

# ew Perspectives

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# Reflections

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The NPPSH 2017 Organising Committee

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## Introduction

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In his 1892 *Degeneration* (*Entartung*), Max Nordau railed against the alleged depravity of those he adjudged guilty of promoting the treasonous spirit of *fin de siècle* in Europe. Nordau levelled this against a whole host of the late nineteenth-century's most prominent artists and intellectuals, such as Leo Tolstoy, Richard Wagner, Henrik Ibsen, Émile Zola, and Friedrich Nietzsche. As its title would suggest, the text bears all the hallmarks of the age's proclivity toward pathologisation and denounces as "degenerate" all modes of art, thought, and individual expression that Nordau deemed incompatible with cultural norms and societal expectations. Like so many of his contemporaries, however, Nordau could never quite settle on a fixed definition for the term "degeneration," and so it became a multifunctional signifier that described the perceived existence of some great cultural bogeyman that threatened to undo all of the scientific, cultural, and political advancements generally attributed to Western civilization. The elasticity of this late nineteenth-century phenomenon is perhaps best exemplified by the philosophical position held by Nietzsche, whose perspective distinguished itself from Nordau's only insofar as it renounced as "degenerate" all those facets of Western culture that Nordau promoted. The moral of the story is that "progress" and "degeneration" are invariably in the eye of the beholder.

Scarcely has the enormity of this reality appeared more plainly before our eyes than in the wake of World War II, which saw visions of "progress" and the rhetoric of "degeneration" used to rationalise and dignify the atrocities of the Holocaust. Writing in the aftermath of these horrors, Michel Foucault implored us all to realise that 'history has a more important task than to be a handmaiden to philosophy, to recount the necessary birth of truth and values; it should become a differential knowledge of energies and failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes' (1997, 126). While drawing our attention to the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate values, such as those endorsed by Nordau and Nietzsche, Foucault's words capture the two opposing conceptions of historical change that this symposium aims to deconstruct and critique: the 'necessary birth of truth and values' assumed by the progressive view of historical change, and the contrasting 'poisons' and 'failings' of seeming

degeneration. As with any dichotomy, however—and, indeed, as Nietzsche and Foucault would urge—we must treat such divisions with radical skepticism. In the face of apparent narratives of historical progress and degeneration, we must ask: ‘Progress for whom, and according to whom?’

When NPPSH 2017: Progress and Degeneration took place, these questions appeared more necessary than they have been for many years. The time was marked by the re-emergence of nationalist politics, evident in Brexit and the violence in Catalonia; the resurgence of fascistic political discourse, considered unthinkable after the collapse of the brutal regimes of the twentieth century; the growth of xenophobic politics in the wake of mass east-west migration; and the continued pillaging of the natural environment. In the time that has elapsed since the symposium, we have witnessed the return of republican tensions in Northern Ireland, the rise of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, the solidification of far-right political currents in Poland, and terrorist attacks on churches, mosques and synagogues in the US, New Zealand, and Sri Lanka: such ongoing and disturbing issues force us to engage with the legacy and nature of ‘progressive’ thought.

Our hope was that this two-day event would offer a dynamic venue where questions of progress and degeneration could be discussed and debated. The importance of the humanities in exploring such questions cannot be overstated: the impressive range of papers on show in this publication—covering everything from censorship and medical practice in the Irish Free State to French political cartoons to the political potential of William Burroughs’s cut-up technique, pedagogical practice, and the digital lives of older people—demonstrates the continued importance of the humanities to the investigation of political, social and cultural issues. It is our intention that NPPSH Reflections: Volume 2 will provide a space for early career scholars to continue to reflect on these questions, while contributing to debates that are situated at the leading edge of humanities research.

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# The Digital Lives of Older Irish People: Contexts and Methods of Enquiry

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Adrian Smyth

## Introduction

Ireland is experiencing significant increases in the numbers of older people as a proportion of the general population. In the last five years, the percentage of those above the age of sixty-five has risen by around nineteen per cent and currently stands at just over 637,000 (CSO, 2017), the various reasons for which align with global commonalities such as improving healthcare, decreases in fertility rates, and general improvements in standards of living (UN, 2015). Looking ahead, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) projects the numbers of those aged over sixty-five in Ireland will rise to just over 887,000 in 2027.

This current study is a response to this demographic phenomenon, but within a rapidly technologising society. Specifically, the focus here is on how the 'flow' of the daily lives of older people may be impacted by their engagements – or indeed disengagements – with the most prevalent of contemporary personal digital paradigms: mobile phones, computers/tablets/the internet, and digital television services. The aim here is to elicit, by way of the diary method and one-to-one interviews, direct evidence from a group of older people and so provide a 'snapshot' of their digital 'worlds'; some are seen to conform to common assumptions about how older people may be said to 'struggle' with new technologies; others will reveal practices of more active 'agency', especially in terms of 'resisting' the 'allure' of digital worlds, particularly when articulated through practices of social comparison.

In terms of what we currently know about the digital lives of older people, some useful quantitative indicators emerge from the Information Society Statistics Households 2017 survey by the CSO. Here, *non*-use of the internet by those in the sixty to seventy-four age group is shown to have dropped by seven percent between 2012 and 2017 (CSO, 2017). Within this five-year band, however – and with the exception of 2016 where there was some narrowing of the gap between age groups –

there has been no significant convergence with the preceding age cohort (45–59) over the same period, with separation between the two groups remaining at an average of around thirty percent (CSO, 2017). Concerns that such digital separations do not narrow over time may indicate a stubborn ‘digital divide’ (Gunkel, 2003) – the suggestion there may be deleterious socio-economic and cultural consequences resulting from disparities between those who engage with digital ‘worlds’ and those who do not.

### **New technologies and older people: assumptions and barriers**

While the responsible assessment of older people and their relationships to technologies is that they must be regarded as heterogeneous a societal group as any other, a stubborn and prevalent assumption nevertheless pertains that older people ‘struggle’ when it comes to digital/technological engagements, especially in terms of the operation of devices; and viewed from a purely chronological perspective, there may appear to be some logic here. Digital technologies have, after all, arrived comparatively late in the life-spans of older people, especially for those aged over eighty. So lives lived largely outside the frame of technology’s more contemporary and accelerating ‘evolutions’ may be particularly notable for deficiencies in the relevant and more ‘native’ technical competences which may otherwise allow more active participation. While reiterating the caveat against accepting prevailing assumptions about older people and technologies, there are nevertheless some common themes in the literature when it comes to understanding any ‘barriers’ older people may encounter in this regard.

The Independent Age (UK)/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation report, *Older People, Technology and Community: the Potential of Technology to Help Older People Renew or Develop Social Contacts and to Actively Engage in their Communities* (2012), has identified a number of barriers including a perception amongst older people themselves that new technologies are either costly or simply not relevant to their lives. This is in part due to a lack of awareness of what technologies can offer to their lives; also, unlike younger groups, there is not an automatic assumption that technologies are necessarily good things per se. Other considerations include

inappropriate or inadequate marketing of technologies to older people, inappropriate technology design, such as inaccessible controls or complicated interfaces, and anxieties over online security.

These barriers are also evident in The GO Digital Trial, commissioned by the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2012, which sought to determine levels of preparedness for a switchover from analogue to digital radio services. While pre-trial knowledge of digital radio technology varied across households, the research concluded that there was a general lack of awareness about a potential switchover, especially amongst those aged over sixty-five. In terms of the installation and usability of digital radio equipment, the research found that older people were more likely to struggle with the setting up of digital radios. However, once older people were introduced to digital radio sets, the technology was, to a degree, 'demystified', and they were then more disposed to using it. Other barriers were identified, such as inertia due to the lack of perceived need for the new technology and lack of awareness and confidence around new technologies in general, the cost of purchasing new equipment, and the notion of sentimental attachment to old radio sets (Ipsos MediaCT, 2013).

Shifting the question from one of access to actual use of technologies, van Deursen (2012) found that comparative operational dexterity and content awareness in internet use amongst younger and older individuals revealed that higher age contributed negatively to levels of more basic medium/operational technical skills. In part, at least, this was due to inevitable reductions in physical mobility that comes with age. However, he also concludes that, whilst younger people perform better in the operational sphere, they showed strikingly low levels of discernment when it came to assessing online content. Regrettably, though, he found that it can often be older people themselves who may unwittingly contribute to negative assumptions about their abilities when questioned *just* about their abilities to operate technological devices. This warns against the dangers of accepting assessments of operational difficulties alone as explainers of digital/technological disengagement as they may not provide the full picture (van Deursen, 2012). Additionally, Lee, Chen, and Hewitt (2011) find that constraints to digital participation amongst older people may be many and varied

and relate also to socio-cultural factors, such as a poor level of education, low annual income, or a solitary living arrangement, any of which may inform digital dis/engagement.

Clearly, attempts to understand the motivations of older people to comprehend and use technologies should be extended to both users *and* non-users alike, such as around practices of resistance, conscious (active), or sub-conscious (passive). This is a consideration in this current study, especially as a counterbalance to any pressures from concepts typified by the ‘silver surfer’ discourse, which aims to celebrate older digital technology users, but which may also serve to perpetuate the notion that *all* older adults stand to benefit from greater access to and use of contemporary digital technologies (Nimrod, 2009). This may not necessarily be a safe assumption, especially if, as has been suggested by Hagberg (2012), late-life prioritisations may simply not rate such activities as important in the overall scheme of daily life.

Nevertheless, when it comes to media consumption, it is the notion of ‘routine’, that remains a major determinant, especially for the older generation for whom routinely-situated habits are most tied in with domestic routine. While media may change their configurations, such as from digital desktop computers to tablets, ‘what matters most...are transformations of habit’ (Couldry et al., 2010, 191). It is precisely at the intersection of technological intervention and older lives, with any ensuing consequences for the transformations of the daily life ‘flow’, that this current study is most concerned.

### **Considerations of ageing in this study**

While it may be argued that, in the social context, the delineation of certain age boundaries may be viewed as mere arbitrary exercises, such as the equivalence of a working life with economic contribution – and so the obverse – there are physiological considerations that must be faced by most people beyond a certain age. Although there may be tensions between attempts to scientifically categorise life stages against those of social policies (Krampe, et al., 2007), Ian Stuart-Hamilton (2012) draws a line in asserting that ‘in the majority of people there are significant (if not dramatic) changes in mental and physical functioning that mean[s]...sixty to sixty-five is a reasonable

choice of age of onset or threshold age and is the one used by most modern gerontologists' (Stuart-Hamilton, 2012, 17). There appears to be further consensus that 'the cognitive mechanics (reaction time, speed of memory search, reasoning speed, motor speed and precision) undergo systematic age-related declines from young to late adulthood' (Baltes et al., 1999b; Li et al., 2004; Rabbitt, 1993a; Rabbitt et al., 2004, cited in Krampe et al., 2007, 256). At the neural level, systematic age-related declines may be explained by a reduction in plasticity of the brain to convert cortical representations into functional experience. At the behavioural level, 'plasticity denotes the (reserve) capacity to extend the behavioural repertoire by acquiring new skills or behaviours through experience or practice' (Baltes and Singer, 2001; Buonomano and Merzenich, 1998; Singer, 1995, cited in Krampe et al., 2007, 260).

There is a specific assertion here that if engaged in, say, computer training, older adults may be less likely to benefit from performance-enhancing training programmes and may need more cognitive support; they may comply less with instructions, and apply the methods of training correctly less often (Baltes and Baltes, 1997; Campl, 1998; Verhaegen and Marcoen, 1996; Verhaegen et al., 1992, cited in Krampe et al., 2007). This also implies that reductions in cognitive plasticity may be even more pronounced in those aged over eighty and that any such instruction above this *may* be negated, not only by reduced cognitive plasticity, but by historical social biographies, such as limited educational background. While these are interesting and important considerations when it comes to understanding the digital worlds of older people, and how they move within them, there is room for a more targeted and specialist study which goes beyond the scope of this current research.

### **Methodologies and methods in this study**

This study's primary concern is to capture, as accurately as possible, a snapshot of the daily digital 'realities' of the cohort within the contexts of their personal situations by way of the chosen methods of data collection: the self-completed diary and the one-to-one interview. Despite the small size of the sample groups – around fifteen people in urban and rural settings – it is hoped that, through judicious and purposive sampling,

the profiles of the participants will approximate to a fair representation of the wider target demographic.

**The diary method:** The nature of this study, dipping as it does into the personal histories of those with comparatively long life-spans, makes it particularly suited to the use of storytelling as a means of capturing data. In this regard, the diary method is one that fits the purpose, allowing as it does the opportunity to explore individual lives from the participants' point of view in what might be a broadly naturalistic tone. The field phase of the study will be underpinned by the key questions: what challenges and opportunities are older people encountering in their daily use of digital technologies, and how may their use, or indeed non-use, of such technologies impact the flow of their daily lives.

While the practice of diary-keeping is perhaps one that has fallen out of favour in recent generations, there may be some remembrances amongst the participant cohort of the activity as a familiar practice. However, in deference to what may be long-established daily life patterns, it is recognised that the daily keeping of such a record may, in some circumstances, be an onerous or even disruptive task. Consequently, it is the intention of the researcher to manage the method in such a way that the capabilities of participants are considered throughout the process. For instance, if the practice is proving troublesome, then there are alternative methods of data recording which may be deployed, such as audio recordings or scheduled telephone interviews. In any event, a period of no more than fourteen days of diary-keeping is considered sufficient here to observe settled patterns of daily behaviour.

Ultimately, the diary method promises to provide privileged access to the private digital worlds of older people, their activities within those worlds, and accounts of their mechanical operations. It promises further access to any tactical or strategic thoughts and practices, and personal reflections on their interactions with digital processes, especially in terms of how they may, or indeed may not, be adapting their lives to fit these relatively new 'worlds'. But more than just the promise of the record of a series of actual events, the diary exercise may be viewed rather as a 'proxy' exercise which may then allow, in the follow-up interview, for deeper explorations of

the data recorded. This certainly chimes with the idea of diary-keeping in social research as a means of *revealing* the social processes and rationalities which may contribute to an individual's decisions and actions (Alaszewski, 2006, 48). So the traditional notion of the diary, as a trigger for personal reflection, serves as an invitation to the participant to dwell more than usual upon what may have previously been regarded as mundane daily tasks.

**The interview:** The one-to-one interview is particularly suitable as a research methodology 'when the researcher needs to gain insights into things such as people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences...' (Denscombe, 2010, 173). This recognises that face-to-face interviews should be both structured and semi-structured in nature; some initial structure is necessary, in order to assist the interviewee along a specific path of enquiry, but the developing encounter should become a little less structured, which allows the interviewee to elaborate, at their own pace, and to pursue trains of thought (175). It is possible this mixed method of interviewing techniques may be separated over time between successive encounters, perhaps starting with the structured method on the first encounter and progressing to a less structured tone over time as rapport is developed between researcher and participant.

## **Conclusion**

There are unequivocal and hitherto unprecedented shifts occurring in the age profile of the population in Ireland. Whilst forward population estimates, as predictions, must always bear some caveats, it is perhaps wise not become too fixated with the weight of numbers, but rather also to dwell upon the *quality* of future lives, especially those which may be caught in technological processes which in any event appear to be assuming more structural and centralised roles in cementing social stability. The physiological realities of ageing processes for individuals, fleetingly mentioned here, are an inescapable consideration when it comes to junctions of the human and the technological. It is hoped that this study will go some way to explaining how a small sample of older people are managing or are being transformed by their digital worlds. Above all, this is an opportunity to hear directly from a generation born into the

mechanical age and to understand how they may be adjusting to the demands of the digital age. This does not only serve as an end in itself, but rather as a predictor of how the conundrum of relentlessly evolving technological spheres can ever be reconciled with those of increasingly long-living – and variable – but ultimately diminishing human forms.

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# Theories of Mental Degeneration in Ireland

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**Aisling Shalvey**

This paper will explore theories of mental degeneration in Ireland, and the practical influence of these theories on medical discussion and social policy. The term 'degeneration' will be used in this article to define the perceived process of decline, while 'degeneracy' defines the more general theory of societal, mental, moral, and physical decline. This article will address these ideas, but will not address general eugenic theories, or the relationship between eugenics and the church and state in this era, as these are outside the parameters of this research. The work of British theorists, such as A. F. Tredgold, will be used as a benchmark to define what is meant by the contemporary terms *degeneration* and *amentia*. Tredgold notes that 'amentia' can be considered a lack of mental development, but encompasses numerous levels of *mental degeneration*; therefore, *amentia* was used as an overarching term for idiocy, feeble mindedness, and imbecility (Tredgold, 1920). This paper will also examine contemporary Irish journals to illustrate how these theories were implemented and how medical professionals and politicians perceived *mental degeneration* to have an effect on the Irish population. Finally, this paper will address the term *degeneracy* and what this problematic term implied for legislation in the Irish Free State (1921–1937).

Two main theories of environmental influences and hereditary influences were utilised in Ireland and abroad to explain the development and inheritance of mental and physical traits in the population. The Weismann germ plasm theory placed an emphasis on heredity, stating that the main influence on development was the germ plasm itself rather than the environment; he proved through experimentation that variations in the germ plasm that developed due to environmental influences could not be directly inherited (Weismann, 1893). Lamarckian theories focused on environmental influences in one's development, and then considered heredity to be secondary in one's development. The tendency to inherit certain traits could be altered by one's environment (Lamarck, 1830). A.F. Tredgold perceived *mental degeneration* to be a lengthy process that was partially influenced by Weismannist theories of

heredity; that if a family line had a history of intellectually gifted people, it was more likely that a person would develop similar traits to their ancestors. He maintained that the provision of a suitable environment through Lamarckian environmental theories could alleviate and even prevent *mental degeneration* (Tredgold, 1911). As a result, he coined the term 'educability'; the in-built hereditary capacity of the germ plasm to acquire knowledge (ibid.). This followed Weismann's theory that inherited tendencies were identifiable and capable of transmission from one generation to another (Weismann, 1893). Tredgold noted that in some individuals their educability may be high, but in the absence of an appropriate environment and education, they may descend into *mental degeneration* (Tredgold, 1911). Tredgold emphasised that everyone had some form of variable educational potential, but without an adequate environment, this could not be fulfilled. However, he believed that even those with an inherently low level of educability could be useful to society, therefore he advocated educational testing in schools to tailor education to the child, thus making the most of their differing capabilities (ibid.). Tredgold also doubted the contemporary classification of acquired and congenital defects, stating that the development of a child was rarely categorised in this simple manner. He instead replaced these terms with 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic'; the former solely explaining the traits that were hereditary, while extrinsic would describe traits that were developed purely as a result of environmental influences (Tredgold, 1920). Extrinsic factors could be found in one's environment, ranging from the development of venereal disease, tuberculosis, malnutrition of the mother leading to birth defects, to the provision of education, unclean housing, or a lack of education. Therefore, extrinsic or intrinsic factors go far beyond the debate on hereditary, but explain the influence of the environment even on the developing foetus that cannot be determined by genetic inheritance. These theories developed to illustrate the importance of environment on education and childhood development.

Alfred Binet discussed theories of educability in the population through his assessment of 'intelligence' (Binet, 1916). It is more accurate to describe this test as assessing mental acuity rather than intelligence, as it was highly culturally subjective and expected a certain degree of understanding from the child being tested. Tredgold

believed this to be helpful only to a certain extent; he explained that testing could be of use, but only for those with an ability to understand the questions and formulate answers. Binet's intention to differentiate between 'idiocy', 'feeble-mindedness' and 'imbecility' could not be fully realised with this form of testing alone; those who would be tested would need some ability to comprehend testing and would therefore be unsuitable for more serious cases of mental incapacity. As a result, Tredgold advocated a more rounded approach by using Binet-Simon intelligence testing, analysing patient files, as well as testimonies those who encountered the patient regularly (Tredgold, 1920). Some of his case studies illustrate children being labelled as *mentally degenerate* purely because the assessment had assumed linguistic and cultural norms. One example that he put forward was that of a child who could not differentiate between particular birds due to his urban upbringing, and had been determined *mentally degenerate*. On further analysis of his patient file and through discussing the patient history, it was shown that the child's understanding of wildlife had led to a poor result on the Binet Simon test (ibid.). Tredgold advocated the use of mental testing to provide for the education of children, whereby the *mentally degenerate* could be segregated from ordinary classrooms into a colony structured institutional environment (ibid.). This entailed a self-sufficient approach to mental healthcare, where patients would work on the farm, in workshops or selling crafts to provide for their upkeep, while remaining in an enclosed institution. He also suggested that it was in the populations best interests to provide some form of education for those considered *degenerate*. Binet estimated through his testing that approximately 2% of the population could be considered *degenerate* (Paul, 1995). However, if they did not receive some form of education, he believed they would develop criminal tendencies (Nicolas et al., 2013). Therefore, he advocated for the adoption of an alternative curriculum for those who were considered incapable of keeping up with mainstream schooling, focusing on socialisation, crafts, and practical skills, rather than on the traditional skills in schools such as language, reading, writing and arithmetic (ibid.). This approach was adopted to a certain extent in Ireland in the institutional system, such as in mental hospitals, and inspired further debate about education.

Prior to the Irish Free State, little provision was made for those with different educational needs, apart from those with sensory difficulties such as schools for the blind (Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs, 2007). However more extensive policies concerning the mental abilities of children began in the Irish Free State. Irish doctors began a similar form of testing mental acuity through the implementation of compulsory school examinations ('Points from the County Health Reports', 1938). Given its popularity at the time, it is highly likely that the Binet-Simon test or some derivative version of it was employed for this purpose, although it is not mentioned exactly what form of testing is used. The use of Binet-Simon testing became widespread in many countries, but the cultural conditions of the test become evident when comparing the degree of variation from the original. American physicians developed the Stanford-Binet, while German physicians developed the highly ideological Binet-Bobertag test which also included the practical capabilities of the patient as a form of testing (Hofmeier, 1938). Each variation detailed different cultural norms and expectations, illustrating that this test could not accurately measure intellect, but merely one's capabilities in a culturally biased manner. Based on the examination of schoolchildren, their findings on the mental condition of the population were detailed in a series of articles and county health reports to the Irish Free State government.

No Irish theorists have yet been discovered who made a significant contribution to theories about *mental degeneration*, however there was a significant debate amongst medical professionals and politicians in Ireland about pre-existing theories. It seemed that they believed heredity to affect the mental capacity of the population, but differed from British theories in some aspects. Irish journals and newspapers advocated much more strongly for Lamarckian improvement in environment, for example slum clearance and provision of maternal welfare clinics. An example of this is the letter written by Dr Robert Collis to the editor of the Irish Press in 1936 stating that Dublin had 'The foulest slums of anywhere in Europe', and noted that these living conditions had a significant influence on the health of the population (Collis, 1936). Dr. Louis S. Clifford, an Irish doctor, examined over 1900 children, and determined that 84 were *mentally degenerate*, with an overall rate across Dublin of 2.14% degeneracy

(Clifford, 1940). Given Binet's average of 2%, the above average rate of perceived degeneracy in Irish statistics was of significant concern. This statistic only accounted for Dublin where educational provision was more widespread due to the urban nature of the capital, so the average for the entire population was likely higher.

The reduction of the percentage of children classified as *degenerate* was of significant concern and debate amongst doctors, as evidenced by the articles they produced that noted how *degeneracy* could be reduced through environmental changes. Dr Clifford stressed that most of these children were still educable and could be of social use, if adequate schooling and provision was made for their welfare (Clifford, 1940). He also qualified his criteria for deficiency as those who were incapable of obtaining adequate instruction at an ordinary school, and therefore alternative means of education would be necessary (*ibid.*). Dr Clifford also agreed with Tredgold, stating that it would be better for these children not to attend school rather than have insufficient schooling as this would lead to criminality and delinquency due to their perceived failure (*ibid.*). Clifford's thoughts mirror Binet's concerns about the lack of suitable education causing children to perceive themselves as a failure and thus develop delinquency of varying degrees (Nicolas et al., 2013). Dr. J. A. Harbison conducted health reports on the general population; in this report he takes a clearly Lamarckian stance on *degeneration*. He notes that *degeneration* could be prevented through school medical examinations, by catching the deficit early and thus making extra provisions where necessary (Harbison, 1940). It does not specify exactly what extra provision could be made; this seems idealistic as it is evident that separate educational facilities were not created for those considered *mentally deficient* in the Irish Free State, and only rarely provided for those with sensory impairments (Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs, 2007).

It was not until the 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap' (1965) that provision for the education of those with learning difficulties was considered in a more uniform manner. Up to that point, in line with the ethos of the Irish Free State, education was standardised and exclusively provided by church organisations that were predominantly Roman Catholic (Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs, 2007). In this era the main question of education was

school control by the state and by religious organisations. This occurred in most European countries in the 1930's given that religion was often linked to national identity, and secularisation was not necessarily considered to be a part of urbanisation (Clarke, 'The Response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Introduction of Vocational Education in Ireland 1930–1942'). One such example is that of Italy where in 1929 Catholic teaching became compulsory in secondary and primary schools. Ireland is noted as an exceptional case, given the strong link between the state and the Catholic Church in its ethos and its legislation. The state's main influence in education during the Irish Free State was passing the 1926 School Attendance Act to ensure compulsory primary education. The Catholic Church primarily staffed schools with priests, nuns, religious brothers and sisters, partially because the state wanted to convey its' Catholic religious heritage. As a result, the Catholic Church had a higher degree of influence in schools in Ireland than in any other country in Europe at the time (Clarke, 'The Response of the Roman Catholic Church'). Even until the present day, the influence and control of the church over education is notable. PRI's *The World* segment notes that 'In many cases, the church owns the school buildings and the property where they sit. Catholic officials have influence over the curriculum, where religion classes are a daily part of learning' ('Ireland is asking what role the Catholic Church should play in public education', 2018). While this article does not seek to detail the intricacies of the Irish Catholic education system, it is important to note the significant influence of religion on the provision of all forms of education in the Irish Free State. Not much provision was made for the education of those considered mentally degenerate in schools controlled by religious orders.

Preventing *mental degeneration* at an early age was of concern to doctors in the Irish Free State, primarily addressed through environmental changes. Dr Harbison noted that many of the defects could be detected in early infancy and were a result of poor education and malnutrition, as a result he endorsed measures in maternal health clinics for the elimination of *mental degeneracy* (ibid.). Kerry Redin, an Irish public health nurse, mentioned that the provision of milk to school children dramatically increased their capabilities in schooling, and that a significant determinant for the high levels of *mental degeneracy* was due to malnutrition of the population (Redin, 1931).

Indeed on this matter Redin agrees with Tredgold, who noted that although there may be no family history of *mental deficiency*, malnutrition and a substandard early childhood environment could create defects in the germ plasm, meaning their inherent educability would not be fulfilled (Tredgold, 1921). It is clear that Irish doctors followed international examples in improving the mental condition of the population, and were familiar with the debates on heritability of mental defects.

The practical impact of these theories within the Irish context is problematic to quantify; it is unclear whether those who discussed such ideas were a minority, or if other medical practitioners also agreed with these ideas in everyday medical practice. It is clear that measures were adopted not only by medical practitioners but also by local philanthropic groups and political activists. Such measures included the provision of meals in schools, as *mental degeneration* was attributed to malnutrition in lower income areas ('The Problem of Poverty', 1931). Statistics from the county health reports illustrate that this concern was not purely an urban one centred around the Dublin tenements (Coleman, 1931). One example of this overarching concern is Dr Kennedy's report that up to two thirds of the children in Waterford were noted as *degenerate*, and that provision of a school meal was recommended to reduce this figure (Coleman, 1931). Other changes were seen in the provision of institutional care, as early occupational therapy was introduced, where patients would be active in some manner toward the economic upkeep of the institution according to their educational abilities. This is particularly evident in St Finians mental hospital, where Dr Eamonn O'Sullivan introduced occupational therapy practices during his time as Medical Superintendent from 1933 (Pettigrew et al., 2017). He later noted in his book, published in 1955, that occupational therapy could not involve just any occupation, but one which took the patients intellectual capabilities and interests into account (O'Sullivan, 1955). He adopted handicraft workshops as well as sports and recreational therapies which took into account the mental development and capabilities of the patients (Pettigrew et al., 2017). It must be noted however, that this provision for accessible education through occupational therapy remained within the institutional structure, and was not generally provided in the school system.



Journal articles discussed the social influence of illegitimacy on the population, and came to the conclusion that sexual deviancy, leading to illegitimacy, was an indicator of *feeble mindedness* and of *mental degeneracy* ('An Irish Instance of Practical Eugenics', 1931). The segregation of these mothers and their *dysgenic* influence on the population was thought to protect others from their influence. This was in line with Catholic teaching and ethos, which heavily influenced education. It should also be noted that unmarried mothers were perceived as inherently feeble minded as they had sexual relations without the social stability of marriage (O'Brien, 2013). The Carrigan Commission was established in 1930 by Eoin O'Duffy, the chief commissioner of An Garda Síochána, to investigate sexual crimes and abuses in the Irish Free State. Testimony was heard from numerous sources including George Cussen, the senior justice of the Metropolitan district court, and Dr Dorothy Stopford Price from the Irish Women Doctors Committee (Kennedy, 2000). The Carrigan Commission mentions 'first offenders', meaning women who had fallen pregnant out of wedlock for the first time, as *mentally degenerate* women, who should be detained as they did not understand the error of their ways (Carrigan Report to the Committee on the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930). Such rhetoric enabled the legislative anomaly that meant indeterminate sentences for mothers committed to such homes; they were seen as mentally unable to participate in everyday life, and a cause of *mental degeneration* in having further children (Smith, 2014). Therefore, while it is not specified directly, it is evident that *mental degeneracy* was considered heritable which contributed to the institutionalisation of unmarried mothers.

Due to the strictly denominational nature of education in Ireland, provision for special education was limited, with access to special education being a significant issue (Whyte, 1980). In Ireland, targeted education was advocated to a limited extent, with the impetus for providing this education largely resting on the parents rather than governmental provision of appropriate resources. While doctors may have advocated for more targeted education, facilities were not developed enough for this tailored approach to education to be realised. Mental and physical testing of the school population was evidently of importance to the government in its attempt to increase the population given the inquiries and health reports that were commissioned at the

time. It is evident that theories of *mental degeneration* had an impact on legislative policies in the Irish Free State as slum clearance began in 1931, the same year that many articles addressed the importance of the living environment on the mental development of children (King, 2010). Although the Education (Provision of School Meals) Act began in 1909, it is evident from medical writings that such a scheme was not broadly implemented in the Irish Free State until the 1930s and its absence in rural areas did have a significant impact on the health of school children ('The Problem of Poverty', 1931). Another important aspect of this development was that it brought about a dramatic increase in school attendance rates, especially in rural areas where children no longer had to travel long distances from home, and could stay in school for the full day. This had an impact on the natural educability of children as well as their capacity to engage with existing education that was provided. Another significant legislative impact of theories of degeneracy in the Irish Free State had was the increased rate of institutionalisation. Unlike in Britain, there was no formal provision for special schooling, those who were in significant need of specialised resources were forced into mental institutions as a remnant of antiquated methods of dealing with the socially excluded. This did prompt a development of alternative techniques of managing patients who were not mentally ill. Therefore, the development of occupational therapy practices and habit training as well as re-education therapy flourished in Ireland, with prominent figures such as Dr Eamonn O'Sullivan contributing one of the first seminal textbooks on this in Europe in 1955 (O'Sullivan, 1955).

Further legislative improvements led to the compulsory school medical examination scheme from 1928 which led to a widespread effort to contain the spread of childhood illnesses and ensure basic healthcare for children ('Points from the County Health Reports', 1938). While the Women's National Health Association was not a legislative body, it effectively continued the work of the school examination scheme in an unofficial sense. It was founded by Lady Aberdeen, a philanthropic figure of the Irish landed gentry. The Women's National Health Association established maternal welfare clinics as well as infant check-up centres throughout rural areas and the slums of larger cities in order to improve the health of the population. Their motto was to 'ensure the vigorous reproduction of a healthy race', which included their

mental development and control of the environment to ensure their health (Tralee Maternity and Child Welfare, 1939). This brought the aims of the school examination a step further by ensuring that pregnant mothers were educated on how to care for their children and how to take care of themselves to ensure maternal malnutrition did not negatively affect the developing foetus. This organisation published the journal *Sláinte*, which covered local and national affairs pertaining to the organisation and issues of healthcare. Theories of inborn abilities and fostering these abilities through maternal welfare and medical inspection of school children are detailed in T. Jones' article in *Sláinte*:

'We know little yet as to the way human heredity works, but children are born with varying powers [...] We can arrange it so that it shall favour the growth of these inborn propensities which make for our social advance and so that it shall oppose those propensities which make for national decay' (Jones, 1910).

In this way it is evident that the instruction and care of children was regarded as a social advancement, while 'national decay' was associated with a mismanagement of these natural abilities. It also insinuates a regression of mental capacity if preventative measures are not adopted. While Jones's article does not reference Tredgold explicitly, it is clear that his idea of educability, as an inbuilt propensity for learning, had become a central part of educational provision and the debates about the accessibility of education in Ireland.

While a fully-fledged eugenics program to eliminate dysgenic influences on the population was not adopted in Ireland, the concern about the health of the population was still a dominant one. Amongst the issues of importance to the Irish Free State were the education of children and the protection of their health, both of which combined in discussing their mental capacity for learning and the accommodation of those who were not suited to traditional schooling. While A.F. Tredgold wrote for an American and English audience, many of his ideas were well received and adopted in the policies and medical practice of the Irish Free State.

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# **Studying the Musical Ecology of Place in Irish Towns through Deep Mapping**

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**Aoife Kavanagh**

## **Introduction**

The value of the study of art and place has become well-advanced in Art History, Geography and other fields in recent years. For instance, Tuan (2004a, 2004b) likens art works to ‘cousins, twice or three times removed’ of places, since they can appeal to the senses and to the values and preferences of those experiencing them. He further argues that art works can capture and convey some slice of time and experience, in a manner in which words are not necessarily as well equipped to do. But little work has considered musical practices in relation to place-making, despite Tuan’s description of music as ‘the supreme art’ in evoking and communicating our sensual imaginations of and experiences in place (Tuan, 2004a, 52). My PhD project seeks to explore the interrelated processes of music- and place-making in three town settlements in the south-east of Ireland: Carlow, Kilkenny (city), and Wexford. I understand places as woven meshworks of lived experiences, memories, and rhythms (Ingold, 2011; Adams et al., 2001; Buttimer, 1976; Tuan, 1977), in which music-making or ‘musicking’ (Small, 1998) happens. Rather than focus on music as an object or output, my work investigates the particular and varied ways in which these everyday processes of making music and place are co-constitutive, shaping and affecting each other. In this essay, I discuss my theoretical framework, what I term the ‘musical ecology of place’, which draws on perspectives from a wide variety of disciplines and approaches, as well as illustrate my approach through research in progress.

## **Towards a Musical Ecology of Place**

In geography, interest in art and artistic practice has grown most significantly in the past number of decades. As a consequence, more sophisticated approaches to studying art works and artistic practice have moved away from purely descriptive and

historical analysis, or using art works as objects that merely provide material to study existing geographic themes. Instead, 'creative geographies' consider the actual experiencing and 'doing' of art work itself as an integral methodological part of research, in addition to contributing to research themes (Hawkins, 2013, 2015). Geography has given significant emphasis to visual art work (Smith, 1994, 1997), though approaches have also developed with regard to literature and performing arts, such as dance, theatre, and music. Duffy (2009) argues that research on music in geography, while dating back some forty or fifty years, is in need of further development, particularly in terms of methodology. Thematic work in the area gaining pace in areas such as health geography (for example, Andrews et al., 2014). My research, in bringing together an empirical study of musical practice and artistic process through a geographic lens, comes at a resonant point in the discipline's development, as well as in related fields of musicology and music education.

The 'musical ecology of place' framework for this study brings a geographical approach to other frameworks being developed in musicology, ethnomusicology, music education, and sociology (Watkins, 2011; Finnegan, 2007; Kenny, 2016). At its most basic level, ecology is defined as 'the study of the interrelationships between organisms and their surrounding, outer world' (The Oxford Dictionary of Geography, 2015). An ecological approach to understanding human systems or even types of places, such as cities, has been applied in a vast array of disciplines (Pickett and Cadenasso, 2002), in particular sociology. However, place and environment in this musically-interested research are sometimes assumed to be passive, understood as location, stage, or container. This contrasts diverse theoretical developments in geography and elsewhere, and the approach in this project too, which understands places as much more than mere location. For example, Casey (2001, 684) argues that place, things and people are intricately linked via 'constitutive coingredience'. Archer's (1964) work may be considered the first to use ecological thinking with regard to music, focusing on the 'mobile, fluid, dynamic interrelationship' (28) of music and other social facets. Later work takes similar views, with approaches such as 'acoustic ecology' (Schaefer, 1977), 'soundscape ecology' (Pijanowski et al., 2011),

‘ecomusicology’ (Allen, 2011; Allen et al., 2014), and ‘ecology of music sustainability’ (Schipper, 2016; Sound Futures, 2018).

These examples have all emerged through an interest in understanding music’s development, organisation, sustainability and work within a wider context. There are thus multiple perspectives on the actual attributes and components of musical ecologies, which cannot be explored here. Based on how my own framework is developing, the facets of the musical ecologies I have studied include: *actors* playing various (musical and non-musical) *roles* in the musical ecology, who form *connections* which support musical practice in place, and also deploy important *resources* for musical practice. The *work of musical practice* is far reaching, and affects all people within the musical ecology, and indeed is a strong part of place-making.

### **Mapping Musical Ecologies of Place**

The idea of mapping musical ecologies of place is critical to the conceptual and methodological frameworks of my PhD project in at least two ways. Firstly, by bringing together multiple approaches, perspectives, methods, and actors’ stories, the project as a whole resembles a ‘deep mapping’ approach. Biggs (2010) describes deep mapping as an intensive exploration of a particular place, usually a small place, with artistic approaches and perspectives at its centre. In deep mapping, multiple (even opposing) voices, of insiders and outsiders, ‘amateurs’ and ‘professionals’ (Finnegan, 2007), official and unofficial, come together to contribute to the whole (McLucas, n.d.). Deep mappings do not seek to be objective or ‘correct’ in any cartographic sense, but are in fact as partisan and politicised as one might expect of such a polyphonic construction. In addition to deep mapping, new approaches to mappings are now increasingly deployed at the meeting point of art and geography practices to explore complex spatial issues and processes, and indeed can contribute to the movement towards change (Hawkins, 2013).

A second facet of my project makes extensive use of a form of community mapping (for example, Lydon, 2003) as a central research method. The community music mapping I have developed resembles the model of community asset mapping, wherein the assets available to particular communities are mapped to produce an



output or resource which can be put to use by that community (for example, UN-Habitat, 2010). Music has been mapped in similar ways through a variety of guises, including, for instance, a mapping of popular music with a focus on tourism in Dublin (Mangaoang and O'Flynn, 2015) and mappings of musical practices, histories, and venues in Liverpool (Cohen, 2012; Lashua et al., 2010). Creative, participatory and other forms of mapping, in geography and elsewhere, continue to develop in diverse ways too, which has also informed the development of my method (for example, Solnit and Jelly-Shapiro, 2016; Pánek and Benediktsson, 2017).

The actual design of my mapping develops Rebecca Krinke's (2010) artistic mapping of joy and pain in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. In a number of public spaces, including parks, museum galleries, and main streets, Krinke invited passers-by and invited guests (students and colleagues) to mark where they experienced joy and pain. They gathered around a large wooden map onto which the street map of the city had been carved. A number of participants could gather around the map at once, with the option to converse with others and the researcher. Individuals had the option to mark multiple places or merely one. People could also participate by not mapping, but observing or offering their own stories.

Overall, this design struck me as accessible, engaging, clear, flexible, and practical, especially with limited resources and time. It could allow significant places to be easily identified and marked. Participants could simultaneously describe their memories, experiences, and opinions of musical practice in their place (which could be recorded and transcribed for later analysis). The map could allow multiple people to converse at once (a polyphony of voices), creating a dynamic, interactive experience which could also be open to debate. Musicians of all ages, musical backgrounds and interests could have their say around this map. All of their views could be brought together with the rest, forming threads within the weaving of the meshwork (Ingold, 2011). The approach could also map the ways in which places relate to each other and other places through musical experience (Massey, 2005).

Importantly too, such participatory mappings, as map-along interviews in a sense, provide insights into on-the-ground, lived experiences of sustaining musical practices in place. Other narratives, for instance those of policy-makers or official

reports, might not capture these aspects of a place in quite the same way (Lydon, 2003). As Lydon also details, collectively produced maps provide rich insights into stories of musicking from across perspectives, in ways that could scarcely be reached through more conventional practices or existing sources. This mapping method therefore clearly accesses the perspectives of actors and roles across the musical ecology of place, and the networks and connections they form. The mapping also explores the work musical practice does more broadly, and the ways it influences and is influenced by the contexts (for example, political, social, cultural, economic) in which it happens.

In addition to mapping, the other central methodological element of the project is musicking ethnographies. Here, in-depth interviews with a range of musicians contributing to and sustaining the musical ecology of place are combined with participant observations of their practice. These musicians are drawn from across the amateur-professional continuum, including community musicians, small ensembles, and individual artists (Finnegan, 2007).



*Figure 1: In conversation with Carlow-based choristers, May 2017. Photograph: author's own*

## Concluding Notes

My theoretical and methodological approach to mapping and understanding musical ecologies of place is still under development. The deep mappings taking place in this project do not claim to be representative either. They provide a small insight into not only the richness and diversity of musical practice in these places, but the ways in which musicians develop and deploy strategies to ensure this richness despite the challenges they might face. Nonetheless, this deep mapping conceptual model, which includes the larger scale construction of mappings of music from a variety of on-the-ground perspectives in combination with close and focused ethnographic case study work with musicians across the professional-amateur continuum, is so far proving an effective approach. I conclude by offering some preliminary conclusions about the significant ecological interrelations emerging between actors, places and musical practice. These exemplify what Massey (2005, 81) calls the 'throwntogetherness' of places (and musical ecologies) and include place-based stories, memories and rhythms, musical fields of care, the work of musical practice, challenges to sustainability, and the importance of connections.

*Place-based stories and memories* (resonating with oral history approaches in many ways too) of musical experiences of times in old, that might otherwise go forgotten are told, often with a sense of warm recollection on the part of the storyteller. This sense of time, of change in musical practice and in place, comes across vividly when the polyphony of voices, musicians of so many age groups, bring their stories to the map, as do the *rhythms and journeys* by which musical practice and place-making happen on a daily, weekly, and seasonal basis, as well as within the lifecourses of musicians. At different life stages on one's musical journey, for example, different rhythms come to the fore; young people who map speak about learning music in school, going to live concerts, some are even considering a career in music. For adults, accounts focus significantly on musical practice as a parent, or on musical practice as a child which may or may not have continued. Older people speak very fondly about the past, but also now experience new rhythms, with many joining musical groups in retirement. They very often acknowledge the important role these activities perform

with regard to socialising, staying active, and challenging oneself, and note the experience of musical practice can be a high point in one's weekly rhythms.

Also emerging is the creation of *musical fields of care* (after Tuan, 1979), important spaces for rehearsal, learning, performance, listening, or reflection. These fields of care, which are clearly highlighted as spatial patterns in the mappings, encompass formal arts and/or music spaces as well as schools, churches, community centres, pubs, hotels, and outdoor spaces (among others). They are enabling places (cf. Duff, 2011) of development, support, enjoyment, fulfilment, and challenge for musicians in creating nurturing environments. As such, they are rich sites of place-making too. They are places which support musical practice, through their existing resources, their accessibility, their centrality, for instance, or through their familiarity or connections to the life of the place in question, although this may not be known or recognised more broadly.

The creative *work of musical practice* (following Hawkins, 2013 and Rice, 2003) becomes clear in mapping conversations. There is a sense of value in the musical experience which goes beyond the actual participation in or production of musical practice. This value enriches musicking for participants in various ways, and contributes to place-making. Mapping participants describe the experiences of learning, enjoyment, socialisation, well-being, reflection, escape, and personal development they experience through musical participation. Lum (2011) urges practitioners (in her case music educators) to 'appreciate the multifaceted functions of music, of which musical skill development is sometimes hardly significant' (194). Bracken (2015) and Goodrich (2013), similarly underline the equal (and sometimes greater) significance of the non-musical fruits of musical practice.

The *challenges* faced by musicians in place, particularly practitioners making their living through musical practice, become clear in mapping discussions too. From the point of view of place scholarship, it is important to consider negative experiences as much as positive ones (Tuan, 2004b). In my own mappings, negative experiences have manifested in the guise of accessing resources, finding work, building new audiences, sustaining practices in challenging funding climates, and the multiple roles in and increasingly mobile nature of musical practice. Often, the connections and

networking fostered through musicking, with musical colleagues in particular, help to overcome some of these challenges. Personal and place-based connections also feature extensively in the accounts of community musicians, most especially those of family and friend groups, but also neighbours and the wider community. As a way for musicians to reflect on and work through their place and the challenges they face there, the project (and similar research endeavours) empowers those who participate in it, fostering community and place wellbeing, and providing opportunities to uncover and consider paths to sustainability for their musical communities.

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# **Between Adolescence and Motherhood: The Representation of Young Single Motherhood in Relation to Work and Sex in Contemporary German Film**

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**Kira Collins**

This article will analyse the representation of young single motherhood in the German films *Lucy* by Henner Winckler (2006) and *Breaking Horizons* by Pola Schirin Beck (2012). Based on E. Ann Kaplan's book *Motherhood and Representation* (Kaplan, 1992), in which she analyses American mainstream film and media from the early twentieth century up to the 1980s, the mother's representation in the German films will be studied in relation to work and sexuality. Kaplan mentions six maternal discourses that evolved from the 1980s onwards in American media, including the categories of the self-fulfilled mother, the abusive mother, the woman-who-refuses-to-mother, the absent mother, the working mother as well as the lesbian mother. The German discourse of non-traditional motherhood, however, deviates from this and is in need of a different categorisation. This article will account a German filmic national context that is missing in the US-centric analysis of Kaplan and maternal film scholarship in general. It will, therefore, analyse the representation of young single motherhood in German film as an addition to Kaplan's originally American maternal categorisation.

Especially, the films of the Berlin School – a filmic movement that addresses social issues in Germany without revealing alternatives to the current state – intend to create space for a non-judgemental observation of these non-traditional mothers. In an era of shifting gender roles and the acknowledgement of women having the choice not to mother, the young single mother in German society still struggles because of a rigid definition of traditional gender roles and an idealised image of motherhood. The young single mother acts outside of what Orna Donath calls a 'cultural-temporal heteronormative logic' (Donath, 2015, 203) which locates motherhood within a heterosexual relationship and follows a conventional pattern of life, leading from school leaving to marriage and motherhood. The young single mother deviates from this norm, finding herself striving for an ideal she can hardly reach. In *Lucy* and *Breaking*

*Horizons*,<sup>1</sup> this struggle is particularly clear when mothers attempt to combine motherhood with work and sex. This article will focus on how the filmic text communicates the cultural climate of young single motherhood in Germany through its narrative, camera work and mise-en-scène.

It will show that, even though the films of the Berlin School open up a critique of contemporary social conditions and offer to identify with the issues of a young single mother, they still fail to represent young single motherhood in combination with both work and an active sex life. Therefore, a rather conservative understanding of the non-traditional mother persists. Rather than offer a direct criticism on political or social issues, the films of the Berlin School communicate the social climate of contemporary Germany. Their criticism is indirect and needs to be interpreted by the audience. A distant camera and minimal background music are some of the tools used to invite the audience to create their own emotions instead of being prompted to certain feelings by subconscious processes as an effect of threatening or romantic music (cf. Abel, 2008). Therefore, even though the films of the Berlin School offer an alternative mode of representation that invites the audience to reflect current conditions in comparison to the mainstream films Kaplan describes that rather construct images of ideal motherhood, the ideological norms of ideal Western motherhood are still inscribed in the Berlin School films.

Henner Winckler's second feature film *Lucy* (2006) depicts the life of Maggy (Kim Schnitzer), an eighteen-year-old mother, and her baby daughter Lucy (Polly Hauschild). The two of them are living in an apartment with Maggy's mother Eva (Feo Aladag), until Maggy decides to move in with her new boyfriend Gordon (Gordon Schmidt). There she will be confronted with a quasi-nuclear family life, while she spends her day caring for Lucy and waiting for Gordon to come home from work. However, Gordon and Maggy split by the end of the film leaving her in search of a new

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<sup>1</sup> The Berlin School is defined rather broadly and it is susceptible to debate whether both films, *Lucy* and *Breaking Horizons*, can be defined as Berlin School movies. However, in this article, both will be seen as part of the movement due to their use of a distant camera, minimal background music, and the positioning of the protagonists within liminal spaces. Both films offer the audience space to reflect and to experience social realities outside of the mainstream maternal representations.

home and facing the decision of whether she should move back in with her mother Eva.

*Breaking Horizons* by Pola Schirin Beck portrays the life of Lara (Aylin Tezel), a 25-year-old woman whose life is aimless. She unenthusiastically studies architecture to please her parents while spending her free time drinking or clubbing with her best friend Nora (Henrike von Kuik). Getting pregnant by a barkeeper (Kai Michael Müller) during one of these nights gives Lara's life direction. She decides to keep the baby but loses the child during the sixth month of her pregnancy due to complications. Because of her infantile self-perception as well as the negative reaction of her parents when Lara tells them about her pregnancy, *Breaking Horizons* offers a valuable representation of young single motherhood.

This article shows that both films detach the work sphere from motherhood through plot and framing, following a traditional ideal in Germany of the stay-at-home mother who sacrifices herself for the maternal duty. In *Lucy*, Maggy briefly mentions her desire to join the workforce to have something in her life she can enjoy besides motherhood. In the scene, Maggy is placed on the right side of the screen standing behind Lucy's stroller and in front of a large window that allows the audience a view into the hair salon her friend (Ganeshi Becks) works in. The glass window, however, separates Maggy visually from the work space. Furthermore, the frame of the window bisects the mise-en-scène, placing Maggy and her friend, who pursues an apprenticeship as a hairdresser, on opposite sides. As a result, Maggy is visually disconnected from the work sphere firstly by the window between her and the inside of the salon and secondly through the division of the frame between her and her working friend. Maggy's desire for individual fulfilment via a job is quickly dismissed by her friend who indicates that Maggy has her boyfriend Gordon instead. With this statement the film unfolds the societal view that the domestic is a mother's natural place, in which her greatest joy is not just to take care of her child but also of her husband (or in Maggy's case her boyfriend). The working woman and the stay-at-home mother become separate concepts that do not intersect.

Lara in *Breaking Horizons* does not face the challenge of combining work with motherhood, like Maggy does in *Lucy*, as her pregnancy ends during the sixth month

in a miscarriage. However, even before the child is born, Lara makes the decision between raising her child or continuing her architectural studies in favour of her child. During her pregnancy Lara loses any remnant of her already low interest in studying architecture and focuses on her future as a mother. In the middle of the film, when Lara meets her friend Nora in a maternity clothes shop, Nora is wearing a casual smart jacket. This is a visual contrast between these two characters, with Lara representing the young single mother on one hand, and the future young business woman represented by Nora on the other. Both women struggle to pay attention to each other as their conversation circles around their own individual interests. The camera focuses on the uninterested faces of the two friends, barely placing them as a unit within its *mise-en-scène*. When the camera does not show the faces in close-up, it positions the women in two corners of the screen sitting on one sofa. Nora and Lara barely physically interact with each other in this scene and are visually separated by objects in between them. Only when Lara feels her child kicking inside her belly does she take Nora's hand to let her feel the movement. However, Nora does not seem to appreciate the gesture and pulls her hand back politely. Motherhood – signified by Lara – and career – signified by Nora – are therefore, as in *Lucy*, strictly separated spheres within a woman's life in *Breaking Horizons*.

The films reflect how this strict separation of motherhood and work leads to a societal anxiety in Germany of dependent young women who become parents outside of the cultural-temporal norm Donath describes. If Lara had not suffered a miscarriage, she might have struggled in the future to earn her own money and be fully independent from her parents, just as Maggy does. The mothers are, therefore, faced with the dilemma many mothers experience when staying at home to parent their children instead of pursuing the career they were originally trained for. As Nancy Chodorow says:

Parenting, as an unpaid occupation outside the world of public power, entails lower status, less power, and less control of resources than paid work. Women's mothering reinforces and perpetuates women's relative powerlessness (Chodorow, 1978, 31).

This power struggle is apparent in the scene with Nora and Lara, in which both women try to convince the other to be fully engaged in their individual interest of motherhood or work. The non-working mother becomes less interesting for her working friends as well as for men, as this article will show. This powerlessness applies not just to the married, stay-at-home mother Chodorow mainly refers to, but especially to the single mother. In *Lucy*, Maggy's inability to combine motherhood and work leads to her dependence on her parents. Both films expose the dilemma that motherhood comes with occupational as well as social restrictions which leads to an eager pursuit of creating a heteronormative family model to be accepted by society for Maggy.

She tries to create this family within the cultural-temporal logic Donath mentions by initially keeping the fact that Lucy is her daughter from Gordon. However, this logic is broken when Gordon learns that Maggy is Lucy's mother. While he is still interested in a relationship, Maggy's only option to save this relationship later in the movie is to give Lucy away to her mother. Therefore, she ultimately must abandon her maternal identity to secure a long-term relationship, while her life before was predominantly shaped by her daughter. During the film, Maggy repeatedly tries to negotiate this maternal identity, searching for alternatives outside of motherhood. In *Lucy*, mothers must put aside their maternal identity to have a lasting relationship. This split between sexual identity and maternal identity will resolve itself in favour of the latter as the child becomes the focal point of identification for the young single mother. Motherhood and serious relationships, therefore, are ultimately incompatible in the film.

Sexuality creates tension in the mother-daughter relationship in *Lucy*. Sex is only actively shown once and implied a second time during a conversation between Maggy and her mother Eva. Both mothers are shown in close-ups in the scene, highlighting the rather emotional discussion. Here, sex is represented as something that divides mother and daughter but at the same time indicates that Maggy's relationships resemble what she learned from her mother's actions. After encountering her daughter with a guy in the kitchen, Eva confronts Maggy, stating her opinion about her daughter's behaviour:

Eva: Ja, findest du das normal?  
(Well, do you think that is normal?)

Maggy: Was denn?

(What?)

Eva: Dass du dann gleich mit dem ins Bett gehst?

(That you immediately sleep with him?)

Maggy: Musst du gerade sagen.

(You should talk!)

Eva: Wieso?

(Why?)

Maggy: Na meinst du ich habe dich hier noch nicht ficken gehört?

(Don't you think I haven't heard you fucking in here?)

This statement does not represent sex positively but simply blames the mother for the supposedly bad traits of her daughter. As Lucy Fischer states: 'In many films, the mother is blamed for her transgressions or for the ills she visits upon her offspring' (Fischer, 1996, 30). In *Lucy*, she is blamed for both. This confirms Chodorow's perception of the reproduction of mothering, whereby the mother teaches the daughter about her presupposed future role (Chodorow, 1978, 7). By doing so, the mother hands down not just traits that are positively conceived by society but also negatively perceived ones. By defining an active (and somewhat promiscuous) sex life as abnormal for a young single mother, Lucy's grandmother others and condemns the maternal character for living out a free sexuality. In *Lucy*, motherhood is, therefore, not just incompatible with serious relationships but also a trigger of conflict in relation to sex.

While *Lucy* offers a conflict-laden representation of sex, *Breaking Horizons* highlights the desexualisation of mothers by men. Although Lara is a sexually active woman before her pregnancy, this abruptly stops once she knows that she is pregnant. When Lara and Nora finish their painting job of the future baby room, the editing slows down and captures both girls in an intimate close-up shot, while they are having a discussion about sex and their current situation. However, when Nora alleges that a pregnancy is perceived as sexy by men, the camera distances itself from the women, showing them in a medium shot instead of the former close-up. By doing so, the camera distances itself not just physically from Nora, but also in regards to Nora's assumption, revealing it as fallacy. When Lara explains that in her experience most

men are sexually repelled by pregnant women, the camera changes again to a close-up shot. During this, the focus of the *mise-en-scène* lies on Nora's face, instead of the speaking Lara, waiting for her to respond to her friend's explanation. Nora, however, refuses to acknowledge the maternal difficulties by changing the subject to herself as she complains that Lara never asks about her relationship to Martin (Godehard Giese). The scene shows that the sexuality of the mother is hindered by men's perception of the pregnant body and highlights the struggle especially young mothers encounter by trying to explain themselves to their peers who did not experience motherhood yet.

In *Breaking Horizons* sex is only actively portrayed in conjunction with the act of conceiving a child. When Lara is clubbing with her friend Nora, Lara meets Martin, her university teacher. The two of them engage in a conversation and flirt with each other. However, while Lara gets herself another drink, her friend Nora leaves the club with Martin. As in *Lucy*, sex triggers a conflict in *Breaking Horizons* between the two main female characters. Lara, frustrated about the libidinous rivalry, keeps on dancing and consuming drugs. At this point, the camera changes to a faster rhythm and just like Lara loses focus. This subjective use of the camera narrows the cinematic space around her while refusing to fully take her point of view. The audience still stays outside of Lara's world observing her closely and at the same time being invited to share part of the experience via a blurry focus. The fast editing of blurred backgrounds of people and lights unfold Lara's feelings of being lost within too many decisions, searching for a direction in her life. In order to find this direction, however, Lara chooses – and needs – to lose herself in the moment first.

The fast editing of mainly close-up shots of which most are blurred continues during Lara's sex with the barkeeper on the toilet of the club. Her attempt at losing herself through drugs and sex, therefore, ultimately causes the conception of her child, and with this comes a direction in her life outside of having a career. Michel Foucault describes in *The History of Sexuality* how sex was confined to the domestic sphere in the 19th century and only functioned as reproductive tool (Foucault, 1978, 3). *Breaking Horizons* detaches sex from the domestic sphere placing it in the public toilet of a club. However, even though Lara has sex out of enjoyment and does not intend to get pregnant, the film still visually reduces the sexual act to reproductive purposes for the

young single mother. After conceiving, an active sex life is excluded from motherhood and remains acceptable only for non-mothers. The portrayal of sexuality in regards to the young single mother, therefore, somewhat stays in line with the conservative idea of the nineteenth century.

In conclusion, the young single mother in contemporary German film constitutes part of a new category outside of Kaplan's original definition of maternal representations in American media. The young mothers in *Lucy* and *Breaking Horizons* are neither self-fulfilled, absent, abusive, employed, homosexual nor do they refuse to mother. Nevertheless, they represent a form of non-traditional motherhood that is often ignored within maternal representations. Therefore, this article focused on films by the Berlin School that intend to show realities outside of the mainstream representation of a Madonna-like mother, while the protagonists still try to fit within the cultural-temporal heteronormative logic Donath describes.

The article shows that camera work, mise-en-scène and narration detaches motherhood from work and from having a constant partnership or active sex life in *Lucy* and *Breaking Horizons*. While Maggy pursues a heteronormative nuclear family model by being a stay-at-home mother who somehow wishes for another place of fulfilment outside of motherhood, work becomes strictly separated from a maternal identity in *Breaking Horizons*. Both films locate the young single mothers as being dependent on their parents. This situates them outside of the cultural-temporal heteronormative logic Donath describes, and positions them within Chodorow's framework of reinforced powerlessness by withholding the possibility of further pursuing school, an apprenticeship or work.

Furthermore, to be able to pursue a heteronormative partnership, the young single mother is forced to deny her motherhood, as sexual identity and maternal identity are clearly separate concepts in both films. The narration positions sexuality as a point of conflict between the young single mother and her own mother, while blaming her mother for her supposedly bad traits. The young single mother is desexualised by men and an active sex life perceived as abnormal by her own mother. Sex is merely depicted in relation to conceiving the child, which follows a somewhat conservative understanding of the sexuality of the maternal character. Only the woman



who is not a mother is able to pursue a lasting relationship and can have an active sex life.

While films of the Berlin School claim to merely show social realities outside of mainstream knowledge, they still imply social critique and challenge social norms. It is up to the audience to interpret this criticism. This article shows, that on the one hand the films refuse to combine the representation of motherhood with both work and an active sex life and therefore follow a rather conservative stance on maternal representations. However, on the other hand, they seem to implicitly critique these boundaries ultimately set by society and not necessarily by the filmmakers themselves. The films, therefore, seem to follow a cultural ideology and in a way mirror the ambitions of the German New Wave (German: Neuer Deutscher Film) by encouraging the audience to step away from the events and reflect them rather than merely identifying with the characters on screen.

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## On Deconstruction and Education in a Post-Truth World

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**Matthew Mallia**

In the context of the presidential election in the United States and the EU referendum in the UK, Oxford showed the term 'post-truth' gaining immense popularity, especially in conjunction with 'politics' and 'society'; by the end of 2016 Oxford Dictionaries declared it as the word of the year (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018). Post-truth is an adjective which refers to 'circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief', and even though the concept has been around for centuries, several philosophers have resorted to blaming postmodernism for our 'post-truth' politics.

A relatively mild accusation is put forward by A. C. Grayling who, in a BBC interview, identified postmodernism and relativism as the intellectual roots which are 'lurking in the background' of post-truth (Coughlan, 2017). A harsher accusation is made by Daniel Dennett, who maintained that people should begin to realise that philosophers are not as harmless as generally thought, and that philosophical notions (such as the ones espoused by postmodernists) can have serious consequences that can come true. He goes on to say:

I think what the postmodernists did was truly evil. They are responsible for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts. You'd have people going around saying: 'Well, you're part of that crowd who still believe in facts' (Cadwaladr, 2017).

It may also be fit to note that such criticisms have not been levelled by philosophers, exclusively. In his piece "'Preparing for the incalculable": Deconstruction, Justice, and the Question of Education' (2001), Biesta maintains that it is a widely held notion amongst educators and educational theorists such as Beyer and Listen (1992) and Hill et. al. (1999) that postmodern philosophy is untenable for the moral and political support required for the project of education. For these theorists, 'postmodernism threatens to cripple the very concept of the political in the human and social sciences'

(McLaren and Lankshear, 1994, 392). One of the central targets of this debate has been Jacques Derrida and his philosophy of deconstruction. Deconstruction has often been accused of being a critical analysis which destroys everything in its path, with many arguing that it has very dangerous nihilistic and hyper-relativistic implications (Ferry and Renaut 1990; Fleming 1996; Habermas 1987).

I claim that one of the best ways out of our social malaise is through education; as a proponent of postmodern philosophy I argue (against those who say otherwise) that not only does it make sense to use it as a thinking cap through which we can re-think education, but also to use this thought to help us better understand how we have ended up in our post-truth world, and consequently, how to go forward. In this paper, to acquaint the reader with the philosopher and 'his' philosophy, I shall begin by putting forward an account of one of Derrida's most seminal texts, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences' (1967), which is, famously, his formal critique on structuralism and western metaphysics. I will then go on to comment on the relationship between deconstruction and truth in order to provide context to the next section of the paper, in which I will be arguing how a deconstructivist perspective tackles important and recurring topics in education such as justice and responsibility, amongst others, to show its relevance to education. There are, of course, a plethora of other channels and methods to be explored if we are to call ourselves serious about doing away with the problems resulting from our post-truth world. My argument is simply that a deconstructivist perspective to education can act as a tool which may allow us to move a step away from our post-truth world, a step in the right direction

### **The Myth and the Origin**

Jacques Derrida presented his paper, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences', at the Johns Hopkins International Colloquium in October 1966, which was an international seminar on structuralism. Ironically, Derrida's lecture subverted the certainties of structuralism by questioning the very concept of structure. In his work, he effectively identifies flaws in western logocentrism: from ancient Greek philosophy up to structuralism. Derrida begins his work by referring to the history of the concept of structure and to an 'event' in this history which is 'loaded with meaning'.

The notion of 'event' in the history of the structurality of structure is how it had always already been at work and neutralised due to a fixed origin, which he argues had been spontaneously attributed. The aim of having a fixed point, a centre to the structure, is to limit what Derrida calls the free play of the structure. He goes on to argue that it has been 'forbidden' for elements at the centre to be substituted; but this does not mean that the substitution of the centre was/is impossible, but rather, that it has been prohibited from changing (352). Play, therefore, refers to that which resists the organization of the structure.

Derrida points out that the centre of the structure is both inside the structure, as well as independent from it, in order to control it. He thus refutes the law of identity by claiming that 'the centre is not the centre' (1978, 352). Derrida analyses the history of western philosophy to maintain this. But what types of centres existed? Derrida names a few: essence, transcendentality, consciousness, God, Man, and so on. It should be noted that for every centred concept which existed, by default, there were concepts which were marginalized, thus creating a hierarchy of binary oppositions. The 'event' is, therefore, a (re)thinking of structure, which is simultaneously a rupture as well as a repetition. This happened with the linguistic turn as language burst into the scene and replaced the centre with discourse. Instead of a structure of concepts, there was a collection of signs, that is, language. The word became intrinsically intertwined with concept which gave rise to a 'play of signification'. Words, that is, signs, could possess meaning within an infinite play (354). Derrida explains that even his greatest influences have denounced metaphysics whilst relying on it: Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, the Freudian critique of self-presence/consciousness and Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics and of the determination of Being as presence. He maintains that this pattern of thought can even be found within the human sciences, whose 'critique of ethnocentrism' runs parallel to the destruction of the history of metaphysics (345–355). All of Western thought, according to Derrida, formed pairs of binary oppositions in which one member of the pair is privileged, thus freezing the play of the system, whilst marginalising the other member of the pair.

Derrida goes on to analyse Claude Levi-Strauss' mythological studies and unearths the weaknesses of the epistemological quest for the unity of a structure.

Structuralism, as Derrida maintains, has become a critique of itself. In his work, *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964, 1996), Levi-Strauss privileges the Bororo myth, a 'reference myth' which he places at the centre of the structure of his mythology. It is not the analysis of the myths as such that is important, but the methodology of analysis, that is, the basic principles of a structural approach to the myths and mythology in general. The idea, basically, is that myths cannot be understood in isolation, but as parts of a system. Derrida, however, questions why this myth is privileged over other myths and surmises that this myth was not preferred by Strauss because it stands out from other myths, but because it holds an irregular position within a group of myths. In this case, there exists no valid reason for choosing one centre over another because any choice that is made will ultimately be arbitrary (357–360). Furthermore, Derrida also shows how the myth itself is decentralised in terms of its origin, which means that it cannot have a pure centre, nor can it be a centre in and of itself. In this sense, structural discourse on myths must itself be *mythomorphic* (363). What Levi-Strauss aims to do in his work is to gauge the underlying structure of the myth, in this case, the 'grammar', in order to understand the language that is the myth. In this sense, a primary code would provide substance, that is, the substance of language, while the secondary code are the myths and the tertiary code (that of critical discourse) allows for the translatability of myths. But this meant that the discourse in Levi-Strauss' work is itself a myth, the myth of mythology. And as long as myths are anonymous, so too is this discourse, the function of which 'makes the philosophical or epistemological requirement of a centre appear as mythological, that is to say, a historical illusion' (Derrida 1978, 363).

From these arguments Derrida concludes that there exist two kinds of interpretation. One is nostalgic for a sign which is free from free-play, one which 'dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play' (369). The other kind of interpretation is 'no longer a turn toward the origin, affirms man and tried to pass beyond Man and Humanism' (369). Though it may seem like Derrida urges us to choose the latter form of interpretation, that is, the one which affirms the free-play of meaning, he maintains that one cannot simply choose between two interpretations of interpretation. This is because, according to him, there exists no authoritative centre

which validates our choice. The consequences which stem from this are impossible to predict; however, we must strive to not be among those who 'turn their eyes away when faced by as yet an unnameable which is proclaiming itself' (370). Due to the scope and limitations of this paper, I shall not be delving deeper into Derrida's analysis of Levi-Strauss' work. However, I believe that this section provides the reader with the brief understanding required to move on to the next sections of the paper.

### **Between Text and Truth**

The word for 'text' in Latin is *texere*, which stands for the verb, 'to weave' and is cognate with *techne* in Greek (art or craft). The word 'text' still holds that meaning. Evidently, the use of 'text' to describe a passage or book is possible by way of referring to the action of weaving. This is arguably because it is appropriate to think about the way in which a text or book is 'put together', by how writing is woven into a text by the fabric of language. But what about the 'true' reading of the text? In a post-truth society, should the educator's job be to 'find' Truth? I argue not.

The text, as it has been thought of throughout history, is a vehicle for meaning. The word 'text' can have a twofold sense. In the *narrow sense*, one can consider the text as Ricoeur does, as 'discourse as writing' (1975, 66). This is the most popular view of text: it is the nature of the text to become discourse, which raises fundamental hermeneutical questions regarding the text. In the *broad sense*, we can think about the text as referring to everything which offers itself to interpretation (Byrne, 1990). But language opposes the text to all the things it represents, that is, the World, God, Consciousness, the Real and so on. So, is the best kind of text that one which gives accurate accounts of such things?

Texts do not convey the 'right' or 'true' impression, which is misleading. There is, therefore, a rhetorical fortification between the 'truth' and the text. History has taught us that the text is on the outside, and the 'truth' of the text is hidden away, somewhere on the inside. But according to the same logic, the 'truth' of the text is hidden on the inside because it lies outside the text, far from being anywhere close to the text. One is therefore faced with a history-laden prejudice, bound by the empirical (text) and the transcendental (truth) (Derrida, 1972, 2016).

Deconstruction, therefore, deals with the text in a way that prompts questions about the limits and borders of the text. The meaning of a text is defined by its borders, by opposing it to other concepts, that is, definition through difference. So deconstruction asks: 'what are the borders, and why do they exist?' Indeed, this is precisely what Derrida does in his work, 'Living on/Borderlines' (1979). It may, therefore, be argued that one fails to read text if they make rash decisions or generalisations about what the text is about or what it means. We must abandon our logocentric yearning for the presence of meaning and instead be patient enough to read the text slowly and carefully. This is what Kafka maintains in one of his great aphorisms: 'All human errors are impatience, a premature breaking-off of methodical procedure, an apparent fencing in of what is apparently at issue' (Kafka, 1994, 3).

Like all of Derrida's terms, deconstruction occupies two contradictory meanings: destruction/(re)construction. As has been shown in the previous section of this paper, the projects of enlightenment metaphysics—namely the epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, and other institutions and structures—need to be de-sedimented in order to expose their underlying assumptions and contradictory logic. But deconstruction must also (re)construct. This (re)construction, however, cannot erect 'ideal' or 'pure' structures. In this sense, deconstruction is the undoing, and desedimenting of structures, which in a certain sense is more historical than the structuralist movement it called into question (Derrida, 1976, 2016, lxxviii). Rather than destroying structure, it is necessary to understand how the 'ensemble' was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end. Deconstruction, therefore, names the conditions according to which institutions are constituted in order to understand the context within which they were built. For Derrida, this desedimenting and decentring, particularly of the logos, is an affirmation. As he maintains in 'Ellipsis': 'Why would one mourn for the centre? Is not the centre, the absence of play and difference, another name for death?' (1978, 297).

It is also at the end of 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (1978) that Derrida voices his concern about an 'affirmation [that] determines the noncentre otherwise than as loss of the centre' (292). Deconstruction, then, does not set out to break down institutions in order to erect others in its place.

Rather, it persistently opens up institutions to their own alterity which makes the structure within the institution change and adapt. In this sense of alterity, a non-concept can act against the sedimenting of dogmatic thought. As I attempt to bring deconstruction to the fore of educational discourse, I wish to note that what deconstruction has to offer is not a set of formulas, rules or regulations which should be applied to education, but rather a perspective, a rethinking of education, whilst analysing the hidden and underlying assumptions in the ethical, the political or the juridical. Cahen (2001) maintains that if one acknowledges the radically affirmative nature of deconstruction, then, the question of deconstruction is also the question of education.

### **On Deconstruction and its Others**

In this section, I will be focusing on the relationship between deconstruction and the topics of religion, the other, racism and justice in the context of education. There are, of course, a plethora of others that can be discussed; but I have specifically chosen these topics because I believe that post-truth propaganda seeks to interfere with one's moral thinking and, as such, one should not only know how to refute fake news and discern whether sources are reliable, but also attempt to remedy the damage that has been made.

Derrida's text helps us tackle recurring topics in education that are still very relevant today—topics which have been misconstrued through post-truth politics. One of these is religion. Whether it is Allah, Yahweh or Christ, God can never be completely represented by imperfect human beings. We live in an age in which a multitude of conflicts are being shaped by people who claim that God is on their side. From a Derridean perspective, it may be argued that, as the world's main religions claim to be built upon unshakeable foundations, they do not always provide us with clear meaning and certainty (Taylor, 2004). Following this argument, it may be said that such religious traditions cast further doubt, and call security and certainty into question. As we become more connected, not only are conservatism and religious fundamentalism around the world becoming more manifest, but also the number of misconceptions about what religion does and for what it stands. It is therefore important to educate our



students about what religion is and how it means, but also how to criticise and question it. It is important to note that questioning one's beliefs does not mean abandoning them. Rather, it means becoming more thorough and rigorous in one's beliefs.

Furthermore, to privilege one religion and to teach one, exclusively, would mean to marginalise all others. I am not saying that schools of faith should not teach their religion of practice in favour of others, but rather that one should be taught other religions alongside the main religion of practice. In this sense, students get a more well-rounded and holistic perspective of what religion is as a concept. This may also help clear up several misconceptions and inconsistent or fallacious arguments brought about by post-truth propaganda. Furthermore, as our classes become increasingly multicultural, there is a growing demand for such a practice. It is, therefore, our responsibility to create classrooms in which we continuously seek to create an environment within which students can respect each *other*, even if they do not agree with them.

In this sense, respect for the other means to respect the other in their otherness. Encountering the other opens us to new experiences and perspectives about the world and, as such, we must always strive to be hospitable towards the other. Integration does not equal assimilation, so that, when guest meets host, it is important that neither are totalized, and neither lose their identity. In this sense, it is imperative for us to safeguard both identities, whilst simultaneously creating a space within which the other and I can integrate and develop a common culture. In the context of globalization, one of the responsibilities of a deconstructivist educator is to recognise that they (as well as the curriculum) should go beyond Eurocentrism. As Egea-Kuhene maintains, 'While upholding the memory of a philosophical heritage essentially Euro-Christian (Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian and Islamic, or Mediterranean/Central European, or Greco-Roman-Arab/Germanic), it is necessary to both recognise its origins, and go beyond its limits' (2004, 27). It is important to note that this should not be done for the sake of difference, but for the appreciation and understanding of perspectives which we may, perhaps inadvertently, silenced.

Another recurring theme in education, and certainly one that has been magnified due to fake news, is racism. When anti-racism is taught, it must never be the

end of teaching for anti-racism. It cannot be codified into a piece of the curriculum as it is taught. Anti-racism must, therefore, become the starting point for a pedagogical investigation into racism. So, if a student has been educated to be against racism, they must never think that there exists some identifiable thing that racism is (Bingham, 2008). This is not to say that the student should not identify it as a concept, but rather, that they understand that the binary oppositions of black and white are nothing more than a social construction. There exists no foundation for privileging one over the other, for if it were the case, how white would one have to be, in order to be white? And consequently, how black must one have to be, in order to be classified as black? This is just the beginning. Bingham asserts that teaching in this deconstructive sense must include education about combating injustice. If my student 'learns' to combat racism, then they must commit themselves to the long-term project of combating racism (30). So, just as the educator must offer their interpretation of racism, so too must the pupils learn to make interpretations about what racism is. What Derrida maintains about critical pedagogy is that there exists no pure critical pedagogy unless the student is aware that they are embroiled within a society which needs interpretation. As Bingham writes:

I must say to myself: 'Alright, I have learned a classroom way, if not perhaps my teacher's own idiosyncratic way, of fighting social power. Now, I have my own interpretations to make. From now on, I will put my own stamp on what social power may or may not be. Now, I must foster my own way of creating social change. For, I now know that there is no social power that is simply "there", that can be pointed to in some non-obtrusive way. When I identify oppression in the future, I will have the responsibility of knowing that such an identification is my own interpretation' (Bingham, 2008, 30).

My education as a rigorously-minded pupil must begin over and over. In other words, I must constantly re-assess my own values, interpretations and principles. My 'education' must not end after the professor delivers their lecture. My constant re-assessment must be ceaseless, for if it stops then I will be stagnant as I, by default, will end up holding on to (and privilege) a new centre. In a sense, this holds true for educators with regard to the way they teach their subjects. The university system often

calls upon educators to act as if they were beginners—as Bingham argues, educational practice at all levels has a ‘certain mandate of erasure’ (2008, 19). In this sense, one may think of the philosophy professor who must teach Platonic philosophy to new students of philosophy or the physics teacher who must teach first-year physics as though quantum mechanics did not exist. This of course also goes for the way one teaches. For a professor to be a better teacher, they must constantly review the way they teach. This does not necessarily mean that they will understand the material any better. It means that hopefully, with time they will convey what they teach in better ways for the benefit of their students.

In this context, one can also discuss the relationship between deconstruction and justice in educational discourse. Justice, as Derrida (1992) maintains, is always directed towards the other, it is a relation to the other. Justice, however, cannot be spoken about *directly* by saying ‘this is just’, because to do so would mean to betray the concept. In this sense, declaring an action to be just dismisses the possibility for the other to voice whether justice has been rendered. If justice concerns itself with the other as other, in their otherness, then by definition we can neither totalize nor foresee, because if justice addresses itself to the very singularity of the other, then one is under the obligation to keep the possibility of the in-coming of the other open. It may therefore be argued that we can never really decide on what Justice *is* out of concern and consideration for the otherness of the other. More than ever, we are living in times when we are surrounded by different tongues and voices. It is in this sense that justice is denied if one does not address one’s self to every individual voice. As Derrida declares: ‘Deconstruction is, in itself, a positive response to an alterity which necessarily calls, summons or motivates it. Deconstruction is, therefore, a vocation — “a response to a call”’ (1984, 118).

In terms of justice, deconstruction is heavily concerned with the question of alterity, the question regarding the other, so the ethico-political horizon of deconstruction can be portrayed as a concern for the other (Biesta, 2001). For Derrida, we can further our understanding of the other through our encounter with the otherness of the other. This experience though is always a particular one and, in this regard, must not be generalised into a recognisable language of ethics. There is,

however, a very tense dynamic at play between the experience of the other and the universality of language. In this regard, the relationship between the other and a universal language is a central theme in education. A tangible example of this relationship is put forward by Edgoose (2001). In his essay, *Just decide! Derrida and the Ethical Aporias of Education*, he describes a situation in which a difficult student in their most challenging class, who had not previously responded to the educator's teaching, suddenly makes a lot of effort and progress in their assignments. The student's grades, however, are not high enough to pass the module. Should the educator offer the student a deal whereby the student would pass if they continued to show a significant amount of progress in their work? Would it be 'ethical' or 'just' to make this offer? Should the educator bend the rules, or should he or she stick to their grading rubric and not offer the deal? What would it mean to be a just educator?

The educator could turn to an educational ethics text for guidance, in which case he might conclude that an ethics of care might probably lead him to offer the deal and deontology might not, but which one is correct? The educator is caught between what policy dictates and the uniqueness of the situation. Nevertheless, one *has* to decide, 'but a just decision is impossible – this very mad impossibility makes justice possible... Justice comes, then, from the failure of fluency, from an ethical hesitation in which the said reveals its Saying' (2001, 129). As Kierkegaard knew well, between the universal and the particular, one must leap. Derrida's analysis of justice does not oppose the attention that one must give to the particular other, nor does it dismiss a necessity for the universal in the pursuit of justice. From a Derridean perspective, it may be argued that an educator is just if he or she constantly negotiates between his or her responsibility towards many others, and the need to be intelligible as an educator in a bureaucracy (130). The educator must negotiate between the curricular requirements set by their educational authorities, whilst simultaneously being the fair educator that the students, parents and colleagues expect him or her to be.

As Edgoose argues, such a negotiation exposes the educator beyond ethics in a traditional sense as deconstruction does not provide an ethical calculus which must be followed as a guide to justice. Neither justice-based ethical theories nor caring-based theories which concern the particular shall suffice. In this sense, Derrida

highlights the unstable ways in which these approaches coexist in a *caring justice* (131). In a world which is dealing with the highest levels of displaced people since World War Two, today's classrooms are more diverse, and it is because of this that a deconstructivist perspective to education is important. Of course, this does not guarantee that educators will always make the right choice, or that they will always be just. It does, however, prohibit the educator from being complacent and simply doing as policy dictates. Furthermore, deconstructivist education highlights the importance of encountering the other, of being sensitive to the other's needs, and of constantly negotiating in terms of what counts as 'just' for each individual he or she encounters.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have explored how Derrida's 'concept' of deconstruction is at work in recurring topics in education such as religion, the other, racism and justice in order to argue for how such a perspective can help us move away from our post-truth problem. It has also been shown that, despite harsh criticism, deconstruction is neither nihilistic nor relativistic. Rather, it offers a playful strategy of interpretation that allows for the complexity and heterogeneity of reality, one which does not endorse rejection of truth but 'Truth'. Deconstruction does not guarantee that one will always 'do the right thing'. At the limits and heart of deconstruction lie hesitation and confusion, but it is the same hesitation and confusion which make us question our values and principles. It is therefore important that, in a post-truth world, educators are sensitive to the many others whom they are confronted with daily. I have argued that educators must go beyond teaching students about how to refute fake news by incorporating the encouragement of activism and critical analysis against the many misconceptions propagated by such news. In these tumultuous times, it is also imperative to recognise the insurmountable limitations and inherent contradictions within the norms that govern our actions. This recognition may, in turn, contribute to keeping one's norms open to constant questioning and assessment, as '[there] can be no ethical action without critical reflection' (Taylor, 2004).

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## An Gúm's Censorship of *Makers of Europe*

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**Teresa Cassin**

The book publisher, An Gúm, was established in 1926 as part of the Department of Education of the Irish Free State to provide reading matter for Irish language learners and the Irish-speaking public. It was clear at the time of its establishment that there had been very little original writing made available in the Irish language in the previous years; therefore, An Gúm undertook an ambitious scheme of translation. During the 1930s alone, more than 250 translations from European languages were published; including both textbooks and general literature. Gradually, as more creative writers came forward writing original literature, the need for translations became less acute and, from 1940 on, less and less translations of literary titles were undertaken ('An Gúm: Nóta Eolais', 2018).

The An Gúm archive (c. 1922–c. 1999) is held in the National Archives of Ireland; my research focuses on the files that discuss translations in the period between 1926 and 1966. During this period, the Irish government were still making decisions about the place the Irish language should hold in the newly formed state. I investigate these decisions in the context of the work of An Gúm. The Irish Free State was established in 1922, four years before An Gúm. In the early years of political independence, the Irish government, which included An Gúm, tried to emphasise the differences between the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom. Among the key differences were the Irish language and Catholicism; as Ronan Fanning noted: 'The Irish language, like the Catholic religion, was a badge of identity which set apart what Ireland had been in the United Kingdom from what it should be after independence' (1983, 81). In this paper, I discuss the decisions that were made with regard to censorship in the context of the history textbook, *Makers of Europe* (1923). I analyse these decisions in the context of censorship in 1930s Ireland and assess An Gúm's censorship in the translation process.

The Irish Free State Executive Council felt that the rejection of foreign values and the implementation of censorship was necessary to strengthen the nation, which



they hoped would one day become a republic (Nic an Bhaird, 2012, 39). The Irish translation of *Makers of Europe, Taoisigh Eorpa*, was published in 1933. In this version, passages in which critics of the Catholic Church were praised, and passages in which Catholics were portrayed in a negative light, were omitted from the published translation. As we shall soon see, sentences that commended the work of Martin Luther and passages that described the more gruesome details of massacres carried out by Catholics, were not translated (Wilmot-Buxton, 1923, 148–9 and 163). The translation process was initiated by then Publications Officer of An Gúm, Seán Mac Lellan, who asked Micheál Ó Siochfhradha, a school inspector, if he would translate a history book into Irish for use in secondary schools (1929). Mac Lellan asked him to suggest a book that would be suitable. Ó Siochfhradha disliked a number of history books because of their bias in favour of certain religions and countries (1929), but found little fault with *Makers of Europe*, which was written by the English author, Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton. However, he did recommend that An Gúm seek a second opinion from at least one other reader with regard to the book's suitability for translation before he began the work (1929). There is nothing in the *Makers of Europe* file in the National Archives (A0053) to suggest that An Gúm consulted any other reader at this point. It was unfortunate that An Gúm did not heed the translator's advice, because questions were raised about the suitability of the text after the translation was finished.<sup>1</sup>

The translator stated that he had finished his translation in September 1930, and it was Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha, the editor of the book, who brought attention to the suitability of the original text for translation in January 1931. He questioned whether secondary schools in Ireland would be satisfied with the text's account of the Reformation, as it appeared more sympathetic to Protestants than Catholics (1931). Ó Siochfhradha drew attention to specific pages of the book (Wilmot-Buxton, 1923). On page 144, for example, 'Papal Despotism' is mentioned and is to be seen in the original *Taoisigh Eorpa* translation manuscript in the National Archives, but is not included in the published translation (Wilmot-Buxton, 1933). It is stated on the same page of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha, the editor of the book, brought attention to the suitability of the original text for translation in a memorandum to Seán Mac Lellan on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1931 (ref NA).

original book and in the manuscript that the Church had 'fallen away from its first paths' and 'accumulated the dust and cobwebs of time' (1933). However, these statements are not included in the published translation either.

For his part, the Editor did not find the account of the reformation offensive; in fact, he felt that there was very little wrong with it (1931). Mac Lellan noted that the English version of the text was 'in use in a number of Catholic Secondary Schools', pointing out that the controversial pieces were 'pro-protestant, but hardly in any opinion, anti-Catholic' (1931). Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh, the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education, told the Secretary of the Department, Seosamh Ó Néill, that he did not believe the text was anti-Catholic either: 'This book certainly seems to be written from a Protestant view-point – that is, by a Protestant and for Protestants – though not in a bigoted way, as far as I have been able to see' (1931a). The Editor felt that people were becoming sensitive about matters such as these at the time, and Mac Lellan suggested they ensure that the translator had not 'accentuated (but rather the reverse) any bias which the author may have shown' in dealing with matters which had been subjects of religious controversy (1931). Ó Dubhthaigh agreed with him: 'As the Irish version is a translation, and published professionally as such, I don't think we can make any material alteration in the sense of oppressing of the original, except to the limited extent which Mr. McLellan suggests' (1931a). It is clear that external pressures had a substantial effect on the actions of An Gúm, as although the Editor, the Publications Officer, and the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education did not agree that the controversial pieces of the original text were anti-Catholic, the Editor feared that the public would not be happy about them (1931), and as a consequence, the Deputy Secretary felt compelled to consult the clergy (1931b).

The book was given to Father Lambert McKenna, an experienced teacher and Irish language lexicographer, and he was the first to recommend that An Gúm should make substantial changes to the meaning of the original text. In his opinion, the book should never have been chosen for translation; in fact, he felt he could not advise An Gúm to publish the text: 'I should not like to take the responsibility of approving the book. Indeed I cannot approve it – though I recognise that it is wonderfully fair for a Protestant writer. I would suggest leaving the decision to Fr. Murphy who represents

the Archbishop' (1931). At this stage, many readers of the book presumed that the author, Ethel Mary Wilmot-Buxton, was a Protestant; however, it is stated in another of her books, *A Catholic History of Great Britain*, that she was a Catholic: 'It is, in particular, satisfactory that this History should have been written by a Catholic...Miss Wilmot-Buxton, writing about Catholic times, can look through Catholic eyes and understand the evidence' (Martindale, 1921, vi). The presumption that the author was a Protestant shows how sensitive the Department of Education staff and the clergy were to any criticism of the Catholic religion.

The original text was sent to Father Murphy, who signed his name in An Gúm correspondence as Micheál Ó Murchadha (1931d). As already mentioned, the original, English-language text was used in a number of Catholic Secondary Schools (Mac Lellan, 1931). While acknowledging this, Father Ó Murchadha insisted that it would not be right to publish the Irish translation under the name of An Gúm without making substantial changes to the text. He believed that more changes to eliminate the prejudice towards Catholics were necessary, and that it would only then be a good history book for Irish speakers (1931). This makes it clear that Father Ó Murchadha was not troubled by the fact that the English version of the text was used in Irish secondary schools, but that he also thought it necessary to censor the Irish version before it was suitable for schools.

Father Ó Murchadha found fault with specific pages of the text (1931). For example, he drew attention to pages 148–9 of the original book, in which the work of Martin Luther is praised in the following detail:

He had done a great work in calling men's attention to the evils existing within the Church, and had hurried on a movement of reform, which it is quite certain was bound to come within the next few years. The popes still ruled in Rome, but their power was very much lessened, and as the new doctrines spread to other kingdoms, their sovereigns, each in turn, became, in more or less degree, independent of their authority. But, except in England, it took many long years of fighting and despair before the reformed Faith was allowed to exist in the different countries. To throw off a galling chain of authority was one thing: to allow one's subjects to be divided upon a matter which involved much beside religion, was quite another (Wilmot-Buxton, 1923, 148–9).

Although a translation of this piece is available in the *Taoisigh Eorpa* manuscript in the National Archives, it does not appear in the published translation. Therefore, it is not expressed in the Irish-language publication that Luther, a critic of the Catholic Church, did great work in drawing attention to the problems within the Church and accelerated the reform movement. Likewise, the text does not mention that the power of the Popes in Rome was lessened and that leaders became more independent of their authority, nor that religion was not the only reason for the conflict (Wilmot-Buxton, 1933).

Father Ó Murchadha also objected to page 163 of the original text, in which a Catholic massacre of Protestants is described as follows: 'One of their little towns was given up on condition that their lives were spared. The promise was given, but the soldiers decided that they need not keep faith with heretics. The men were massacred, the women shut up in a barn and burnt' (Wilmot-Buxton, 1923). Again, the translation of this piece is to be seen in the *Taoisigh Eorpa* manuscript, but it is excluded in the Irish publication (Wilmot-Buxton, 1933). One would imagine that it was omitted because it portrays Catholics in a negative light. On the same page, these Protestant people are described as 'harmless', which was translated in the *Taoisigh Eorpa* manuscript, but not the final publication.

After receiving Father McKenna's and Father Murphy's response, the Deputy Secretary advised that the translation be published as a work of general literature and not as a school textbook. With this arrangement, An Gúm would not be obliged to print the *imprimatur* of the Department of Education at the start of the translation, yet it would still be available to schools. If printed as a school textbook, however, this *imprimatur* would be required to stipulate that the Department of Education deemed the book suitable for secondary school students (1931c). This response is similar to the Department's reaction to the case of *Fánaí*, one of the few known examples of An Gúm censorship. This original work by Seán Óg Ó Caomhánaigh was published in 1927. After receiving complaints from the clergy about a love-scene in the book, An Gúm recalled the unsold copies, and published it again in 1928 with the controversial sections omitted (Ó Brosnacháin, 2001, 38). The *imprimatur* is to be seen on the first publication (Ó Caomhánaigh, 1927), but has been removed from the second (Ó Caomhánaigh, 1928).

As a result of the changes that the translator was advised to make to *Taoisigh Eorpa*, he had to wait almost a year to receive the second half of his payment for the work.<sup>2</sup> When he submitted the amended translation, he remarked that he had been reluctant to make the changes as the Irish version was to be published as a translation (1931). When this Irish translation did appear, it did not make any attempt to acknowledge that pieces of the original text had been omitted (Wilmot-Buxton, 1933). In general, the An Gúm staff made an effort to carry out censorship behind closed doors. As León Ó Broin, a civil servant, writer, and An Gúm employee, explains: ‘We discovered early in the proceedings that An Gúm had to have a self-imposed censorship. After all, we were part of a government department subsidised from public funds...None of our trouble became public’ (1986, 67–8). In 1929, the *Censorship of Publications Act*, enacted provisions for the prohibition of the sale and distribution of ‘unwholesome literature’ (Saorstát Éireann, 1929). No Irish-language book was placed on *The Register of Prohibited Publications, 1929–1967*; however, Irish language books were censored. The only difference was that Irish-language books were not censored officially, nor were these instances of censorship made public (Nic an Bhaird, 2012, 57).

Few publishers were able to compete with An Gúm in the Irish book market until the 1940s, when a book club, An Club Leabhar, was established, which in turn provided a steady demand for Irish books. In 1945, An Gúm’s largest competitor, Sáirséal agus Dill, was established; this company was strongly opposed to the censorship practices of An Gúm.<sup>3</sup> It was not part of the Department of Education, and was therefore not under the same pressure to censor texts. An Gúm was under the influence of those who saw translation as a filter, a way of cleansing texts of foreign impurities before Irish speakers read them. Policing translation was in this way only

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<sup>2</sup> Micheál Ó Siochfhradha stated that he had finished the translation in a letter to Seán Mac Lellan on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1930, and he was not given the second half of his payment until the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1931 (ref NA).

<sup>3</sup> However, Sáirséal agus Dill were also put under pressure to censor one book; *Maraíodh Seán Sabhat Aréir*. They published this book in 1964 with sections omitted, so that the Club Leabhar would accept it. In the end the company published one version of the book for the Club Leabhar, in which there was a blank space in place of the pieces that were omitted, and another version which they placed on sale in shops (Ó hÁinle, 2005, 12–14).

one element of a larger ideological project aimed at using Irish to create a more conservative national culture (1996, 160). In the case of *Makers of Europe*, the Irish translation was used to create a more Catholic version of a text. In Father Ó Murchadha's opinion, a Protestant viewpoint was shown too clearly in the text, and this censorship was an effort to prevent the Irish-speaking public from reading, and the government from publishing, what were perceived as the strongest aspects of a Protestant opinion (1931). The government would not publish anything which expressed a negative attitude towards the Catholic Church.

While there are a few known examples of An Gúm's censorship of original works,<sup>4</sup> more research must be carried out to achieve an understanding of An Gúm's use of the process of translation to censor texts. The case of *Makers of Europe* is particularly egregious because the English version of the text was already in use in Irish secondary schools. It is clear from this case that An Gúm would not translate details that damaged the Executive Council's preferred image of a nationalistic and Catholic Ireland, even if they were already available in English. As no Irish-language book was placed on *The Register of Prohibited Publications, 1929–1967*, because they were not officially censored, deeper research is required to identify what other books were edited in the process of translation into Irish. Further analysis of original books, translations and An Gúm files must be undertaken to reveal the comprehensive history of the censorship of Irish texts during this period.

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## William Burroughs's *The Electronic Revolution*: The Evolution of the Cut-Up Technique as a Political Weapon

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Alan Carmody

In a letter to Allen Ginsberg sent in 1955, William Burroughs claims that his novel *Naked Lunch* sketches 'the sick soul, sick unto death, of the atomic age' (Burroughs, 1994b, 255). In response to the discontent of the 'atomic age' Burroughs forges his own aesthetic arsenal that he will later claim supersedes the power of nuclear weapons. By using literature as a means to 'change fact' (Burroughs, 2010, 55), alter consciousness and 'make things happen' (Burroughs, 1994a, 32), Burroughs will, in 1970, come to realise techniques for attacking political opponents, creating 'fake news' and altering the course of the Cold War (Burroughs, 2005, 17). William Burroughs moves from forging aesthetic techniques aimed at carving out a niche for authentic subjectivity in the modern age to suggesting guerrilla methods for mass media control.

Many of Burroughs's generation grew up in the shadow of the bomb, but few could claim that they shared their *alma mater* with the nuclear weapon. In his youth, William Burroughs attended an expensive, private 'ranch' school in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Los Alamos would later play host to an even more famous guest: J. Robert Oppenheimer. It was here that Oppenheimer and his colleagues established the Manhattan Project, which developed the first atomic bomb. Of this Burroughs wrote: 'It seemed so right somehow' (qtd. in Miles, 2015, 133). Anxiety surrounding the potential for nuclear annihilation informs many works of the Beat Generation, including Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*. Famously, Gregory Corso's poem 'Bomb' is formatted to resemble the mushroom cloud that follows a nuclear explosion. Burroughs's mid-twentieth-century works track growing concerns over the proliferation of nuclear weapons while also focusing on the alternative means of engagement taking place between the vying superpowers. For instance, *Queer* articulates anxieties regarding the pursuit of mind control techniques by both the Soviet Union and the US. Here Burroughs discusses the potential of the powerful hallucinogenic drug 'yage' as a means to mind control: 'Automatic obedience, synthetic schizophrenia, mass-

produced to order. That is the Russian dream, and America is not far behind' (Burroughs, 2010, 81).

The cut-up technique can be imagined as an aesthetic approximation of the hallucinogenic intoxication experienced with drugs like 'yage' or LSD. As Burroughs states, '[the] use of consciousness-expanding drugs could show the way to obtain the useful aspects of hallucinogenic experience, without any chemical agent. Anything that can be done chemically can be done in other ways, with sufficient knowledge of the mechanisms involved' (Burroughs and Odier, 2008, 131). Burroughs's contradictory view of hallucinogenic drugs – as both 'consciousness-expanding drugs' and potential agents of mind control – informs his conception of the cut-up technique, which was initially viewed as an agent of liberation and only later, in *The Electronic Revolution*, regarded as a means towards mass control. Such contradictions remain fundamental to Burroughs's use of the cut-up technique and his attitude to writing more generally, where 'the written word was literally a virus' (Burroughs, 2005, 5) but also with the author viewing 'writing as inoculation' (Burroughs, 2010, 128). Writing, drugs, technology, weapons and the cut-up technique are, in Burroughs's view, means to both liberation and control. Burroughs's support for American citizens' right to possess firearms is emblematic of his belief that all sources of power should be freely available to the general populace. In *The Electronic Revolution* the 'cut-up technique' is suggested as a weapon, freely available, that is perhaps more effective than nuclear weapons. While Burroughs espouses explicit anti-democratic sentiment,<sup>1</sup> his writing, even at its most antagonistic, functions to provide the reader with tools to survive and prosper in the modern era.

*The Electronic Revolution* aims to situate the battleground for geo-political dominance in the consciousness of the individual. This essay explains the development of the cut-up technique, assessing its use across Burroughs's career. It then analyses Burroughs's *The Electronic Revolution*: a text that explains how 'the cut-up technique' can be applied outside the realm of literary production and used as a psychological and political weapon to hack the mass media. The article will examine Burroughs's

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<sup>1</sup> 'Democracy is cancerous and bureaus are its cancer' (Burroughs, 1966, 134).

‘cut-up technique’ as both a creative and political tool. Unlike representative artforms, the ‘cut-up’ does not describe things that have happened but is designed to make things happen. The history of Burroughs’s adoption of the cut-up method shows how his writing aims to blur the lines that separate fact from fiction, magic from technology and aesthetics from politics. The radical techniques described in *The Electronic Revolution* are markedly similar to those used by individuals and groups who exploited social media platforms and their data-rich, algorithm dependent architecture, helping to cause the biggest political upsets of the twenty-first century. Burroughs and his cut-up technique foreground the malleable nature of reality. These aesthetic theories and practices, when adapted to social media platforms have the potential to alter the course of history, just as Burroughs envisioned.

The ‘cut-up technique’, used by William Burroughs and a number of his Beat generation peers such as Gregory Corso, Brion Gysin and Sinclair Beiles, primarily involves cutting up one or more printed texts and recombining these textual fragments to form new texts. As Burroughs explains: ‘[The] cut-up method consists of cutting up pages of text and re-arranging them in montage combinations’ (Burroughs, 1985, 61). Below is an example of one of Burroughs’s first cut-up texts:

There seemed little doubt, however, that Mr Eisenhower said ‘I weigh 56 pounds less than a man’, flushed and nodded curtly. Asked whether he had had a fair trial he looks inevitable and publishes: ‘My sex was an advantage.’ He boasted of a long string of past crimes high-lighted by a total eclipse of however stood in his path when he re-did her apartment (Burroughs, 1980, 7–8).

This text is largely produced from cut-up newspaper articles, combining a number of unrelated stories into one disjointed text. Burroughs argues that anyone who reads a newspaper does this already – unconsciously cutting across columns into other articles and news stories – but normative modes of cognition filter out these spontaneous ‘cut-up’ readings (Burroughs and Gyson, 1978, 4–5). Normative modes of cognitive behaviour censor the random and diffuse nature of everyday experience in order to make sense of the world. The cut-up technique aims to focus attention on the raw, unformatted data of experience prior to its ordering by cognition. Burroughs’s goal is to foreground the creativity of consciousness. For Burroughs, if consciousness

creates reality then 'Nothing is true [and everything] is permitted' and, therefore it is possible to reconceptualise and augment our realities (Burroughs and Ginsberg, 1963, 60).

In his early 'cut-ups' Burroughs is already using the technique on media sources in order to attack the political status quo and the conservative modes of consciousness that sustain it. Burroughs states that '[the] word of course is one of the most powerful instruments of control as exercised by the newspaper and images as well, there are both words and images in newspapers... Now if you start cutting these up and rearranging them you are breaking down the control system' (Burroughs and Odier, 2008, 41). As suggested here, 'the cut-up technique' can be applied to other mediums, such as photography, audio tape and film reels – indeed, the technique has its origins in the visual arts and techniques such as collage. While the 'cut-up technique' is primarily associated with Burroughs, it was discovered<sup>2</sup> by Brion Gysin at the "Beat Hotel" at 9 Rue Gît-le-Cœur in the Latin quarter of Paris' in 1959 (Miles, 2015, 898–906). Describing the 'cut-up technique', Burroughs writes that 'in 1959 Brion Gysin said that writing is fifty years behind painting and applied the montage technique to writing – a technique which had been used in painting for fifty years' (Burroughs, 1985, 61). Burroughs first sought to directly apply this visual arts technique to the medium of literary writing with various degrees of success.

The 'cut-up technique' is an aleatory method that introduces random factors into literary composition, upsetting the grammatical, spatial and temporal structures of writing. The creator of the 'cut-up' cannot foresee the outcome of her artistic endeavour and thereby becomes the audience for her own creation. The resulting message of the 'cut-up' can be interpreted psychologically, as a report from the unconscious, or parapsychologically, as a form of telepathic communication, as information from the future or a communiqué from an occult realm. As a literary technique, the cut-up simultaneously demands and denies interpretation and comprehension. Oliver Harris writes that 'the cut-up process is future-oriented, in the

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<sup>2</sup> Or rediscovered, as a variation of the 'cut-up' method had been used by Tristan Tzara in the 1920s.

sense that cutting up pre-existent texts reverses the sequence that is axiomatic to mimesis, so that the sign creates its referent; production replaces reproduction, and meaning becomes contingent, a coded message awaiting the “intersection point” that will decipher it’ (Harris, 2004, 178). The original aim of Burroughs and his fellow early adopters of ‘the cut-up method’ was to disrupt common linguistic patterns as a means of breaking out of psychological, cultural and ideological control which they perceived as being built into language. This is what Burroughs describes as ‘the word virus’:

The Word is literally a virus, and it has not been recognised as such because it has achieved a state of relatively stable symbiosis with its human host... But the Word clearly bears the single identifying feature of virus: it is an organism with no internal function other than to replicate itself (Burroughs, 1985, 47).

Burroughs’s position here is similar to Adorno’s, who states, ‘[words]... once uttered, take on a life of their own, bringing woe on anyone who goes near them. They form a zone of paranoiac infection’ (Adorno, 2010, 138). In Adorno’s estimation words become infectious ‘[in] an all-embracing system [where] conversation becomes ventriloquism’ (137). Language in such a society structures it to the point where dissent becomes ungrammatical and therefore unthinkable. Burroughs uses the ‘cut-up technique’ to sabotage this linguistic hegemony and break out of the semantic cocoon of modern society: what Burroughs calls the ‘reality film’ (Burroughs, 1964, 15). The ‘cut-up’ succeeds by challenging the mainstream modes of cognition that create ‘reality’.

Burroughs also believes that ‘cut-up’ texts accurately reflect how the mind functions: ‘consciousness is a cut-up’ (Burroughs, 1985, 61). Furthermore, for Burroughs the cut-up is a more faithful representation of phenomenal experience. The ‘cut-up’:

would be actually closer to the facts of perception than would, say, a sequential narrative. For example, you walk down the street. You see it and you put it on canvas. That's what they did first. But that's not how you really see it or remember it. It's more jumbled. There are the street signs and the vendors and the houses and people walking. You don't see them like a photograph. You look at diverse images. Painting it

that way is montage. I merely applied it to writing. So there's nothing very new there (qtd. in Kramer, 1981, 96).

Like the stream of consciousness technique employed by authors such as James Joyce, the 'cut-up' method attempts to more accurately reflect consciousness and reality. However, for Burroughs the 'cut-up' not only reflects these but has the ability to predict future events:

I've made many cut-ups and then later recognized that the cut-up referred to something that I read later in a newspaper or in a book, or something that happened... Perhaps events are pre-written and pre-recorded and when you cut word lines the future leaks out. I have seen enough examples to convince me that the cut-ups are a basic key to the nature and function of words (Burroughs and Odier, 2008, 32).

The 'cut-up technique' revealed to Burroughs the all-encompassing power of language. Burroughs views the 'cut-up technique' as a means to literally hack the system of language and its ability to control the individual and future events. The cut-up technique, Burroughs argues, is thus both a method for revealing the power of the collective linguistic unconscious and a means towards achieving unconscious control over others:

The original purpose of scrambling devices was to make the message unintelligible without the unscrambling code. Another use for speech scramblers could be to impose thought control on a mass scale. Consider the human body and nervous system as unscrambling devices... Remember that when the human nervous system unscrambles a scrambled message this will seem to the subject like his very own ideas which just occurred to him, which indeed it did...In most cases he will not suspect its extraneous origin. That is the run of the mill newspaper reader who receives the scrambled message uncritically and assumes that it reflects his own opinions independently arrived at. On the other hand, the subject may recognize or suspect the extraneous origin of voices that are literally hatching out in his head (Burroughs and Odier, 2008, 297).

The power of 'the cut-up technique' as a means towards psychological control of others lies in its ability to make its targets believe that they have spontaneously come

to conclusions that have been introduced to them extraneously. The target of this form of 'cut-up' coercion is like the cyborg and '[what] makes this figure so tragic is the extent to which he has been programmed to believe in his own autonomy' (Plant, 1997, 99). The 1992 film *Baraka*, directed by Ron Fricke, contains an example of the 'cut-up' method being used in this way. In one section, footage of eggs and chicks on conveyor belts is spliced together with images of human beings on escalators in subway stations: the implication 'literally hatching' out of the viewer's head is that the fate of modern humans is that of battery chickens. The need to unscramble data means that the viewer feels as though they have freely come to conclusions that have been written in advance.

The works that William Burroughs produced in the two decades after *Naked Lunch* (1959) heavily employed the cut-up technique. While Burroughs obsessively used the cut-up method in the production of his novels throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he later came to regret his overzealous adoption of it (Acker, 1988). One of the first cut-ups that Brion Gysin produced revealed the message 'It is impossible to estimate the damage', which Oliver Harris suggests answers the question, 'What will be the effect of the cut-up project?' (Harris, 2004, 175). It is indeed 'impossible to estimate the damage' that the cut-up had on the quality of Burroughs's literary output and its corresponding critical reception: 'for many critics, Burroughs's use of the cut-up technique... was proof that his writing could no longer be interrogated for objective meaning or structure' (Murphy, 1997, 10).<sup>3</sup> However, the effects of the cut-up method as 'A Project for Disastrous Success' has potential outside literature and the arts (Burroughs and Gysin, 1978, 2).

In *Minutes to Go* Burroughs anticipates the wide-ranging potential of the 'cut-up' method: 'As to the distant future say 100 years Dr. Stanley sees the entire DNA code being cracked "We will be able to write out the message that is you"' (Burroughs, 1960, 61). Here Burroughs suggests that the cut-up method can be applied as readily to genetic code as to the written word. For Burroughs, the cut-up method was a means

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<sup>3</sup> Burroughs was aware of this problem and complained that, 'if you apply montage method to writing, you are accused of promulgating a cult of unintelligibility' (Burroughs, 1985, 61).

towards empowerment: that it is not just a way to break out of control systems, but a method for creating new ones. Given that, in the realm of the cut-up, 'Nothing is true [and everything] is permitted', one can remake reality according to one's own desires. While Albert Camus writes that, '[if] we believe in nothing, if nothing has any meaning and if we can affirm no values whatsoever, then everything is possible and nothing has any importance', Burroughs's view is completely opposite (Camus, 1971, 7). Atheism, nihilism and the aleatory power of the 'cut-up method' allow for the possibility of mythic belief becoming a radical form of self-creation which in turn involves forging new realities. Burroughs aim for the cut-up involves seizing the means of cognitive and epistemological production in order to create new realities. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's state that the 'real revolutionary practice refers to the level of *production*. Truth will not make us free, but taking control of the production of truth will' (156). The cut-up is thus envisioned as a means for creating new truths, new forms of consciousness and new realities.

In his extended essay *The Electronic Revolution* (1970), Burroughs provides practical advice for applying the cut-up to everyday life using media technology. Burroughs describes how cameras and tape-machines can be used to attack businesses, politicians and the public in general. This method involves taking photographs, making tape recordings and playing these recordings back on location. Applying the cut-up method as an occult weapon, Burroughs reports some uncanny results. Simply using a camera and tape machine, Burroughs believes he helped to close down London's first espresso café, the Moka Bar:

'Reason for operation was outrageous and unprovoked discourtesy and poisoned cheese cake'

Now to close in on The Moka Bar. Record. Take pictures. Stand around and they know it.

'You boys have a rep for making trouble. Well come on out and make some. Pull a camera breaking act and I'll call a Bobby. I gotta right to do what I like in the public street.'

If it came to that I would explain to the policeman that I was taking street recordings and making a documentary of Soho. This was after all London's First



Espresso Bar was it not? I was doing them a favor. They couldn't say what both of us knew without being ridiculous... (Burroughs, 2005, 11).

After Burroughs's cut-up attack, strange occurrences began to happen at the Moka Bar. Fights broke out, fires started and eventually it closed down<sup>4</sup> (11). Similar attempts at psychic warfare targeting the London Scientology Headquarters had mixed results. While Burroughs believes his experiments caused the scientologists to change their location (10), further attempts to remove them from their new location had no effect and a branch of the Church of Scientology remains at 68 Tottenham Court Road to this day (Miles, 2015, 1306).

*The Electronic Revolution* also outlines other forms of 'cut-up' guerrilla warfare. One technique involves playing an audio recording of a riot on location at a public event in order to cause a riot (13). The book also describes methods for attacking political opponents, suggesting splicing together audio of a politician's speeches with recordings of sex acts, disdainful voices, coughs and sneezes. These recordings, when played back over mass media networks would, Burroughs suggests, make that politician immediately unpopular (13). Furthermore, Burroughs's offers instructions on how to make fake news:

you scramble your fabricated news in with actual news broadcasts. You have an advantage which your opposing player does not have. He must conceal his manipulations. You are under no such necessity. In fact you can advertise the fact that you are writing the news in advance and trying to make it happen by techniques which anybody can use. And that makes you NEWS' (17)

In a reflexive move, Burroughs creates his own 'fake news' in the opening section of *The Electronic Revolution*:

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<sup>4</sup> Hardy Cabell described similar results when he and Burroughs used a tape recorder to attack a Greek delicatessen in Boulder, Colorado. Much to Cabell's surprise, he reports, on playback of the tape recording in situ, fights broke out in the kitchen and the owner began arguing with staff and customers. One of the waitresses reported that the owner had just gone crazy for no reason. 'I told you it would work!', Burroughs said to Cabell. 'Now, aren't you glad we didn't take photos, too?' (Miles, 2015, 1399).

Doktor Kurt Unruh von Steinplatz has put forward an interesting theory as to the origins and history of this word virus. He postulates that the word was a virus of what he calls biologic mutation effecting a biologic change in its host which was then genetically conveyed. One reason that apes cannot talk is because the structure of their inner throats is simply not designed to formulate words. He postulates that alteration in inner throat structure were occasioned by a virus illness... (Burroughs, 2005, 5–6).

'Doktor Kurt Unruh von Steinplatz' along with his theories are in fact Burroughs's inventions. As Burroughs suggests in an essay entitled 'The Fall of Art', the purpose of writing is not that of representational art, which creates an image of reality, rather the 'purpose of writing is to make it happen' (Burroughs, 1985, 61). Burroughs's identifies that, 'the Beats wrote a world-wide cultural revolution' and, furthermore, '[what] we call art... is magical in origin' (61). *The Electronic Revolution* attempts to provide its readers with a magical means – the cut-up technique – towards gaining similar powers.

*The Electronic Revolution* opens up a dialogue between technology and the occult, demonstrating that '[any] sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic' (Clarke, 2000, 65). However, Burroughs's instincts at the time of writing *The Electronic Revolution* appear to have been far ahead of the available technology. Despite this, the chaotic form of the 'cut-up' matches well with how digital media is produced and consumed. In the mind of the user, the apparently arbitrary structure of the 'newsfeed' of various social media platforms is unconsciously unscrambled, whereby a reading of this digital 'cut-up' can 'seem to the subject like his very own ideas which just occurred to him' (Burroughs and Odier, 2008, 297). Furthermore, the apparently 'cut-up' structure of the social media 'newsfeed' is frequently controlled by advertisers and other parties who have paid to not only gain access to social media users' 'newsfeeds', but also to have their campaigns finely tailored based on the data that social media users often unwittingly provide to their chosen social media platforms. Social media functions like 'junk [heroin] ... the ideal product... the ultimate merchandise. [...] The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client' (Burroughs, 1966, xxxix). As Aral Balkan states, '[there] are only two professions that call the people who use their products "users".'

One is drug dealers, the other is us [software developers]' (qtd. by Gilroy-Ware, 2017, 74). However, this degradation of users may have some practical end. As Burroughs suggests in *The Electronic Revolution*, the type of mass control enabled by the application of the cut-up technique to the mass media may lead to the end of war itself.

*The Electronic Revolution* details how the cut-up technique can be used to create 'fake news broadcasts' (Burroughs, 2005, 17) suggesting 'cut/up techniques could swamp the mass media with total illusion' (18). Burroughs foresees that using media manipulation as 'weapons that change consciousness' (35) is the new frontier in the Cold War and could be used as an alternative to the atomic bomb:

That is what this revolution is about. End of game. New games? There are no new games from here to eternity.'

END OF THE WAR GAME (36).

The only thing we have to lose by ending 'THE WAR GAME' is our minds, which instead will be fought over in the virtual domain of electronic media. It seems apparent that the end result of Burroughs's compulsive transgressions is the end of the possibility of transgression itself.

Despite the deterministic potential of the 'cut-up technique' outlined in *The Electronic Revolution*, transgression remains a possibility for Burroughs. In his essay 'The Limits of Control', Burroughs writes:

words are still the principal instruments of control. Suggestions are words. Persuasions are words. Orders are words. No control machine so far devised can operate without words, and any control machine which attempts to do so relying entirely on external force or entirely on physical control of the mind will soon encounter the limits of control (Burroughs, 1985, 116).

Since control requires language to function and language is subject to critical analysis and interpretation it is both the site of historical oppression and the source of subjective freedom. 'Control' in Burroughs's estimation requires participation on the part of those controlled:

A basic impasse of all control machines is this: Control needs time in which to exercise control. Because control also needs opposition or acquiescence; otherwise it ceases to be control. I control a hypnotized subject (at least partially); I control a slave, a dog, a worker; but if I establish complete control somehow, as by implanting electrodes in the brain, then my subject is little more than a tape recorder, a camera, a robot. You don't control a tape recorder — you use it. Consider the distinction, and the impasse implicit here. All control systems try to make control as tight as possible, but at the same time, if they succeeded completely, there would be nothing left to control. Suppose for example a control system installed electrodes in the brains of all prospective workers at birth. Control is now complete. Even the thought of rebellion is neurologically impossible. No police force is necessary. No psychological control is necessary, other than pressing buttons to achieve certain activations and operations (Burroughs, 1985, 116).

What is established here is akin to Lacan's interpersonal concept of desire: 'Man's desire is the desire of the Other' (Lacan, 2009, 235). In other words: 'Desire full stop is always the desire of the Other. Which basically means that we are always asking the Other what he desires' (38). In Burroughs's novel *Queer*, desire is simply another name for control. Early in the novel Lee describes his desire as 'an amoeboid protoplasmic projection, straining with a blind worm hunger to enter the other's body, to breathe with his lungs, see with his eyes, learn the feel of his viscera and genitals' (Burroughs and Harris, 2008, 36). In other words, desire is always the desire to control the desire of the Other: to become their desire. What is established in *Queer* is that 'control', like desire, requires a resistant Other. As Burroughs writes, '[when] there is no more opposition, control becomes a meaningless proposition. It is highly questionable whether a human organism could survive complete control. There would be nothing there. No persons there' (Burroughs, 1985, 117). However, 'The Limits of Control' also articulates Burroughs's fear that technological and psychological advancements, particularly if they remain secret and the preserve of the rich and powerful, could achieve heretofore unimaginable levels of societal control (118–120). If control systems can construct and interpellate the desires of its subjects, 'Control' may become complete control.

Burroughs's conception of control thus has its basis in his experience of interpersonal, sexual desire. Having established this in *Queer*, Burroughs invents many terms such as 'word virus' and 'control addict' to represent how the line dividing self and Other is difficult to ascertain. This relationship can be regarded as parasitic, where 'parasites occupy a complex position between inside and out, neither wholly supplementary nor essential to the subject' (Melley, 47). Burroughs's influence on modern western culture is similarly parasitic. As Graham Caveney observes, Burroughs is 'a disc jockey of the word, sampling and restructuring the languages that society speaks. Small wonder then that his novels can be reified without being read – his work already exists all around us, his material constantly affecting us almost by a kind of osmosis' (18). Like the parasite, Burroughs's influence can be regarded as benign, benevolent and destructive, but there is no denying its force. Burroughs spoke about the prescient power of the 'cut-up technique' and its ability to cut through spatial and temporal structures, and the 'cut-up technique' similarly intersects with a digital age that was only coming into being at the time of Burroughs's death in 1997. When encountering Burroughs's *The Electronic Revolution* in the time of 'fake news', electronic media and the re-emergence of Cold War tensions, it can be difficult to tell who is reading whom.

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## **‘I’ll Say the Bad Words I Have’: Anne Enright and Eimear McBride’s Subversive Modernisms**

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**Chris Beausang**

There has been an increasing tendency within literary critical discourse to refer to at least two developing trends, both in the context of Ireland and internationally. The first is an upsurge in the volume of quality work being produced by young Irish writers, and the second is a resurgence of novel-writing that re-engages modernist aesthetics, which can be seen in the fiction of writers such as Will Self, Tom McCarthy and Mike McCormack. It’s worth remarking on the centrality afforded to women’s writing in the articulation of both of these developing strands, such as Sara Baume, Claire-Louise Bennett, Joanna Walsh, Eimear McBride and Anne Enright. Brian Dillon, in his review of Bennett’s *Pond* (2015) in the *London Review of Books*, sounds a dissenting note, touching on the somewhat parochial overtones of this nascent discourse:

She [Bennett] has somewhat misleadingly been set aside Eimear McBride as representative of a modernist turn among young writers in Ireland, especially women writers. Misleadingly, not because they don’t share something — a commitment to voice, a syntax that is speedy, bristling and strange at first encounter — but because they sound so different...If there is a modernism of sorts at work in current fiction in Ireland, it’s less a return in the manner called for by authors such as Tom McCarthy, and more an acknowledgement of the variety of experimental traditions on which young writers now draw (Dillon, 2016, 37–38).

Dillon’s critique of the prominence of national identifications in the defining of contemporary modernism is astute, but elides the problematic qualities of this deeply contested term. The study of modernism has undergone significant changes since the first issue of *Modernism/modernity* was published in 1994, and what is referred to as the new modernist studies began to bring an increasingly revisionist approach to the study of twentieth century literatures. Modernism is no longer deployed solely as a designator for a literary tradition formulated by a cluster of writers in continental



Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Rather, it now encompasses discourses as varied as the visual arts, film, fashion, architecture, scholarship and dance. The consequent reframings of nineteenth and twentieth century cultural forms, has led to a proliferation of categories within the study of modernism itself such as ‘late modernism’ (Bixby, 2013, 465–466), ‘post-war’ modernism (Whittier-Ferguson, 2014, 26) and ‘cold modernism’ (Burstein, 2012, 24). Space does not allow us to anatomise each of these categories individually, but overall they have served to re-radicalise contemporary notions of modernist aesthetics by de-emphasising grand narratives of breakage and insurgence which have historically reproduced the tone of modernist polemics, emphasising their distance from their literary antecedents, ostensibly in order to promote their own works (MacKay, 2007, 15). This is reflective of broader changes underway in literary criticism more generally, where structuralist and diachronic approaches have fallen out of favour due to their tendency to fix texts within totalising and teleological conceptual models (Jameson, 2002, 12–13). Dillon is correct to be sceptical of the critical usefulness of ‘Irishness’ in considering these writers; the term is limiting, especially when many of them cite non-Irish authors as influences (Hansson, 2011, 52; International Dublin Literary Festival, 2017; WNYC Studios and *The New Yorker*, 2011; The Biblio File, 2008). Dillon perhaps overlooks the usefulness the term modernism can now provide in accounting for sameness as well as difference, especially in moving beyond the familiar James Joyce/Samuel Beckett polarity operative in many discussions of modernism in Irish literature. In reviews of both Enright and McBride’s prose, these are the two names that are invoked most frequently, to the detriment of other authors that would be just as illustrative. In this article I will contrast Enright’s novel *The Gathering* (2007) and McBride’s novel *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* (2014) in order to establish a groundwork for discussing new Irish modernism in manner that is indebted to a heterogenous notion of many modernisms over a singular modernism.

In so doing it may first be necessary to provide a very brief outline of the political milieu that these authors respond to, and the ways in which the Irish state has engaged, and failed to engage, with the literary avant-garde. For a variety of reasons, the Free State and the Republic have historically not been places hospitable to artistic

expression or critique. Both the poet Eavan Boland and the historian Diarmaid Ferriter have written on the fraught relationship which has existed between the arts and the state in a way which is useful in characterising the state's intolerant culture of governance, and the means through which it, with the help of the Catholic church, dismantled that which it regarded as critical of Catholic teaching (Ferriter, 2012, 542; 547). The Irish constitution granted the church a special position within the state, and under many administrations government policy was informed by encyclicals generated by the Vatican (Foster, 1985, 547). This had negative consequences for the living standards of the nation's female population, as in the failure of Noël Browne's mother and child scheme and the patchwork nature of the Irish welfare state with social payments remaining lower than their British counterparts (Foster, 1985, 572). Precedence should be attached to the material effects of these policies on Irishwomen's lives, but the effects of the Church's policing of the cultural sphere is symptomatic of this broader national culture of coercion. The attention of organisations such as the Irish Vigilance Association, the Catholic Truth Society and the censorship board, to the frustration of many authors within the literary scenes of the time, tended to fall disproportionately upon experimental works of literature. The first review of *Ulysses* (1922), being blocked by a magazine's printer in anticipation of reprisals from the Catholic Truth Society, as well as the hostile reception which met Edna O'Brien's novels attests to the persistence of a milieu hostile to formal and thematic innovation especially when coupled with criticism of the status quo. David Dickson argues that this coercive attitude, combined with a dearth of public and private funding for the arts, amounts to a sense that state policy as a whole encouraged a standardisation of expression. It should be noted that Dickson gives examples of spaces in which exceptions to these rules were possible; the Irish Film Society gave uncensored screenings, the Theatre Royal and orchestral music performances could be said to have flourished but, one should remember that one's ability to access these spaces depended upon one's social class (Dickson, 2014, 522; 507).

Enright herself has spoken of a 'resistance to the new' when she began her own career in the late eighties and early nineties. As a young Irish author at this time, selling one's writing abroad was a financial necessity, as new writers were not reviewed in the

Irish establishment journals or newspapers. This resulted in the creation of an ambivalence feedback loop, wherein one would not be part of the cultural conversation in Ireland, but a concern as to how one was representing the nation abroad would persist. For example, *The Gathering* was criticised at the time of its publication in 2007 for dealing with the matter of child sexual abuse at a time in which Ireland was economically affluent (The Seattle Public Library, 2011; The Irish Arts Centre, 2015), demonstrating that Enright's works deploy protean formal and thematic responses to a marketplace and socio-political episteme that is intolerant of experimental fiction and women's writing; an attempted formulation of an aesthetic of dissent. In *The Gathering*, the act of narrative itself is made self-conscious via its metaphorical association with bones, a motif which is initiated in the novel's opening paragraph:

I need to bear witness to an uncertain event. I feel it roaring inside me – this thing that may not have taken place. I don't even know what name to put on it. I think you might call it a crime of the flesh, but the flesh is long fallen away and I am not sure what hurt may linger in the bones (Enright, 2008, 1).

The protagonist of the novel, Veronica Hegarty, who is speaking in this section, thereafter provides the following description of a cuttlefish bone: '[it is] so pure that I have to ship it in my pocket, and I comfort my hand with the secret white arc of it' (Enright, 2008, 1, emphasis added). If we were to accept that the word 'arc' is semantically loaded, and also refers to a narrative arc, then the act of narration is construed as a private experience, one which is carried out in order to provide a kind of private consolation in the aftermath of one's experience of trauma. This can be read as a synecdoche for the novel; *The Gathering* traces Veronica's attempts to come to terms with her brother Liam's suicide, another larger attempt at the construction of a secret white arc. Veronica re-creates the events surrounding Liam's death through use of empirical, imaginative and anamnestic data. However, the novel makes clear that her account is unstable; there is no one cause, and even a multiplicity cannot satisfactorily account for Liam taking his own life. As such, narratives serve Veronica in the same way that the cuttlefish bone does, as a small and insufficient comfort, even on the individual level for which it was initially devised. Her chronicle also fails in giving rest to the uneasy spirits which populate the text such as her brother Liam, and her

grandmother Ada, who make appearances during otherwise mimetic sequences in the text's action, according to the familiar schema by which what has been repressed will inevitably return.

The novel also displays a broader understanding of the historical position of women in Irish society, reflecting on how Veronica's mother and grandmother processed their negative emotions, or more accurately, did not, when Veronica was young: 'I don't know what they called these episodes. Single women had 'breakdowns', but in those days married women just had more babies, or no more babies' (Enright, 2008, 46). The political critique contained within *The Gathering* lies in references such as these to the results of the Irish state's repressive and coercive social policies, but also in its rejection of the possibility of accounting for the extent of the tragedy, as in the following passage in which Veronica describes a mass grave at the former mental institution in Portrane:

Just one cross – quite new – at the end of a little central path. A double row of saplings promise rowan trees to come. There are no markers, no separate graves. I wonder how many people were slung into the dirt of this field and realise, too late, that the place is boiling with corpses, the ground is knit out of their tangled bones (Enright, 2008, 46).

The tangled knit of human remains stands in contrast to the discrete cuttlefish bone of the novel's opening and does not present an auspicious starting point for the realisation of a root cause. This failure of narrative to explain away the mass institutionalisation carried out within Irish state has a continuity within Enright's oeuvre in its disavowal of textual authority: 'however culturally historically I'm placed I don't claim an authority in the text...[being] from a class of people who isn't particularly empowered about writing books...Irish women, this gives me a way of doing it, by writing through other voices' (Boston College, 2007). Enright therefore writes from a self-conscious position of enforced liminality but in such a way that reverses its terms. By writing relative to a historical record that is pockmarked with silences, both enforced and otherwise, narratives can only fail us. *The Gathering*, via its stylistic and formal architecture, demonstrates this failure within the context of late twentieth

century Ireland, and the beginning of a process which subverts or interrogates the enforced silences of the earlier years of the free state.

The notion of Enright's modernism as a kind of resistance should be kept in mind when discussing *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*. McBride's modernist praxis is in some ways coterminous with the modernist aesthetics as resistance that Enright's fiction exemplifies, but it is also worthy of consideration on its own terms, for the reason that McBride is the novelist of the current generation who is suffering most egregiously under the comparisons to either Beckett or Joyce, which are present, in every review of her novels (Wood, 2014; Brantley, 2016; Mars-Jones, 2013). This leads to a kind of interpretative distortion whereby McBride's works are not the object of study so much as an ongoing level of attention to a reified canon of male modernist writers, a tendency which McBride has noted and critiqued (London School of Economics, 2017). It is on the basis of these comparisons that Claire Lowdon has charged McBride's prose with redundancy and artificiality, arguing that because Joyce is among McBride's most forthright influence, which is debatable, her writing must be judged by the benchmark established by Joyce's writings (Lowdon, 2016). From an attention to the way in which *A Girl* uses language, it is clear that *A Girl* is more formally aligned with *Finnegans Wake* than with *Ulysses* albeit with a far less overt attention to the materiality, or referential capacity of language.

There are less puns, and obviously less written in another language, as well as less dependence upon leitmotifs in the conveying of narrative information. But it would be a mistake to regard this as McBride's failure to live up to her twentieth century modernist forebears, considering this is a role that has been largely imposed upon her by critics rather than one her or her writing has claimed. The example from the opening paragraph that Lowdon cites reads as follows:

For you. You'll soon. You'll give her name. In the stitches of her skin she'll wear your say. Mammy me? Yes you. Bounce the bed I'd say. I'd say that's what you did. Then lay you down. They cut you round. Wait and hour and day (McBride, 2014, 3).

'Wait and hour and day' carries with it a vague association with the phrase 'a year and a day' but it doesn't strictly make sense in that context and there is no clearly defined

reason for the semantic distortion. But just as there is no requirement that McBride's novels compose a mythic framework in the same way that the *Wake* does, there is no reason that these words necessarily have a grand or multi-faceted significance. If we approach these examples from the perspective of McBride's own concerns, we will be capable of arriving at a more sophisticated understanding of her work, one which doesn't amount to downgrading it because of its perceived inadequacy in relation to Joyce. McBride has spoken of her interest in nineteenth century novels, texts which are less discernibly self-consciousness about language and its processes of meaning-making. McBride has cited the work of nineteenth-century Russian naturalistic author Fyodor Dostoevsky as a significant influence, particularly as an example of proto-modernism; modernism in a nascent stage of its development wherein human intersubjectivity was beginning to make itself known within the novel while the tenets of naturalistic fiction were still trying to accommodate it. McBride's point is one which is very much of a part with the current discourse within new modernist studies, which avoids entering the accounts of traditionally canonical modernist authors and attempts to emphasise instead the influence of genres such as realism, naturalism and popular literature in modernism's development, rather than relegating these genres and naturalism to a Victorian pre-history due to their pessimism, environmental determinism and perceived stylistic inadequacy, in comparison to the stylistic transcendence certain aspect of the modernist movement has trafficked in historically (Budd, 1995, 42, 43; Joyce, 2014, 1, 5). Critics such as Emer Nolan and Joe Cleary have emphasised the importance of naturalism to comprehending the development of Irish modernism in particular, and how the legacy of the Irish literary revival has tended to elide the influence of naturalism on authors such as Joyce and George Moore (Joyce, 2014, 84–85). While remaining aware of the fact that *The Lesser Bohemians* (2016) is not the novel under discussion, it's important to note the ways in which it stages this interplay between the formal traits of modernism and naturalism. Within the context of what the author calls *The Lesser Bohemians*' 'modernist monologue' there is a very melodramatic narrative in which Stephen, the novel's love interest, outlines his life story to Eily, the novel's protagonist, doing so in a directly rendered monologue. McBride has said that this is a very deliberate formal mechanic which is pertinent to

the text's thematic concerns, as it is a novel about relating to another person in spite of one's traumatic past (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 2017).

What makes McBride's particular modernism distinct then, is the importance it attaches to the conveying of narrative information to the reader in directly sensuous terms (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 2017). McBride has also expressed frustration at the disproportionate level of attention her idiosyncratic use of language receives in reviews at the expense of her content, expressing ambivalence with regard to the merely formally adventurous wing of the modernist movement exemplified by an author such as Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* (1925) due to its formalist solipsism, arguing that *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* emulates the physical experience of attending theatre; regarding this aspect of the text is more significant than its use of language (London School of Economics, 2017; Shakespeare and Company, 2017). The importance McBride attaches to the book's content, at the expense of the difficulty of its form, is fundamental to what we might call McBride's reader-centric literary ethic, and represents at least a partial reversal of one's expectations regarding her relationship to modernism, in that it is conceptualised, not as an estrangement from reality as such, but an simulated attempt to move the work closer to 'the reality' of phenomenological experience in a primordial state, before the stage at which feelings or sense-impressions take conceptual shape. One example of this formal mechanic in action can be seen in phrases such as: 'My thud cheeks up' or 'This are boring' (McBride, 2014, 35), which lead the reader to decode the text at only a partial remove from a reality that it otherwise quite discernible.

This is done in such a way that provides the artifice of an intimacy, or a proximity to wavelengths of nascent thought, in a state of abstraction, before having been actualised into words or strictly defined concepts In a way that further demonstrates the significance of the plot, and how determined the novel's style is by its syuzhet. The following paragraph which represents a conversation between girl, and her brother, referred to as 'you', about the way he experiences the world may prove illuminating in locating the impetus behind the way in which *A Girl* is written:

Don't you knock your brother's head. You stumble. Not that bad. And walking into doors...is blind eye at side like in eyelid? No. Like water? No. Like glass? You said it is like nothing at all. It must be something. What? And words, trace stammers. Trace stammer of (McBride 10).

In case this paragraph requires parsing, it represents a conversation between the two characters in which girl is attempting to understand how her brother's brain injury, due to a tumour having been removed when he was an infant, effects his ability to perceive the world. Any insight we as readers get into his perception of reality is defined negatively, girl offers the comparisons of water or glass, and he rejects both of them, offering instead that it is 'like nothing at all'. One should note the significance of the first two suggestions, which are distinct in that both are transparent and are traditionally posited as analogies for how realistic or mimetic literary art functions. According to the terms of these analogies, we have our attention drawn not to the work itself necessarily, but to what it opens out onto. In actuality these two mediums do refract the light that passes through them, these mediums do effect what we see, albeit in subtle ways. So it isn't realism that is being dispensed with, but referentiality. It is an attempt to generate a language that points to nullity and surfeit.

To conclude, what I have said about Enright and McBride as authors is the product of close readings of their works set next to remarks they have made about them in interviews and at public events. Therefore, I find it unlikely that they will articulate their novels in such a way that will make them easy to encompass as part of a notion of contemporary modernism that is either neat or consistent. What this might point to is the inadequacy of the notion of modernism that is most frequently deployed, one which MacKay refers to as institutionalised, or establishment modernism which confine us to hopelessly overdetermined generic or temporal limitations (MacKay, 2007, 15). Modernism should instead be considered relative to its unique significance for individual authors.

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## **‘I’ve Won a Hero’s Name’: Stereotyping the Post-war Irish Builders and Mythologizing the Mundane**

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**Michael Mulvey**

The quote in the title of this paper is the opening line of Dominic Behan’s well-known folk-song, officially entitled *Paddy on the Road* – but much better known by its popular title *Building up and tearing England down*. Dominic was the younger brother of Brendan and Brian, and was himself an author and playwright but was probably better-known as a songwriter who came to prominence in the 1960s Irish folk revival. The full first verse merits examination as it précisés succinctly the theme of this paper, which is the way in which the Irish migrant builders who participated in the post-war reconstruction of London performed a specific stereotypical version of male Irishness.

I’ve won a hero’s name with McAlpine and Costain,  
With Fitzpatrick, Murphy, Ashe and Wimpey’s gang,  
I’ve been often on the road on my way to draw the dole,  
When there’s nothing left to do for Johnny Laing,  
I used to think that God made the mixer, pick and hod,  
So that Paddy might know hell above the ground,  
I’ve had gangers big and tough tell me tear it all out rough,  
When you’re building up and tearing England down<sup>1</sup>

The song first featured as the title track of Christy Moore’s debut album in 1969, and is one of a number of significant cultural products which shaped the master narrative of Irish builders in post-war London. It is an example of what might be termed the stereotyping of the Irish by the Irish. Behan borrowed heavily from seasonal and wartime migrant Irish work-culture, for example in his re-writing of the original version

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<sup>1</sup> The late Frank Harte (1933-2005), a noted folklorist and song collector included this song as ‘Paddy on the Road’ in *Songs of Dublin*, (ed.), 1978, Gilbert Dalton, Dublin and 1993, Ossian Publications, Cork. The Dubliners recorded the song under the better known title of the chorus line ‘Building Up and Tearing England Down’ on their albums *Prodigal Sons* and *Live in Carré*, in 1983.

of another famous navy-song *McAlpine's Fusiliers*, but also in his original songs such as this, which entered popular culture in Ireland and in the clustered Irish communities of London with such resonance that by the end of the century they became the dominant narrative of the Irish builder's experience in the second half of the twentieth century.

It is appropriate to start by establishing who the post-war Irish builders were. During World War Two British government recruitment campaigns (undertaken with the tacit approval of de Valera's wartime administration) saw thousands of young men come to Britain to undertake essential wartime agricultural, industrial, construction and civil engineering works (Delaney, 2000, 119–125). These men were predominantly from the rural west of Ireland and had been culturized into a pre-existing tradition of seasonal agricultural and navy migration. After the War, once travel restrictions were lifted and the common travel area reinstated many of these men stayed as the huge and urgent demand for labour to rebuild Britain began to create plentiful employment opportunities. This, in turn, triggered an extensive pattern of chain-migration – from all counties in Ireland but predominantly from the west – and predominantly to London, which persisted at least until the early 1970s. These migrants – men and women who came in more-or-less equal numbers, indeed women slightly outnumbered men initially – have been labelled the *Mailboat Generation* (Murray, 2012, 39). Whilst women tended to go mainly into nursing or retail or domestic work, the overwhelming majority of men in that generation worked in the construction and civil-engineering industries as manual operatives.

This paper seeks to consider some of the ways in which Irish cultural production can be seen to have mediated the anecdotal experiences of its migrant construction workers. The result of these cultural representations was to create a master narrative which focuses on the veneration of physical labour as the primary measure of Irish masculinity alongside lifestyle excesses – primarily alcohol and gambling, social and working recklessness, ethnic insularity and clannishness and ultimately an innate sense – and fear – of socio-economic inadequacy. In one sense the rhetorical anxieties reflected by the mailboat migrants, in particular their resistance to any form of assimilation into British culture and society, can be seen as a legacy of the Irish

revolutionary generation of whom they were, for the most part, first-generation descendants.

Sociologist Mary Hickman has argued that alongside the ‘rich ignorant Irish-American’, the stereotypes of the ‘mobile entrepreneurial adventurer’ and the ‘down-on-his-luck labourer’ are the major archetypes of the Irish diaspora in Britain within the popular Irish imagination (Scully, 2015, 133–148). I contend further that Irish collective cultural memory – diffused through performative Irishness: in the forms of folklore, myth, literature, folk-song and drama – has constantly re-cycled, romanticised and mythologised the life-experiences of the ‘typical’ post-war migrant construction worker based on these stereotypes. The effect of this process is broadly similar to what Mark Scully terms the ‘*rhetorical invocation*’ of transnational collective post-memory (Scully, 2015, 134).

Whilst much of the heroic myth and folklore which underpins the metanarrative is undoubtedly rooted in fact and based upon some real characters, my contention remains that it is far from being representative of the wide range of experiences actually encountered by most of these migrant builders in London. The central question which my own doctoral research attempts to answer is whether the verifiable factual experiences of Irish migrant males in the London construction industry align with these cultural representations; or put another way – are these Irishmen the ‘forgotten Irish’ as often depicted by literary and, more recently, news media representations – ill-educated, exploited, ‘down-on-their luck navvies’ – or are they instead the ‘mis-remembered’ Irish?

In methodological terms the research draws upon a wide variety of primary archival, journalistic and documentary sources including pre-existing interviews and newspaper records and a wide array of secondary literature. However, key to the verification of actual experiences by contrast to cultural representations of the period are twenty to twenty-five original field interviews conducted over the research period as semi-structured oral interviews with a variety of postwar builders and civil engineers who migrated from Ireland to Britain drawn from personal contact networks, snowball sampling and referrals. These interviews corroborate the importance of the various ‘Gaelic’ masculinities to the performance of ‘Irishness’ within the post-war migrant

construction-work community whilst also demonstrating that the effects of this performative culture were transitory and in most cases the propensity to itinerancy, casualization, 'lump' working and reckless endangerment were features of the assimilation process of newly-arrived migrants into the working culture of the ethnic enclave of Irish construction workers. As such these features of the Irish migrant experience became permanent in a relatively small proportion of the London-Irish ethnic enclave, with the vast majority of men eventually becoming settled into domestic urban life, returning to Ireland regularly and maintaining links with their families, often becoming householders and raising families and maintaining a relatively stable social position.

E.P Thompson, back in the 1960s, sought to rescue the English working class from what he ironically called 'the enormous condescension of posterity' (Thompson, 1963, 12). Do not the anonymous Irish who came to reconstruct London after the war deserve the same treatment? The oft-exaggerated cultural representations of Irish builders engender, I contend, a false sense of exceptionalism in the story of Ireland's migrant builders. Enda Delaney asserted that 'the besetting sin of all historical writing is myopia [... its] close relative is the unshakeable doctrine of exceptionalism: the assumption that each nation's history is, by definition, *sui generis*' (Delaney, 2011, 599). This can certainly be applied to the myths and folktales of the Irish builder in London. It is important therefore that historical methodology and 'the austere passion for fact, proof and evidence, which are central' to good history serve as a corrective to cultural myth (Yerushalmi, 1982, 116). That said, it is equally important to recognise, as Luke Gibbons has remarked, that 'Understanding a community or a culture does not consist solely in establishing 'neutral' facts and 'objective' details: it means taking seriously their ways of structuring experience, their popular narratives, the distinctive manner in which they frame the social and political realities which affect their lives' (Gibbons, 1991, 95–113). So, as always, there is a balance to be struck between representation and reality.

Until very recently the existing official and 'academic' histories of both Ireland and Britain have given scant relevance to the working experiences of the post-war Irish builders. Indeed there are no academically-driven histories which examine this cohort

from any analytical or theoretical perspective; rather their lives have been what Roy Foster termed a 'subject too often dealt with by means of second-hand narrative and unexamined clichés' (Foster, 2012). As a result, the London-Irish community abounds with tales of the *Cuchulainn* characters of this generation; men with epic nicknames like 'The Bear' O'Shea, Darkie Finn, 'The Horse' McGurk' and 'Elephant' John. Yet these men exist in something of a historical vacuum; except for some fairly biased and non-specific surveillance records made by the Irish government during and immediately after the war, they are recorded almost entirely by way of oral transmission and communal memory.

In terms of literary representations, there is now a well-developed genre of Irish builder or navy narratives which re-conjure some of the more dramatic tropes of working life 'on the shovel' amidst these 'pathfinder migrants' – the first waves to come to London during and immediately after the war. Some of the core folklore seems to echo the post-revolutionary 'official' discourses of Catholic bourgeois Ireland; wrapped up in rural fundamentalism and the heroics of nationalist, Gaelic revolution. As such they tend to reinforce the stereotypes of hegemonic and martial masculinities deriving from these ideologies; epic warlike tales of hard-living, hard fighting and hard drinking amongst and between Donegal's 'Tunnel-tigers', 'McAlpine's Fusiliers', 'Murphy's Rangers' and the 'Pincher laddies' have been encapsulated in songs and stories, remediated through these fictional retellings which, for the most part, have been created by writers and dramatists at a significant temporal and cultural remove from the original sources. Are such representations simply an example of the fabled Irish penchant for creating 'heroes of renown' out of the mundanities of working life? What is certain from research is that self-identity within the London-Irish industrial proletariat is inextricably linked with this complex pastiche of cultural myth and urban folklore. Therefore oral life-histories derived from semi-structured interviews with the migrants themselves, in my view, offer a vital source of primary and comparative evidence together with the wide range of archival information sources available.

Irish migration to London has a long history stretching back centuries, but the immediate post-war impetus for the Mailboat migration, in terms of 'pull factors' was the physical destruction wrought upon the city by the Second World War, and the Blitz

in particular. Moreover, the temporary vacuum which war shortages caused in technological progress and labour-saving mechanisation within civilian industry created an urgent need for large quantities of physically robust and capable manual labour.

In broad terms, one third of the Irish-born population of Britain lived in London throughout the mid-Twentieth century (Delaney, 2007, 89). Just under 50% of this group were male and of these it can be safely reckoned that 70–80% worked in construction and civil engineering. Post-war demand was such that London's Irish population virtually doubled between 1931 and 1951 with approximately 225,000 Irish living in the Greater London Metropolis by then (Delaney, 2007, 89).<sup>2</sup> By 1966, according to census returns, there were c.288, 000 Irish-born living in London (Hall, 2016, 562). A third-wave of Irish migration to Britain in the 1980s was identified by Bronwyn Walter as being even more London-centric, with the proportion of young Irish migrants living in London rising from 32% to 47% between 1981 and 1991 (Walter, 1997, 62). Add to this the London-born, second-generation children of the Mailboat diaspora which has been estimated to outnumber their parents by 50% and many of whom followed their fathers into construction and engineering, and one reliable estimate puts the London-Irish population at c.700'000 by 1971 (Sorohan, 2012, 6). Whilst these are inevitably approximations, interpolating these various statistics suggests that the average number of 'London-Irish' builders over the post-war period varied between 150 and 200 thousand; overwhelmingly men.

Immediately after the War, in 1947, the British government abandoned unionised time-based wage agreements across the construction and civil engineering industry in favour of what was termed 'Payment by Results' (Clarke et al., 2012, 57–60). This encouraged the rapid growth of casualised labour-only subcontracting. This informal contracting system became euphemistically known as 'The Lump' and was often characterised by unwritten, informal gang-labour arrangements, payments in cash – thus staying outside the framework of statutory tax and social welfare systems

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<sup>2</sup> Interpolated from remark by Enda Delaney (2007), *The Irish in Post-war Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 89.



(something of critical importance to young Irishmen in Britain before 1957, as it enabled them to avoid conscription for National Service in the Crown Forces) – and careless, indeed often reckless attitudes to work method and health and safety considerations driven by the imperative to rapid completion and maximised productivity. Around this period, in the early 1950s the iconic Irish firms, Murphy, McNicholas, RSK and Lowery, amongst others, began trading as subcontractors. Was this mere coincidence? More likely it was the inevitable result of merging deregulation of construction employment via ‘the Lump’ with the short-term socio-economic aspirations of the Mailboat Generation – then overwhelmingly made up of young, single, recalcitrant Irishmen whose primary ambition was to make enough money to buy a farm at home as quickly as possible by whatever means.

By the early 1960s a vast expanding network of formal and informal subcontractors and casualised labour-only gangs was developing, bringing with it a significant sub-culture of Irishness within the London construction sector. At the top of this hierarchy, five families of brothers, Murphy, McNicholas, Clancy, Byrne and Carey (although there were dozens more) had all established thriving civil engineering companies to capitalise on the explosion in infrastructure projects feeding the expanding metropolis with power, gas, water, road and rail networks all becoming vital to London’s recovery. Irish manual workers’ willingly acquiesced in the development of ‘Lump’ labour-only subcontracting because it suited the fundamentally rural petty-bourgeois capitalist mindset with which they had been raised.

By the mid-1960s these migrant builders had begun to settle as a community in London, although the stereotypical perception of them, both in Britain and Ireland, remained as a highly itinerant ‘navvy’ workforce. By this time they were actually highly mobile but no longer itinerant in the sense applied to the nineteenth-century navvies and certainly did not see themselves as navvies. That lifestyle had more-or-less died out by the end of World War One. These new migrants had often become semi-skilled or skilled tradesmen or self-motivated entrepreneurs who moved with specific projects. With some minor exceptions, the work-camps of the 1940s and 50s were largely replaced by digs and lodging houses. Also many workers from the 60s onwards

commuted to/from work in London and the south-east because of rapidly modernised road and rail infrastructure and the expansion in private vehicle ownership.

A notable feature of the Irish migratory experience in London which became subject to stereotyping was the transfer of rural cultural traditions, customs and practices into the receiving community. Many migrant interviewees anecdotally report never having felt more Irish than when they were living in Britain. The speed of cultural change within their new environment was constantly mediated by a sense that altering or abandoning the customs of 'home' was somehow a betrayal of their Irishness; despite the recognition by most of the post-war migrants that Ireland as a state had, in reality, failed them in economic and social terms. The majority of these builders – particular those who migrated from the early 1940s to the late 1970s were the children of the Free State and latterly the Republic; the first generations to be educated under an independent, Catholic, nationalist state education system which imbued its children with an ultra-patriotic worldview of Britain as the 'old enemy'.

According to Roy Foster, 'emigration was not interpreted as a rational, individualist alternative, but as evidence of British disruption of the Irish way of life.... A race-memory of exploitation, oppression and banishment flourished long after these concepts had become anachronistic' (Foster, 1989, 370). This version of cultural patriotism inevitably dominated the consciousness of Irish male identity in Britain, thereby promoting cultural and social insularity amongst the migrants working in construction and engineering. One female migrant interviewee encapsulated the contradiction of the migrant experience in Britain in stark terms: 'In a sense we were taught to hate. We were taught this history, you were sorta [sic] taught to hate England and then sent there' (Lambert, 2001, 88).<sup>3</sup> In short, for most of the post-war Irish builders – mainly from west of the Shannon and raised on a diet of bourgeois rural fundamentalism, post-revolutionary zealotry and Catholic dogma – London was perceived as *economically necessary but culturally toxic*.

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<sup>3</sup> Enda Delaney (2007), *The Irish in Post-war Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 56, citing an interviewee in Sharon Lambert (2001), *Irish Women in Lancashire, 1922–1960: Their Story*, Lancaster: Lancaster University Press, p. 88

Running counter to the development in popular Irish-British culture of this 'stereotypical' Irish builder, the introspective zeitgeist of the 1950s and 60s amongst significant numbers of these post-war immigrants saw the development of an urban – but highly insular – sub-culture which transplanted and adapted their traditions of religious observance, sporting activity, traditional music, dance, song and modes of social engagement from the rural communities of the Irish western seaboard.<sup>4</sup> This led to a marked sense of double-consciousness for a significant proportion of the Irish male community involved in construction.

For many, the outward-facing working persona of the hyper-masculine, hard-drinking, hard-fighting wild-rover, conforming in all respects to Fitzpatrick's 'model industrial proletariat' (Fitzpatrick, 1984, 32) and Hickman's *adventurer-labourer stereotype*, concealed a more mundane ethnocentric social life of dogmatic religious observance, weekend Gaelic sports and an aesthetic of traditional art forms – especially music and dance – together with rural customs and practices. For example, the Catholic Church together with organisations such as the Gaelic League, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, and The Pioneer Association positively promoted temperance, cultural conservatism and Gaelicisation amongst the London-Irish. These ostensibly contrary identities co-existed functionally in the ordinary lives of the Irish construction worker because, as Clair Wills has pointedly observed [quote] 'For male migrants in particular, building work and the landscape of reconstruction were not [just] the background to personal stories, but the [very] fabric of their lives. Construction sites were, at once, their workplace and one of the locations of their community' (Wills, 2015, 111) .

## **Conclusion**

Almost all of the oral histories I have relied upon in my research – whether pre-existing archival interviews or my own original field work – reference at least some of the stereotypical traits and scenarios remediated in Irish cultural representations of the

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<sup>4</sup> Reg Hall has extensively researched this transfer of rural music practice into post-war London – see Reg Hall, *A Few Tunes of Good Music: A History of Irish Music and Dance in London, 1800–1980 & Beyond*, (London, 2016).

period, usually as folktales and stories from the sites and the pubs of Irish London. However, the detail of their own individual personal experiences tends to show that the typical post-war Irish migrant builder who came to London after the 1950s did not in fact experience a work-life or social-life trajectory which was dominated by these stereotypes. Crucially, however, in most instances they learnt to *perform* those stereotypes when encouraged to do so by the constraints of their hyper-masculine existence within the ethnic enclave of London Irishmen *on the buildings*.

This learnt behaviour in relation to the automatic activation of stereotypes of Irishness is analogous in some ways to psychological research carried out in the 1990s on African-American stereotyping which concluded that the unconscious behavioural confirmation processes involved led to self-fulfilling consequences of stereotype re-activation; in other words a mutually-reinforcing cycle which explains, to some extent, why such stereotypes are so resistant to change (Chen and Bargh, 1997, 541). The American oral historian Linda Shopes asserts that by 'recording multiple, contradictory stories across a spectrum...' we can trust the power of these stories to '...communicate broader social truths' (Shopes, 2015, 97). In doing so, it is hoped that eventually a proper balance can be struck between the irresistibility of Irish heroic storytelling as cultural myth and the (sometimes unavoidably mundane) realism of the Irish migrant builder's existence in London.

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# Debating nationhood through images: the visual language of French political cartoons

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Rachel McMahon

## Introduction

Comparable to the metaphorical 'struggle over domains of belonging and apartness in Africa at the founding of the Mali empire' (Fernandez, 1991), contemporary France, consistent with the current populist wave in Western Europe and the US, is experiencing a crisis of identity. This identity crisis, ignited by slowing economic growth, rising unemployment and a continuing influx of immigrants, has sparked nationwide debate about Frenchness and citizenship, and is widely apparent in French media, particularly in the readily accessible visual language of the political cartoon. Within these illustrations, disputes about identity and social hierarchy are negotiated through the use of metaphor in the figurative 'argument of images'.

The media, notable for its power to inspire and shape public opinion, is a crucial tool for imagining a nation. Featured regularly in French media, the political cartoon is a central art form in France. By utilizing the conventions of nuanced satirical media, the political cartoon contributes to the on-going debate on French nationhood, acting as a site wherein hegemonic relations are contested and power subverted. Within this space, I posit the analysis of metaphor as a useful approach with which to understand the differing argumentative strategies pertaining to national identity within the current socio-political climate of France today. At the outset, the ubiquity of metaphor in these cartoons can be understood by their capacity to condense complex political situations or issues through the deployment of humour and satire, serving as both a tool of propaganda and as of entertainment. A keener look reveals that, through this argument of images and play of metaphor, metaphoric constructions of the world are being disputed through metonymic negotiations of the source domain, and conventions are challenged and established hierarchies contested.

The central premise of this paper, therefore, is to decode the visual rhetoric of satirical media in France today, particularly pertinent given the evidence for the

explosive power of cartoons witnessed in Europe in recent years, and their implication for concepts of nationhood and identity. And in this way, reveal the workings of the rhetoric of French identity, or 'Frenchness', as conceived primarily through the use of metaphor in French political cartoons.

By analysing the metaphorical imagery of press cartoons, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which the trope constructs social hierarchies and challenges power relations, supporting or rejecting the authority of the metaphor-producer to create a world. I will examine conflicting representations of Frenchness through an 'argument of images' evident in the country's media today. The political cartoon can therefore be grasped as a stage for negotiating national and cultural identities, and metaphor as a powerful prop. This will further inform 'the role and status of a hybrid but highly visual form [of the political cartoon] within the culture of France' (Wygant, 1999), and its implications for the identity-making process in France today.

## **Discussion**

Comprised of condensed meaning, metaphors are built upon dense layers of intertextuality. In political cartoons, the content of metaphorical images often references popular culture, as a kind of 'visual shorthand' (Connors, 2007), connecting the reader with the cartoonist, as well as to the images depicted, through the deployment of a current, accessible vernacular. This cultivation of intimacy is further expounded by the nature of metaphor, functioning as 'an instrument of consensus and thus community' (Fernandez, 1991). This condensing of a social or political issue into an iconic representation allows for potentially greater persuasive power and influence through visual rhetoric (Moss, 2007). Although acceptance of a metaphor may mean acceptance of the authority of its producer, this is subject to manipulation as the metaphoric construction of the world can be disputed through metonymic negotiations of the source domain. Through this argument of images and play of metaphor, conventions may be challenged and established hierarchies contested (Fernandez, 1991).



(i) *Decoding the Image*

Coinciding with a pan-European and American rise in nationalism, and an ever-expanding cultural and economic globalisation, a desire to ascertain a national sense of self has been reinvigorated in France and is abundantly clear in its presidential campaigns for the recent elections. With the first round of the French presidential elections held in April 2017, candidates' campaigns depicted candidates' promises to address unemployment, which has risen since 2008 from 7.1% to almost 10%, and economic growth, which has slowed to 0.2% of GDP (tradingeconomics.com). Parties such as far-right Front National (FN), in particular, displayed a heavy reliance on nationalist and nativist rhetoric to appeal to the electorate by offering nationalism as a solution to their frustrations, promising 'a return to France's glory days' (edition.cnn.com, 2016).

These recent presidential elections in France provided a valuable opportunity to investigate constructions of a national imaginary, as, coinciding with these elections, a barrage of images representing Frenchness became apparent in verbal and visual political discourse. These election cartoons, in particular, due to their accessibility and wide distribution, are rich sources of coded information, revealing differing conceptions of national identity, in the context of the current political climate in France.

In order to understand the metaphorical content of a cartoon and its productive potential, I identified its source and target domains, as well as the metonymic entailments alluded to in the image. In this way, I hope to demonstrate how the source domain of a chosen metaphor relates to its target domain, and to show how the metaphor, and its corresponding metonymic extension through entailments, correlates to socio-political experience in France today. The selection was made using Medhurst and DeSousa's (1981) four-themed framework, referring to content relating to political commonplaces (that is, tying the campaign to current events), personal character traits, situational themes, and literary/cultural allusions. The latter is defined as 'any fictive or mythical character, any narrative form, whether drawn from legend, folklore, literature, or the electronic media' (Connors, 2007).

Immigration is an increasingly contentious issue often at the centre of these debates. Traditional mechanisms of integration, such as the public school system,

social benefits and the army (although historically successful for the most part), are currently seen to be struggling under the increased pressure from the rise in immigration (Safran, 1991). The growing presence of Maghrebis on already strained systems, and the increased competition for schools, housing and welfare, has sparked resentment among indigenous French working classes, leading many to reconsider who is and who is not French. It would seem that the difficulty in the assimilation of this influx of immigrants is due to their cultural heterogeneity as well as their number, and their arrival has sparked a concern about the dilution of traditional French culture with supposedly conflicting Islamic values. This deculturalisation is further expounded by the perceived engulfing common Western culture, advanced by the EU.

I will look now at various constructions of the French citizen, as well as the contentious issue of Islamic assimilation, through the imagery of traditionally left-wing *Le Monde's* illustrator Plantu. The technique, through metaphoric construction, of manufacturing authenticity and nation-building, as well as its role in the *Je Suis Charlie* campaign, will be explored here. During this time, too, the nationalist rhetoric of FN loomed large in this discourse, and so will be analysed in this discussion.

(ii) *Plantu's 'Marianne'*

The recent presidential elections in France provided a valuable opportunity to investigate constructions of a national imaginary, as a barrage of images representing Frenchness was apparent in visual and verbal political discourse.

The election cartoons, in particular, as readily accessible and widely distributed media, are rich sources of coded information. Attempts to rouse national sentiment is evident in mediated national identity discourse in France today, wherein can be seen a collective need to perform the nation and redefine national identity, most notably in the nativist rhetoric of Le Pen and Le Front National. 'Nation-building' is one such process of generating national sentiment, which includes policies that encourage affective connection to one's nation above ethnic and regional identities. In countries with higher levels of ethnic diversity, "'nation-building" has been proposed as a mechanism for integration and conflict reduction' (Masella, 2013). Rhetoric to this effect is apparent in much political discourse, and is deployed to create both inclusive

and exclusive definitions of French citizenship. As well as in the rhetoric of FN, this is evident in the recurring *Marianne* figure in Plantu's illustrations, depicted as the French electorate as well as a *Je Suis Charlie* campaigner, as a symbol of France and of liberty, below.



6 February 2017: Plantu for *Le Monde*.

*'I'm the most anti-system!'*

Jean Plantureux, under the professional name Plantu, has been a regular contributing artist to *Le Monde* since 1972. Frequently featured in his artwork is the Marianne character, as a metaphorical construct of the French electorate, whose actions and reactions seem particularly pertinent in the context of the recent French election campaign. Along with the recurring Marianne in Plantu's cartoons, the figure of a small mouse can often be seen, representing the publication's reader as well as the normative national standard, against the seemingly absurd events and political characters in French public life. In the image above, both Marianne and Mouse are depicted, confused by the identical assertions of the candidates, Mélanchon, Le Pen, Macron, Fillon and Hamon, who each proclaim themselves to be the best choice to break from the establishment. Each candidate tries to appeal to the electorate, who

presumably upholds the revolutionary ideals associated with Marianne, by addressing the undercurrent of dissatisfaction felt among the French populace of the status quo.

The depiction of the contemporary French electorate as Marianne, as well as the Revolution imagery in the *Je Suis Charlie* solidarity cartoon, to be discussed, frame the growing preoccupation with what it means to be French as a renewal of an old debate about national identity and nation-building. Although, during the *ancien régime*, Frenchness was acquired ascriptively from Gallo-Roman ancestry, the Revolution effected a change in the acquisition of French identity, which could now be derived from 'a voluntary commitment to common political values and a common fate' (Safran, 1991). Concepts of post-French Revolution nationalism and nation-building are symbolised in Renan's 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?', wherein the historian proposes that a nation is a sentiment, based on both 'a common possession of a rich inheritance of memories...and a common consent, a desire to live together' (ibid.). Resulting from the upheaval of the Revolution, considerable importance was therefore placed upon the construction of a collective memory, which sought a fusion of the various assortments of group identities, united under one national culture. Recalling the Revolution and Republican values through imagery is commonplace during the current presidential election campaigns in French media. In this way, the nation's collective memory is stirred by referring to previous regimes, a common method of constructing an 'authentic' national identity and cultivating national imagination.

Alongside these images in contemporary French media, the nationalist rhetoric of le Front National provides additional context. Through the mediated political discourse of FN, an attempt to create an authentic national identity through a sense of timelessness and embodiment is made by the deployment of 'regimes of authenticity'. Much like the romanticisation of the rural Singaporean 'heartlander' (Chong, 2011), the non-elite French citizen is a frequently recurring image, and is seen to embody traditional French values and ethnicity. Like the 'heartlander heroes' who struggle against state institutions and structures, depictions of 'authentic' and 'virtuous' rural French can be perceived as 'metaphors for rebirth, self-awakening and self-purification for a nation of consumers' (ibid.). Depictions of the country's pastoral

practices can therefore be understood as metaphors for life and 'the formation of the self' (ibid.).

Here, authenticity is manufactured by placing these 'heartlanders' in contrast to the elite Parisians and to the politics of globalisation. In this way, the party's populist rhetoric is arguably contributing to the growing divide in France between urbanites and rural dwellers. Ideas of 'authentic Frenchness' are conflated with pastoral scenes, a signifier of unpretentiousness and traditional French values and morality, and are appropriated into FN's image. Far from what Le Pen describes as the 'brouhaha' of Paris, the rural French belong to the real France, contrasted against a dismissive urban elite. This 'real France', *La France Profonde* (Deepest France) or 'Peripheral France', account for up to 60% of the French population (Astier, 2014), and it is on the fears of this group that FN capitalises. Conceivably a nationalist FN heartland, Le Pen contested the usage of the term *La France Profonde*, preferring instead 'to think of it as deeply patriotic' (Willsher, 2016). Le Pen toured this 'forgotten France' of the rural areas and small towns suffering social deprivation ('Tour des France des Oublies'), describing the sacrifice of the 'small people' to multinationals and globalisation (Astier, 2014), whilst valorising the farmer and the worker as the embodiment of morality and integrity, (Nowak and Branford, 2017). Perhaps not unexpectedly, omitted from this anti-EU, 'France for the French' discourse is the significant funding the region receives from the European Agricultural Fund as well as any reference to the relative scarcity of immigrants in the region (Willsher, 2016).

Notwithstanding this omission, related party rhetoric may be interpreted as attempts to decry a 'deculturalisation', alluding to trends of Westernisation and a departure from a 'traditional' French way of life, with the intention of encouraging a sense of loss and disorientation (Chong 2011). Under the slogan 'In the name of the people' ('Au nom du peuple'), Le Pen has claimed during her campaign that the French have been 'dispossessed of their patriotism', with supporters heard to shout 'This is our country!' ('On est chez nous!') (Nossiter 2017). Posing the question 'Will our children live in a country that is still French and democratic?' the party's rhetoric is emphatically nationalistic. Nationalist rhetoric ascertains that the national move towards globalisation, industrialism and urbanisation 'undermined the traditional

authority structures and social anchors of French national identity: the peasantry, the family, and the church' (Safran 1991). FN discourse locates this nostalgic imagery and metaphor conjuring rural life and family alongside the depiction of a France that is modern, secular and economically strong, arguably conflating it with the more favourable outcomes of globalisation. By fostering loyalty through nostalgia, these images can be powerful persuasive tools at the disposal of political parties.

The symbol of a blue rose has been used by FN during the presidential campaign to unite the French electorate by using the flower emblem of the Socialists and the colour of the politically right, but also, as party officials have stated, to denote the current possibility of realising the impossible. Referring to the recent unforeseen successes of nationalism, this poetic metaphor, framed as a chance occurrence in nature rather than a feat of genetic engineering, suggests that the current surge in nationalist and nativist discourse is a naturally, albeit unusually, occurring, unpredictable event in nature, one outside of human control. With this investigation into the rhetorical devices of identity and nation-building discourse, perhaps the metonymic repudiations of this supposed naturalness may be discovered, revealing the true socio-political roots of FN's rose.

Constructing a national identity that combines the aforementioned nostalgia with the concept of a progressive, modern France, also creates grounds for the exclusion of non-European immigrants in particular who do not share either traditional French values and memory or its modern values of individual liberty and secularism. Furthermore, metaphors depicting the above-described rural 'heartlander' as 'true' French in ascriptive views of national identity argue metonymically against the inclusion of non-nationals without needing to state explicitly this sentiment. In this way, nationalist parties 'fallaciously transfer modes of reasoning to more problematic arenas' of government policy (Sahlane, 2013), such as those that would normally be categorised xenophobic, thereby naturalising the exclusion of immigrants from concepts of nationhood. The conclusions drawn from this metaphoric reasoning can enable the perpetration and naturalisation of xenophobia and justify ethnic discrimination. However, ostensibly, the Front National disputes the legitimacy of the inclusion of Islam into French identity more resolutely on the basis of the perceived

incompatibility between French and Muslim values. These grounds for exclusion, then, are based on the professed belief in the latter's inability or reluctance to assimilate into French secular society, rather than on the grounds of FN's ascriptive view of national identity, perhaps so as not to reaffirm the connection with the previous xenophobic incarnation of Jean-Marie Le Pen's FN. The inclusion of Islamic identity into French nationhood is therefore doubly negated.

(iii) *Challenges of Islamic assimilation into French national identity*

As we have seen, by organising our understanding of an argument, the metaphor informs 'how we will experience and *carry on* rational argument' (Fernandez, 1991). More than aiding in the understanding of a complex problem, then, the metaphor, by way of entailments, offers previously unconsidered dimensions to an issue, drawn from the source domain, thereby governing reasoning (ibid.). The potential power of a metaphor lies in its ability, through its metonymic entailments, to inform our understanding of a target domain by transferring meaning from the source domain.

The attacks at the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo* are a particularly pertinent example of metonymic reasoning. A strong proponent of the political cartoon, *Charlie Hebdo*, along with *Le Canard Enchaîné*, form part of 'a distinctly French blend of journalism, politics, satire, art and unrepentant provocation known as the *Journaux irresponsables*, or irresponsible press' (Philips, 2015). Although historically choosing its targets from diverse sections of French life, religion has increasingly become the preferred subject of satire for *Hebdo*, frequently stoking controversy and debate about freedom of expression and religious tolerance. The attacks at the Hebdo office by extremists as a response to the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad, appear as a challenge to hegemonic secular France and its corresponding definition of national identity. French media are thereby an assertion of French cultural control, which was metonymically opposed in the violent attacks. Conversely, the vilification of Muslim immigrants is supported in nationalist rhetoric in part by a synecdochic construction of Islam. By conflating isolated fundamentalist acts of terrorism with the entire Muslim population, and through its transmission by mass media, a reductionist argument for

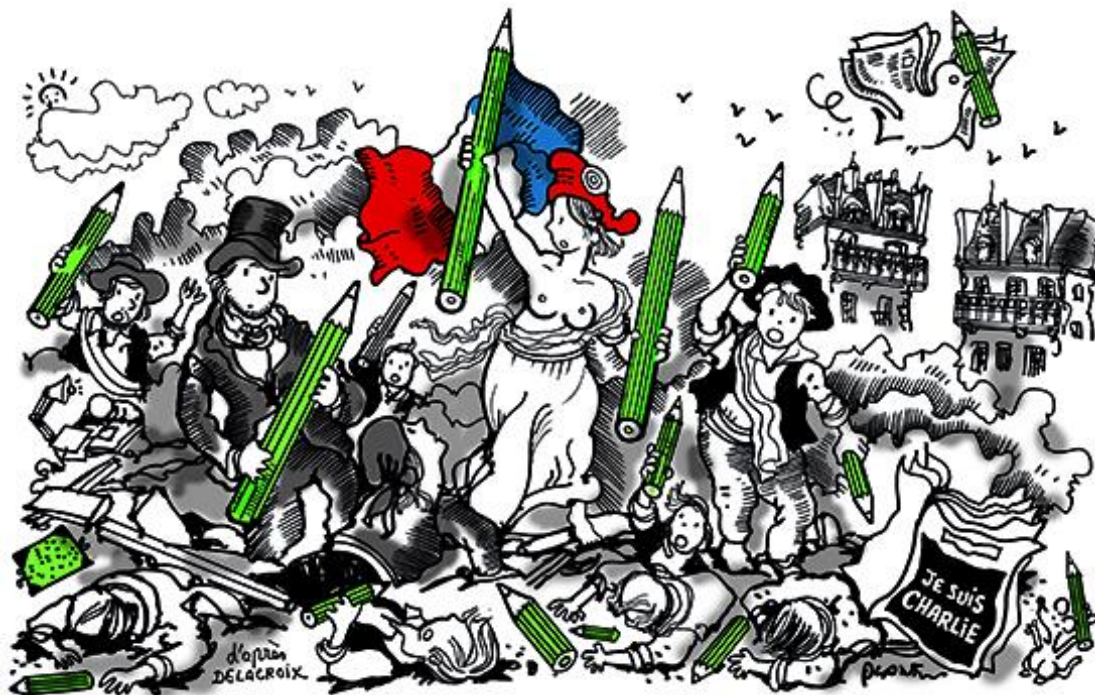
ethnic discrimination takes hold in public discourse. This synecdochic formulation can therefore be deemed politically explosive, as it may, as Friedrich asserts, 'suggest, trigger, or catalyse feelings that...together with legitimating ideologies, can change and even revolutionise or decimate the (political) economy' (Friedrich, 1989).

Similar to a recent investigation (Sahlane, 2013) into the controversy surrounding the Danish cartoons of Muhammad, a 'strategic manoeuvring' of political metaphor may be identified in disputes about *Charlie Hebdo* in Western media. This strategic manoeuvring, he argues, is accomplished by the framing of the debate as a 'conflict between the advocates of 'free speech' and 'religious sensitivity'" (ibid.). By manipulating metaphor in this way, the discussion focuses on Islamic fundamentalism, largely ignoring a growing anti-Muslim sentiment in Western Europe (Hussain, 2007; Sahlane, 2013). Giving due consideration to the extent to which the cartoons resonated with, and were appropriated by, an Islamophobic ethos in Western cultures is important in this study. Similarly, the potential misappropriation of the subsequent *Je Suis Charlie* counter-terrorist movement to bolster anti-Islam discourse is an important consideration. A rising anti-Muslim sentiment and nativism trend has been further explored in a recent Danish study, which has highlighted the role of media 'in popularizing a neo-racist discourse that positions the Muslim identity as a direct negation of 'Danishness' (Muller et al., 2007). This apparent exclusion of the Islamic identity from dominant concepts of Danishness elicits a more nuanced reading of the Danish and French Muhammad cartoons, one that possibly exposes an undercurrent of 'Islamophobia' or anti-Muslim discourse in the two countries.

The supposed 'solidarity' cartoons of the *Je Suis Charlie* campaign that arose in the wake of the Hebdo attacks are an abundant source of metaphorical constructions of national identity. These have been distributed mostly via social media platforms, and will be analysed as conceptions of French identity are here profuse. As seen in the image on screen, these illustrations also use the aforementioned techniques of nostalgic imagery for nation-building. In this recreation of Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People', Liberty (or Marianne) is seen waving the tricolour with its pencil flagpole, drawing an unambiguous comparison between freedom of speech and French values. Her vibrant red Phrygian cap, symbolising liberty, serves to further



emphasise this. In her other hand, the pencil replaces a musket, metaphorically framing the medium of the cartoon as a weapon in the defence of freedom. The dove, symbol of peace, too, carries a pencil in place of an olive branch, its newspaper wings further portraying the publication as an instrument of peace, as well, perhaps, as referencing the slang term for newspapers, *canard* [duck]. Of note, too, is Plantu's Mouse, here depicted brandishing the pencil in support of this new revolution, anticipating the reader's response.



7 Jan. 2017: 'Charlie Hebdo: Il y a deux ans' ['Charlie Hebdo: Two years ago'].

Originally published in *Le Monde* and in *L'Express*, January 2015.

However, framing a campaign for freedom of speech as a French Revolution, in this context, not only metonymically depicts Islamic fundamentalism as the oppressor of the French people, it may also be interpreted as a rejection of moderate Islamic values generally. Though often portrayed bare-breasted, Marianne is in stark contrast to the veiled bodies of Muslim women and so here may signify the exclusion of Islamic values from conceptions of French identity, whilst reaffirming Republican ideals. In this way, this cartoon, while seeking to unify and bolster the nation against terrorism, may be

interpreted as supporting the argument for the incompatibility of Islam with French nationhood.

## **Conclusion**

From the pre-revolution cartoons of 1789 mocking French royalty, the cartoon or comic is of considerable import in French political and cultural life. Similar to the carnivalesque, as observed by Rabelais, the power of the political cartoon lies in its ability to 'subvert the social order through acts of parody, poking vulgar fun at the mystique of political rulers and stirring rebellion in their audiences' (Hall et al., 2016). The counter-narratives of the political cartoon act as 'instruments of resistance that undermine, demythologise and demystify governmental political mythologies and narratives' (Eko, 2007). In this way, they resist and subvert hegemonic ideologies, stimulate debate about political decisions, and challenge dominant configurations of the 'Other'. The political cartoon can be interpreted, then, as a kind of liminal space, a site wherein power relations can be contested. Recalling Goffman's conception of humorous performance, the artist is given license to apparently break rules without breaking them (Goffman, 1959). It is also a particularly effective and 'popular communication tool that critically engages popular sentiment and political ideologies' (Purcell et al., 2010).

As we have seen, these struggles over hierarchy are played out in the political cartoon as metonymic reorderings of social order (Fernandez, 1991). The deployment of power is thereby interpreted and resisted in constructions of identity and place in these political ephemera. Although this construction of identities is central to the human condition (Fernandez, 1986), the current socio-political climate in France has placed this as a particularly pertinent issue of contention. Arguing metonymically within an authoritative metaphor, then, is a powerful tool with which to imagine and reconceptualise perceptions of identity. By envisioning new creative metaphors and through new metonymic reimaginings, the ways of understanding our experience can be reconfigured, new meaning given to our pasts, to our concepts of self and to our belief systems. Like Sundiata in ancient Mali, by 'weaving new metonymies into and so subverting his adversary Soumaoro's metaphoric domains of self-assertion', thereby

reorganizing his society (Fernandez, 1991), national imaginaries may be enacted and disputed. Situated within a particularly sensitive time in French history, careful consideration is required, I maintain, of the ways in which manufacturing authenticity and the metaphorical negotiations of French identity are accomplished in France today.

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Matthew Fogarty is a Tutor and Occasional Lecturer in English at Maynooth University. He was recently awarded a Ph.D. by the School of English, Media, and Theatre Studies at Maynooth, where he held a Government of Ireland Postgraduate Research Scholarship. His dissertation, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Literary Works of William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett*, explores the contrasting ways in which these Irish modernists engage with Nietzsche's philosophy. Matthew has published on Patrick Kavanagh and Conor McPherson, and his book chapter, "'I can't go on, I'll go on': Liminality in Undergraduate Writing," co-authored with colleagues

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Rachel McMahon am currently undertaking my Ph.D. in Anthropology at Maynooth. Her research is on the use and implication of metaphor in the French political cartoon. Rachel completed an M.Sc. in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. Her thesis was a semiotic analysis of the various ideological identities of publications. She has previously worked as a journalist, as well as in administration for a cultural publication. She has also worked as Production Assistant for an animation company. She completed a course in Visual Merchandising at the Dublin Institute of Design. Her project concerned the affective response of viewers to a display, and aesthetic harmony

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Michael Mulvey was born in Luton in 1964, and raised in London of parents from Leitrim and Galway, who emigrated with the post-WW2 wave. He was socialised in an

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Aisling completed her undergraduate in English and history in Maynooth University, and her Erasmus at the University of Vienna. She wrote her undergraduate thesis on a case study of mental illness in Ireland in the 1800s. This led her to study a Masters in the history of medicine in Oxford Brookes University, where she specialised in the study of medical ethics, eugenics and biopolitics. She is currently a Ph.D. researcher at the University of Strasbourg and is funded by the Fondation pour la Memoire de la Shoah and the University of Strasbourg. She is also a member of the Historical Commission for the Medical Faculty of the Reichsuniversität Straßburg, 1941-1944.

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