best Seller,” *Irish Times*, December 4, 1942.



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<sup>10</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 27, November 18, 1942, 21.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-5. While the ensuing debate reveals that the most direct and only stated concern was with the reference to homosexuality, Jana Fischerova, in a paper delivered at UCD's "An Evening with Kate O'Brien" in January 2005, persuasively argued that there were other aspects that were equally subversive to the official nationalism of the State. The argument that appeals for more nuanced readings of banned books is further supported in Chapter Seven.

<sup>14</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 27, November 18, 1942, 25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-6.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-86.

<sup>22</sup> This had a particular resonance at this time given that the official Irish policy on World War Two was neutrality.

<sup>23</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 27, November 18, 1942, 66.

<sup>24</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Short Story*.

<sup>25</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 27, December 2, 1942, 122-73.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 171.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-84.

<sup>30</sup> Liam O Buachalla attempted to refute the Irish interest in such literature, stating that it is imported but not necessarily desired by the public. Rowlette counter-argued that the successful sale of such products proved that there was a ready market for it. *Ibid.*, 177-8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-80.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, December 3, 1942, 256-9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1942, 300-6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, December 3, 1942, 268-76.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1942, 277-8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 306-28.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, April 19, 1944, 1361.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, June 20, 1944, 1422.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1426.

<sup>43</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 98, October 10, 1945, 52-3. In an interview with the *Irish Times*, Sean O'Faolain approved of the impending legislation because of its allowance for a more clearly defined appeal mechanism but was hesitant in his approval because he wished to see how exactly it was to be structured. See "New Book Censor Bill Likely," *Irish Times*, October 10, 1942.

<sup>44</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 98, October 17, 1945, 320.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1945, 511-2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 516-7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, November 7, 1945, 786-7.

<sup>50</sup> *Seanad Debates*, Vol. 30, November 14, 1945, 931-1004.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 941-65.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 965-75.

<sup>53</sup> *Censorship of Publications Act, 1946*, 3 (1).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 (1).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 (d and e).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 (2). Incredibly, this section of the Act also suggests to one who might be caught entering the country with a prohibited book that it would "be a good defence for him to prove that the book or periodical publication was imported otherwise than for sale or distribution or that it was not a prohibited book or prohibited periodical at the time he ordered it."

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

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<sup>58</sup> Siobhán Harty, "Theorizing Institutional Change." André Lecours similarly describes this process as "institutional adjustment." André Lecours, "Structuring Nationalism."

<sup>59</sup> Wolfgang Streek and Kathleen Thelen, "Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economics," 19-29.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics"; and Paul Pierson, "The Limits of Design: Explaining Institutional Origins and Change," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 94, No. 2 (June 2000), 251-67.

<sup>62</sup> The proximity of St. Patrick's to the Archbishop of Dublin's palace would only have enforced these connections: the college is situated in a valley with the palace located at the top of one of the surrounding hills.

<sup>63</sup> Adams, *Censorship*, 246.

<sup>64</sup> For an early and extremely sympathetic treatment of the Knights, see Evelyn Bolster, *The Knights of St. Columbanus* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979). The promotional brochure that the Knights provided me when I visited Ely House in the summer of 2005 states: "The aim of the Knights is to maintain our country Christian in outlook, thought and action." One of the main activities the organisation undertakes "is to counteract the proliferation of non Catholic ideas in every sphere of life, local or national." *The Knights of St. Columbanus: Order of Catholic Laymen*.

<sup>65</sup> Evelyn Bolster, *The Knights of St. Columbanus*, 51.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>67</sup> Gerard Whelan, *Spiked: Church-State Intrigue and The Rose Tattoo* (Dublin: New Island, 2002), 195-308.

<sup>68</sup> These figures are taken from the following sources: "Annual Reports of the Censorship of Publications Board and of the Censorship of Publications Appeal Board, for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1946 and 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1947," JUS 90/102/232, NAI; "Annual Reports of the Censorship of Publications Board and of the Censorship of Publications Appeal Board, for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1948 and 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1949," JUS 90/102/232, NAI; "Annual Reports of the Censorship of Publications Board and of the Censorship of Publications Appeal Board, for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1950 and 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1951," JUS 90/102/232, NAI; "Annual Report of the Censorship of Publications Board, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1952," JUS 90/102/231, NAI; "Annual Report of the Censorship of Publications Board, for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1953," JUS 90/102/231, NAI; Adams, *Censorship*, 119. For the figures of the numbers of books examined and banned in the early years, see Adams, *Censorship*, 243.

<sup>69</sup> Adams, *Censorship*, 119.

<sup>70</sup> See Adams, *Censorship*, and Whelan, *Spiked*, for examples of this phenomenon.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from M.L. Burke to the Supreme Secretary, November 22, 1945, KSC.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Secretary of C.K. 15 to the Worthy Supreme Secretary, May 8, 1946, KSC.

<sup>73</sup> "Report on Evil Literature Committee Waterford Council," August 9, 1949, KSC.

<sup>74</sup> Letter from T.A. Buckley to E. Kavanagh, September 15, 1949, KSC.

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<sup>75</sup> Letter from E. Kavanagh to T.A. Buckley, September 21, 1949, KSC.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from E. Kavanagh to B.F. Shields, September 21, 1949, KSC.

<sup>77</sup> "Publishers Applications for Revocations which have come Before the Appeal Board to Date (22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1949)," KSC.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from T.A. Buckley to E. Kavanagh, January 24, 1951, KSC.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from B. MacMahon to J.J. Pigott, February 19, 1951, KSC.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Letter from B. MacMahon to C. O'Reilly, February 26, 1952, KSC.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from T.A. Buckley to E. Kavanagh, October 26, 1951, KSC.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from E. Kavanagh to T.A. Buckley, December 5, 1951, KSC.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from C.E. Doherty to E. Kavanagh, October 20, 1950, KSC. [Original emphasis].

<sup>84</sup> Letter from E. Kavanagh to C.E. Doherty, October 24, 1950, KSC.

<sup>85</sup> In the Knights' dossier on censorship, there are several drafts of questions to the Minister for Justice detailing what some members believed to be open attacks on the Censorship Board and the Appeal Board in the early 1950s, specifically in articles published in the *Irish Times*. That there is no record of these questions posed in the debates of the Oireachtas suggests that the matter was dropped, handled at the source of the attacks (the journalist in question), taken care of behind closed doors by politicians, or dismissed before being broached in the House out of the fear of members appearing to be cranks.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from D.J. Ryan to E. Kavanagh, November 13, 1952, KSC.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from M. O'Halloran to E. Kavanagh, undated, KSC.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from C. Russell to E. Kavanagh, April 12, 1954, KSC.

<sup>89</sup> "Council of St. John the Baptist (C.K. 50.) Proposals for the more effective control of books and periodicals," KSC.

<sup>90</sup> "Memorandum by the Minister for Industry and Commerce on Requests for the Imposition of Additional Restrictions on the Importation of Newspapers and Periodicals," December 11, 1950, s2321A, NAI.

<sup>91</sup> Internal letter from M. Costigan, January 8, 1951, s2321A, NAI.

<sup>92</sup> Internal memorandum, May 21, 1953, s2321A, NAI.

<sup>93</sup> Letter from J. McQuaid to E. de Valera, November 14, 1953, s2321A, NAI.

<sup>94</sup> Letter from E. de Valera to J. McQuaid, December 21, 1953, s2321A, NAI.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from J. McQuaid to E. de Valera, December 29, 1953, s2321A, NAI.

<sup>96</sup> JUS 90/102/164, NAI.

<sup>97</sup> JUS 90/102/165, NAI.

<sup>98</sup> JUS 90/102/172, NAI.

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- <sup>99</sup> JUS 90/102/182, NAI.
- <sup>100</sup> JUS 90/102/183, NAI.
- <sup>101</sup> Letter from P. Boylan to Archbishop Byrne, October 16, 1929, MGR. Cronin's Papers, DDA.
- <sup>102</sup> Letter from P. Boylan to Archbishop Byrne, January 23, 1933, MGR. Cronin's Papers, DDA.
- <sup>103</sup> Letter from G. Boland to J. McQuaid, January 29, 1942, AB 8/B XVIII, DDA.
- <sup>104</sup> Letter from J. McQuaid to G. Boland, February 14, 1942, AB 8/B XVIII, DDA.
- <sup>105</sup> Letter from S.A. Roche to J. McQuaid, May 19, 1945, AB 8/B XVIII, DDA.
- <sup>106</sup> Letter from G. Boland to J. McQuaid, May 31, 1945, AB 8/B XVIII, DDA
- <sup>107</sup> It is interesting that this was the same year that *The Bell* stopped publication, perhaps suggesting that another forum was needed to get views across that were not supportive of the censorship as it was constituted in its membership and constructed in its mechanisms.
- <sup>108</sup> Even in studies devoted to O'Faolain by people who had access to the man, there is disappointingly nothing of substance written about the work of the Irish Association for Civil Liberty.
- <sup>109</sup> Letter from S. O'Faolain, March 1956, s2321A, NAI. The same letter, dated April, 1956, and a copy of the petition were obtained by McQuaid. The petition stated:  
"In signing this petition, I do so exclusively for the purpose of encouraging a review of the work performed by the Censorship of Publications Board. I consider that the number of works having general literary merit that are banned is so great as to demand investigation. I am in favour of censorship being applied to pornography, but question the widespread banning of books of literary merit found acceptable in other democratic countries where the Christian Faith is practiced.  
"I, therefore, respectfully request the Taoiseach to initiate an investigation into the *record* and *working* of the Censorship, with a view to reconciling the protection of morals with the reading habits and interests of the educated public in Irish society." AB8/B XVIII, DDA.
- <sup>110</sup> Flyer announcing the April 21, 1956, meeting of the IACL, AB 8/B XVIII, DDA.
- <sup>111</sup> Minutes of the Irish Association for Civil Liberty, April 21, 1956, AB 8/B XXV, DDA
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>114</sup> Letter from E. Deale to J. Costello, July 6, 1956, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>115</sup> "Irish Association of Civil Liberty on Censorship," July, 1956, s2321A, NAI
- <sup>116</sup> Letter from E. Deale to J. Costello, August 10, 1956, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>117</sup> "Report of the Irish Association of Civil Liberty," August 10, 1956, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>118</sup> Letter from T. Coyne to J. Costello, September 3, 1956, s2321A, NAI.

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- <sup>119</sup> Unsent letter from J. Costello to E. Deale, September 5, 1956, s2321A, NAI. The hand-written comments made by a civil servant at the end of the letter, dated November 13, 1956, note the Taoiseach's final decision to abstain from a response.
- <sup>120</sup> "Minority View Needed on Board," *Irish Times*, November 7, 1956.
- <sup>121</sup> Adams, *Censorship*, 246.
- <sup>122</sup> Anonymous Internal Memorandum, undated, AB 8/B XXV, DDA. Because the memorandum speaks of the late Government when referring to the Minister for Justice who dealt with the IACL's petition, it had to have been written after March 5, 1957, when Fianna Fáil took over from Fine Gael in the general election. That the memorandum speaks of the Censorship Board as actively working with the two factions noted means that it was written before the September resignation of the three Knights and, most likely, before their last meeting was held on May 8.
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>124</sup> Anonymous Internal Memorandum, undated, AB 8/B XVIII.
- <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>126</sup> Letter from C. Ó Suilleabháin to E. de Valera, September 22, 1957, s2321A, NAI. The letter was "a despairing cry from a frustrated body of Catholics" about the presence of unbanned, though wholly obscene and indecent, publications in Ireland. Gerald Boland, for one, refused to allow a deputation of this group an audience because it had "very exaggerated notions of what was indecent and any discussions with them could not fail to be embarrassing." Letter from G. Boland to E. de Valera, November 18, 1957, s2321A, NAI. The Conference of Convent Secondary Schools lodged a complaint similar to Ó Suilleabháin's later the same month. Letter from Sister M. Jordana to E. de Valera, September 27, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>127</sup> Memorandum written by J. Pigott for J. McQuaid, undated, AB 8/B XVIII.
- <sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>130</sup> In a personal letter, Comyn claimed that he had suggested that he would call a meeting if Pigott continued to refuse calling one himself. It is odd that a copy of this letter found its way into the censorship dossier kept in the archives of the Knights of St. Columbanus. Letter from A. Comyn to A. Fitzgerald, August 15, 1957, KSC.
- <sup>131</sup> Memorandum written by J. Pigott for J. McQuaid, undated, AB 8/B XVIII, DDA.
- <sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>134</sup> For the most sustained version of these events, see Whyte, *Church and State in Ireland*.
- <sup>135</sup> Letter from J. Griffin to M. Burke, November 7, 1957, KSC.
- <sup>136</sup> Letter from M. Burke to J. Griffin, November 12, 1957, KSC.
- <sup>137</sup> Letter from M. Burke to L. Browne, November 29, 1957, KSC.
- <sup>138</sup> Letter from M. Burke to all Grand Knights, November 29, 1957, KSC.

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- <sup>139</sup> "Foul Books on Sale, Says Archbishop," *Irish Independent*, December 4, 1957.
- <sup>140</sup> "Censorship Board: Prof. Pigott Tells Why He Resigned," *Irish Independent*, December 5, 1957.
- <sup>141</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 164, December 5, 1957, 1579-82.
- <sup>142</sup> "Civil Liberty Association Replies to Professor Pigott," *Irish Independent*, December 7, 1957; and "Civil Liberty Association Challenges Ex-Chairman," *Irish Times*, December 7, 1957.
- <sup>143</sup> The following debate between Pigott and Sheehy-Skeffington occurred in the *Irish Times*. Another debate occurred simultaneously in the "Letters to the Editor" section of the *Irish Independent*, though largely between people who employed pseudonyms. See the "Letters to the Editor" section of the *Irish Independent* on December 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 30 and 31, 1957, and January 2 and 11, 1958.
- <sup>144</sup> Owen Sheehy-Skeffington, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, December 10, 1957.
- <sup>145</sup> Edgar M. Deale, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, December 12, 1957.
- <sup>146</sup> J.J. Pigott, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, December 13, 1957.
- <sup>147</sup> Owen Sheehy-Skeffington, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, December 20, 1957.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>149</sup> J.J. Pigott, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, December 24, 1957.
- <sup>150</sup> Owen Sheehy-Skeffington, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, January 1, 1958.
- <sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>152</sup> J.J. Pigott, "Letter to the Editor," *Irish Times*, January 6, 1958. Some debate did occur, but it was over the fact that Pigott had tried to correct Sheehy-Skeffington on a minor fact about whether or not Halliday Sutherland's *The Laws of Life* was banned in all editions. This ended with Pigott being wrong, as pointed out to him by a third letter writer; he issued a public apology which Sheehy-Skeffington publicly accepted. See the "Letters to the Editor" section of the *Irish Times* for January 7, 8 and 9, 1958.
- <sup>153</sup> Letter from K. Butterly to E. de Valera, December 3, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>154</sup> Letter from Father M. Troy to O. Traynor, December 4, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>155</sup> Letter from V. Wall to E. de Valera, December 4, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>156</sup> Letter from M. Cullen to E. de Valera, December 11, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>157</sup> Letter from D. Doyle to E. de Valera, December 13, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>158</sup> Letter from I. Flynn to E. de Valera, December 14, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>159</sup> Letter from S. Greene to E. de Valera, December 20, 1957, s2321A, NAI. This group, as the header on their correspondence notes, was founded in March 1894, and had as its patron Archbishop McQuaid. Their objective was: "To crush vice and evil habits among boys; to instruct them thoroughly in the Catholic doctrine; to prepare them for the worthy reception of the Sacraments; to give them habits of obedience, discipline and self-respect; reverence and love for ecclesiastical authority and our holy religion; to promote their moral, physical and temporal well-being and to give them habits of strict sobriety."

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- <sup>160</sup> Letter from G. Boland to E. de Valera, December 20, 1957, s2321A, NAI.
- <sup>161</sup> Internal memorandum, January 14, 1958, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>162</sup> Letter from E. Keane to M. Burke, December 31, 1957, KSC.
- <sup>163</sup> Letter from T. White to M. Burke, January 3, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>164</sup> Letter from P. Beagan to M. Burke, January 9, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>165</sup> Letter from T. Croke to M. Burke, January 4, 1958, KSC; Letter from T. Croke to M. Burke, January 18, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>166</sup> Letter from H. Lennon to M. Burke, January 27, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>167</sup> Letter from T. Finn to M. Burke, February 13, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>168</sup> Letter from M. McIntyre to M. Burke, February 28, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>169</sup> Internal Memorandum, January 1, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>170</sup> "Newsagents' Suggestion: Licensing of Book Importers," *Irish Independent*, January 22, 1958.
- <sup>171</sup> Directive from M. Burke to all Grand Knights, February 28, 1958, KSC.
- <sup>172</sup> Letter from Dublin City Council to the Government, January 16, 1958, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>173</sup> Letter from W. MacNeely and J. Fergus to E. de Valera, January 30, 1958, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>174</sup> Letter from E. de Valera to W. MacNeely, February 1, 1958, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>175</sup> "Bishops Warn of Peril to Young People," *Irish Press*, February 1, 1958.
- <sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>177</sup> "Evil Reading Matter is not Literature," *Irish Press*, February 17, 1958.
- <sup>178</sup> "A Warning on Evil Reading," *Irish Press*, February 17, 1958.
- <sup>179</sup> "A Turning from God," *Irish Press*, February 17, 1958; "Indirect Attack," *Irish Press*, February 17, 1958.
- <sup>180</sup> NAI, s2321B, Letter from Oscar Traynor to E. de Valera, February 4, 1958, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>182</sup> Internal Memorandum, undated, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>183</sup> Internal Memorandum, February 13, 1958, s2321B, NAI.
- <sup>184</sup> Letter from E. de Valera to J. Fergus, March 8, 1958, AB 8/B XXV, DDA; a copy of this letter also exists in the National Archives in the file s2321B. In preparation of this letter, there was a massive report submitted to de Valera outlining the crisis since its inception with a detailed account of how and why to respond to each point mentioned in the Hierarchy's letter of January 30. Memorandum for the



Government, February 20, 1958, s2321B, NAI. Bishop Fergus responded politely, thanking de Valera for his letter and noting that he would communicate its contents to the rest of the Hierarchy. Letter from J. Fergus to E. de Valera, March 10, 1958, s2321B, NAI.

<sup>185</sup> *Dáil Debates*, Vol. 167, May 1, 1958, 1230.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 168, May 20, 1958, 278-80.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 170, July 10, 1958, 377-9.

<sup>188</sup> Letter from M. Burke to J. Blowick, May 16, 1958, KSC.

<sup>189</sup> The figures speak for themselves, as Table 2 illustrates.

Table 5.2            Figures for the Censorship Board, 1958-62

Year	Number of Books	
	Examined	Banned
1958	911	487
1959	797	402
1960	518	291
1961	631	408
1962	539	389

The larger numbers examined in 1958 and 1959 were probably the result of the backlog that had occurred from the Censorship Board's inactivity over much of 1956 and 1957. The numbers of bannings were still significantly higher in these later years than they had been in the first sixteen years, when just over a hundred books were banned each year, but this was also the result of more complaints being submitted. It is important to note that the bannings that occurred in the post-1957 era were largely of the pulp fiction variety and no longer the modern classics that had been previously banned wholesale along with such works. Granted, serious younger Irish writers such as John McGahern, Edna O'Brien and John Broderick were banned in these years, but this can be accounted for in the significant generational shift that was occurring in Ireland in terms of the society's changing norms and mores. The figures for the numbers of books examined and banned in these years are taken from the Annual Reports for the Censorship Board as found in the National Archives, files JUS 90/102/231 and JUS 90/102/232.

<sup>190</sup> For treatments of the 1958 *An Tóstal* crisis between the festival organizers and McQuaid, see Joan FitzPatrick Dean, *Riot and Great Anger*, 160-6, and Christopher Murray, *Sean O'Casey: Writer at Work* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2004), 386-404.

<sup>191</sup> This figure is taken from the yearly totals provided in note 189 above.

## **Chapter Six: The Cultural Borders of Censorship**

The issue of borders has received increased academic scrutiny in recent years, with the number of essays and books devoted to the subject having multiplied exponentially. Related concepts such as “hybridity,” “crossings” and “liminality” have become heavily theorised, entire conferences dedicated to discussing their contested meanings and their relevance to fields, issues, disciplines, countries and periods of study. In fact, scholars across disciplinary borders, most notably Literature, History, Geography, Political Science and Anthropology, have undertaken much of the exciting work. This interdisciplinary interest in borders is, in some respects, a reflection of the subject itself: just as borders sever two or more States, so too do the departmental structures of universities sever two or more disciplines. The study of borders has also been effective in exploring the subject from both the institutional and cultural perspectives, a fusion that is complementary to the dualistic approach of this thesis in its examination of censorship.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the literature devoted to borders and border theory and the issue of borders as it has been discussed in respect to Ireland. In so doing, it emphasises the importance of borders to understanding the dominant varieties of postcolonial nationalism at issue in post-independence Ireland, then teases out the ways in which censorship functioned as a cultural border that served to both undermine and reinforce the material border created by Partition. In order to illustrate the issue of censorship as a problematic cultural border, the chapter proposes a case study of Benedict Kiely, the first Northern Irish writer banned by the Censorship Board. Aside from his battles with the Censorship Board, Kiely is of interest because of the complex and changing relationship he had with Ireland, North and South, and Irish republicanism.

After providing the context of these relationships, the chapter concludes with a reading of his first banned novel, *In a Harbour Green*, to highlight how censorship functioned as an imperfect cultural border.

The banning of *In a Harbour Green* is read for how it helped to reinforce an artificial, psychological border – that which exists between the North and South of Ireland. Because this border has long been in question by some people, both in terms of its existence and its shape, the issue of borders in Irish society is especially contentious – and Benedict Kiely has not shied from this contention. This debate is developed by examining identity constructs formed by the State as physical borders that are psychological and artificial, simultaneously negotiable and arbitrary. That Kiely is known as a *Northern* Irish writer and might also be labelled an Irish Catholic only adds to the question of what is and is not Irish, both in a parochially Republican sense and a more openly plural, civic sense. This chapter therefore theorises how Irish literary censorship of the mid-twentieth century helped to both incorporate and exclude aspects of Northern Irish society that it deemed as either desirable or undesirable.

### *Border Theory*

Simply put, borders are lines that separate two or more bodies from one another, be the bodies social or material in nature. Borders also simultaneously bring together as they separate, defining what belongs within them as much as what belongs without.

Discussing “anthropogeographic” borders, Arthue Moodie notes how these attempt

to enclose groups of people and their territory according to one or more aspects of homogeneity within each group. The striking fact about these lines is that, while they are the most accurately delimited and demarcated and the most jealously guarded of all boundaries, the unity of the entities

which they define is at least open to question and always difficult to assess.<sup>1</sup>

Borders have been controversial for how they undertake this definitional process, thus highlighting the fact that they are social constructions and not concrete representations of metaphysical realities.<sup>2</sup> Such has been the case in Kashmir where Indian and Pakistani military forces have remained hostile to each other's claims over the territory, China's attempts to control Tibet and Taiwan, and Israel's rule of the West Bank and Gaza Strip despite the presence and desires of the Palestinian majority that lives there. Borders have also been the basis of conflict in imperial aims and anti-colonial struggles. The issue of the rights of the coloniser to penetrate and rule potentially sovereign peoples has been challenged in places such as India, Vietnam, much of South America and the countries of the African continent. The issue of the border that partitions the island of Ireland has been as hotly and long contested as many of the above examples. But while the place and role of borders has created much international debate and been the source of wars and conflicts, the actual definition of what a border is has not been questioned. Indeed, the universal acceptance of a border as a line that both separates that from without and holds together that from within is what has made such conflicts so enduring and global in nature.

Likewise, borderlands and frontiers, the two terms being interchangeable, have agreed upon definitions yet present problems for the person brave enough to attempt a definition of what exactly each encompasses. Whereas boundaries and borders are *lines*, frontiers and borderlands are *zones*.<sup>3</sup> Given to flux and change, these areas lie between the two or more bodies that are separated by them. Borderlands often straddle boundaries in the untidy and haphazard manner that is contrary to the neat and orderly demands of

the modern State. These are the places where, says Gloria Anzaldúa, “two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, “The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.”<sup>5</sup> Borders, argue Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, are *centripetal* forces, dividing populations and political bodies, operating as *separating* factors, whereas borderlands are *centrifugal* forces, throwing peoples together and confusing the orderly lines of borders.<sup>6</sup> But as it is noted above, while borders serve to separate political bodies, they also fuse those within them into a body politic, thereby acting in a way that counters the claim that they solely act to separate.

Borderlands could be likewise defined as *centripetal* once their areas have been demarcated. In effect, as opposed to establishing a border that crosses through the borderland, a border is drawn around it once it has been defined as a place. Where these definitions get tidied up is in the fact that borderlands are not States in and of themselves. Instead, they lie *between* states, inconveniently overlapping borders that separate the two or more polities and thereby serving as potential sites for undermining the State’s powers and its construction of an official national identity. Boundaries are therefore essential to the maintenance of States as they express the spatial limits of their power, operating as “the manifestations of political control, and indicators of changes in political power within and between states.”<sup>7</sup> It is in this way that borders have been scrutinised by those who study them from the institutional perspective.

Borders are well-defined institutions of a State’s territorial reaches and powers. Towers, barbed-wire fences, flags, armed police and military personnel, cameras, walled

barriers, incarceration centres, and road blocks announce the power and boundaries of the State. Here is where the sovereignty of one State ends and another begins. In order to pass from one State to another, a traveller must have the permission of the one to leave and the other to enter. Through emphasising their power at borders, J.R.V. Prescott argues, States

secure a clear unchallenged title to parts of the earth which are valued either for the human or material resources they contain or the strategic advantages which they confer. They also wish to create lasting arrangements with neighbours which will at least minimize the risk of friction either between governments or between citizens.<sup>8</sup>

But the ability to show and enforce such power is necessary not only in order to demarcate states from one another.

A State's heavily policed border also signals to individuals the different culture, society, political system and legal jurisdiction in which they are about to find themselves, reminding them that they must act accordingly with regards to the dominant and legalised norms and mores. Deviation from these will result either in incarceration or deportation; that is, monitored containment *within* the State's borders or expulsion *outside* of those borders. That a State's sovereignty and legal claims do not extend outside of its borders, except in times of border disputes, allows individuals to decide whether or not they will participate in that particular society, except in cases where totalitarian regimes restrict the movement of people. Borders therefore function as institutions in and of themselves in terms of their relative stability and the legal structures that support their existence. But they also serve to demarcate and define the territorial reach of all of the other institutions within the State, what is collectively known as the limits of the State's sovereignty. The

one exception to this definition is those institutions that are founded as a part of and guided by a State's ties to supranational organisations, such as the European Union.

"Ethnicity," claim Donnan and Wilson, "and its correlate, national identity, is a fundamental force found at all borders, and it remains the bedrock of many political, economic and social activities which continue to befuddle the institutions and agents of the state, in the borderlands and in the centres of power and influence."<sup>9</sup> The interest with borders from less of an institutional perspective, specifically for those who approach the subject with a theoretical grounding in postcolonial studies, is with these issues of ethnicity and national identity. Because of the influence of poststructuralism on postcolonial theory, the befuddling of institutions that is evident at borders is taken as a point of entry into complicating ethnicities by this theoretical school. In fact, the critic might read "befuddling" in the above quote as "deconstructing," seeking to interrogate and inquire into the "centre" of the institutions and their sources of power. As adherents of poststructuralism and the modernist school of nationalism would argue, ethnicities, like borders, are social constructs. And as constructs,

borders are spatial and temporal records of relationships between local communities and between states. Ethnographic explorations of the intersection of symbolic and state boundaries have salience beyond anthropology because of what they may tell us of the history of cultural practices as well as the role of border cultures and communities in policy-making and diplomacy.<sup>10</sup>

This is not to suggest that borders are unreal, for they represent the very real limits of the State. Rather, it is to argue that borders are negotiated and renegotiated over time, that they have not been there since time immemorial and they will not necessarily last for all eternity. Despite their status as institutions, borders are not rigidly immune to change.

Like race and ethnicity, borders are all the products of relationships that have occurred over time.

National identity, however, differs from race and ethnicity because it is supported by the power and is defined by the legal system of States in a way the latter two, for all of their connotations with the former, are often not. Who belongs to what State is evident in whether a State considers one a citizen, the rules of citizenship being defined differently by different States. States are generally constructed along lines of national identity as opposed to the more fluid concepts of races and ethnicities, a fact highlighted by Arthur Moodie. He says,

Whatever the basis of differentiation between human societies, ethnic origin, religion, language, economic activities, political systems, or a combination of two or more of them, these cementing agencies do not suddenly stop short at a river, a mountain range, a lake or a marsh; still less do they cease to function at any line which may be laid down in relation to physical features, and it will be recalled that the essential quality of a boundary is its linear character.<sup>11</sup>

Human beings on two sides of a given border will, as it is implied in this account, have more in common with one another than they will with those in the distant national metropole. As such, it is of primary importance for the State to construct, reify and reconfirm national identity through its various institutional structures and maintain it at its borders. Without these measures, a State's legitimacy, and thereby its authority, could be undermined by those living on both its literal and metaphorical margins.

Borders are therefore sites of anxiety, the place where the State must show its force and identify, literally and metaphorically *flag*, itself in order to reconfirm its position and the identity of the nation it safeguards. This is the threat that borderlands present the State. This threat is then replicated in the people who inhabit the borderlands:



they do not readily adhere to borders and the rigid definitions of national identity. They undermine, subvert and transgress by simultaneously being a part of and apart from the collective unit, the political body and national citizenry. Homi Bhabha, for example, links borders to his concept of “hybridity,” noting that “[t]he margin of hybridity, where cultural differences ‘contingently’ and conflictually touch, becomes the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience. It resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups . . . as homogeneous polarized political consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> Whether one refers to Bhabha’s concept of “hybridity” or Gloria Anzaldúa’s “*mestiza*,” the individual or collective in the borderlands generally cannot, does not and will not conform to an either/or binary relationship. Instead, its relationship to the binary divide must be understood through a both/and relationship.

The threat that critics can pose, however, in celebrating the hybrid nature of a *mestiza* is to neglect and even reify the two sides of the binary divide. In effect, while the third term, in this case the inhabitants of the borderlands, is celebrated for its subversive existence, the collective identities on either side of the border that tend away from the borderlands are still conceived of in the rigid terms of the State’s own official definition. Anzaldúa makes this error herself in her homogenising of “whites” to symbolise power while failing to note the gender, sexuality, class, religious and national differences that exist within that larger specious construct of race. This tendency has caused critics such as David E. Johnson and Scott Michaelson to justifiably lament the fact that there are still too many who interrogate identity as though “cultures are still to be ‘crossed’ rather than . . . analyzed for their ‘constant interplay.’”<sup>13</sup> In effect, all cultures, and thereby cultural identities, are always-already hybrids. By not recognising the constructed nature of

national identities, which were constructed through their relationships with and to others, critics fall into the discursive trap of binaries.

Border theory is therefore not meant to emphasise and reify the border. Instead, it seeks to examine it for what it is: the product and construction of social relationships. This is specifically why Alejandro Lugo claims that “the border region and border theory can erode the hegemony of the privileged center by denationalizing and deterritorializing the nation/state and culture theory.”<sup>14</sup> This threat to the State is exactly why it can and does subject individuals to brutally invasive measures at border crossings. Border sites, note Donnan and Hastings, “are liminal spaces within which state power is absolute, and can be imposed upon even that most intimate element of our being, our body.”<sup>15</sup> This is precisely why describing a national citizenry as a *body politic* is a perfect metaphor, for “the boundaries of the body become analogous to the borders of the nation and the nation-state; both are vulnerable to penetration and corruption from the outside, susceptible to disease and alien intrusion respectively.”<sup>16</sup> In Ireland, the border has likewise been a source of anxiety, both when it comes to the State being penetrated and itself being an agent of penetration.

### *The Irish Border and Censorship*

The border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State officially came into being with Britain’s Government of Ireland Act of 1920, and was accepted by the Irish leaders with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on December 6, 1921.<sup>17</sup> As a part of the negotiations, it was agreed that a Boundary Commission would be formed to determine the line of division. In the meantime, the six north-eastern counties of the island –

Antrim, Tyrone, Derry, Armagh, Fermanagh and Down – would in their entirety compose the statelet of Northern Ireland. The Commission finally convened on November 6, 1924, almost three years after the Treaty was ratified. Geoffrey J. Hand argues that the reasons for this delay were three-fold: 1) Northern Irish intransigence; 2) the Free State's eagerness to secure the North's Catholic areas coupled with anxiety over possible threats to its internal security; and 3) a minority Labour Government in Britain that was reluctant to involve itself once again in Irish politics.<sup>18</sup>

The Commission was composed of three members, each belonging to one of the countries with interests in the matter of the border. Former Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden was the original choice to represent the British Government as the Commission's chair, but he refused because he wanted the Northern Irish Government to co-operate. Richard Feetham, an Englishman who had become a South African judge and would later make his name fighting against the Apartheid regime, was chosen in his stead. The Irish Free State selected Eoin MacNeill, who at the time was the Irish Minister for Education, to represent its interests. Apparently believing that Stormont was incapable of selecting someone itself, the British Government appointed J.R. Fisher, a staunch Unionist.<sup>19</sup> Given the cast of characters assembled, the political climate at the time and the controversial subject around which they were convened, it is indeed amazing that they were able to operate and that they were expected to come to any sort of an agreement. However, that the Commission undertook its job with an earnest professionalism and that no stories of infighting were reported at the time or since is a testament to the three men involved.

The Commission's first struggle was with *how* it would determine the shape of the border. A series of methodological problems existed that the members had to resolve before they could begin the more concrete practice of redrawing the line between the North and South. Grave consideration was dedicated to how one might determine the desires of inhabitants, whether the border was to be entirely redrawn or merely adjusted, what might occur when the wishes of the inhabitants contradicted economic and geographic conditions and which would take priority, whether unanimity or a bare majority would suffice for change, what qualified one as an inhabitant (which in turn raised questions of class and ownership of land and tenantry), whether they could be certain conditions had not changed in the fourteen interceding years if they used the 1911 census to guide them, and whether they were to examine the desire to change in 1925 (when they sat) or 1921 (when the Treaty was signed).<sup>20</sup>

These concerns were systematically answered and agreed to by the Commission. In determining the inhabitants' desires, for example, they reckoned that Protestants wished to be in Northern Ireland and Catholics in the Irish Free State.<sup>21</sup> To make a change to the existing border, the Commission placed the onus on those who desired change to provide the facts to justify it.<sup>22</sup> However, it was later admitted in the final report, in a manner that is somewhat astonishing for its candour, that "it is right to mention the contention, which has been urged upon the Commission, that this particular boundary has none of the sanctity which would ordinarily attach to an existing state boundary."<sup>23</sup> The report also targeted what were defined as "homogeneous areas," places that would vote with unanimity or in which there was an overwhelming majority.<sup>24</sup> Aside from the problematic assumptions that all Catholics and all Protestants would vote

identically according to their religious affiliation, the Commission's report reveals the due diligence and professionalism with which its members approached the difficult task at hand.

Unfortunately, before the report was published and the Committee's findings were known, the ultra-Tory *Morning Post* published a leak of the report's suggestions, including a map of the forecasted changes, on November 7, 1925. Public opinion in the Irish Free State was roused by the loss of territory as opposed to celebrating its potential gains, causing MacNeill to resign on November 20 which in turn forced the British Government to officially disband the Commission on December 3.<sup>25</sup> This was a hasty decision on the part of the Irish Free State, for it cost the country the gain of 286 square miles versus the loss of only 77, and the border would have been conveniently shortened from 280 miles to 229.<sup>26</sup> Given Fisher's political allegiances, the politics of the *Morning Post*, and the fact that Fisher had journalistic connections as a former editor, Hand suspects that he was the source of the leak.<sup>27</sup> If so, it was a brilliant tactical move on Fisher's part, forcing the Irish Free State to sabotage the Commission's work before it was completed. In so doing, it could be demonstrated that for once Northern Irish Protestants were not the ones who were intransigent in their unwillingness to negotiate and participate in democratic politics. Instead, the sore losers, even though they would have been the winners, were the Free State Catholics. And thanks to the Irish Free State, Northern Ireland would not end up losing the net territory it would have under the suggestions of the Commission. In the end, the border was left as it had been at the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty with the six north-eastern counties independent of the Irish Free State; the report was dutifully buried by bureaucrats.

However, the border that separates Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State actually has its roots in more ancient times. Long before the seventeenth-century plantation of Ulster created the demographic specificity of the North, the Ulster or Black Pigs Dyke – also known as the Dorsey Rampars, the Worm Ditch and the Dane's Cast – was erected, running from Donegal Bay to Newry. “More than three-quarters of the ancient dyke runs along existing County boundaries in an amazing demonstration of the stability of the old divisions,” writes Richard Hayward, “and the great earthwork, with its associated folklore and tellings, is proof enough of the age old separation of the men of Ulster from their fellows who dwell in the other parts of Ireland.”<sup>28</sup> The dyke effectively linked marshes, lakes, bogs and forests “in a great defensive border that makes its present counterpart look like the chalk marks that define the dens and boundaries of the pavement games of city children.”<sup>29</sup> Attempting to further historicise and justify the existence of the boundary, Hayward makes a specious gesture towards the more austere pottery from the Bronze Age found in the North compared to the more ornamented pottery of the same epoch found in the South as evidence of the early differences between the dour Northern and expressive Southern personalities.<sup>30</sup>

Unionist geographers have raised more convincing, but no less questionable, arguments for Partition. For example, M.W. Heslinga makes the valid point that many critics have constructed their arguments for the erasure of the border because, geographically, it is evident that Ireland as a relatively small island should be unified as one people living under one State. What these critics first ignore is that, historically, the sea did not serve to separate populations. Instead, owing to the ease with which large populations could move over water compared to over land, islands were linked through

sea travel. The Vikings and their various outposts throughout the North Atlantic in Scandinavia, Britain, Ireland, Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland are exemplary of this phenomenon. Generally speaking, mountain ranges posed much bigger impediments to travel than did bodies of water. Because of the ease and frequency with which most humans living in Ireland now travel over the land when compared with the sea, most of these critics are charged with suffering from wilful historical amnesia. It is therefore with much surprise and exasperation that Heslinga says, "It is rather odd that no geographer who deals with the spread of cultural features in Ireland or in Great Britain is dissuaded by mountain ranges or lake belts but the same geographer rarely looks beyond the Irish Sea."<sup>31</sup> As opposed to looking at the British Isles as a large eastern island and a smaller western island, Heslinga speaks of the British Isles as being divided with a large southern part and a smaller northern part.<sup>32</sup> In terms of human distribution and emigration, this divide, he claims, makes sense, as the Irish have tended to settle in Merseyside, the Northern Irish in Clydeside. Thus, the Irish border, he argues, "may be interpreted as a cross-Channel extension of the Scottish Border as it marks off, in a rather arbitrary way, the 'scoticized' part of Ireland against the 'anglicized' part."<sup>33</sup>

Like Heslinga, the Welsh-cum-Northern Irish geographer E. Estyn Evans used his discipline to counter Nationalist irredentist claims to Northern Ireland. "One might think of the moulded drumlins as moulding, in turn, the outlook of the farmers who dwell among them," he suggests. "Much of the drumlin country is Orange country. . . . The deep drumlin soils, previously utilised mainly for grazing, responded to the labour of a Protestant people who saw virtue in hard work."<sup>34</sup> The land was *made* for the Protestant farmers, seemingly waiting for their productive, hard-working hands to save it from the

inept, lazy and unproductive Catholics who once lived on it. In this way, the people are territorialised, the earth in harmony with them and only them, and any attempts to restore it to its former tenants would therefore have disastrous consequences for its productivity. The drumlin country, that which forms a good deal of the borderlands, is Orange country. It is here, along with the glens and fields of Co. Antrim, that the Protestant Northern Irish identity is most associated:

[I]t was among the episcopalian drumlins in north Armagh that the Orange Order had its rural roots in 1795. When you see the big drumlins, whether at Rossnowlagh on Donegal Bay or at Killyleagh on Strangford Lough, you may expect to hear the noise of the big drums in the month of July.<sup>35</sup>

Here history is also appealed to in order to strengthen the claim already made by geography: the people are tied to the earth racially *and* historically. Furthermore, the repetition of the word “drumlins” both echoes and foreshadows the word “drums.” And both are Orange and episcopalian. However, it might be worth asking how one tells the difference between an episcopalian and a Catholic drumlin – or even if Catholic drumlins exist. Geography has done much to yoke Ireland to Great Britain in the form of the Ordnance Survey and separate Ireland from Great Britain in the romantic nationalist view of an island-nation apart. Likewise, the appeals of both Evans and Heslinga to the methodologies of their discipline further the interests of those who seek to claim the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland and justify the place there of the Ulster Protestant communities.

The legacy of the Irish border has therefore been one of division as opposed to one of coalescence. Not only has it served to divide the North from the South, it has also further severed the two majority peoples that compose Northern Ireland because of the



contentious debate it provokes. Meanwhile, the view from the South has increasingly become one of reconciliation with the border's existence, and it has deeply etched itself into the island's political cultures.<sup>36</sup> But it is felt most saliently in the lives of those who live near it, "precisely because it functions as a structure and symbol of differentiation in status, power and politics."<sup>37</sup> One of the problems the drawing of the border created is that it placed some people who had formerly been in one State in a position so that they came to straddle two. Richard Hayward describes a home that is divided by the border so that the family "may actually sleep in Northern Ireland but sit around its own fireside under the selfsame roof in the Republic."<sup>38</sup> Similarly, he tells of a man that lives in the North and owns a shop on the other side of the street, in the Republic.<sup>39</sup> In the course of events, he winds up smuggling his own goods home each day. Especially confusing for both the traveller by foot and the traveller by car are the torturous stretches of land between Fermanagh and Tyrone in Northern Ireland and Cavan and Monaghan in the South, intertwining and twisting "in a regular Chinese puzzle of cartographical complexity."<sup>40</sup> In this way, Hayward appears to contradict his argument that Partition is good and natural, simultaneously pointing out the inconvenience of the "unapproved roads" that force the motorist to drive further in the search for an approved road in order to cross the border.<sup>41</sup> Writing during the IRA border raids of the late 1950s, a time when smuggling even home products and groceries was a lucrative enough business to cause a tightening of the border regulations, it is no wonder that he bemoaned the restrictions the law of both States had placed upon his movements. This would have been even more noticeable to the traveller who had visited the same area only a few years earlier when

travel between North and South was relatively freer. However, for many academics, the interest in the Irish border has been less of a material than a metaphysical concern.

Indeed, Owen Dudley Edwards argues that “the crucial point of the Border for Irish intellectuals is its offer of the Other.”<sup>42</sup> Yet Edwards’ statement is hasty. Because, historically, Ireland and England have served as one another’s Other, Northern Ireland presents the intellectual with a third space, a site where the sides of the binary divide actively come into contact on a daily basis and are represented in the society’s culture. “As an imaginative exercise in symbolic determinism,” Evans suggests, “one might compare [the] un-Irish rock formations [of Northern Ireland] – Scottish basalts overlying English chalk which rests in turn on slippery clays – with the stratified layers of human occupants in the north-east.”<sup>43</sup> Again, the primordial link between the people and the land is made by an appeal to geography. But the important point made here is the complex nature of the society, one that is hybrid in terms of the mix of the groups that live within its borders as much as for the hybridity that is evident in the mixed-blood of individuals. This notion of Northern Ireland as a hybrid society lends it to being defined as a borderland, an entire population and territory that straddles the boundaries of other countries. For this reason, Donnan and Wilson argue that the Irish border is

a liminal ‘state’, because it is the gateway to a province which may be viewed, in its entirety, as a borderland, a frontier zone of disputing nations and ethnic groups, out of touch and out of synch with both states to which each of the two Northern Irish communities profess allegiance and cultural affinity. This liminality is an integral part of the Irish border, and is both expressed and confronted symbolically all along its 360 kilometres.<sup>44</sup>

Edna Longley, writing just before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA), claimed that an acknowledgement of Northern Ireland as a borderland by the Irish Government would help Northern Ireland “to relax into a genuinely diverse sense of its own identity: to

function, under whatever administrative format, as a shared region of these islands.”<sup>45</sup>

Unfortunately, up until the GFA the South was unable to do so. At least, it was not able to do so consciously.

Nationalists, bolstered by Articles 2 and 3 of the 1937 Irish Constitution that laid irredentist claims to Northern Ireland, spoke openly of their unequivocal intentions to take back the six counties. At the same time, a Protestant majority that was largely and overtly hostile to this aim dominated the land. The problem therefore existed that in order for the Nationalist re-conquest of the island to be finalised, a large part of Northern Ireland’s population would either have to change allegiance and assimilate to Nationalist ideals or leave the land. As neither of these options were ever seriously considered by the majority in the North, Nationalists were faced with the presence of undesirable inhabitants, that imperfect breed that dwells in the borderlands and confounds the purists and essentialists on either side of the border.

These dwellers of the borderland are the prohibited and forbidden, those who can undermine and subvert the official constructs of national identities as they are legislated on either side of the border, in this case Ireland and Britain. A sort of no-man’s land, Northern Ireland is thus depicted to have no specified identity. Instead, it is a place in negotiation between other places. But such theorising, for all of its usefulness, is perhaps equally damaging for how it refuses the possibility of an Ulster identity. Such theorising also neglects the post-modern challenge that exists to homogeneous identity constructs in every society. However, by focusing on the positive aspects of this theory, by thinking of Northern Ireland as a borderland of fractured identities and in a constant state of flux, one can begin to neutralise the irredentist claims made by Nationalists and the arguments for

entrenchment made by Unionists. Yet despite the fact that Northern Ireland might be conceived of as a theoretical borderland, as *metaphysically* straddling two states, it does not *physically* straddle the borders of Ireland and Britain. Because of this it is subject only to the laws of Britain while those of Ireland do not have any effect *per se* on the daily lives of its citizens. The institutions of the Irish State, such as censorship, are therefore only enforced on the southern side of the border as the border marks the end of Irish sovereignty. Richard Hayward exploits this to comical effects at one moment in his travels along the Irish border:

There had recently been a great scandal about the sale of indecent literature in a certain part of Belfast, and the Republic especially, with its tight literary censorship, was campaigning against the abuse. Cars crossing the Border from Northern Ireland were subjected to increased scrutiny and the story goes that one such car, at the height of the scandal, was pulled up for special inspection. 'Have you any pornographic literature with you?' demanded the Customs official. 'I have not,' replied the driver. 'Sure what the hell would I be doing with the like of that. God knows I haven't even a pornograph itself.'<sup>46</sup>

Comedy aside, the anecdote reveals a real concern on the part of the State's officials over the potential of literature to undermine and threaten its authority. Given that the border was being policed at the time because of the menace of increased IRA terrorist activity, it also conflates the work of writers and literature with that of terrorists and bombs. In this scenario, literature is an explosive threat to the State's stabilising efforts over the society it rules and censorship is a justified practice.

Censorship should therefore be conceived of as an issue defined and demarcated by boundaries that go beyond questions of the limits of a State's sovereign reach. Books are labelled banned or unbanned, readable or unreadable, acceptable or unacceptable, the line between them clearly drawn by the decisions rendered by the Censorship Board. In

its zeal, the Censorship Board banned many books because of how its members interpreted both the books at hand and the laws that governed their actions. As well, because of the imperfect nature of institutional censorship, there were many books that in all probability *should* have been censored by the State but were not, the most infamous of these being James Joyce's *Ulysses* and even his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.<sup>47</sup> The word "law" is itself derived from the Latin *legislar*, meaning "to read." The law is a literate act, the composing and *reading* of legal definitions and limits. In the case of censorship, the laws are read and applied to texts which have also been read. Decisions of whether or not a book should be banned are based upon one's reading of the book *and* the law that guides the censor's role and defines the norms and mores of the greater society.

Similarly, as one passes from one State to another, border officials and customs agents read visas and passports that have been previously written by State bureaucrats and decide upon the permissibility of the document's holder. These readings are based upon the officials' and agents' understanding of the laws that guide their roles and determine *how* they will interpret the documents before them and render their decisions. The members of the Censorship Board are thus analogous to border officials, acting as literary customs agents. That Irish Customs Officials were instrumental in bringing hundreds of possibly suspect book titles to the attention of the Censorship Board and were simultaneously instrumental in policing the traffic of indecent and obscene materials crossing the border, further connects the notion of censorship as a national border that must be crossed. Hayward's anecdote is exemplary of this practice. In this way, censored materials are viewed as foreign, and their status in the Republic, or any

other State, is that of the illegal alien. The early debates on institutional censorship that are discussed in Chapter Two highlight this tendency to conflate censored materials with elements that are foreign to the host society.

Censorship is therefore once again evoked as the State filling its parental obligations in safeguarding the nation from the harmful effects of foreign elements that seek to undermine, subvert and contaminate both the body politic and the purity of the national imaginary. And so the borders, in this case censorship, must be raised. Ross Castronovo, for one, notes the teleology of most works in border studies to celebrate a given book because it is “marginal to two or more cultures, and indeed subversively benefits from these limitations and prejudices to undermine the oppressive structures that in the first place differentiated and hierarchized [themselves].”<sup>48</sup> But he argues against this narrative, believing that its danger and attractiveness is its theoretical simplicity, for “negotiations along the border also have the unintended counter purpose of solidifying and extending racial and national boundaries.”<sup>49</sup> Joe Cleary echoes this point, claiming that cultural narratives of partitioned societies “help either to ratify the state divisions produced by partition or to contest the partitionist mentalities generated by such divisions.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, just as censored books might subvert the State, the fact that they are banned and not placed in the sphere of public debate makes them complicit in helping to solidify attempts to construct national identities. Likewise, while the fact that they are banned might make them appear subversive, they might not be so *in their entirety*. That is, banned works might contain aspects that *both can and cannot be assimilated* into the national imaginary as it is officially constructed. As a result, banned books and their writers might within themselves form a sort of borderland, simultaneously containing

aspects that are and are not acceptable to the nation. This is the specific threat posed by banned Irish writers and, in the case of borderlands and their temptingly forbidden and threatening inhabitants, banned Northern Irish writers. Benedict Kiely, in both his work and his person, exemplifies this condition perhaps better than any other writer in the Irish context.

*The Case of Benedict Kiely and In a Harbour Green*

Kiely was born in 1919 in the town of Omagh, Co. Tyrone. He has noted how Omagh is a town of contradictions, citing the long tradition of many of its Catholic residents serving in the British Army since the time of William of Orange.<sup>51</sup> His own family had such a line of military men: his grandfather, who had come from Bruff, Co. Limerick, was a sergeant in the Royal Irish Constabulary and his father was born in the barracks in Moville, Co. Donegal.<sup>52</sup> His father's own career took him from military service in the British Army during the Boer War to work as a chainman for the Ordnance Survey.<sup>53</sup> Once married, his father settled down to more sedentary jobs in Omagh as a farm-estate manager and a bank porter.<sup>54</sup> Kiely himself turned away from family tradition in joining the Jesuits as a novitiate in Emo Park, Co. Laois. He describes this time as being one of happiness, but his studies were interrupted because of his chronic back problems that eventually caused him to be hospitalised for eighteen months. During this time away from the cloistered world of the religious, he acquired a ferocious appetite for Literature and began to notice the feminine attractions of the nursing staff: a powerful one-two punch combination that led him to leave the novitiate upon his recovery.<sup>55</sup> Kiely's professional life since then has been largely divided between writing fiction and working

variously as a regular columnist for *The Standard* and the *Irish Independent* and the literary editor of the *Irish Press* from 1950-64, an interesting and daring position for a banned writer in the relatively claustrophobic Catholic society of mid-century Ireland.

In one of the few studies that exist on Kiely and his work, Daniel Casey argues for the importance of Northern Ireland and the place of the border in understanding the man and his art. "The reality of the border," he claims, "and the realities of his Nationalist breeding and background mentally intrude on fiction set in a province torn by factionalism and war."<sup>56</sup> Although Kiely's grandfather and father both worked for the British Government, they took the King's shilling to support their families and, in the case of his father, to travel the world on adventurous campaigns. They were, in effect, able to separate their Nationalist loyalties with the economic roles they filled as paid agents of the Empire. This is the very complexity that Northern Ireland as a borderland presents the critic: a place and people with labyrinthine and contradictory impulses and identities that are difficult, if not wholly impossible, to compartmentalise and facilely reduce.

In *Counties of Contention*, his first published work which appeared in 1945, Kiely repeatedly sheds light on this complex nature of Northern Irish society and history. A historical and polemical account of Partition and the six north-eastern "counties of contention," Kiely succeeds in depicting the society's complexity despite his allegiance to the Republican Nationalist community and aggressive condemnation of Orange politics. It is the sort of study that "excited great furor among Nationalists who found the author an eloquent spokesman for their cause and among Unionists who considered it



altogether exasperating.”<sup>57</sup> Kiely’s own words in the book’s preface unmask his pretensions at fairness and equitable treatment of the sides involved in the disputed area:

The aim is to point the way towards the removal of a compromise forced on the people of Ireland by circumstances and the battle of conflicting sentiments, towards the establishment of a compromise that will, in peace and mutual understanding, make for the good of all the people of a united Ireland, and for improved relations with the people and government of Great Britain.<sup>58</sup>

One might ask how exactly the compromise was “forced” on “the people of Ireland”? Is there only *one* people here, as he suggests with his use of the singular noun? To what degree will good come about from a renewed compromise and how can he assert that the new compromise will be better than the old one? Of course, the answer is in his assertion that the new compromise will create “a united Ireland,” which in fact negates the wishes of the majority of people in Northern Ireland to remain a part of Britain and naively assumes that all future politics will become benign once the border is erased.

Despite his polemical Republicanism, the study is exemplary for how Kiely describes the borderland composition of Northern Irish society. Reflecting upon his native Omagh, he notes how it lies twenty miles from the border. “Still,” he claims, “the division was there, the barrier, the disunion, as if the material Border, cutting off six counties of Ireland from the other twenty-six, had projected itself into the things of the spirit.”<sup>59</sup> Here, the placing of the border by Partition is assumed to have created this divided situation as opposed to the cultural composition of the society’s inhabitants. In his attack of the border, he argues that “to divide the small population of a small island by any rigid and unalterable barrier is quite as sensible as arranging a barbed-wire entanglement in the middle of the bathroom floor.”<sup>60</sup> By appealing to the domestic imagery of a bathroom being divided, Kiely implies that the *homeland* and the people of

the nation are unnaturally divided which therefore accounts for the dysfunctional nature of Irish politics. To set it right, the barrier must come down so the people can be reconciled and the home put back into order. The view of Ireland as a natural island nation-state is a replay of the false reasoning of Nationalist geographers that were discussed at the outset of the chapter. As Unionist geographers would counter-argue, the drumlins that rim Northern Ireland to the South and West make as much of a natural boundary as the sea, and its people are just as different to those of the Irish Free State as they are to those of Scotland and England. It is therefore curious that in the first full-length study of Northern writers, John Wilson Foster's otherwise excellent *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction*, there is absolutely no discussion of the Border and Partition as a dominant force or theme in the Literature of these people. This absence is made all the more evident as Foster devotes a significant amount of space to Kiely's work and even acknowledges that it was Kiely who first suggested that he undertake the study.<sup>61</sup> In fact, when Kiely is discussed, despite Foster's stated subject matter, his early novels set in Northern Ireland are left completely unmentioned while critical focus remains on his later books which are set in the Republic.

In *Counties of Contention*, the fault of Partition, for Kiely, lies not with the cultural composition of the people and Northern Irish society, but with the divisive politics of the Orange leaders. Edward Carson receives the most criticism, Kiely referring to him as "the great advocate and apostle of disunion."<sup>62</sup> Carson receives particularly venomous commentary for what Kiely views as his defence of property over people, of social class cleavage and the rights that privilege give those of fortunate birth.<sup>63</sup> In fact, the blame for Partition is laid firmly at Carson's feet:

He achieved only a very little measure of success, so small that it was little more than defeat; but he divided Ireland to the present day and by that division impeded her normal development, postponed indefinitely the final making of friendship between Ireland and Great Britain.<sup>64</sup>

British and Irish politicians conceded to his demands because, in Kiely's estimation, they merely wanted peace at any cost.<sup>65</sup> Because of this, the compromise that failed to resolve anything must be rejected and the border erased. In so doing the island would become a united Ireland and thus fall in with the natural order of the Irish nation.

Carson's popularity, however, was merely symptomatic of "the Orange mind." According to Kiely, before Carson arrived in Northern Ireland, Orangeism was a beautiful display of culture, whereas Carson coerced it to promote bigotry.<sup>66</sup> This is evident in Kiely's sentimental recollection of watching Irish Nationalist and British military bands with childhood enjoyment while holding the Orange bands in contempt for having a "political axe to grind."<sup>67</sup> Ignoring here the history of sectarian strife in Northern Ireland before Carson's arrival on the political scene and the fact that divisions in culture and political allegiance were already rampant in Irish society long before the twentieth century, Kiely portrays Carson as the driving force of Partition. This logic thus demonstrates the unnatural aspect of the border. By further ignoring that the history of the young Irish Free State fed sectarian fears in the North through its passing of legislation that was heavily influenced by Catholic social teachings, Kiely conveniently elides placing any responsibility for solidifying the Partitionist mentality of Loyalists on the members and ideology of the Nationalist community. This aspect of his scholarship is egregiously demonstrated in his hagiographic portrayals of Patrick Pearse and Arthur Griffith,<sup>68</sup> two men who could be just as polemic and divisive as Carson and, in fact, whose politics contributed to the intransigent attitudes of the Unionist majority in

Northern Ireland. It is therefore curious to read his somewhat conciliatory conclusion: “Personally, if I were given the choice to-morrow between the continuance of partition and a one-government Ireland ruling the Protestants of Ulster against *their* will, I would choose a partitioned Ireland.”<sup>69</sup> This conciliatory note, however, is late in coming and the disavowal of violence that it implies is in stark contrast to the violent and polemical rhetoric that precedes it for much of the book. In this sense, it is merely an empty and symbolic gesture towards egalitarian and democratic principles. However, by placing it at the end of the book, it reveals a *real* turn towards such principles that is evident in the books that he published in the time between the publication of *Counties of Contention* and *In a Harbour Green*.

Years later, recollecting *Counties of Contention*, Kiely lightly dismissed his early work as being inflected by the energy and idealism of his youth, what he referred to as “the age of romantic innocence.”<sup>70</sup> His first novel, *Land Without Stars*, appeared the following year, in 1946. In a note that precedes the text, he maintains the views he expressed in his study of the border by informing the reader that “there is an island called Ireland, divided by a political boundary into two fragments, the smaller of which is misnamed *Ulster*, the larger misnamed *Eire*. More natural boundaries divide the island into thirty-two counties.”<sup>71</sup> He does not venture to explain how or why counties are more natural boundaries than the border created at Partition, although one might infer that it is the history and tradition that lie behind county divisions when compared to the novelty of Northern Ireland that gives him cause to make such a statement. However, despite the opening echo of his polemical first book, *Land Without Stars* presents a Northern Irish society that is more conciliatory and complexly divided.<sup>72</sup>

The novel begins with the return of the Quinn brothers to Omagh during World War Two for the Christmas holidays. Davy arrives from Glasgow where he has plied his trade in the industrial sectarian city while Peter arrives from Dublin where he is studying to become a priest. More in the mould of the man of action, Davy is against Partition, a staunch Republican and Gaelic enthusiast who eventually joins the IRA. While Davy represents the old Fianna Fáil position, Peter represents the Cumann na nGaedhael position: a pragmatic realist who relishes in the shades of grey that colour the world of politics. Davy's unconfused beliefs are confirmed in his Manichean motto: "Black's black and white's white."<sup>73</sup> Admittedly, Kiely's presentation of the Nationalist community as falling simply into these two positions is not much of an improvement upon his earlier portrayal of the community as solidly unified. But it represents a move towards an acknowledgement of Northern Irish society as a borderland.

The novel's narrative is exemplary for how it interjects moments that reveal Kiely's admission of the hybridity of Northern Irish society. Looking around Omagh, Peter muses: "If Winston Churchill had been a young man in this town he'd have joined either the British Army or the I.R.A. There's no half-way house for honest men."<sup>74</sup> Peter offers further reflection on the sad situation, perhaps thinking of Davy:

This was Ireland, as absurd and entangled as the whole lunatic world, each man like each nation digging into the past for buried bitterness to anger him against his neighbour. . . . Men sat in Belfast gaol, confined and guarded by their next-door neighbours, also to no particular purpose. Orange and Green lived like windy lizards on irrational generalizations, sighed dangerously for differing ideals, forgetting everything that should bind men together. God, what a mess and a meddle. All a muddle.<sup>75</sup>

And while vacationing across the border in Donegal, he overhears a discussion regarding Partition. "Strikes me Catholics and Protestants are all alike over there," says one man.

““One as bad as the other.””<sup>76</sup> Although the differences between the two sides are evident to those who are most divided, they are not so starkly contrasted for outsiders. The man’s comments that serve to actually make Northern Ireland homogenous in its vilification of all of its inhabitants cause Peter to note the complicated nature of the communities themselves. Thinking about one of the men he has encountered, he thinks:

He might be any one of a dozen different types of Ulster Unionist or Ulster Protestant. Even as he tried to place the man in a category Peter realised wearily the inadequacy of the political terminology of his country. To say that a man, living in Ireland, near the close of the first half of the twentieth century, was a Unionist might mean anything or nothing.<sup>77</sup>

Peter, the one who eschews Manichean thinking, sees and admits Northern Ireland as a society that is fractious in countless respects. Even the other side of the sectarian and political divide is admitted as being multi-faceted and plural. By recognising this, Peter allows for a gradation or spectrum of identities, seeing them as fluid and resistant to compartmentalisation. If Unionists and Nationalists are fluid identities, then there is the possibility that they might flow into one another, in effect blurring the borders between them and creating a borderland as opposed to a rigid sectarian divide.

While the two brothers follow a rather predictable trajectory, with an old flame coming between them, Davy joining the IRA and Peter returning home for good after leaving the novitiate, the ending further reveals how Kiely has begun to make this move towards a more critical analysis of the situation. Davy, who earlier has been a part of a botched robbery that ends with the killing of a policeman, is shot and killed. His death is the result of his return home to reconcile with Peter and Rita, their shared love interest, despite the fact that he knows the authorities have been searching for him. In the end, Peter heads to Dublin upon accepting a job that will take him away from Omagh, turning

his back on Rita and the divided society of his home. The implication is that the case is relatively hopeless because of the intransigence on all sides and anyone who refuses the binaries of Northern Irish politics must leave if he or she is not to be consumed by the atavistic hatreds and power ploys. Peter's retreat to Dublin demonstrates that while Partition might have had a negative effect on Northern Ireland, it has had a stabilising effect on the Irish Free State, making it a place of respite from the drums of war on the north-eastern side of Evans' Orange drumlins.

*Poor Scholar*, Kiely's third book, was published in 1947. It was the first book-length study of William Carleton's life and work bringing with it renewed academic attention to the long-neglected writer. Kiely's interest in Carleton is evident in his Foreword:

His life and his writings bridged the Famine, the greatest of the many tragedies of the Irish nineteenth century. His own character mirrored much of the contradiction and division, political and religious, of that period, just as the journey that brought him from his birthplace in Tyrone to the place where his body was laid in Dublin emphasises the continuance of some of those divisions and contradictions into the present.<sup>78</sup>

Carleton was, like Kiely, a writer from the border country of Co. Tyrone. As a dweller of the borderlands, Carleton was full of contradictions and it was these contradictions, as much as the qualities of his writing, that caused Kiely to write about and identify with Carleton. Carleton was born a Catholic but converted to Protestantism after falling under the editorial sway of the Protestant Englishman Caesar Otway, and shortly thereafter began to associate the Irish people with backwardness because of their lingering pagan superstitions and the dictatorial direction the Irish Catholic Church had begun to take.<sup>79</sup> His critique of the Church was not the zealous attack of a convert eager to prove his fidelity to the new faith, but rather one who was truly concerned with the conditions of

his people. He was to become most famous for his writing of the Famine during the catastrophe in his attempts to stir the Government to action.<sup>80</sup> Although he utterly detested the romantic strain of the Young Irelanders, he approved of the movement on the whole because it proposed a cultural and economic plan for the people of Ireland.<sup>81</sup> Carleton therefore had an ability to see and appreciate contradictory impulses in people, movements and societies and was still able to come down on what he viewed to be the side of righteousness. In writing so lovingly of these aspects of Carleton and in emphasising them, Kiely in effect implicitly asks the reader to associate *him* with these very characteristics. *Poor Scholar* can revealingly be read in very much the same light as *Land Without Stars*, as being a work of considerable biographical ability and historical merit in itself, but also possessing autobiographical suggestiveness in that it marks the end of the idealist mawkishness that detrimentally pervades the polemical *Counties of Contention*.<sup>82</sup>

Although *In a Harbour Green* is not Kiely at his best, the book represents a turning point in his portrayal of Northern Irish society. The novel could be profitably read as a celebration of the contradictions he came to acknowledge in *Land Without Stars* and admires in the person and works of William Carleton. *In a Harbour Green* is a tale of a divided community in Northern Ireland in the year just before the outbreak of World War Two. Its controversial subjects include murder, rape, robbery, an illegitimate child and pre-marital sex, a book that Daniel Casey justifiably claims "rivals [Brinsley] MacNamara's *Valley of the Squinting Windows* as a realistic portrayal of the narrowness of rural Irish life."<sup>83</sup> The novel follows several characters, opening with the trial of an old farmer, Maxwell, for the murder of his wife. From the outset, Kiely demonstrates



how gossip permeates, even dictates, the daily lives and interactions of the town's inhabitants. Although Maxwell is acquitted, the town's debates on his culpability continue until his death, at which point the rumoured murder, which Maxwell admits to having committed lives on in town folklore.

At the centre of the main story-line is Bernard Fiddis, a successful, well-travelled bachelor lawyer who escapes from the town's pettiness into the worldly hotel parlour of Alice Graham. Alice, having come from Scotland and been twice divorced, is looked upon poorly by the townspeople who speak of her only under their breaths, save for in the macho homo-social quarters of the pubs where her behaviour is a matter of public record. Across the street from Alice's hotel is the home of the Catholic upper middle class Campbell family, whose fortunes and reputations are protectively guarded by the children's Aunt Agatha. May, the eldest daughter of the Campbell of the family, comes to recognition of her womanhood and enters into sexual relationships simultaneously with Fiddis and the younger Pat Rafferty, the son of a well-to-do farmer. May's sister Dympna, meanwhile, goes steady with Pat's good friend Jim Collins, who, like Pat, comes from poorer stock than the Campbell family. Concurrent to these relationships, May's brother Gerry gets involved with two local troublemakers, stealing from several homes in town before they wind up beating and raping a maid in one of their bungled attempts. The novel ends with the flight of Pat Rafferty from town, having falsely learned that May is pregnant with Fiddis' child, when in fact the child is Pat's. The case is kept quiet in the hopes of minimising scandal in town, with Fiddis proposing marriage to May after discussing the situation with her father.

The basic facts of the story – rape, premarital sex and unrepented murder – most certainly caused the book to be brought to the attention of the Censorship Board. When it was banned in 1949, Kiely became the first Northern Irish writer to be censored in Ireland. This was also the year when the Irish Free State officially became the Republic of Ireland, which suggests recognition of the more permanent nature of the border. It also underlines the threat that Northern Ireland posed to the Republic in its liminality, as a borderland that was admittedly full of contradictory impulses that both could and could not be assimilated into the national identity as it was being constructed by the State. The *Republic of Ireland Act, 1949*, in effect severed Northern Ireland from the Republic on an official level, but the maintenance of Articles 2 and 3 in the Constitution simultaneously kept it sutured, thereby emphasising a legislative paradox.

Although Kiely's Republican credentials would seem beyond reproach and his early writing suggests that there is a striking similarity between his personal beliefs and the irredentist politics of the Republic, his book *In a Harbour Green* was censored, in a sense labelled as foreign, or at least containing un-Irish material. The problem that censoring Kiely, a Catholic Nationalist from Northern Ireland, poses is tightly bound up with the legislative paradox. Namely, the banning of his book relates closely to the passing of the Republic of Ireland Act in 1949 that formed a sovereign nation further separated from Great Britain, and thus Northern Ireland in its abandonment of the Commonwealth. Simultaneously, his personal politics closely aligns him with Articles 2 and 3 of the 1937 Constitution. Kiely, like both his book and Northern Ireland, becomes a sort of borderland, with both assimilable and unassimilable aspects. This concern is highlighted by Eckley who, in describing the reception of Kiely's second banned novel

*Honey Seems Bitter*, notes: "The Irish reviewers did not so much object to such unflattering descriptions as they did to the behavior of the characters: murder in a quiet village, seduction of an innocent girl, continual drinking in pubs. These activities, they tritely hoped . . ., would not be regarded as typically Irish."<sup>84</sup> Or Irish *at all*. The banning of his book is tied more intimately to the process of national identity formation in Ireland as opposed to merely posing threats to Catholic social teachings; this is demonstrated in the fact that as the book was being censored in Ireland it was chosen as a selection of the Catholic Book Club of London.<sup>85</sup>

The character of Aunt Agatha best personifies the censorious nature that pervades the novel and the times in which it was written. Indeed, at one point she is referred to as a "censoring presence" precisely for how she monitors and controls the children's behaviour.<sup>86</sup> When Aunt Agatha has a stroke and becomes an invalid, May exalts in the ability to escape her aunt's critical scrutiny and is seen within the next two weeks to be a frequenter of Alice Graham's hotel, delighting in the older woman's stories of her life experiences and her ostentatious personality and, of course, the company of Fiddis.<sup>87</sup> Inwardly, May hopes that her aunt dies or at least remains infirm so that she can remain free to do as she likes.<sup>88</sup> When she and her father escort Aunt Agatha to the hospital in Belfast, May goes along for the opportunity to visit a big city rather than out of any familial concern for her aunt's health and well-being. Mistakenly believing that she has been anxious with regards to her aunt, her father leaves her in Belfast with some money to enjoy the day out and take the train home, hoping that it will help to take her mind off of Aunt Agatha.<sup>89</sup> However, Fiddis happens to be in Belfast for the day on business and after he runs into May he initiates her into a world far away from Omagh.

It is no mere coincidence that Fiddis and May encounter each other in a bookshop. He tells May of his first time in that particular shop trying to get a book they did not have in stock because they did not carry books “of that nature,” what the proprietor refers to as a “bad book.”<sup>90</sup> It was, Fiddis admits, “Not the sort of book a young man could ask for in any shop in our town.”<sup>91</sup> By merely asking for such a book in Omagh, Fiddis would thereafter be subject to even worse rumours than he was in keeping company with Alice. Books therefore become the means by which he seduces May. After leaving the bookshop, he leads her through a maze of “alleyways, dark and cluttered with goods, like a lane in a bazaar in some Eastern story of dark passion and darker hate.”<sup>92</sup> The exotic oriental imagery placed immediately after the discussion of “bad books” foreshadows their sexual interlude in Fiddis’ car on their way home from Belfast, where May literally has another world opened up for her in terms of the more opulent and thrilling lifestyle Fiddis will offer her compared to Pat Rafferty. The irony is that their relationship is consummated on the way home in the very unromantic setting of the side of the road in the backseat of the car.

Like everyone else, Fiddis is subject to the town’s censorious gossip and must hide from its glare. At one point he cannot even take May into his own house because his maid, Judy, is there and he does not want her to discover their secret relationship.<sup>93</sup> He also keeps a diary, protecting it under lock in key in the event someone should stumble upon it:

It always struck him as particularly appropriate that the key to the lock of the drawer in which he kept the accumulating black-bound folio pages should be neighbour on his ring to the key that opened the door of Alice Graham’s hotel. There were three ways of escaping from the town and from his life in the town: escape by going on a journey, escape by seeking

the society of Alice Graham, escape into this room to the careful writing of the things he thought and the things he did.<sup>94</sup>

The diary contains a log of “his hidden infidelities,”<sup>95</sup> though the fact that he is not married suggests that he is unfaithful not to another person but to himself, or at least the image of himself as it exists in the town’s collective imaginary. And as he watches May act in a play shortly after they have begun their relationship, he thinks:

Nobody in that hall knew what he knew. The town didn’t know. Her father didn’t know. The angels would have been shocked. The wise men would be wiser than ever. It would have given him a strange satisfaction to whisper it all to the monsignor, leaning sideways in the darkened hall, pointing to the girl on the lighted stage, telling it all to the priest, not with repentance in his voice but with the wild exultation of a man who has found a pearl or captured beauty like a bird in a cage.<sup>96</sup>

The thrill for him comes in the secretive, hidden knowledge and the possibility that others might also discover it and therefore him too. His perversions, or his sexual proclivities, would bring shock to the town and this potential for shock heightens the thrill of the initial sexual act. This is perhaps why he also keeps a diary of his life, as it could potentially be discovered by someone and read – the key that locks its contents would not prove to be much of a deterrent should someone prove curious enough. The irony of the diary’s key placed next to Alice’s key is therefore the proximity of forbidden knowledge, of sex, of what the town would look upon as foreign. This conflation of the sexual and forbidden is realised in Fiddis’ pre-coital travels with May through Belfast’s alleys that resemble an oriental bazaar.

Alice furthers the conflation of sexuality and otherness. She is the town’s most notorious sexual deviant and, as it happens, has immigrated from Scotland. As Chris Campbell looks upon her, he thinks: “Aunt Aggie said once that woman would be a fine house-keeper in hell. Maybe, above the high forehead and hidden by the crimped black

hair were the stumps of horns like the horns of the devil.”<sup>97</sup> Aunt Agatha’s censorious judgement was, however, based merely upon rumour and not an intimate knowledge of Alice. Indeed, not once is it inferred in the text that Aunt Agatha has ever had any interaction with Alice. But from the time the reader is first introduced to Alice, there is an obvious reason why such interaction is not needed: “For the prudent men of a prudent town, the way she walked and the way she dressed, the good perfume she used and the gin she drank were all challenges waving like flags above a gateway that opened into another world.”<sup>98</sup> Although her perfume is “good,” implying it is expensive, it is *too* good for the town. Her foreign values and demeanour are demonstrated in her difference in clothing, perfume and manner of walking. Prudent men, those who would not want to sully their reputations, therefore steer clear of her as a forbidden fruit. She is tempting in her difference, but her difference is foreign and thus disapproved of by the norms and mores of Omagh society. Despite the fact that Northern Ireland is a borderland, Alice Graham does not fit into the mould of its hybrid inhabitants, suggesting that the borderland might not be as indescribably composed as it is posited by theory. Alice’s differentiation is “flagged” as being part of “another world,” thereby metaphorically suggesting that she is irreconcilable to Northern Irish, or at least Omagh, society. Considering the influence of Scotland on Northern Ireland and vice versa, this is an extreme indictment, one that supports the Nationalist claims to an Irish Ireland.

Alice’s foreignness is overt and it is imbricated in her choice of profession. As a hotel owner, she receives and caters to foreign bodies, those from outside the defined community, those who do not belong. Like her guests, as both an inhabitant of her hotel and one who came from Scotland, she is from beyond the borders. As a hotel, her house

becomes a sort of borderland within the borderland of Northern Ireland, containing bodies that are not able to assimilate into the larger community. In this way, the threat she poses to the community is not only in her deeds and thoughts, but rather in what she represents: the uncertainty of identity and its attendant anxieties. This accounts for the need with which the characters repeatedly differentiate Alice from the community, a move that simultaneously implies that they belong in Omagh, in Northern Ireland.

When it is discovered that May is pregnant, it is therefore logical that no one lays the responsibility on her, Fiddis or Pat Rafferty. Instead, Dympna blames the Graham hotel, and Jim Collins, taking Dympna's side, thinks of Alice as nothing more than "a foreigner from some backstreet in some unknown city."<sup>99</sup> May's father, perhaps lashing out as any widowed father would given the time period and context of his having an unmarried pregnant daughter, refers to Alice as a "painted hussy."<sup>100</sup> And Fiddis, once it is decided that he will marry May, gets Tom Nixon, a local man, to buy her hotel.<sup>101</sup> It is insinuated that her departure will signal that the immoral actions of both Fiddis and May, or at least their knowledge and the implications of them, will be erased.<sup>102</sup>

This ending is somewhat foreshadowed by Pat Rafferty who, while looking upon Alice, thinks that maybe she "was feeling the want of her people like a pain in the bowels, for in this town she was an exile, and Bernard Fiddis, in spite of his travels, had his roots here, deep under the houses, watered by the river, twisted in the earth as the little wandering roads twisted over the back of the earth."<sup>103</sup> Pat therefore sees people and nations in primordialist terms, which is perhaps not surprising given that he is a farmer and the son of generations of farmers, who till the land and through their labours feel an organic connection between themselves and the soil. For him, then, Northern

Ireland is not a borderland in which people change and interchange, but a place in which people live and to which they belong and a culture to which others cannot readily assimilate. His view is in accordance with the mixture of suspicion, hatred and perverse curiosity that the town looks upon the borderland of Alice's hotel, fearing that she represents what they themselves represent to the Republic: a foreign body that is perhaps not as foreign as they have convinced themselves.

The book is therefore written in and of an atmosphere of censorship. The town censors people, attitudes, ideas, fashions and behaviours as foreign through its use of gossip as a regulatory device. That which does not conform to the censorious prevalent norms and mores is cast outside the local and national imaginary. Gossip in the town therefore functions as a means of exorcising the foreign or non-uniform and unconventional elements from its body politic, in effect substituting the town as a smaller and more restrictive model of the nation and gossip as the State's use of censorship. By identifying the unwanted "foreign" elements in its people, the community negatively defines itself through what it is not. People are expected to conform and adapt to the prevalent consensus and by doing so they are normalised. In this way, the hybrid aspects that make Northern Irish society a borderland are neutralised in the imaginary. This is precisely what Benedict Anderson suggests is the case in *all* national societies, the convenient forgetting, remembering, elisions, deletions, mistaken identifications and false consciousnesses that occur in the collective imaginary of the nation and are embodied in the legislation and institutions of the State.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the cohesive veneer of the town as expressed in its unreserved outer expressions of piety and through the conformity its gossip seeks to impose, it is as deeply



and multiply divided as any borderland. Although the Collins boys are good friends with her nephews and nieces, Aunt Agatha looks down upon them with the snobbery of her class, believing “they belong to Barrack lane and not to High Street.”<sup>105</sup> May is likewise elitist in her attitudes for all the ways in which she likes to differentiate herself from Aunt Agatha. She disapproves of Dymyna’s choice of Jim because his family is employed in the British Army, and her own relationship with Fiddis begins when she fully recognises upon their dining at an exclusive Belfast restaurant that Pat Rafferty could not offer her such refinements. Fiddis provided “a world into which poor Pat hadn’t the price of admission; a world of soft carpets, and orders obsequiously obeyed, and good food, and shining cutlery, and delicate glasses, and wine that was warmth and comfort and merriment without end.”<sup>106</sup> Instead of rushing into what she imagines will be a life of struggle and some hardship with a farmer such as Pat, she repeatedly thinks about how much better her life would be with Fiddis.<sup>107</sup> In the end, the class divisions and temptations of remaining in high society are too overwhelming, and so she trades in Pat’s rural homestead and penned in fields for the wide porch and decorous salon of the barrister’s house. The absence of sentimentality and emotion that help to account for her decision are the chilling results of one who is fully aware of the future material conditions of such a choice and is partially informed by how she will be observed by the community, for the fact of the matter is that Pat is no poor farmer: his father is rumoured around town to own half of the countryside.<sup>108</sup> Of course, given the reliability of town gossip, it is only fitting that May does not ever consider this possibility.

The sectarian politics that have sundered Northern Irish society and caused most commentators to claim it as a borderland are even more prevalent than the class divisions.

While class divides the town into wealthier and poorer districts, religious and political affiliations, at this time closely intertwined, divided once again those socio-economic neighbourhoods. Aside from being a lawyer, Fiddis is also a Nationalist candidate in the upcoming election. However, he is pragmatic enough to know that he is in a losing cause because the town is part of a Unionist constituency. “Politics don’t develop in Ulster,” he says without any hint of sadness or frustration. “The Orange farmer votes Unionist because he’s told if he doesn’t he’ll have to learn Gaelic and become a Roman Catholic. The Catholic votes Nationalist because the priest tells him to, and because he wants to see Ireland free and united and Gaelic, whatever that means.”<sup>109</sup> The divisions are deep enough that no reflection as to their sources or the possibility of surmounting them is given. Instead, even a cynic such as Fiddis acts into the divisions as though he were merely playing a role in the town theatre company, with no thought as to the content of what he is saying or the consequences that such words might have. From the campaign podium, he claims that “this town stands for an Ireland free, united, Gaelic and democratic.”<sup>110</sup> In effect, he completely ignores the political desires and aspirations of those inhabitants who might disagree with him, forcing their beliefs into the margins of accepted opinion. His rhetoric reaches new heights, however, when he poses the questionable analogy: “What did Hitler or Stalin ever do that Lord Craigavon hasn’t done?”<sup>111</sup> As the townspeople leave excited and incited towards religio-political division and nearly a riot, Fiddis slinks off to safety and the warm embrace of May Campbell. His public performance is exactly that: a performance. He is urbane and well-travelled enough to not believe what he has just uttered, yet he denies any responsibility for his speech. Like the constituency, he is both a product and an empty conduit for

history, lacking any agency to change the way society is shaped despite his privileged position. Just as the constituency has always been Unionist and, it is implied, will always be Unionist, so he as a Nationalist candidate must rattle off the timeless discourse of sectarian division.

When compared to Fiddis, Pat Rafferty's father is an instrument and agent for progress. The irony of this is that it is the supposedly backward farmer who seeks to modernise Northern Irish society while the supposedly better educated lawyer remains locked in outward displays of maintaining its backwardness. The character of old Rafferty, Kiely later admitted, was taken from a real life model. Joe Gormley, a farmer from Omagh country, "had read a great deal about the Tennessee Valley Authority and he saw in the draining of the Fairywater (*omnibus paribus*) a clogged river and a reckless floodier, a hope of increased prosperity for the farmers of the valley."<sup>12</sup> Of course, the other farmers ignored him, until some years after his death the river was drained allowing it to run unhindered to the River Foyle and the sea and the cultivation of acres that were once only marshlands. Old Rafferty's rants against his fellow farmers are therefore seen as a positive modernising influence, one that will help, not ruin their livelihoods and lifestyles. "There'll be no farming in this backside of a country until the land is properly drained," he says to his son, hoping to stir him to become an educated farmer. "[O]ne half-penny on the rate would clean the river. And by God there isn't enough organization in the country to get that done. Is it much wonder the Irish are where they are?"<sup>13</sup> Because of his quixotic impulses, Pat refers to his father as "an American out of his environment. He wants to make the world turn the other way."<sup>14</sup> But through his own powers of organisation he hires Fiddis, along with several other farmers, to sue the

government into cleaning the river. Taking Fiddis on a tour of the valley during the spring flood, they survey the death and destruction the waters have left in their wake.<sup>115</sup> Old Rafferty curses those who are reluctant to modernise, leading Eckley to comment that “the effects of the flood demonstrate the reasons Rafferty gets little support for flood control from the people; they do indeed survive, as they have survived before.”<sup>116</sup> Yet they find Maxwell’s bloated body floating in his flooded house. Not all people survive the floods and some farmers have come around to Rafferty’s ideas and views in helping him to hire Fiddis to get the river cleaned.

Being so intimately knowledgeable of Carleton’s writings, Kiely would instantly recognise what Foster calls the “reckless fertility” that his rain and water imagery represent. This reckless fertility is crucial to many twentieth-century Northern Irish writers, part of what Foster claims is “a mocking conspiracy of God, the Ascendancy and, did they but know it, the peasants’ own inadequacies. . . . Bad government, poverty and the vicissitudes of the soil and climate combine to produce one of the major motifs in Ulster fiction, that of *the blighted land*.”<sup>117</sup> Another closely related theme Foster locates in Ulster fiction is *bad blood*, the result of “the penchant for scandal, gossip, intrigue, snobbery, fecklessness and avarice.”<sup>118</sup> The blood and land are mystically, primordially bound, a reflection of the peoples’ tribal atavisms: “The union depends upon the concord of kin and neighbour (‘good blood’) and the proper and cordial exploitation of the land’s fertility. When the blood is ‘bad’ or the land is ‘blighted’, the blood-land nexus is broken and the people’s ties with the land severed.”<sup>119</sup> Adopting this formula, because of the sectarian and divided nature of Northern Irish society, there is much “bad blood” which has been translated into “blighted land.”

The flooded lands of Rafferty's valley is a form of reckless fertility that has been caused by the divisions and discord in town amongst the peoples, and their avarice and divisions are held responsible for these conditions. Rafferty, then, is a model of what Kiely views as a positive factor in the society, seeking to rectify the reckless fertility of the river's floodwaters so that the vicious circle of "bad blood" and "blighted land" might be broken. Fiddis, however, continues to provoke and maintain the "bad blood" and thereby the conditions of the "blighted land" through his divisive speeches. Furthermore, he profits from this vicious circle in that he is then hired by the farmers to sue the Government to clean the river and thus restrain nature to a more manageable fertility and in the process restore the health of the land and the people's blood. Unfortunately, the onslaught of World War Two interjects on the narrative and the vicious circle of "bad blood" and the "blighted land" will continue for some years. The novel ends with the war claiming the life of Pat Rafferty, the farmer's sole son, suggesting that the land, after it is blighted, will either lie fallow or become sterilely barren, and that relationships between the peoples will remain a matter of "bad blood." In this analysis, Northern Ireland thus remains a borderland of hopelessly mixed and incongruent peoples.

Following the publication of *In a Harbour Green*, Kiely produced *Modern Irish Fiction*, the first critical study of Irish authors from the 1930 to 1950 period. Taken as a whole, it reads as an early canonisation of his contemporaries, with Liam O'Flaherty, Kate O'Brien, Patrick Kavanagh and Sean O'Faolain meriting much attention when compared to most of the other fifty-odd writers mentioned. Having recently had a book banned, Kiely notes with some concern how censorship is a process of weeding out the un-Irish elements in both foreign and Irish books. Further distancing himself from his

youthful allegiance to nationalist ideology, he mocks the State's banning of Frank O'Connor's translation of Brian Merriman's eighteenth-century Gaelic poem *The Midnight Court* as "the shocked reaction of serious Hibernians discovering that bawdry among the ancients was not confined to Chaucer the Englishman or Rabelais the Frenchman."<sup>120</sup> Sean O'Faolain's *Midsummer Night's Madness* "is banned in the part of Ireland governed from Dublin, and in the National Library in Dublin it is kept, with other books similarly banned, as carefully under lock and key as if it were a landmine. For all that, it is unlikely to cause any serious damage to growing girls or to the general state of public morality."<sup>121</sup> And of *Tarry Flynn* he notes: "Kavanagh's references to chamber pots, the forking of dung, the bulling of cows, drew down on the book the Dublin censorship sentence for obscenity or indecency. . . . It is well known that Irish peasants out of respect for the principal of censorship never mention such matters."<sup>122</sup>

Undoubtedly, Kiely's own views on censorship are framed by his experience both as a border dweller and as one who has felt the sting, in social, political and economic terms, of writing banned books. State censorship, he says, "has, unfortunately, earned its prominence by a phenomenal stupidity in application, by its relation to the whole wide question of the status of the writer in modern Ireland, and by its relation to the vexed argument (among Catholics) as to what is and is not Catholic literature."<sup>123</sup> In fact, there is even a moment in *In a Harbour Green* in which although the town's dramatic society wishes to perform Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, the Monsignor single-handedly nixes it. When asked about it, he says, "That's by O'Casey isn't it? . . . The dog. If he wrote the thirty days prayer it would be a sin to say it."<sup>124</sup> Jack McGowan, the dramatic society's director, argues for its production, although only behind the

priest's back: "If he is [against it], he should know there's worse goes on in his parish than Sean O'Casey ever put on the stage, from owl fellows executing their wives to young girls having infants that can't be logically accounted for."<sup>125</sup> McGowan focuses on the hypocrisy of the town and the larger culture in their censorship, arguing that the literature is merely a reflection of the society, that the society is not a reflection of its literature.

Kiely's concern is therefore focused on the site where the responsibilities of the State and the writer come into conflict:

A parochial puritanism does to a certain extent bear the burden of the blame for the actions of the censorship, but as much or more to blame is our general inability to realise the exact relation of the writer to the society in which he lives, to see clearly that, in relation to the nationalism or the creed in which he was reared, a writer may as readily be an apostate as an apostle.<sup>126</sup>

It is this change in his mentality that led Kiely, in reaction to those IRA members who blew up the Nelson Pillar in 1966, to say that "these half-educated poor devils would be better employed putting stink bombs in the Office of the Censorship of Publications."<sup>127</sup>

It is interesting that these same "half-educated poor devils" Kiely chastises in all likelihood shared the same views on the Irish border as he himself held only twenty years earlier. Yet the revision of his earlier staunch republicanism was already in the midst of a transformation in the years immediately after he wrote *Counties of Contention*, a transformation that was perhaps more fully completed after the time he had spent away from Ireland in the United States in the early 1960s and with the eruption of the Troubles in the coming years. His negative and unsympathetic portrayal of the IRA in *Proxopera* stands as a testament to this changing view. But read more closely, the statement Kiely makes with regards to the IRA is still an argument for the need to erase borders: in this case the removal of the censors who police the socio-political borders of Irish literature.

In effect, Kiely has come to view Ireland, and indeed every society, as a borderland, containing contradictory identities, loyalties and ideologies. It is the post-modern condition that he, perhaps because of the fact that he is a wilfully exiled native of a more obvious borderland, has come to accept. In banning his books, the Censorship Board implicitly acknowledged he suffered from these symptoms as a writer whose ideas were distinctly foreign, and so it maintained the State's borders around the official construct of an Irish national identity. Kiely is *both* an Irish writer *and* a Northern writer, with aspects of him that simultaneously are and are not able to assimilate into the official culture of his day. He was lucky: banned Irish writers who hailed from Ireland were told that they were not wholly able to assimilate and, as such, were not Irish. But if they were not Irish, they did not necessarily have the luxury of Kiely in also being of somewhere else.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Moodie, *Geography Behind Politics* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1957), 99.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Joseph M. Chan and Bruce T. McIntyre, "Introduction," in *In Search of Boundaries: Communication, Nation-States and Cultural Identities*, ed. Joseph M. Chan and Bruce T. McIntyre (Westport, CT: Ablex, 2002), xv.

<sup>3</sup> J.R.V. Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London: Allen & Unwin), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands = La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation, and State* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 48.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>8</sup> Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*, 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Moodie, *Geography Behind Politics*, 88.



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- <sup>12</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 207.
- <sup>13</sup> David E. Johnson and Scott Michaelson, "Border Secrets: An Introduction," in *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics*, ed. Scott Michaelson and David E. Johnson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 9-10.
- <sup>14</sup> Alejandro Lugo, "Reflections on Border Theory, Culture, and the Nation," in *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics*, ed. Scott Michaelson and David E. Johnson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 45.
- <sup>15</sup> Donnan and Hastings, *Borders*, 131.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.
- <sup>17</sup> For one of the best accounts of the politics and effects of the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 and the Anglo-Irish Treaty, see T.G. Fraser, *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine: Theory & Practice* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 20-67.
- <sup>18</sup> Geoffrey J. Hand, Introduction to *Report of the Irish Boundary Commission, 1925* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), ix.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, x-xi.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, xii-xvi.
- <sup>21</sup> *Report of the Irish Boundary Commission, 1925* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), 30-1.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> Hand, Introduction, xviii-xxii.
- <sup>26</sup> Ged Martin, "The Origins of Partition," in *The Irish Border: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. Malcolm Anderson and Eberhard Bort (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 96.
- <sup>27</sup> Hand, Introduction, xi-xii.
- <sup>28</sup> Richard Hayward, *Border Foray* (London: Arthur Baker, 1957), 30.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.
- <sup>31</sup> M.W. Heslinga, *The Irish Border as Cultural Divide* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1979), 11.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-2.
- <sup>34</sup> E. Estyn Evans, *The Personality of Ireland: Habitat, Heritage and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 29.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Malcolm Anderson and Eberhard Bort *The Irish Border: History, Politics, Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Hayward, *Border Foray*, 10 and 157-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 123 and 125.

<sup>42</sup> Owen Dudley Edwards, "The Shaping of Border Identities Before Partition: Some Clues Towards Culture and Society," in *The Irish Border: History, Politics, Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 239.

<sup>43</sup> Evans, *The Personality of Ireland*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*, 74.

<sup>45</sup> Longley, *The Living Stream*, 195.

<sup>46</sup> Hayward, *Border Foray*, 186.

<sup>47</sup> His *Stephen Hero*, the earlier longer draft of *Portrait*, was not so lucky.

<sup>48</sup> Ross Castonovo, "Compromised Narratives Along the Border: The Mason-Dixon Line, Resistance, and Hegemony," in *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics*, ed. Scott Michaelson and David E. Johnson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 195.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>50</sup> Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>51</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Drink to the Bird* (London: Methuen, 1991), 72.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-3.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel J. Casey, *Benedict Kiely* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 15.

<sup>55</sup> Kiely, *Drink to the Bird*, 2-17. In addition to leading him on his future path in literary endeavours, the time as a novice until his departure later became material for his excellent novel *The Was an Ancient House*, the second book of his to be banned by the Censorship Board.

<sup>56</sup> Casey, *Benedict Kiely*, 42.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

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<sup>58</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Counties of Contention: A Study of the Origins and Implications of the Partition of Ireland* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1945), v.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> John Wilson Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1974), unpaginated.

<sup>62</sup> Kiely, *Counties of Contention*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-34.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-72.

<sup>67</sup> Kiely, *Drink to the Bird*, 34.

<sup>68</sup> Kiely, *Counties of Contention*, 94-105.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>70</sup> Kiely, *Drink to the Bird*, 31-2.

<sup>71</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Land Without Stars* (London: C. Johnson, 1946), ix.

<sup>72</sup> One contemporary review of the book makes this point: "Mr. Kiely, who has previously written a study of the interaction of nationalism and unionism in Ulster, here shows that contradictory environment expressed in the thwarted lives of two ordinary young Irishmen." See W.R. Le Fanu, review of *Land Without Stars*, *Times Literary Supplement*, February 15, 1947, 89. It is interesting in the context of this chapter that despite the fact that the Quinn family is from Northern Ireland, the reviewer considers the brothers as "Irishmen."

<sup>73</sup> Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 21.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>78</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Poor Scholar: A Study of the Works and Days of William Carleton, 1794-1869*, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), v.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-94.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-58.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-32.

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<sup>82</sup> In a contemporary review of *Poor Scholar*, Austin Clarke argues that Kiely is more biased against Carleton's conversion than I do. One of the reasons for this is that although Kiely might at times slip into his former republican nationalist views, the study *on the whole* demonstrates a move away from this stance when read against *Counties of Contention*. See Austin Clarke, review of *Poor Scholar*, *Times Literary Supplement*, April 24, 1948, 236.

<sup>83</sup> Casey, *Benedict Kiely*, 64.

<sup>84</sup> Grace Eckley, *Benedict Kiely* (New York: Twayne, 1972), 93.

<sup>85</sup> Casey, *Benedict Kiely*, 55.

<sup>86</sup> Benedict Kiely, *In a Harbour Green*, (Dublin: Moytura Press, 1992), 33.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-8.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-81.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-13.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-3.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 184. Tom Nixon's interest in buying the hotel is likely motivated by moral concern for the community as much as it is by business. Earlier he hints that Alice used to be a prostitute, claiming that she had "learned her manners on the London pavements" (*Ibid.*, 155). The comment itself suggests that he either knows her intimately and is therefore glad to see her go in the event that tells of their relations, that she has refused his attentions and he is therefore immaturely and unkindly lashing out in hurt, or that he is merely echoing what others have already been saying about her.

<sup>102</sup> One contemporary review of the book replicates the town's methods by laying the blame squarely on Alice: "May's evil genius is the raffish faded Alice Grahame [sic] who keeps a hotel and herself has hopes of marrying Fiddis. Under her sophisticated influence, May not only gets ideas about men but begins to put them into practice." See Maurice Lane Richardson, review of *In a Harbour Green*, *Times Literary Supplement*, November 4, 1949, 709.

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- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 105.
- <sup>104</sup> See his *Imagined Communities*.
- <sup>105</sup> Kiely, *In a Harbour Green*, 10.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-8 and 163-5.
- <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.
- <sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>112</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Drink to the Bird*, 105.
- <sup>113</sup> Benedict Kiely, *In a Harbour Green*, 34-5.
- <sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-22.
- <sup>116</sup> Eckley, *Benedict Kiely*, 73.
- <sup>117</sup> Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction*, 3.
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>120</sup> Benedict Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction: A Critique* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1950), 10.
- <sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.
- <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.
- <sup>124</sup> Kiely, *In a Harbour Green*, 51.
- <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>126</sup> Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction*, 137.
- <sup>127</sup> Eckley, *Benedict Kiely*, unpaginated.

## Chapter Seven: Literary Criticism and the Condition of Censorship

In discussing a given work and writer, one of the critic's main objectives is, either implicitly or explicitly, to make a case for or against their inclusion in the literary canon. The political nature of this objective is heightened in the case of previously censored books that have remained relatively marginal to the canon and is especially emphatic in situations wherein a novel was banned almost immediately after its publication. Because of the rapidity of the ban, the book would not have received an initial readership and, in Ireland, publicity of it would not have been allowed under the auspices of the *Censorship of Publications Act*. As a result, the book in question would have been cloaked in a form of silence, its contents known to those who were connected in high cultural circles while the mass public remained largely ignorant of even its existence.

Kate O'Brien's *Mary Lavelle* is one such novel. Published in 1936 and banned in Ireland on December 29 of that same year, its Prohibition Order was not revoked until the passage of the *Censorship of Publications Act, 1967*, which released all titles from censorship if they had been censored for a time of twelve years or more.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find that much of the critical work undertaken on the novel has been in the post-1970 period – although the establishment of Irish Literature as a field of study, the ever-increasing academic publishing industry, and the institutional acceptance of more women and women's writers were further contributing factors. In his critical history of the Irish novel, James Cahalan makes a similar argument, claiming that O'Brien and other Irish female writers of this period, such as Molly Keane and Maura Laverty, began to enter the canon only in the 1980s, due largely to reprints of their novels by the feminist presses Arlen House and Virago.<sup>2</sup> This recuperative work by fringe and

marginal presses has helped spark renewed scholarly interest in formerly overlooked and banned works and made them available for classroom teaching.

The academic reception of *Mary Lavelle* has been largely positive, which suggests that there has been a significant process of recovery involved in its critical treatment. Accompanying their critical readings, scholars have devoted a large amount of print discussing the book's qualities that were subversive of the dominant cultural mores of the Ireland of 1936. Of particular interest, in fact an almost singular interest, to the majority of critics is the book's depiction of sexuality. Possibly because episodes entailing sexual acts and discussion of sexuality are foregrounded in the novel, there is no comment on other potentially subversive aspects of the book. This chapter argues that by failing to recover these other aspects of the novel, the book's most vocal supporters actually do it a disservice. By focusing critical commentary on only one or two potentially subversive aspects of the book, its critics fail to make a significant case for its adoption into the canon of Irish Literature. Why, one might counter argue, should an already crowded canon with other noteworthy and deserving, though equally marginalised, works and writers, make place for a one- or two-dimensional book?

By not providing more sophisticated readings of previously censored works, critics fail to adequately recover books that were originally marginalised by the Censorship Board's suppressive work. In the course of their work, critics can either hamper or facilitate censorship, in much the same way as librarians and booksellers can be either potential agents of subversive activity or informal censorship. Although it would be difficult to say that these contemporary critics are explicitly complicit with censorship, it does reveal how the condition of censorship, the marginalising of works

and ideas, takes its toll on the recovery process.<sup>3</sup> In providing a more complex and multidimensional reading of potentially subversive aspects of *Mary Lavelle*, this chapter forms part of that process.

*There's Something Else About Mary: Kate O'Brien's Mary Lavelle*

Having recently arrived in Altono, Spain, Mary Lavelle finds herself reminiscing about her home town of Mellick, Ireland, that she has left behind to become a governess for the Areavaga family's three teenage daughters. Her thoughts range from her indifferent father and his stagnant medical practice to her two brothers who, for various reasons, have quit Ireland to work in England and America, and finally her fiancé, John MacCurtain. Though the recollection of home from abroad might be understandably sentimental or cause one to recoil, Mary describes both Mellick and her family with a cool distance. Her remembrance of kissing John for the first time evokes the expectation of pleasure, yet Mary claims that she only felt relief when their lips parted. The blame for the disappointment masked by this relief is placed upon neither herself nor John, but a third party: "Kissing, she had understood from literature, hearsay and innuendo, was a pleasant privilege between two who loved, but until John came, hungrily compelling, no one had ever kissed her mouth."<sup>4</sup> Literature and gossip have therefore shaped her perceptions and expectations, the romantic strain of both leading her to believe in an ideal that is not met by the reality. In this brief recollection, Kate O'Brien acknowledges the power of literature to form and inform individuals and their beliefs. Mary's subtle placement of blame on literature for its effect on individuals is much the same argument that is often made to justify censorship. In such circumstances, the banning of a book is



viewed as a preventative act, one that protects the potential readers from what the censor sees as harmful words, ideas or images.<sup>5</sup> That such a moment would occur at the outset of a banned book such as *Mary Lavelle* is therefore, in hindsight, a touch of irony.

What might have caused *Mary Lavelle* to be banned from Irish society? That is, what is there in *Mary Lavelle* that did not fit into, or even threaten, the popular and official construct of Irishness? As already mentioned, the responses from literary critics are somewhat facile and reductive: *Mary Lavelle* was banned because the title character has an affair with Juanito, the married son of the Areavaga family. More recently, cases have been made that the confession of lesbian love by Agatha Conlan to Mary was even more scandalous and this, coupled with the individualist-feminist undertones of the book, also contributed to its banning. While both of these possibilities will be discussed, it is necessary to explore some ignored aspects of the novel as also pertinent, all of which seek to undercut the narrative of official nationalism.

On the surface, the statement that *Mary Lavelle* was banned for the adulterous affair between Mary and Juanito seems obvious. John Cronin, for example, only notes that O'Brien "ran into trouble with the Censorship Board because . . . she permits her Irish heroine to have a brief affair with her Spanish lover before returning to Ireland."<sup>6</sup> Lorna Reynolds makes a similarly reductive claim, though she nuances it by claiming that it was banned because the Irish girl *willingly* has sex and is not *led astray*.<sup>7</sup> Certainly Mary is the title character and her actions and words will largely affect how the book is read and interpreted. Mary and Juanito's relationship becomes the focal point for how she comes to realise her individuality and the need for individual freedom: confession of their sexual union is the means by which she will be able to disengage herself from both

John and Irish society. A fallen woman, Mary knows she will be forced to leave Ireland and work abroad to support herself. The banning of *Mary Lavelle*, when the book is reduced to this simple summary, is therefore justified because of the negative model Mary represents for young Irish women whose ideas of love, like Mary's, are largely formed by the literature they read. But this conclusion does not do justice to even the simple summary, for it refuses the possibility that Mary and Juanito's relationship was threatening in other ways.

On two occasions in his study of Irish Censorship, M.H. Adams mentions that some books were objected to by Catholic associations on the basis of their contents advocating "Race Suicide,"<sup>8</sup> yet he never explains to what this term refers. While an argument could be made that it implies contraception, the effects that this has on population control, and the views of the Church on the evils of such, "Race Suicide" might have also represented xenophobia, more specifically the fear of racial impurity and miscegenation. Published in 1936, *Mary Lavelle* was received by a world that was on the brink of armed conflict and dealing with the upheavals of communism and fascism; this was particularly the case in Spain, where the novel is set. In fact, a contemporary review of the book in the *Irish Press* uses the war in Spain to register displeasure with O'Brien's work, noting the war as possibly having one positive outcome: the banishment of "that blind alley career the English speaking 'miss' from Ireland."<sup>9</sup> Fascism was not foreign to Ireland, the Blue Shirts forming a visible presence in the early 1930s.<sup>10</sup> But the Ireland of 1936 was largely not receptive to fascism as a political ideology.<sup>11</sup> However, as the preceding chapter argues, anything, or anyone, that does not conform to the construct of official nationalism was beyond the pale of Irishness, a foreign body that threatens to

contaminate the larger society. In this way, Juanito represents not only pre-marital and adulterous sex for Mary, but a foreign body co-mingling with and penetrating the pure Irish body politic, a point that will be returned to in a moment.

The sexual union of Juanito and Mary is portrayed in oddly contradictory terms. Juanito, upset that Mary is leaving Spain to avoid indiscretion, rushes to Altono and takes Mary away into the mountains above the town. He claims he wishes only to talk with her, which Mary repeatedly refuses, preferring to have sexual intercourse. Juanito, giving in to her, remarks that she is seducing him.<sup>12</sup> Considering it is he who seeks her out on every occasion that they clandestinely meet and brings her to their isolated place, it is odd that he should place the blame on her for seducing him. In so doing, Juanito evades all responsibility for his own actions. This scene can be read as an analogue to the shifting of both individual and societal responsibility on to the potentially evil influence of literature as justification for censorship. In effect, Juanito exercises the power and authority he has over Mary, a young, inexperienced woman living in exile, by suggesting that the responsibility for the act is hers. Mary, partly because of her Catholic upbringing, accepts this responsibility out of guilt and her internalisation of a patriarchal hierarchy, and thereby reveals the hegemonic nature of her and Juanito's sexual act. But this acceptance of responsibility also reifies negative aspects of gender relationships by implying that, despite Juanito's role as the one who has provoked and orchestrated their private meetings, the fault is with Mary as a woman for leading the man into temptation and adultery. This possibility is never explicitly suggested in the narrative – nor anywhere in critical works dedicated to the novel. One reason for this might be in the novel's thrust towards O'Brien's claim for the importance of individual freedom,

especially for women. By accepting responsibility for seducing Juanito, Mary accepts responsibility for her own choices and her own life. While this is an important point to consider, it is problematic because the circumstances leading up to their sexual act together are manipulated by Juanito. This is further complicated by how the sexual act is described.

In the prelude to the act, Mary notes how she is aware that, as a virgin, Juanito will cause her pain.<sup>13</sup> When it comes, the pain is described in masochistic terms that border precariously between martyrdom and rape:

He took her quickly and bravely. The pain made her cry out and writhe in shock, but he held her hard against him and in great love compelled her to endure it. He felt the sweat of pain break over all the silk of her body. He looked at her face, flung back against the moss, saw her set teeth and quivering nostrils, beating eyelids, flowing, flowing tears. The curls were clammy on her forehead now, as on that day when she came into Luisa's drawing-room from the bullfight. She was no longer Aphrodite, but a broken, tortured Christian, a wounded Saint Sebastian. He held her still and murmured wild Spanish words of love. His heart hurt him as if it might in fact break. How grotesquely we are made, he thought, how terrible and insane are our delights and urgencies. I love her, love her, and yet I tear and break her for my pleasure, because I must, because I love her, because she loves me.<sup>14</sup>

The excitement and violence are such that the bullfight is evoked as having had the same effect on Mary. After her first time at the *corrida*, the reader is told that “the wound of the bullfight was in fact – though she tried to forget and ignore it – the gateway through which Spain had entered in and taken her.”<sup>15</sup> Later, while dancing with Juanito in Altono's Plaza San Martín upon their first private meeting, this violent equation of Juanito and the *corrida* is foreshadowed: “She thought of the bullfight suddenly, of how it *ravished* her memory. This too she would need to remember.”<sup>16</sup> Just as the bullfight represents violent cultural penetration, Juanito's physical penetration represents the final

consummation of Mary's transformation into one who has ceased to be wholly affected and directed by a single cultural and political entity – in Mary's case, the norms and mores of Irish society. The cultural and physical miscegenation has therefore tainted Mary, the virginal Irish colleen who has now taken on the ambiguous identity of an exile. One understands why she and John, before she left for Spain, had decided she should not see a bullfight,<sup>17</sup> the implication being that it was more he than she who had so decided. This is yet another example of Mary's submission to male authority, though one she refuses by attending the corrida only six weeks into her stay.

In reading the bullfight as foreshadowing Mary's sexual act with Juanito, Adele Dalsimer notes the sexual overtones of its description.<sup>18</sup> Emma Donoghue critiques Dalsimer, believing that the bullfight does not foreshadow sex with Juanito for the simple fact that it is Agatha Conlan, the Irish lesbian governess, who brings her to see it.<sup>19</sup> While Dalsimer's point lacks a certain sophistication in its supporting argument, Donoghue's hasty dismissal is more evidence of her own ideological and critical investment than a nuanced counter-argument: she notes at the outset of her essay that it is "necessary" to read O'Brien as a lesbian novelist.<sup>20</sup> In effect, Donoghue marginalises those who read O'Brien's works with an eye to her relationship to Catholicism, Ireland, the upper middle-class, or life as an exiled member of the diaspora to name but a few possibilities, let alone other methods of inquiry apart from identity politics. Donoghue also neglects to mention that it is in fact Mother Liguori whose reference of Mary for the position of governess brought her to Spain and Juanito,<sup>21</sup> just as Agatha brings her to the corrida; Mary is therefore led to cultural and physical miscegenation by women who are devout, practising Catholics.

Dalsimer is thereby justified in her assessment. However, the physical miscegenation in Mary's sexual union with Juanito is foreshadowed by a less violent cultural penetration that begins to take effect only one week into her stay: "She had begun to drink wine at dinner, and to dip churros in her chocolate. . . . She felt a little at home."<sup>22</sup> Earlier, in her first letter home to John, she writes: "There is wine on my table always, but I haven't had the courage to try it yet! Nice business if I got drunk! What would you say if you heard that of me?"<sup>23</sup> The fact that Mary, after only one week in Spain, begins to readily imbibe wine without a thought of John and Ireland but instead feels "a little at home" reveals that she has undergone changes induced by the Spanish culture five weeks before the corrida. Finally, Mary's sexual union with Juanito and its link to the bullfight is further foreshadowed by and analogous to the marriage of the Irish governess O'Toole to the retired matador-cum-shopkeeper Pepe.<sup>24</sup> But the coupling of heterosexuals is a means, not an end; it is through the sexual act that Mary irreversibly sets herself on a course of individual freedom.

Again, the critic attempting to make a case for O'Brien in the canon encounters reductive critical readings that while celebrating the author simultaneously refuse to tease out the careful nuances and sophistication of her writing, preferring to remain fixated on only one or two aspects of the text. Eavan Boland, regarding O'Brien's past critical reception, states that she "was neither an Irish writer nor a woman writer in the accepted sense of those terms."<sup>25</sup> Eibhear Walshe similarly notes this problem, stating that "[s]he falls into no ready category, judged as appearing to vacillate between popular fiction and 'literature', Catholic conscience and Wildean dissidence, English letters and Irish writing, bourgeois history and feminist fable."<sup>26</sup> Says Ailbhe Smyth: "Kate O'Brien suffered a

long banishment to the outlying regions of (Irish) canonical acceptability. Not totally dismissed but not considered central either."<sup>27</sup> In an interesting twist, Donoghue notes that "[b]ooks on lesbian literature almost never mention Kate O'Brien's name; it is always as an Irish novelist, closeted in nationality, that she is known."<sup>28</sup> Perhaps, then, a critical route for Donoghue to take would be a more explicit deconstruction of the terms "lesbian" and "Irish" as mutually exclusive. In so doing, she could do much to counter the views of Jennifer Jeffers who, while celebrating many of the younger writers of the 1990s, claims that "Irish religious, gender, sexual, and material precedents in fiction that overtly challenge heterosexual culture and regulation are basically nonexistent."<sup>29</sup> Despite Jeffers' claims, homosexuality in Irish literature did not begin with the Celtic Tiger, though perhaps O'Brien's marginal status to the canon has caused many contemporary critics to overlook *Mary Lavelle*, *The Land of Spices* and *As Music and Splendour*.<sup>30</sup>

The secondary plot concerning Agatha Conlan and her love for Mary is cited as the other reason for the book's banning.<sup>31</sup> There is, in fact, nothing salacious about Agatha's confession; and though she is normally abrasive towards others, she is quite tender and timid towards Mary. Agatha admits to her: "I told you a lie that day. You asked me if I'd ever had a crush. . . . And I said I'd never had a crush on a living creature. That would have been true up to the first day I saw you. It's not true any more. . . . I thought it quite funny that O'Toole's romance, and my absurd infatuation – began more or less together."<sup>32</sup> The pain and circumlocution then become focused against Mary's gentle protests: "I like you the way a man would, you see. I never can see you without – without wanting to touch you. I could look at your face forever."<sup>33</sup> The lesbian love

never moves beyond mere words and remains unrequited. This fact, coupled with the relationship's marginality to the main story-line of Mary and Juanito's affair, might have kept it safe from the censor's wrath. Agatha's avowal might also seem at first glance to be entirely unnecessary to Mary's movement towards individual freedom. However, Donoghue makes the perceptive remark that O'Brien's strategy of diverse presentations of the theme of forbidden love allows her "to make, not a special plea for lesbians, but a grand argument for moral accountability and tolerance."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, instead of distracting from or seeming tangential at best to the main story-line, Agatha's unrequited love of Mary becomes central in its thematically supporting role. Because of this, the banning of *Mary Lavelle* on the grounds that Mary and Juanito's relationship is inappropriate, if not entirely immoral, makes Agatha's story guilty by association.

Agatha's lesbianism is in fact foreshadowed before the reader even encounters her. Seated for the first time in the café Alemán, a local meeting place for expatriot English-speaking governesses (most of whom are Irish), Mary's interest is piqued about the absent woman. When she asks who Agatha is, the comments elicited from the others can be read as hints of her lesbianism though it is assumed the others are not aware of this aspect of her life – she herself only becomes aware of it upon meeting and falling in love with Mary. The governesses alternately refer to Agatha as "a lunatic. The worst tempered woman in Spain," "She's a bitter pill," "She's a bit of a poser," "She's just not like the rest of us," and "One of her sort is quite enough."<sup>35</sup> To this, Mary can only remark: "She sounds queer," in this sense meaning odd. Agatha is therefore differentiated from the outset. She is also the sole governess to have learned how to speak Spanish and she is portrayed as an *oficianado* – or *oficianada* – of the *corrida*,



perhaps making a further case for how perverting and dangerous miscegenation on a cultural level can be to the psycho-spiritual make-up of an individual.

Both Mary and Agatha, the novel's two female sexual deviants, are those who embrace Spanish culture, the implication being that the embracing of a new culture means a rejection of the old. As these two female protagonists turn away from their Irish culture, their stay in Spain becomes a means for them to shirk the traditional gender roles of mother or nun. Emphasising this aspect, Ailbhe Smyth makes the claim that the banning of the book was directly related to its move towards a freedom of the individual from the tyranny of society as intertwined with a freedom of the woman from the tyranny of patriarchy:

Kate O'Brien was censored because her heroines expose and, to differing degrees, resist the bondage of patriarchy and all its paraphernalia – family, marriage, property, religion, class, and all the rest of it. They come to knowledge, if not to sweet and lasting joy, through experiences which are not defined or controlled by men.<sup>36</sup>

Though even the rebellion of O'Brien's characters against patriarchy would not have helped her case against censorship, it is not the *sole* reason. And though they rebel variously against these paraphernalia of patriarchy, they do so to differing degrees, normally in ways that are quite subtle. Agatha, for example, upon admitting her love to Mary, states: "I know it was wrong; but lately I've been told explicitly about it in confession. It's a very ancient and terrible vice."<sup>37</sup> Agatha's rebellion is not complete: she has not accepted her love for Mary and the naturalness of it, believing, as the Church does, in its sinfulness. She reiterates this in their last meeting in the café Alemán, though she reveals herself as beginning to come to odds with her religious beliefs: "It can't be such a ghastly crime to – to think about you. . . . I fell into what my confessor calls the

sin of Sodom. . . . They know their business. And hard cases make bad laws.”<sup>38</sup> Yet Agatha, whether with a priest or with Mary, has accepted the need to confess, has made the move towards discourse. Likewise, Mary states that she will return to Ireland, confess to John and leave.

Their rebellions are therefore tempered by allowing them to be subjected to approval or disapproval to patriarchal authority. In this regard, Anne Fogarty claims that

O’Brien’s involvement with family structures may be seen not only as an attempt on her part to explore the plight of women who are fated to be trapped in domestic relations but also as a reflection of the particular historical era in which these texts were produced. The familism of her novels acts as a commentary on the closed and hierarchical nature of Irish society in the initial decades of the Free State.<sup>39</sup>

Though *Mary Lavelle* is not as representative of familism as other O’Brien novels such as *The Ante-Room* or even the convent-set *The Land of Spices*,<sup>40</sup> it reveals the necessity of women to quit Ireland in order to break free of its patriarchal nature and its attendant trappings, yet also how difficult it is for those who have physically separated themselves from that society to cast off its psychological shackles. Both Agatha and Mary appear relatively at ease with Agatha’s newly discovered lesbianism, yet they both struggle with it as a sin as defined by the Church. And Mary’s individual freedom is realised only once she has had sex with Juanito, a problematic equation of the need of a male to extricate the female from patriarchal demands. But Mary’s need was not, at the outset, total freedom. Upon hearing of the governess position, she thinks:

To go to Spain. To be alone for a little space, a tiny hiatus between her life’s two accepted phases. To cease being a daughter without immediately becoming a wife. To be a freelance, to belong to no one place or family or person – to achieve that silly longing of childhood, only for one year, before she flung it with all other childish things upon the scrap-heap. Spain!<sup>41</sup>

Spain represents a respite from the “accepted” roles of daughter and wife, the role of governess a sort of societal limbo in which the person remains outside of either world, this being reinforced by the isolated exile of the governesses of Altorno and their private corners of the café Alemán. Yet Mary leaves Ireland to take on another traditional role: the matronly position of governess. The restricted role of wife and mother she would assume in patriarchal Catholic Ireland is therefore substituted for the restricted role of governess in patriarchal Catholic Spain.

Indeed, the women of Spain appear as restricted as the women of Ireland. Luisa, Juanito’s wife, is accorded much respect because her drawing-room has been featured in *Vogue* magazine.<sup>42</sup> O’Brien emphasises the feminised interior by describing it as “*Luisa’s* drawing-room,”<sup>43</sup> not *Luisa and Juanito’s*. Juanito is the upwardly mobile young man in the world of Spanish politics while Luisa is relegated to the domestic sphere. Likewise Doña Consuela, Juanito’s mother, maintains this hegemony in her view of men: “They had brains and from them created a world of argument, schemes, dreams and ideas where women need not enter, thank Heaven, and where feminine wisdom must be content to let them move in peace.”<sup>44</sup> Instead of supporting the independence and inquisitiveness of her youngest daughter, she worries about what sort of husband they will find the “queer” Milagros,<sup>45</sup> and chastises Pilár, her eldest daughter who is on the verge of coming out in society circles, for eating like the rest of them: “[Y]ou know that bread soup isn’t good for your figure! Did you weigh yourself to-day?”<sup>46</sup> Doña Consuela reinforces the patriarchal gaze and Pilár’s obsession with how society will approve her once she is made available – in other words, her value once she is on upper-class society’s matrimonial market. The patriarchy of Irish society is therefore not absent

in Spanish society. It is not, however, as impinging upon Mary's life and allows her, as an exile and apart from that community in terms of familial and cultural ties, a relative amount of freedom. But this freedom is defined within the narrow confines of the liminal world of Irish governesses by the patriarchy of Catholic Spain.

Somewhat similar to Spain, the official nationalism of the Irish Free State was informed by the values of the Catholic Church. In *Mary Lavelle*, the clergy is most visibly represented by an Andalusian priest, Don Jorge, who teaches the Areavaga girls music while Mary chaperones their lessons. Mary notes how, given the subject being taught, Don Jorge's movements around the room and with the girls are allowed a certain liberty. Though his actions are not perceptibly indecent towards his pupils, they do become "considerably intensified" when Nieves is instructed. In time, Mary becomes the object of "unpredictable pats" and "unexpected caresses." This continues until one day she feels "a thick hand pad suddenly and greedily along her neck and shoulder, under her blouse."<sup>47</sup> Horrified, Mary raises to her feet; Don Jorge leaves her alone in the future but makes inappropriate jokes to the girls in Spanish. Though she cannot speak the language fluently, Mary understands the thrust of the priest's words and reports him to Doña Consuela who, along with her husband, relieves the priest of his position. Don Jorge is therefore a sexual predator, one who despite his vows of celibacy and position of authority – or perhaps because of them – makes physical advances towards the Areavaga girls and Mary. The Freudian implication here, when viewed alongside the healthy, developing sexuality of Mary, is that the priest's long-time repression of his sexuality leads to its deviant expression.

If this view is taken, then the sexual deviance of Agatha can perhaps be explained through her repression via spinsterhood and her devout Catholicism. Unlike Don Jorge, Agatha does not *act* on her desires, but confesses them to and seeks absolution through the Church. The two most obviously religious characters of the novel are therefore posed as threats to Catholic sexual morality. The difference is that while Agatha is sympathetic, Don Jorge is not – in fact, his revelations of Mary and Juanito’s affair leads to the already ailing Don Pablo’s fatal heart attack.<sup>48</sup> Yet by revealing sexual deviance in supposedly devout characters, O’Brien complicates the generally accepted norms of morality that equate religious devotion with sexual and spiritual purity.

This complication of Catholic sexual morality is also evident in Mary. After Agatha has confessed her love for her and noted its sinfulness, Mary, disheartened, claims that everything is a sin. Standing outside the church as they talk, they are physically reminded of morality:

Mary watched the baize door swing and swing again in the porch of San Geronimo and caught each time the gleam of candles. People going in incessantly to pray, as Agatha so often did, as Juanito too, perhaps. Seeking mercy, explanation and forgiveness because they are so vicious as to love each other, seeking wearisome strength, in the midst of life, to forgo the essence of their own.<sup>49</sup>

The Church and its clergy have caught the people in a paradoxical conundrum: they are a shelter from sin and anxiety, yet they are those that *define* the sins and therefore create the anxiety in those who transgress. As such, Mary’s seemingly throw-away line that *everything* is a sin is in fact an indictment of both the relativism and subjectivity behind the term “sin” and the obsessive lengths to which the Church has gone to control individuals.<sup>50</sup> “Sin” is therefore recognised as a construct. An Irish Government that controls the populace not only through the matrix of parliamentary legislation but the

norms and mores of the Church would be rightfully concerned at such a proclamation, a threat to the power and the structure that supports it. However, acknowledgement of the subversiveness of O'Brien's treatment of religion is entirely absent from critical readings of the book. Eamon Maher, for example, in an examination of Catholicism as a force in twentieth-century French and Irish literatures, argues that "it is very difficult to detect antagonism to Catholicism in [Kate O'Brien's] works."<sup>51</sup> This is surprising considering that Maher repeatedly makes the connection between the Church and State in Ireland and the prominent role of censorship in this relationship, but it is symptomatic of canonical readings of *Mary Lavelle*.

Juanito recognises this double-bind of Church and State and claims that, as he rises to power and importance, he will bring divorce to Spain and promote secular politics.<sup>52</sup> Like his father, Don Pablo, Juanito is a radical, a socialist who seeks the betterment of humanity. Yet his vision, as he relates it to Mary, is tempered with a bitter reality:

‘Utopias are unpleasant, slavish dreams. All that politicians can give is fundamental health and the roots of knowledge. It is for parents and theologians to inject the civic virtues if they can, and the artists to give whatever answer they can to human aspiration. But the real issues will always be unmanageable. There is no such thing as legislation for happiness.’<sup>53</sup>

The Church and State must be separate, according to Juanito, for politics should have “no spiritual attack or message. The spiritual basis of life must be left alone, unless you can isolate it and know what you are attacking – and how can politicians do that?”<sup>54</sup>

Juanito develops his father's views in a more secular direction; of Don Pablo the reader is told: “He was a loather of institutions, but he believed in the human spirit; he regarded the existent Catholic Church with profound suspicion, but he accorded to its ideal and to

much of its tradition an unwithholdable inbred devotion.”<sup>55</sup> Given the influence of the Church on State policies in Ireland, the views of the Areavaga men can be read as threats to the existing power structure as it was at the time of *Mary Lavelle*’s publication.

Because the Church did much to inform censorship legislation and guide the Censorship Board’s action, the banning of the book can also be explained as an action on behalf of this group to protect it from a threat to its role in society and not merely to its teachings.

This also works in conjunction with both the Church’s and State’s antagonistic relationships vis-à-vis socialism, both of which largely cast the leftist ideology in the light of godlessness.<sup>56</sup> Socialism, as an ideology that has universal tendencies, is also at odds with the parochial and territorial beliefs of nationalism. Given the prevailing nationalism in independent Ireland that helped to create and foster the cultural and economic isolationist policies of the times, those who expounded socialist views were bound to be marginalised.

The historical and geographical setting of *Mary Lavelle*, when coupled with the events of the story, were sure to further raise the nationalist ire. On the surface, such a statement seems rather tenuous. However, when one reads the story-line of *Mary Lavelle* against its setting, a counter-narrative to Irish nationalist mythology begins to emerge. In the novel’s opening, O’Brien notes Mary’s trunk – she is at this point anonymous and known only as a “Miss,” the more familiar sobriquet for a governess – and its contents, which reveal her as a member of the middle classes. Mary crosses the Pyrenees with little else. The year, the reader is told, is 1922.<sup>57</sup> The first letters Mary sends upon arrival in Altono, to her father, Mother Liguori and John, are all dated June 12, 1922.<sup>58</sup> Before she and Juanito consummate their relationship, she plans to leave Spain and return

to Ireland on October 15 of the same year.<sup>59</sup> Upon learning of Don Pablo's death, she delays her departure, though she leaves only a few days after the planned date.<sup>60</sup> The time frame of the novel therefore spans the first full summer of Irish independence during which the country was embroiled in its civil war. Mary's flight from Ireland therefore coincides with the moment at which the nation is at its most needy and symbolises a young Irish woman derelict in her patriotic duty. It is somewhat ironic that Kate O'Brien, whose banned books could perhaps be used to illustrate her failure to conform to official nationalism and the State's construction of Irishness, herself worked as a governess in Spain during the period of 1922-3.

In the past, however, Mary has shown some evidence of her commitment to the national cause. During the guerrilla war of independence her brother Jimmy was a member of the IRA and "Mary had met him sometimes by stealth, cycling to villages and farms near Mellick on errands for him or his flying column."<sup>61</sup> Jimmy was caught by the authorities, spending the years 1917-20 in a British prison before leaving for California. The lack of emotion and off-handedness with which her errands are described compared to the attachment, slim though it may be, for Jimmy and her older brother Donal, imply that her rebellious acts were not the result of political convictions, but rather undertaken out of a sense of familial duty, if not love and concern. Mary was definitely not the sort of young woman to join Cumann na mBan.

The ambivalence with which Mary regards politics is evident throughout the narrative. Though she lives in the heart of Basque country, she is not interested in knowing much of anything about the national independence struggle of the people. At one point she hints at some knowledge of the regional movements throughout Spain, but



she only broaches the subject to alleviate her own discomfort at not being better informed on Irish politics:

[Luisa] had never been in Ireland, but had heard much of its beauty and of the great charm of its people, had read the poetry of Mr. Yeats, had seen the Irish players. She admired the Irish-Spanish hero, de Valera, thought the civil war in Ireland tragic but inevitable, and the Treaty compromise a grave mistake.

Mary hesitated. She felt uninformed and uneasy about this new outburst of fighting.

'Do you then sympathise with the nationalist ambitions of the Catalans and the Basques?' she asked Luisa.<sup>62</sup>

Luisa, surprised that Mary has an interest in Spanish politics (which such a simple question does not necessarily reveal), likewise side-steps the issue, noting that Juanito's political future is in and with *Spain*. When the opportunity arises for Mary to participate, even passively, in nationalist Basque politics, she shows no such inclination: "She heard the Basque speech in the market place; amusedly once through the oration of a Basque nationalist she heard the names 'Arthur Griffiths' and 'Patrick Pearse.'"<sup>63</sup> Mary is *amused* by the nationalist's use of Irish references; she does not go to any lengths to discover what exactly is being said or even why at that moment in time, thereby revealing once again her political ambivalence.<sup>64</sup>

Luisa's comments also serve to problematise a point made earlier: in terms of the cultural and physical miscegenation of Spanishness and Irishness, perhaps no one person symbolises such a mix as Ireland's long-standing prime minister and president, Eamon de Valera. What, then, could possibly be wrong with Mary's cultural and physical miscegenation? Firstly, de Valera was an American of Irish and Spanish parents who came to Ireland as a child and later helped in the nationalist struggle and led the nation, whereas Mary is presented as a pure (in both the racial and sexual senses of the word)

Irish colleen who abandons both the values of her society in consenting to having sex with Juanito and the physical society itself in going to Spain. De Valera can therefore be viewed as making a move towards “purity” and expunging the traces of “impurity” while Mary’s narrative moves in the opposite direction. Secondly, de Valera was male whereas Mary is female. And women, specifically Irish women, are configured and represented in very different ways in terms of nationalist mythology.<sup>65</sup>

Much has been said by many critics in the field of Irish Studies with regards to the Irish nation and its representation as female. In the colonial narrative, female Ireland is there for the forceful taking by male England.<sup>66</sup> The Act of Union was therefore naturalised (in the hetero-normative sense) as a marriage of the two nations. Likewise, the citizens of Ireland are construed as women, feminised, in need of the steady, rational male rule of the English. In nationalist mythology the Irish nation is still represented as female, only she is there to be defended or taken back by the people.<sup>67</sup> The defending or reconquering Irish must beat back the English invader who has either bastardised or cuckolded the Irish, depending upon the narrative. However, in both colonial and national narratives, the one consistency is that the Irish nation is *passively female*. Males – either the invading English or the Irish citizenry – are those imagined and constructed as actors. Women are therefore relegated to the domestic sphere,<sup>68</sup> much as Article 41 of de Valera’s *Constitution Act, 1937*, envisioned them to be both the bearers and the transmitters of Irish norms and mores.<sup>69</sup> As such, Mary poses a problem to this male construction of the Irish woman in that she leaves the domestic sphere, in fact the whole of Ireland, to become a governess in Spain.<sup>70</sup>

Mary's abandonment of this domesticity is actualised in having sex with Juanito – both because this act represents her individual freedom from Irish society and its attendant values, and because it occurs outdoors, away from the confines of the feminised home and domestic sphere. Patricia Coughlan provides a perceptive comment related to this point: “[O’Brien’s] writings not only take an unmistakably oppositional stance towards the general cultural narrowness, prudery and ruralist exclusions of Free State Ireland – the common targets of all dissident writers and cultural critics in the decades between 1920 and 1955 or so – but also institute an interrogation of the forms of oppression specifically visited on women.”<sup>71</sup> These two aspects of exclusion and oppression converge in the patriarchal political and social spheres of post-independence Ireland, thereby highlighting the regressiveness of the official nationalism in the wake of the more liberational anti-colonial nationalism of the century’s first two decades.

The banning of *Mary Lavelle* can therefore be explained for multiple reasons. One should not assume that the censorship of the book was merely due to the consensual adulterous sex between Mary and Juanito or its portrayal of lesbian love.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, the novel, in closer, more nuanced readings, reveals a work that functions in many more ways against the official nationalism of 1930s Ireland: the stance against the marriage of Church and State, the appeal of socialism to the intellectual and wealthy patriarchs, the dereliction of one’s duty to the nation especially in a time of crisis, and the dangerous cultural and physical miscegenation that occurs when the barriers of isolationism are not in place.

Kate O’Brien was well aware of how malignant censorship could be, both in its official and unofficial forms. Discussing *La Celestina*, a book Milagros has read much to

Mary's surprise for its contents, Milagros tells Mary: "You should read it a little, even if it shocks you."<sup>73</sup> Milagros is allowed to read anything she wishes because, she notes, her father is an anarchist. "You see, I really think that a part of him believes that most people, let alone, are potentially good – especially Spaniards!"<sup>74</sup> Her joke aside, Milagros strikes against the major argument that drives censorship: the protection of the people from knowledge in the belief that they will not be able to cope with it. In banning Kate O'Brien's *Mary Lavelle*, the Censorship Board refused to allow the definition of Irishness into the realm of dialogue; instead, the monologue of official nationalism continued, on the whole uninterrupted for years to come despite the efforts of many who resisted and campaigned against it. Out of anger and frustration, O'Brien would follow up the banning of *Mary Lavelle* with the publication of *Pray for the Wanderer*, a book that, like O'Flaherty's *The Puritan*, lashed out at Irish society and censorship in its portrayal of "a writer who is rejected by his native land and in turn rejects it."<sup>75</sup>

In the case of a book such as *Mary Lavelle*, while the official report might state that it was banned because it was considered obscene for sexual reasons, the critic owes both his or herself and his or her readers to probe deeper when seeking to explain why a given work was banned. As John B. Keane argued in the Seanad during the debates on the *Censorship of Publications Bill, 1928*, the possibility exists that sex was held up as the offensive aspect of a book because it was convenient and legally easier to do so than attack a book's ideology. Critics must provide more sophisticated readings and treatments of censored books, especially as large amounts of Government files are either missing or held back by the Department of Justice. The lack of available diaries and journals on the part of those involved in the censorship to allow a more concrete and

obvious glimpse into the decision-making of censorship only heightens this responsibility on the part of the critic. Without such intellectual work, the process of fully recovering formerly banned books will continue to be delayed.

<sup>1</sup> The logbook in the Censorship of Publications Office notes that an appeal was lodged on July 6, 1951. However, the only comment made is unrevealing: "That this application be dismissed."

<sup>2</sup> James M. Cahalan, *The Irish Novel: A Critical History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 204.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent discussion of the cultural repression of artists, specifically those who complicate facile historical narratives and challenge the canon, by society and academics, see Cary Nelson, *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910-1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). Nelson focuses on the role that academics must undertake to recover these repressed writers and their works, a role that he plays in advocating the recovery and inclusion of poetry written by the left wing and blacks that was repressed in the United States during the McCarthyite era. Recovery, he emphasises, is a *process*, one that needs constant attention and revision.

<sup>4</sup> Kate O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle* (London: Virago, 1984 [1936]), 31.

<sup>5</sup> On this subject, Maurice Girodia says: "In other words, the good people . . . must be kept in blissful ignorance of the universal nature of sex, and, above all, of the legitimate nature of eroticism." Maurice Girodia, "More Heat than Light," in *To Deprave and Corrupt: Original Studies in the Nature and Definition of Obscenity*, ed. John Chandos (London: Souvenir Press, 1962), 131. Walter Allen supports Girodia's libertarian views, attacking censorship and questioning the role of the censor: "So far as I know, none of the people who write about and against pornography admit to having been corrupted by it themselves; they merely believe that others are weaker and will be. In the absence of evidence, one can only be one's own guinea-pig." Walter Allen, "The Writer and the Frontiers of Tolerance," in *To Deprave and Corrupt: Original Studies in the Nature and Definition of Obscenity*, ed. John Chandos (London: Souvenir Press, 1962), 144.

<sup>6</sup> John Cronin, *Irish Fiction, 1900-1940* (Belfast: Appletree, 1992), 146.

<sup>7</sup> Lorna Reynolds, *Kate O'Brien: A Literary Portrait* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Adams, *Censorship*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> M.R.K., "Recent Irish Fiction," review of *Mary Lavelle*, *Irish Press* Tuesday, November 3, 1936. Contrast this to the positive positive and romanticised review of *Mary Lavelle* in the London-based *Times Literary Supplement*. See Orlo Williams, "Romance in Spain," review of *Mary Lavelle*, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 31, 1936, 883.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> The qualifier is important: Ireland was largely not receptive to fascism as a guiding political ideology for its own political system, but many people, including the Catholic Hierarchy, openly supported Franco's struggles against the godless communists.

<sup>12</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 305-6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 308-9.

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- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 190. [emphasis mine].
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.
- <sup>18</sup> Adele M. Dalsimer, *Kate O'Brien* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 36.
- <sup>19</sup> Emma Donoghue, "'Out of Order': Kate O'Brien's Lesbian Fictions," in *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 43.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>21</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 34-5.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-81.
- <sup>25</sup> Eavan Boland, "Continuing the Encounter," in *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 19.
- <sup>26</sup> Eibhear Walshe, "Introduction," in *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 1.
- <sup>27</sup> Ailbhe Smyth, "Counterpoints: A Note (or Two) on Feminism and Kate O'Brien." In *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 26.
- <sup>28</sup> Donoghue, "'Out of Order,'" 55.
- <sup>29</sup> Jennifer Jeffers, *The Irish Novel at the End of the Twentieth Century: Gender, Bodies, and Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 4.
- <sup>30</sup> Other Irish books long predating the Celtic Tiger with significant overtly homosexual material include Maurice Leitch's *Liberty Lad* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1965) and John Broderick's *Pilgrimage* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961), both of which were banned by the Censorship Board shortly after their publication in the 1960s. An earlier example, though less explicit, is M.J. Farrell's *Devoted Ladies* (London: Collins, 1934). And, lest one forget, the trials of Oscar Wilde and queer readings of his work have shown that these writers have also had their predecessors.
- <sup>31</sup> Emma Donoghue is the main proponent of this view.
- <sup>32</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 284-5.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.
- <sup>34</sup> Donoghue, "'Out of Order,'" 39.
- <sup>35</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 84.
- <sup>36</sup> Smyth, "Counterpoints," 31.

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<sup>37</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 285.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-8.

<sup>39</sup> Anne Fogarty, "'The Business of Attachment': Romance and Desire in the Novels of Kate O'Brien." In *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 103.

<sup>40</sup> At least in terms of the Irish family, although the Areavaga family could be read as a Spanish analogue. Admittedly, Mary thinks about her family but they feature more as background than a primary concern.

<sup>41</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 34.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 225 and 232.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 232. [My emphasis].

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 285-6.

<sup>50</sup> Tasmin Hargreaves makes an illuminating remark on how O'Brien's characters function within their Catholic belief-system: "Like all her novels, *Mary Lavelle* is pervaded by a sense of Catholic morality, but in *Mary Lavelle* as in *That Lady* it does not act as a complete deterrant to the heroine's need for personal freedom. In this sense, Kate O'Brien's novels are unorthodox; her heroines are driven by personal need and they struggle to reach modes of behaviour and thought which are true to themselves, even if, at times, this means going against the teaching of the Catholic Church. All Kate O'Brien's major novels describe love (be it heterosexual adultery or homosexual love) which in orthodox terms is illicit and forbidden and which is therefore deeply problematic." Tasmin Hargreaves, Introduction to *Mary Lavelle*, by Kate O'Brien, (London: Virago, 1984), xvii.

<sup>51</sup> Eamon Maher, *Crosscurrents and Confluences: Echoes of Religion in Twentieth Century Fiction* (Dublin: Veritas, 2000), 93. Like the critics already discussed, Maher attributes the book's banning to the combination of Mary and Juanito's adulterous affair and Agatha's confession of lesbian love. *Ibid.*, 101-5.

<sup>52</sup> While this chapter reads the critique of official nationalism with regards to the Irish State, Adele Dalsimer reads it in terms of the Spanish State and the fascist struggle, something that would be in keeping with Juanito and Don Pablo's views. Dalsimer, *Kate O'Brien*, 33. Eibhear Walshe, discussing O'Brien's 1937 travelogue *Farewell, Spain*, published the year after *Mary Lavelle*, notes that it "was banned in Spain for its outspoken criticism of Franco and she was barred from entering Spain until 1957." Walshe, "Biographical Note," in *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 13. O'Brien was allowed to return only after the diplomatic efforts of the Irish ambassador had convinced the Spanish Government to rethink its position. This is an excellent though under-argued reading of the novel, as Dalsimer does not allow for the possibility of reading these political views as analogous to Irish society.

<sup>53</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 260.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. Even Doña Consuela views this secular socialism as one who seeks “the overthrow of the structure onto which all whom she loved and believed in had fought their way so courageously.” *Ibid.*, 59. It is interesting to note here that it is the wealthy men who can afford to have such reformatory/revolutionary views, while Doña Consuela’s reveals hegemonic power in her unease at changing the *status quo*. Her views could perhaps be interpreted as a gender-specific response as it has been formed under hegemonic rule. To support this, even the seemingly egalitarian Don Pablo has sublimated this power structure, hoping of secular Government “that liberty, in its gravest and in its least sense, was indisputably everyone’s and knowledge at every man’s elbow who desired it.” *Ibid.*, 61. If everyone is to have liberty, should knowledge not be extended beyond every man to include every woman as well? The question, especially in the context of censorship, also arises: how much liberty can one have in the absence of knowledge?

<sup>56</sup> This notion of the Church being against socialism should not be construed as being against charity and social welfare, for the Church is well-represented and instrumental in such organisations as the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

<sup>57</sup> O’Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, xxi.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 4 and 5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>64</sup> Given the more recent connections with and relationships between the IRA and ETA, the link made here in a book published and banned in 1936 is certainly historically interesting.

<sup>65</sup> For a more general study of this phenomenon see C.L. Innes’ *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993).

<sup>66</sup> Amongst these critics are Declan Kiberd in *Inventing Ireland*, George Watson in *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O’Casey* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), James W. Flannery in *W.B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre: the Early Abbey Theatre in Theory and Practice* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), and David Cairns and Shaun Richards in *Writing Ireland*.

<sup>67</sup> The best-known literary example of this is Yeats’ *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1909).

<sup>68</sup> Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis make the point that women, because the childcare role is often placed upon them, become important as cultural transmitters. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Introduction,” in *Women – Nation – State*, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (London: MacMillan, 1989), 9. Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis state: “It is possible to argue . . . that the exclusion of women from citizenship was an intrinsic feature of their naturalisation as embodiments of the private, the familial and the emotional. It was thus essential to the construction of the public sphere as masculine, rational, responsible and respectable.” Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Introduction: Women and the New Discourse of Citizenship,” in *Women, Citizenship and Difference*, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and Pnina Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1999), 6. By portraying the nation as female and the citizens as male, the



national narrative reified gender roles, bestowing activity to males and passiveness to women, thereby allowing a justification for the exclusion of women from the political sphere.

<sup>69</sup> Article 41.2.1 states: "In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved."

<sup>70</sup> Eibhear Walshe argues that O'Brien's exploration of the feminised domestic sphere is evident in all of her novels, although her writings rarely, with the exception of *That Lady*, explicitly link the private with the political sphere. Of *Mary Lavelle*, he notes the privacy of Agatha's apartment as one such place. Eibhear Walshe, "Lock Up Your Daughter: From Ante-Room to Interior Castle." In *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 158. The ladies' section of the café Alemán is another possibility suggested in the novel.

<sup>71</sup> Patricia Coughlan, "Kate O'Brien: Feminine Beauty, Feminist Writing and Sexual Role," in *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 60. Anthony Roche makes much the same point of O'Brien's concern with gender above that of nation. Anthony Roche, "The Ante-Room as Drama." In *Ordinary People Dancing: Essays on Kate O'Brien*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 95.

<sup>72</sup> Compare this to Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, a book that was famously brought to trial in Britain in the 1920s. For an excellent account and analysis of Hall's book and the subsequent trial, and the censorship of modernist literature, see Adam Parkes, *Modernism and the Theatre of Censorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>73</sup> O'Brien, *Mary Lavelle*, 134.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>75</sup> Cahalan, *The Irish Novel*, 210. See also Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction*, 122.

### Conclusion

Like the Roman censors, the Irish Censorship Board intimately linked censorship with citizenship. It decided what was not appropriate for Irish citizens to read and in so doing dictated what was not within the bounds of Irishness by determining what threatened the nation's norms and mores. In the case of banned books written by people of other countries, the offending publications could be excused as merely the reflection of foreign values and cultures that stood in contradistinction to those held by Holy Catholic Ireland. Ireland's dominant culture was of course largely influenced by the Catholic Church owing to post-independence needs to carve out a distinctive national identity and stabilise an otherwise unstable political situation after years of anti-colonial and internecine conflict. However, the conflict between Irish people was merely glossed over by the outward veneer of Catholic morality and unity as the IRA remained active despite the creation of Fianna Fáil and de Valera's entry into the Dáil. More relevant to this study, another internal conflict over how the country should be defined was evident in the banning of Irish writers who challenged the dominant official nationalism of the State.

Since the Censorship Board was run under the auspices of the Department of Justice, its decisions were State decisions. Any publication banned by the censors was deemed beyond the pale of Irishness, either unable to assimilate to the official definitions of what it meant to be Irish or subversive of the process of State-led national identity formation. It must also be recalled that the State was at this time democratic and its values were largely the reflection of the majority of the population. In this sense, censorship was both the product of the State's attempts to officially define Irishness and a reflection of how the majority of Irish people viewed themselves. Had Ireland been a

more autocratic society, censorship would have been less of a reflection of the people and more of the result of State-led policies. The caveat is that as the majority of the population was Catholic, both legislation and the Censorship Board were largely informed by Catholic values. Because the Catholic Church demands unquestioned loyalty from its people, it is difficult to determine to what degree the majority was merely acting as it had been taught: by rote and without analysis. In effect, though the country was *de jure* democratic, the case might be made that it was *de facto* autocratic owing to the strong pull of religious *habitus* and the influence of the Catholic Church and its affiliated lay societies. Irish liberals who believed in more libertarian values therefore had to combat the tyrannies of both the State and the Church.

Similarly, the struggle that determined how Irish censorship came to function was fought on two fronts. The first front pertained to the role of aesthetics. Specifically, liberal sections of Irish society argued that literature should be exempt from censorship because of its importance as a cultural lodestar. Meanwhile, conservative sections claimed that such exemptions should not be made because of the malign influences morally suspect art could have on the weaker members of the community, notably women, children and the less educated and poorer classes. While it is apparent that aesthetics were considered in some of the Censorship Board's decisions, many works were banned based on cursory readings of isolated passages. For the first three decades, the Censorship of Publications was guided by a relatively parochial notion of morality that marginalised the possible importance of a work of art.

The second front entailed the provenance of banned writers. While foreign writers could be dismissed as reflecting foreign values, in the case of Irish writers, and

especially those who set their narratives in Ireland, liberals argued that they should not be banned because they were thereby ridiculously labeled as un-Irish. Conservatives, however, viewed such works as evidence of foreign values creeping into Irish culture and the bannings were justified as stemming the corrupting tide of modernity and other forces seeking to weaken the morality of the Irish national character. The fact that most Irish writers of substance writing in the first four decades of the post-independence era were banned attests to the importance placed upon the possible effects such works were perceived to have on the community. Those in power targeted Irish writers to maintain the structures that supported their positions. In effect, by banning these works, the State denied views of Irish society alternative or threatening to the official nationalism in order to thwart any reforming efforts. Thus, debate on the nature and structure of Irish society was hampered. This in turn led to the stagnation and ruination liberals feared, as evidenced in the massive increase in emigration in the 1950s instigated by a poor economy and a practically nonexistent social welfare system.

It is therefore no coincidence that 1958 saw the publication of the outward looking Government policy paper *First Programme for Economic Expansion* and the creation of a newly reformed, more liberal Censorship Board. More debate had to be allowed into Irish society for two main reasons. First, a more liberal discourse was needed to bolster the modernising process of the *First Programme* and thus censorship had to be less conservative. Second, the veneer of a more liberal and democratic society was needed to attract multinational corporations and transnational capital that would be understandably wary about investing in a country guided by an insular nationalism and might, in the extreme interests of self-determination and preservation, nationalise sectors

of the economy. As a result, censorship had to at least have *the appearance* of being a benign protective influence and not a malign xenophobic presence. The demarcating line between the two is fine: the reformed Censorship Board resolved the difficulty by allowing recognised classics and respected authors to pass, while continuing to ban unproven talent and pornography.

At issue, then, is the role of censorship as a cultural border. As a physical territorial border defines the boundaries of a State, its inhabitants and its sovereignty, a cultural border allows for more subtle qualitative distinctions. More specifically, a cultural border defines who belongs based upon an individual's degree of adherence to or differentiation from the national norms and mores. That is, it determines how much someone or something resembles the "typical" national construct. Censorship functions as a cultural border in that banned publications are determined to be foreign to the national construct despite the fact that some conform to it in many ways and were actually produced within the territorial border. Total conformity is not needed, but a threshold level is. In fact, that some permissiveness is allowed prevents censorship from becoming formulaic. This lack of formula both supports and undermines censorship: it supports it by allowing the State to demonstrate that it is democratic and plural despite its control of culture, and it undermines it by providing its detractors with examples of uneven practice that prove it is ineffective and given to the subjectivity and whims of the censors.

Liberal detractors of Irish censorship, such as Sean O'Faolain and the members of the Irish Academy of Letters and the IACL, were among those instrumental in offering postcolonial resistance to the attendant tyrannies of the official nationalism of post-

independence Ireland. They challenged the pastoral, unified vision of Holy Catholic Ireland cultivated and promoted by the State and the leaders of Irish society. In the stead of romanticised imagery and a public discourse dominated by platitudes rather than debate, detractors argued for the acknowledgement of such social ills as the plight of the urban and rural poor and the abuse of unmarried mothers. Solutions to these social ills needed to be found and this could not be achieved if they were ignored, brushed aside, hidden away from the sight of respectable society and impressionable people, and simply moved offshore through emigration. The detractors therefore sparked debate that was uncomfortable for those protecting the *status quo*, gradually providing the voice of those who were antithetical to the State's construct of Irishness and the growing numbers who were likewise outraged at the State's inability to confront and solve those social problems. The need for change and acceptance of the principle (as opposed to the *appearance*) of debate was reflected in the decision to liberalise the Censorship Board in the late 1950s.

But the liberalisation of the Censorship Board was not the end result of postcolonialism in Ireland. Practitioners of the politics and theory of postcolonialism would continue the fight, seeking to rid Ireland of a system that glossed over society's existent inequities. In this, institutional censorship still had a long way to go before it was more fully liberalised, until the banning of serious aspiring writers such as John McGahern and Edna O'Brien finally ended in the early 1970s and the focus turned to limiting the circulation of more overtly pornographic and exploitative publications that lacked aesthetic merit. The success of postcolonial resistance against institutional censorship was therefore predicated upon the patience of the detractors, of people like

Sean O'Faolain who waged his war over the course of several decades. In effect, the detractors needed the time and energy to create, garner and coalesce a certain level of societal disapproval with how the State operated. The success of postcolonial resistance is therefore predicated on three main factors: 1) the degree to which the State allows dissidence; 2) the duration and enthusiasm of the resistance; and 3) the willingness of the remainder of the population to listen to views in opposition to the State. Ireland allowed a relatively high degree of dissidence as illustrated in the freedom granted to publications such as *The Irish Statesman* in the 1920s, *Ireland To-Day* in the 1930s and *The Bell* in the 1940s and 1950s. And the overlap in contributors to these periodicals and membership in the Irish Academy of Letters and the IACL demonstrates the duration and enthusiasm of the primary detractors. However, that the Censorship Board took thirty years to liberalise, another decade and a half before it stopped banning what might be termed "literature," and that there was relatively little public outcry and incentive for the State to make these liberal reforms any earlier suggests that Irish society on the whole was both ignorant of the issues at stake and willing to let things remain as they were. Furthermore, while dissidence was formally allowed, the links between social, cultural and religious capital and conservative thought and action created a network that informally kept dissidence in check. While the postcolonial resistance was therefore directed at the larger Irish society, the case could be made that those who resisted the State's official nationalism were merely preaching to the converted despite their efforts to take the debate to a broader audience through letters to the editors of the large daily papers and public meetings.

Yet despite the absence of a large-scale countrywide call for a more liberal censorship, the institution eventually yielded to reform. A part of this reform was instigated from within the State in order for the policies of the various departments to run in harmony with each other: a more liberal censorship was needed to reflect the neo-liberal policies of the *First Programme of Economic Expansion*. But this change could not have occurred so quickly had censorship been an institution as hard as the systems of health and education. Because censorship is a soft institution, it was more malleable for those who had the power to reform it. It is defined as soft because it does not employ as many people as hard institutions and the costs of change are therefore significantly lesser. It is also soft because although it was deemed an important institution by the many powerful parties that debated its structure and existence over the course of several decades, it was not perceived to have the same impact on the lives of the majority of citizens by those citizens themselves as health care and education. Indeed, as many of the opponents of censorship argued, there would not have been the need for institutional censorship had the system of education done a better job in developing the critical and analytical faculties of the people so that they could discriminate for themselves.

The need for criticism is as pressing now as it was in the formative years of institutional censorship. While the institution might have been liberalised long ago, the effects of censorship are still felt. This is most evident in the banning of works that – seldom though it now occurs – continues in the twenty-first century. But it is less evident, and therefore more insidious, in how it has tempered the regard for the past in terms of both historiography and the development of the canon. While many of the foremost of the banned Irish writers of the post-independence period are known to



scholars of Irish Studies, they lack the body of critical output that has been devoted to writers of the periods preceding and succeeding them. The literature of the Revival, produced from 1890-1920, has been scrutinised to no end and there is an astonishing amount already written on the literature of the Northern Irish Troubles and contemporary Irish authors. While in the 1970s there was a relative spike in interest in Irish literature produced in the four decades following independence – largely the result of two coinciding series of books dedicated to these writers published by Twayne Publishers and Bucknell University Press – there has since been a considerable pall. Undoubtedly, a part of the critical silence reflects the attention devoted to what might be considered the more pressing concerns raised by the Troubles and the continued global popularity of the literature, history and politics of the Revival. But the result is a corresponding academic lacuna – namely, the ignorance or dismissal of the post-independence period. Thus, the debates that are prioritised are those dictated by that conceptual bugbear of the fight for independence: the English/Irish binary. As a result, discussions of the workings of power are limited to being framed by national and imperial discourse. By turning the critical attention to a period in which the struggles over representation were between people of the same national group at a crucial stage in its formation, the nature and workings of power might be understood and discussed in a more sophisticated manner. These struggles can best be articulated through the politics and theory of postcolonialism.

Postcolonialism seeks to fully liberate, and this is where Irish criticism has fallen short, most notably and paradoxically on the part of those who have used it as a theoretical model to articulate their arguments. One cannot merely substitute one tyranny (imperialism/colonialism) for another (anti-colonial nationalism) and call it

postcolonialism. Postcolonialism continues to interrogate anti-colonial nationalism, to ensure that it lives up to its ethical imperatives of securing personal, social and economic freedoms for all members of society. It does not seek to make excuses for one system of abuses merely because it is less abusive than another: all are held up to its withering analysis. Irish Studies scholars need to turn back to the first decades of the post-independence period and unflinchingly examine the structures and abuses of that society and the literature it attempted to silence. Without such work, an important and defining part of the field will continue to be repressed and those once-marginalised books will remain marginal and unread. This is the challenge that censorship in the past offers to the present and the future.

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