Carnivals of Reaction?: Irish Modernist Novelists and the Free State Counter-Revolution

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of Irish modernist novelists and of the pro-state and counterrevolutionary themes found in their works. These novels, in so far as they are concerned with political questions, are generally ambivalent about the post-1922 settlement in Ireland. This ambivalence has been often overlooked in recent criticism which has tended to suggest that Irish modernism was, in the post-independence period as much as in the period of revolutionary agitation which had preceded it, a force for imagining and creating alternative Irelands.

Hence this thesis critically engages with Irish postcolonial critics such as Declan Kiberd, in demonstrating how the creation of the Free State in fact radically altered the context of Irish modernist literary production. I here explore the linkages between formal experimentation and counter-revolutionary politics in novels by four writers, James Joyce, Eimar O'Duffy, Brian O'Nolan, and Kate O'Brien. I argue that in works such as *King Goshawk and the Birds*, *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and *The Land of Spices*, as well as in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, we can apprehend an appreciation of the actual achievements of the movement for Irish political independence. While these achievements are often understood by these authors to be flawed and insecure, and to be always under the threat of collapse, they are nevertheless animated to varying degrees by an ambition to protect and develop the legacies of 1922 settlement.

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Introduction

Radical Literature/Conservative State? Problems for radical readings of Irish modernist novels

In a celebration of the contributions Ireland's writers have made to Irish society, Declan Kiberd has claimed that 'in every decade after independence, writers and artists had given warnings' (*After* 3) about the failures of the Free State and Republic. Irish writing served as a kind of 'early warning system' (x) about problems which would not be otherwise identified for years. For Kiberd, this success has been a constant in Ireland since independence, from the early years of the Free State up to the twenty-first century post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. His argument is that Irish writers, sometimes alone among the professions in Ireland, have exposed the insufficiencies of independence and offered up alternatives, often of a politically radical nature. Kiberd's views are open to contest. Joe Cleary, for instance, has warned of a 'haughty sense of sectoral self-congratulation and self-exoneration' ("Horseman" 142) artists and critics have sometimes deployed, one which overlooks the extent to which art and state have, in twentieth century Ireland, operated in support of one another. It is possible to exaggerate the depth of the critique Irish writers have made of independent Ireland and, in doing so, conceal the many ways in which even those working with radical literary forms were unwilling to break from the state. Irish art has not always rejected the Irish state and many artists have attempted to form positive relationships with political power in Ireland.[1]

This thesis is a study of the relationship between the Irish Free State and experimental Irish writing in the 1920s and 1930s. It disagrees with the argument that Irish writers responded to the Free State with radical and independent criticism and instead explores how James Joyce, Eimar O'Duffy, Brian O'Nolan, and Kate O'Brien were never willing to enact a complete break from conservative Irish politics in their work. These writers, often seen to have been enemies of the Free State, will be shown to have struggled to resolve two

[1] Cleary makes his comments in response to what he sees as efforts by Colm Tóibín and other prominent Irish writers to advance the claim that Irish writers, alone among the professions in Ireland, had not compromised themselves during the Celtic Tiger and post-2008 Crash periods. For Cleary, such claims were being advanced in part to protect funding for Irish writing and in part to offer up Irish writing as a potential reservoir of value for the state to draw on in its efforts to rebuild Ireland's international reputation after 2008. Although Cleary does not mention Kiberd in his piece, Kiberd's suggestion that 'as the political nation called Ireland dies … culture is once again seen to be the site and stake of all meaningful struggles' (*After* 495) is worth noting here. For Kiberd, culture activity should be seen to be entirely distinct from the political failures of the post-2008 era.

problems. First, they were confronted with the question of whether to recognise the state which was the insufficient but real product of the national struggle. Second, they had to decide how to engage with those Catholic and bourgeois qualities of the Free State which were, to varying degrees, endorsed also by these writers. Central here will be accounts of the Irish political environment of the post-1922 era which stress Cumann na nGaedheal's investment of political power into the Catholic middle class, a process which has been expressed in historian John Regan's notion of an 'Irish counter-revolution'. This process, says Regan, involved the replacement of both the radical ideas and the radical social forces of the 1916 – 1922 period with those of a conservative Catholic bourgeoisie. Important also will be accounts of avant-garde art and a focus on how artists in the interwar era, throughout Ireland and Europe, were subjecting the idea of what art was and what it could do to intense scrutiny. Most critical of all, however, will be the studies of Irish writing provided by postcolonial theory. Irish postcolonial theory, in this thesis, is both a resource and a problem. If it has made vital arguments for the importance of considering national politics when reading Irish modernism, it has also argued that these works were 'clean', insofar as they were total rejections of the Irish Free State, a contention I deny.

This introduction has three goals. First, it will provide a history of postcolonial theory in Ireland, with particular attention paid to the scholars associated with the Field Day Theatre Company. This history will explore the historical and theoretical contexts within which Irish postcolonialism was formulated and how these contexts shaped the resulting theories. The importance postcolonial scholarship has had for the creation of the concept of an Irish modernism will be also be noted. Crucially, I will examine how postcolonialism has attributed to culture an enormous capacity to effect social transformation, creating an opposition between cultural and political or state-based actions, the latter often being conceived as repressive. In this thesis, I will argue that Irish writers felt the political to have proven to be a greater transformative power than the cultural. The second section of this introduction will move to a critique of this 'culturalism' and explore critical models Irish scholars have developed which preserve gains made by postcolonial scholarship, but which reinsert politics into a historical understanding of cultural practice. The operations of government, state, and parties have a far more prominent role in this criticism. Some of the theoretical implications of culturalism will also be explored, by way of noting the problems culturally-focused political thought encountered in the 1980s, contemporaneous with Field Day. The third section will then lay out the structure of the thesis as a whole, providing a

brief overview of each chapter and explaining how these will develop the themes of the thesis.

Postcolonialism and its discontents

I begin here by looking at postcolonial theory, due to its importance for critical readings of Irish modernist works. As Eóin Flannery explains, 'the projects of critical postcolonial studies question, and effectively underscore, the ideological functionalism of culture within colonial and postcolonial contexts' (*Versions* 12). Postcolonial theory demonstrates the imbrication of culture with politics, showing how culture can serve both colonial and anti-colonial aims. Flannery here echoes scholars who have studied postcolonialism as an international phenomenon, such as Robert J.C. Young, who describes postcolonialism as 'the reconsideration of [colonial] history, particularly from the perspectives of those who suffered its effects, together with the defining of its contemporary social and cultural impact' (4). Postcolonialism is an exploration of the cultures of colonial domination and anticolonial resistance. It seeks, says Young, to 'undo the ideological heritage of colonialism' (65) through presenting 'intellectual and cultural traditions outside the west' (65) as an alternative to 'the political and cultural hegemony of the west' (65). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has expressed this work in a phrase by asking the question 'can the subaltern speak' (66). What is involved in postcolonial theory is an assertion of the perspective of the colonised. History as it has been experienced by colonised peoples is written up as a challenge to history as it has been written by the colonial powers.

To explain how this operation has been carried out by Irish postcolonial theory, Marjorie Howes has argued that postcolonial criticism has staged an argument that pits a 'Romantic culturalism' (94) against classical Enlightenment philosophy and history. Postcolonialism, Howes suggests, deploys a 'political conception of culture in which an enormous faith [is placed] in culture's transformative and emancipatory power' (94). It is in accordance with this 'conception of culture' that postcolonialism seeks to understand the relationship between culture and 'the public sphere, the political and public role of intellectuals, and the need to negotiate, theoretically and practically, between the universal and the particular, between the abstract and the concrete' (94). While Howes does not offer any strict definition of what she means by "Enlightenment", her reference to 'the public sphere' suggests, to use historical referents, the French and American revolutions, the philosophy of Kant, the political philosophy of John Locke. Juxtaposing this

"Enlightenment" to a "Romantic culturalism" strengthens such an impression, with the latter term invoking variously Rousseau in politics, Herder in philosophy, and the development of nationalism in the nineteenth century. This binary pair of 'Enlightenment' and 'Romanticism' invokes debates between linear and discontinuous or circular models of history, between an abstract state and a concrete people, or between the sovereign and autonomous individual and the collective

In effect, what Howes suggests has developed is a contest between culture and modernity, the latter referring to technologization, the modern state, rationalisation, and capitalism, the former referring to popular tradition, decentred forms of organisation, religion, and communal economies. To describe how this culturalism manifests in the postcolonial context, Howes explains culturalism as:

> plac[ing] enormous faith in the subject-constituting or "soul-making" power of culture, and [as] preoccupied with the relationship between "culture" and "politics" or 'public life. Culturalism involves the privileging of culture as both an instrument of colonization and a vehicle of resistance to it. Much culturalist work contains a tension between transformation and tradition; it casts culture as a powerful agent of change and simultaneously looks to culture as a source of tradition and continuity (96).

Culturalism has 'democratizing political impulses' (96) which manifest through explorations of 'diverse populations who have little or no access to conventional means of making political demands, such as political institutions, mass movements, guns, or money, and little or no access to the modes of conventional high cultural production' (96). Culturalism, then, seeks to explore the situation of those left behind or shoved aside by societies structured according to Enlightenment values. In speaking of such a society, what I am describing is the process of modernisation, at least as it had been understood by the modernisation theorists, a school of historians and sociologists I will examine below. As we will see, this contest between Enlightenment and Romanticism, which lies at the roots of much postcolonial debate, manifests in postcolonialism as a debate between a particular Western understanding of modernity and its culturalist antagonist. Deeming culture to be the major transformative power in society, postcolonial scholarship finds itself faced with the question

of what to make of the formal and abstract systems of government which claim to organise the societies this scholarship explores.

Howes is not on her own in making these claims. She repeats them when writing with Derek Attridge in the introduction to their collection *Semicolonial Joyce*. Here, the pair suggest that culturalism 'tends to privilege culture (rather than, for example, economics or military force) as both an instrument of imperial domination and a vehicle of resistance to it' (10). Again, culture is seen to be the driving force of society, although here Attridge and Howes stress the different directions culture can drive. In the field of Irish postcolonial studies, culturalism can promote scholarship which sinks into 'exceptionalism' (10) or which 'traces the similarities and exchanges between Ireland and other peripheral or colonized regions' (10). The model of nationalism it promotes or seeks to excavate can be 'narrow, intolerant, and demand conformity' (10) or be 'more open and pluralistic' (10). These concerns build on work done by Gayatri Spivak, whose *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* is regularly cited by Howes and Attridge. Although not writing about Irish postcolonialism in particular, Spivak worries that a 'distorting culturalism' (qtd in Howes 97) results in denying the postcolonial subject access to those modern institutions decried by culturalism. Assertions of cultural difference or particularity conclude in self-imposed exile from a civil society deemed suspect through its associations. Colin Graham has warned that a postcolonial 'ethics of oppression' (153) can promote 'cultural criticism which makes the subaltern a theoretical site of disempowered purity – social groupings apparently so subsumed by colonialism, capitalism and nationalist ideology, that their oppression leaves them unsullied by these dominances' (153). Nirvana Tanoukhi, in a discussion of the concept of 'alternative modernities', worries that the attempt to assert the notion of a postcolonial alternative to modernity as it existed in the twentieth-century, risks 'disguis[ing] a real dissonance between an academic thesis that celebrates the periphery's specificity, and a local outlook that experiences "specificity" as a mark of inferiority' (609). For Tanoukhi, in other words, the assertion of regional particularity can be carried to such an extent as to celebrate the particular's isolation from global and putatively-universal developments.

The thread connecting these critiques is that the postcolonial urge to critique and oppose the very real failures of modernity risks obscuring the realities of the society under analysis. These failures are real, involving a destructively chauvinistic attitude towards culture in the colonies, a ruthless drive to exploit resources, and an authoritarian disregard for local powers. In politics, then, the stance of the unreconcilable may well be of value and, historically, anti-colonial energies have often been generated through cultural activity, as

exampled by Ireland in the early 1900s. As scholarship, however, if a discipline, seeking to uncover the oppositional energies in a society, begins from the assumption that only culture is capable of acting as a progressive force, the range of readings which can be produced is curtailed. This may appear to be a broad and somewhat sensational description. Such a distortion, however, can be identified even with Irish postcolonial scholars who are not generally regarded as belonging to the radical ends of the political spectrum. Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* concludes with the declaration that 'the notion of "Ireland"' (653) can be defended through a recognition that 'no one element should subordinate or assimilate the others: Irish or English, rural or urban, Gaelic or Anglo, each has its part in the pattern' (653). Kiberd is here seeking to strike a conciliatory note and to avoid exclusivism by promoting an idea of Irish identity as open and welcoming to traditions which have not always identified with or as Irish. While all this may be fair enough, Kiberd clears the ground for this open identity by dissociating his idea of Irish identity from the state or institutional manifestations of Irish identity which emerged in the twentieth century. He argues that James Joyce 'had done more than any politician to liberate Irish consciousness into a profound freedom of form … it was the politicians who, in cleaving to tired, inherited forms, failed to be modern and so ceased being Irish in any meaningful way' (267). We find Kiberd arguing that to be Irish is to embrace 'freedom of form' and the anti-state angle Kiberd takes here is emphasised when, moments earlier, he argues that the open Irish identity was formed 'in the free zones of art rather than in the far-from-free state' (266).

It is one of Irish postcolonialism's great successes, says Conor McCarthy, to have retained the concept of the nation as an intellectual device. It is 'the one synthetic or totalising intellectual concept available to us' (23) and this retention has succeeded in spite of major political and academic opposition. The problem postcolonialism encounters, however, is if it retains the concept of the nation by associating it with the oppositional and the alterative, what counts as national becomes warped. As seen in the example of Kiberd, 'Irish' means 'freedom of form', a sort of modernist willingness to experiment with received forms of knowledge and practice. This means that quite a lot, including the Free State and subsequent Republic, ceases to be Irish and must be understood as a manifestation of something else. Furthermore, it means that anything one wishes to claim as Irish must be dissociated from these 'not-Irish' institutions. So, in literary criticism, if Joyce is to be Irish and the Free State 'not-Irish', then Joyce cannot be seen to have any association with the Free State. In this thesis I want to argue that Joyce, as well as various other Irish modernists, did indeed seek positive relations with the Free State. There was, I will argue, nothing 'not-

Irish' about this. The quest for this positive relation was the product of a certain social and intellectual position shared among these four Catholic middle-class writers and if their work is to be understood in its context, then we must recognise the extent to which opposition or dissent was mitigated by varying degrees of deference to the Free State. Indeed, I will argue that politics, particularly questions of state formation and social reconstruction, provided the framework within which these authors thought and wrote, in direct contrast to the leading role cultural activity held before the Easter Rising. While it has often been held that this lessening of cultural power after 1922 represented a betrayal, I argue that the writers were aware that all had 'changed utterly' and this included the role art could have in political development in Ireland.

Before turning to how I explore this deference, however, I will first spend some time developing the account of postcolonial criticism I have provided above. This thesis will rely on the arguments of postcolonial scholars and their accounts of Irish modernism. My argument will emerge partly through a critique of the blindspots these accounts, with their aim of finding radicalism in works, possess. Hence, I will first sketch out an account of postcolonialism which explains the historical reasons, political, social, and intellectual, for the appearance of these errors. This will involve noting the context of Irish postcolonialism as a product of political radicalism in the 1960s, principally the Troubles in Northern Ireland, but also of international anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements, as a product of economic breakdown in the Republic, and as a product of poststructural philosophy in the academy. Having established how these contexts influenced postcolonialism in Ireland, I will then turn to the accounts Irish postcolonialism provides of modernity and tradition, the uses these accounts have for this thesis, and some of the problems they encounter.

Postcolonialism as a product of decolonization

Broadly, postcolonial theory emerged as part of the post-1945 decolonizing processes in which the various European, as well as the Japanese, empires were dismantled. Initially arising out of the anticolonial struggle itself, the theorisation of this struggle intersected with developments in the Western university system, shaken by the various pressures of the Student Movement, anti-Vietnam protests, Civil Rights and intellectual developments such as the growth in feminist and poststructural theory. As Aijaz Ahmad explains, 'the crisis provoked in the Western academy first by the Algerian Revolution and then by the Vietnam War' (58) made Western intellectuals 'question their own place in the world, and hence also

… question the hegemonic closure of the texts upon which their epistemologies were based' (58). In other words, the political conjuncture of the late 1960s and early '70s proved fertile ground for the development of postcolonial theory and its attempts to, as Young has it, 'undo the ideological heritage of colonialism' (65). This international context exerted its influence on Irish postcolonialism throughout the century, perhaps best measured by Field Day's publication of Edward Said's "Yeats and Decolonization" essay.

It was the Field Day Theatre Company which proved most successful in adapting postcolonial theory to Irish circumstances. Initially established by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea for a Derry-based production of Friel's *Translations*, Field Day quickly expanded from theatrical production to criticism, publishing critical pamphlets throughout the 1980s from thinkers such as Deane, Kiberd, Tom Paulin, Seamus Heaney, and later from the international scholars Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, and Terry Eagleton. Deane, speaking in 1985, described Field Day's outlook in its earliest period as follows:

> one of the basic assumptions of the group was that neither the North or South's political establishments had long to survive and that in a comparatively brief historical period the whole island would be radically altered. Field Day felt that as writers it was part of their responsibility to help create in advance of these changes an idea of Irish culture and tradition which would be more generous than any of the essentially sectarian visions of Irish literature which had previously existed (qtd in Richtarik 69).

Deane's reference to a more 'generous' idea of culture introduces a central concern of Irish postcolonialism. This is its interest in what Eóin Flannery has called 'the ethics of representation and … the practical political, economic and social ends to which these are put' ("Morning Yet" 47). Questions of what social groups appeared in art and how the traditions of those groups were framed were central here. Before turning to Deane's comment on the prospect of political collapse either side of the border, then, I want to note why representation was a major issue and this question brings us to note the relationship between the Troubles and Irish postcolonialism.

As Richtarik explains, in the post-Hunger Strike context of Northern Irish politics, there had been a 'collapse of any middle ground within the province' (68). The Field Day project of adopting 'more generous' ideas of culture was occurring against a backdrop of

political polarisation, which, Richtarik explains, found Field Day attacked by anti-nationalists and unionists as 'straightforward nationalist[s]' (157) and by nationalists for not 'toeing the line' (161). What Field Day understood as its opponent was not this-or-that tradition in Ireland, but the system of binaries it saw as structuring these traditions. Field Day's ambition was to alleviate the pressures created by the treatment of Catholic/Protestant, Unionist/Nationalist, North/South, and so on, as binary oppositions. The sides of these binaries were not to be destroyed, but, rather, the requirement of each identity that the other exist only as an enemy was to be removed. As Richtarik puts it, the point was to 'shak[e] off old conceptions of Ireland and "Irishness" in order to look forward to a richer, more inclusive notion of Irish identity' (164). As Shaun Richards and David Cairns have put it, this was the position that 'the quest for the unattainable essences of either Nationalism or Unionism was destroying the present' (152). This attempt at 'breaking the mould of traditional nationalist thinking' (Richtarik 157) was met with hostility across a political spectrum built upon these antinomies. A 'more generous' concept of culture which promoted cultural unity or conciliation between competing groups, and which involved an attack on identitarian thinking, was necessarily an assault on the strictness adopted by the nationalist and unionist movements of the 1980s.

Field Day were conforming to the culturalism characteristic of postcolonialism by interpreting the Northern crisis as a cultural problem. Deane, for instance, argued that 'the crisis we are passing through is stylistic … it is a crisis of language' ("Heroic Styles" 6). It was a logical development that a belief in the primacy of culture in Irish history, when allied to a desire to avoid the sectarian either/or stances of the Troubles, led to a call for a conciliatory model of culture. We can find an example of Field Day's conciliatory model of culture in the concept of a 'fifth province' which became prominent in Irish postcolonialism during the 1980s and 1990s. As Helen Thompson explains, the 'fifth province' was an idea which appeared in the first issue of the *Crane Bag*, in an editorial by Richard Kearney, a poststructuralist philosopher and student of Derrida, before being adopted by Friel and later the Field Day writers generally. Thompson defines the 'fifth province' as an intellectual space 'where Irishness may be explored beyond the borders between North and South' (12). Within this intellectual construct 'identity [was] permeable rather than fixed so that the distinction between "self" and "other", "us and them", "Protestant and Catholic" … became poles to interrogate rather than positions to inhabit' (13). Friel, when he used the term in 1982, talked about 'a fifth province to which artistic and cultural loyalty can be offered' (qtd in Richtarik 137), going on to argue that Field Day's work sought to 'lead to a cultural state

… out of that cultural state, a possibility of a political state might follow' (qtd in Richtarik 137). Despite the spatial metaphor of a province, the 'fifth province' was a purely intellectual affair. Political organisation, it was allowed, could follow from the popular adoption of a mode of thinking which encouraged unity through cultural exchange, but no more. This was consistent with, and an expression of, a culturalist position. The concept further illustrates the influence the Troubles had on the direction of postcolonial theory in Ireland. Sectarian politics pushed postcolonial culturalism to produce an idea of cultural conciliation.

The concept of a 'fifth province' dropped out of the Irish postcolonial lexicon, in part due to it being, as Richtarik explains, 'annexed by liberal nationalists' (246). The concept expressed the theoretical imprecision culturalist scholarship is vulnerable to. By not promoting any particular programme and tending to disavow political programmes in favour of cultural exchange, the concept was vulnerable to being co-opted and decontextualised. Mary Robinson, referring to the 'fifth province' in her inaugural presidential speech in 1990, described it as 'a place within each one of us — that place that is open to the other, that swinging door which allows us to venture out and others to venture in' (Robinson). While Robinson should not be accused of cynicism in drawing on postcolonial language, by elevating the 'fifth province' to a concept promoting a general openness, she tore it away from the context which gave it meaning. Field Day was attempting to resolve the conflict between nationalist and unionist positions, not the general question of the Other.[2] Seeing Field Day in this context, David Cairns and Shaun Richards describe Field Day as having 'moved to the advocacy of democratic pluralism' (153), rejecting the 'sectarian exclusivism' (153) it had identified in traditional Irish nationalism. Prompted by historical circumstance, Field Day sought to take a suffocating combativeness out of Irish discourse. That Irish postcolonialism was determined by circumstance cannot be seen as a criticism. All intellectual movements are products and victims of circumstance and it is to Irish postcolonialism's credit that it sought to intervene in political and social life. Nonetheless, these circumstances must be recognised if we are to have full recognition of how the theory operated and what it was looking for in its readings and criticism.

[2] Indeed, in the same year, the problems inherent in Field Day's focus on this conflict would be exposed with the publication of the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. Feminist critics were quick to note the absence of women writers and themes, particularly in the third volume covering twentieth-century Ireland. The criticisms were unavoidable. For instance, the section "Political Writings and Speeches: 1900 – 1988", edited by Deane, contained no woman writers and only one significant reference to feminism, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington's "War and Feminism". For a comprehensive account of the controversy, see Caitriona Crowe's "Testimony to a Flowering" in *The Dublin Review*, issue 10, Spring 2003.

Postcolonial theory as a product of '70s economic stagnation

What must be added to the above account of Irish postcolonialism as a conciliatory and pluralist discourse is, of course, colonialism. To better understand how this concept appeared within Irish postcolonialism, a second historical and intellectual context is required, one suggested in Deane's remark about anticipating the collapse of the Republic in 1981. What Deane referred to here was the protracted economic crisis Ireland had entered in the late 1970s.[3] Partly a product of the oil shocks of the 1970s and partly a product of government policy, the crisis of the Republic in the 1980s manifested as a return to the crises of the 1950s, with emigration, unemployment, and a retrenching of conservative Catholic power all visited on the state. What is of particular importance for this thesis is the intellectual crisis brought on by the economic crash. As Luke Gibbons explains, 'the collapse of the social and economic policies of the 1960s and 1970s was sufficient to throw into question the whole project of modernization as it applied to a newly industrialized country such as Ireland' (*Transformations* 84). This 'project of modernization' was the project initiated under Sean Lemass in 1959 and involved abandoning autarkic or self-reliance economics, encouraging greater industrialisation, some social liberalisation, and most importantly, a new emphasis on bringing foreign capital into Ireland to provide growth. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the project was considered a remarkable success and its collapse was a major intellectual and political shock. This shock, however, was one being repeated throughout the world in the 1970s and 1980s. Modernisation projects similar to Ireland's had been attempted by many countries, notably by the decolonising nations of the 1950s, and had come to similar ruin. As a result, writes Michael Todaro, of these 'numerous failures and growing disenchantment' (74) with modernisation, intellectuals were provoked to develop radically new understandings of what constituted modernisation and modernity. These new accounts paid significant attention to colonialism and neocolonialism. Field Day, which anticipated that the problems of modernisation were going to crash the Republic, participated in this global intellectual movement and this needs to be taken account of also.

In referring to a project of 'modernisation', Gibbons is not using a mere generic term. Rather, Lemass's modernisation project had attempted to change society along lines

[3] Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was a fear among politicians in the Republic that the violence in Northern Ireland would spread beyond the border. Events such as the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974 gave weight to such fears. Given that the Irish postcolonial project was seeking to alleviate violence, however, it seems unlikely that Deane would have been anticipating this sort of escalation and these fears are uncommon among Irish postcolonial writings of the 1980s. Far more common are attacks on economic and cultural failings in the Republic and, so, it is this I have chosen to focus on.

prescribed by what was called "modernisation theory". Described by Todaro as a product of a post-World War II environment, modernisation theory drew on European and American experiences of industrialisation to explain how the decolonising nations would 'catch up' to the standards of the West. In modernisation theory, development was conceived of as occurring through stages, what Todaro calls 'a series of successive stages of economic growth through which all countries must pass' (68). According to one of the more prominent modernisation theorists, Walt. W. Rostow, it was 'possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high-mass consumption' (47).[4] While the pace at which a society moved through these stages could vary, the stages themselves were universal. Development was thus linear and universal, the singular process through which countries moved from agricultural to industrial to consumer society. Interestingly, although Rostow described modernisation as occurring through 'major changes in both the economy itself and in the balance of social values' (49), he argued that 'the building of an effective centralized national state … was, almost universally, a necessary condition for take-off' (49). What modernisation theory attempted to codify into a sociological theory was the transformation of values, economic structures, political organisations, and social life, which had been visited upon Europe in the nineteenth century. This was modernisation and while a host of postcolonial critics would successfully problematise both the definition and the theory, it would remain the standard against which alternative ideas of modernisation would pit themselves.

Alternative ideas of modernisation developed because, as prominent critic of modernisation theory Andre Gunder Frank complained, 'most of our theoretical categories and guides to development policy have been distilled exclusively from the historical experience of the European and North American advanced capitalist nations' (76). The developing nations of the 1950s and 1960s had not drawn their programmes for modernisation from internal social forces, but instead had been encouraged to ram through

[4] Todaro describes Rostow as the 'influential and outspoken advocate' (70) of the 'stages-of-growth model of development' (69). The work of Rostow quoted from here is titled "The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto". References to Marx are common in modernisation theory, with the understanding of development being of the same spirit of Marx's remark that 'the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future' (Preface 414). It is worth noting that the model of Marx the modernisation theorists drew on has itself come under attack by scholars who have identified a much less stage-based model of development in Marx's later work. See, for instance, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*, ed. Teodor Shanin.

a programme which assumed the historical inferiority of their society. For Frank, this misunderstood that:

> the contemporary underdeveloped institutions of the so-called backward or feudal domestic areas of an underdeveloped country are no less the product of the single historical process of capitalist development than are the so-called capitalist institutions of the supposedly more progressive areas (77).

For Frank, there were no such things as the traditional and the modern. Rather, anywhere that had been integrated into capitalism, which by the 1950s meant the entire non-socialist world, was modern. The industrialised west and the impoverished former colonies had been brought into being by the same process. If the western result was to be deemed modern, then, said Frank, so too must the colonial. Todaro describes the critiques that emerged as constituting an 'international dependence paradigm' (74). This emphasised how modernising nations existed in a 'dependence and dominance relationship to rich countries' (81) and 'attribute[d] the existence and continuance of Third World underdevelopment primarily to the historical evolution of a highly unequal international capitalist system of rich country-poor country relationships' (81).

Frank argues that the failure of societies to develop ideas of modernisation from their own context conceded in advance subordination to the modernity of the west. Dependency was built into the idea of modernisation. Immanuel Wallerstein adds that this neglect of local conditions led to a second error. This lay in modernisation's demand for a 'break from the supposedly culturally-narrow religious bases of knowledge in favour of supposedly trans-cultural scientific bases of knowledge' (83). Those 'changes … in the balance of social values' (49) which Rostow desired involved the adoption of prescribed technocratic, scientific, and rationalised methodologies. For Wallerstein, however, the problem here was that 'at the simple technical level of agricultural productivity and biological wholeness, we have been discovering of late that methods of human action discarded a century or two ago …often need to be revived because they turn out to be more, not less, efficacious' (99). Scientific and technological approaches could not, it turned out, always match the results of tradition. Furthermore, the very idea of 'a neutral "universal" culture' (83) of technocratic modernity was a mask for 'cultural imperialism' (83), or the imposition of the rule of a certain branch of technocratic specialists in the name of so-called modern culture. Again, subordination

was built into the idea of modernisation, here manifesting as the replacement of local cultures with those of the industrialised west. It is the case that a critique of modernisation as a form of cultural imperialism could have been made without modernisation theory proving itself to be economically fallacious. That it proved itself guilty of such a fallacy, however, gave this cultural critique much greater weight, as the results of tossing tradition overboard were found to be surprisingly limited.

Dependency theory was adopted by some Irish historians and economists in the 1980s. Raymond Crotty, for instance, argued that 'Ireland's failure to provide a livelihood for its people is best understood as part of a much more widespread failure, that of the Third World's failure to develop' (11).[5] Certainly, postcolonialism and Field Day, as presented above, shared something of a spirit with this critique of modernisation theory. Frank's complaint about the failure to derive categories from local conditions echoes, in the sphere of economics, Brian Friel's desire to produce a theatre which 'talks to ourselves' (qtd in Richtarik 12). For postcolonial theorists, Gibbons explains, what was intellectually enriching about the breakdown of modernisation theory was that 'the equation of urbanization and industrial development with enlightenment values of progress, secularization and cosmopolitan proved no longer viable' (84). An emphasis on colonialism and unequal international relations, as well as an exploration of the importance culture has as a social force, were themes of an international debate that Ireland could not avoid.[6] One product of this was the idea of 'alternative modernities', a concept described by David Lloyd as referring to societies which:

> are neither modern nor traditional, developed nor backward, but that occupy a space that is uncapturable by any such conceptual couples … a space where the alternative survives … as an incommensurable set of

[5] Crotty explicitly refers to Rostow's work, describing the 1960s modernisation project in Ireland as having 'an intellectual basis in an amalgam of the Keynesian deficit financed "demand management" economics … and of the currently popular teaching by Rostow on "economic take-off"' (88). Crotty notes that 'faults similar to those in the Irish economy have precluded, in every former capitalist colony, the "economic take-off" about which Rostow facilly wrote, but which occurred virtually spontaneously in countries that were not capitalist colonies' (90).

[6] Gibbons admits that one possible response to the collapse of modernisation, taken by many in Ireland, was to complain that modernisation has not been completed. Here, the problem was seen as 'the persistence of tradition, the tenacity of rural values in the face of social change' (*Transformations* 84), a position which, particularly when it involved the discussion of why political violence had survived modernisation, drew the support of revisionism. Conor McCarthy, in a wide-ranging study of modernisation discourse in modern Ireland, argues that revisionism 'is the historiographic outrider of the discourse of modernity as it has come to be understood in Ireland' (18). Modernisation's antipathy towards tradition found a supporter in revisionism. See McCarthy, *Modernisation, Crisis, and Culture in Ireland, 1969 – 1992*. pp. 14 – 23.

> cultural formations historically occluded from, yet never actually disengaged with, modernity (2).

The critique of modernisation theory, then, yielded the concept of 'alterative modernities', that which went beyond the traditional but which did not conform to modernity as understood by modernisation theory. Problematically, such a theory implicitly sanctified western industrial modernity as the true modernity, to which the alternative existed in relation to. Nonetheless, however, this battle over the meaning of modernity proved crucial to postcolonial theory, and a willingness to see value in tradition and culture lent importance to the Field Day project of preserving, through conciliation, the traditions on the island.

Postcolonial theory as a product of poststructuralism

Irish postcolonial theory, then, found itself emerging from two major political discussions, the discussions about culture and tradition brought on by the Troubles and the discussion about modernisation brought on by the 1980s crash. These political contexts should not conceal that postcolonialism was a cultural theory and, as I have indicated, has been described as having a culturalist understanding of society. Although it developed itself through participation in social and economic questions, it also drew on less immediately political sources. A vital context for postcolonialism is the poststructuralist school of philosophical thought, which held enormous power within the academy in the 1980s through the prominence of figures such as Foucault and Derrida. The severe anti-identitarian leanings of poststructuralism was, argues Ahmad, of particular interest to postcolonial critics dissatisfied with the restrictions placed upon them by the nationalist states produced by decolonization. Being 'disillusion[ed] with the (national-bourgeois) state of the said Third World' (68), he argues, theorists found in 'poststructuralism and deconstruction … determinate theoretical positions for the critique of nationalism itself' (68). Poststructural thought provided an 'alternative to nationalism' (68) which remained radical and opposed to the western forces anti-colonial struggle had been aimed at. Of particular interest for Irish scholars was that, for many French poststructuralists, including Derrida, but also others such as Hélène Cixious and Philippe Sollers, Joyce's work was a vital reference. This trend was continued beyond the Francophone world, with Colin MacCabe's 1978 work *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* a vital step in Anglophone poststructural literary criticism. Certain poststructural themes found their way into Irish

postcolonial approaches to the question of culture in Ireland and, so, some note must be made of this philosophy.

Edna Longley described Deane's work as attempting to 'reconcil[e] Derry with Derrida' (31) and, if Longley was overstating the case somewhat, poststructural themes certainly recur throughout Deane's work. As a quick accounting of this, we can note his borrowing from Derrida in calling *Finnegans Wake* a 'Babelian Act of War' ("Introduction" xlivi) and his suggestion that Joyce was 'like the deconstructionists of our own time' (xxi). Poststructural influence can also be noted with reference to the importance of Richard Kearney to Irish postcolonialism. Editor of the *Crane Bag*, Kearney was a poststructuralist philosopher in his own right, with Derrida a central element of his thought.[7] More generally, we can note the sustained presence of Bakhtin in Irish postcolonial criticism. A vital reference for poststructural thinkers, Bakhtin's concepts of the carnivalesque and heteroglossia have been prominent in Irish postcolonial criticism.[8] A central influence these thinkers had on Irish postcolonial critics was their approach to language. Ira Nadel, for instance, has made a controversial claim that 'even the control of language over experience has been identified as fascistic' (30), suggesting that Joyce, through 'the dialogic and contradictory world of language which stresses its reprocessing through parody, invention, puns, borrowings and re-creations. … protests against the uniformity and authority of Fascism' (32). Excessive or not, Nadel's conviction that Joyce, with *Finnegans Wake*, was fighting fascism has been echoed by Philippe Sollers, who has described *Finnegans Wake* as the 'most formidable anti-fascist book produced between the two wars' (109) This sort of reading was prominent in MacCabe's work. Complaining that post-war criticism had produced readings where Joyce's works were 'transformed into complicated crossword puzzles whose solution is the banal liberal humanism of the critic' (3), MacCabe sought to use the poststructural account of language to provide a politically radical reading of Joyce. For MacCabe, Joyce's works depicted 'the subject as the product of a constant re-articulation in the present' (9). Joyce's characters were not stable identities or individuals. Rather, his approach exposed 'the

[7] See, for instance, *Jacques Derrida*, Fordham University Press, 2004, or *Derrida and Messianic Atheism*, Fordham University Press, 2014.

[8] Gerry Smyth, for instance, argues that the Bakhtinian carnival allows us to understand 'the struggle between colonising and decolonising cultural discourse … in terms of an economy of *centripetal* (centralising) and *centrifugal* (decentralising) tendencies' (30). Indeed, so prominent is the carnivalesque that it has become a target of criticism. Cleary, for instance, warns that carnival 'loses much of its socially transgressive quality in modern times … because the modes of excess and extravagant consumption … became virtually routinized and individualized in late consumer societies' (289). This thesis will align closer to the second of these attitudes on the carnivalesque, as will be explored in the chapter on Brian O'Nolan.

incompatible discourses that have traversed our flesh' (133) and produced 'an encounter with those constitutive processes that render us sexed and civil subjects' (133). For MacCabe, Joyce demonstrated that the self was a fiction composed of discourses, made up of ideas and languages in constant flux. What made this political, in MacCabe's opinion, was that Joyce had uncovered the political work which art could carry out. This was to either 'confirm[] … identities in an imaginary exchange or … transform … them into a network of relations which thus become available for knowledge and action (156). Like Nadel, MacCabe saw in Joyce's breakdown of languages, codes, discourses and ideas a politically subversive attack on the identities of modern societies. For MacCabe, the political importance of this attack could not be understated and he compared it to Leninist innovations in political activism.

A postcolonial critic such as Deane could draw on these poststructural readings to argue that Joyce, writing as a colonial writer who was the victim or prisoner of the canons of English literature, saw 'colonial oppression, the canonization of authority and the authorizing of canonicity' (xvi) as philosophically similar problems. The poststructuralist attack on authority as manifesting in identities, canons, teleologies, and so on, could be imported into a postcolonial attack on strict traditional identities, on the British canon, and on the teleologies of imperialism and anti-colonial struggle alike. It provided a plastic theory adaptable to Field Day's need to generate a sense of culture where traditions existed in horizontal relation, rather than as binaries. It was this insistence on Joyce's national basis that was the major innovation postcolonial critics brought to these poststructuralist readings. Although MacCabe did seek to refer to Irish history in his work, the analogy he drew between Joyce's refusal to visit the Free State and the anti-Treaty IRA of the 1930s was left underdeveloped.[9] For the poststructural critics, Ireland was not an important context. Languages games were an international and de-contextualised phenomenon in poststructural theory and it was postcolonial theorists who suggested that these may have emerged from local conditions.

Postcolonialism in Ireland and the critique of modernity

[9] Ironically, the title of MacCabe's work revealed his roots in internationalist readings of Joyce. "James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word" had originally been the title of an essay by Eugene Jolas, the publisher of *Work in Progress* and a partisan for cosmopolitan readings of literature.

Postcolonialism, then, arrives at a critique of subjectivity and language through a poststructural inheritance, at a critique of modernity through the breakdown of modernisation theory, and at a desire for a conciliatory model of culture through its response to the Troubles. These aspects of Irish postcolonialism should be seen as instances of what Eagleton calls postcolonialism's opposition to the 'liberal-rationalist' ("Revisionism Revised" 317) reading of history, deemed guilty of 'generously trusting to the civilising forces of modernity' (317). Critiques of the liberal ideal of the subject as coherent and autonomous, of the developmental ideal of capitalist market relations, and of the modern idea of post-traditional rationalisation, all belong to this criticism of 'the civilising forces of modernity' (317). Having explored how and why this critique emerged, we can turn to the critique itself in greater detail, looking first at the postcolonial treatment of modernity before turning to its account of tradition's relation to modernity. At the outset, it is important to clarify that my critique of Irish postcolonialism is that it has, too often, restricted itself to reading culture as a radical force. What postcolonialism has sought to demonstrate is the potential for culture to act as the force which produces politics. Culture, it follows, is to be understood as a force in contest with the more-official seeming politics of state and party. It is this aspect of the postcolonial critique which I disagree with, at least as a tool for investigating culture in the Free State. In the Free State, I contend, culture followed politics. It is evident, then, that I do not dissent from the postcolonial politicising of culture, but only from how it weighs the two terms. On the other hand, the postcolonial interest in the modernist strain in Irish culture is one I wish to continue pursuing. Furthermore, the emphasis postcolonialism places on Ireland as the governing category of cultural production in the revolutionary and Free State periods is something I entirely agree with. Irish independence, an Irish state, and an Irish revolution, were all central to the thought of the writers examined here and what I explore is how this centrality involved supporting or seeking reconciliation with the Free State.

Postcolonialism emerged in an era when the critique of modernisation, or at least the formulation of it which had been adopted in Ireland, had two major elements. The first was a critique of the actual operations of modernisation and the modern world system which had been ignored by theorists. The second was a critique which addressed the modes of living which modernisation promoted and those replaced by modernisation. Both critiques of modernisation are evident in Irish postcolonialism. We can find a suspicion of modernisation as a form of imperialism in, for instance, the work of David Lloyd.

Expressing the sort of concern with cultural imperialism found in Wallerstein, Lloyd argues that a 'broader plan for rationalizing and homogenizing the European political economy' (*Ireland After* 81) is corrosive of 'cultural identity' (81). His criticism here is of contemporary European developments rather than historic development, but nonetheless, Lloyd is accusing modernisation of being a means for the powers of capital to seize control of a territory. Lloyd critiques modernisers for implanting a prescribed model of thought in place of an existing one. Furthermore, he critiques the state for carrying out the 'massive restructuring of the modes of interpellation by which individuals are transformed into citizen-subjects' (34), echoing and critically elaborating on Rostow's claim. Here, rationalisation and state centralisation are seen to be tied together, the state being the practical expression and agent of rationalising society. Resembling Lloyd, Gibbons argues that 'under certain conditions of relative historical continuity or legal-rational administration … language and identity acquired [a] kind of fixity' (*Transformations* 147). These conditions, Gibbons explains, find embodiment in the state, conceived by Gibbons as a product of 'Hegelian standards of clarity and abstraction' (147). Gibbons's point about language here is that these 'Hegelian standards' imprint themselves onto the use of language. Concurrently, the absence of these standards leaves its own imprint. Again, we find suspicion of modernisation as an imperial force which imposes institutions, cultures, and philosophies on societies rather than develop existing models.

Central also to the critique of modernisation theory presented above is the idea that the world cannot be split into modern and traditional. Rather, every state in the modern system is modern and what is required is an awareness that being modern can mean different things depending on how one is integrated into modernity. This critique is strongly felt in Irish postcolonial theory as it provides the basis for refuting the claim that colonial Ireland was merely backwards and traditional. Joe Cleary provides an eloquent demonstration of this argument in describing how nineteenth-century Ireland was 'a society swept into modernity on the scythe-edge of famine' (*Outrageous* 88). The 'discombobulating force' (88) of modernisation, 'corrod[ing] the old social order, dissolving its pre-capitalist elements, imploding traditional forms of everyday life and installing in their place new work practices' (88) was brought about 'by the extraordinary devastation of the Great Famine' (88). Cleary argues that the absence of industrialisation, urbanisation, and so on, was not an absence of modernity. Irish colonial impoverishment and British industrial wealth should not be seen 'as two altogether alien and disjunctive histories but rather as two divergent vectors of the

same capitalist modernization' (78-79). The colonial Irish situation could only be a product of modernity.

In his references to modernity as a 'discombobulating force', Cleary draws on an idea of modernity as being a psychic experience as well as a social transformation. Alienation and confusion, more commonly understood to be products of industrialisation and urban life, are understood to have been inflicted upon Ireland by the Famine. This position has been developed by Gibbons, who argues that 'the disintegration of experience visited by the city and modernity … was brought about by the antinomies of colonial rule in Ireland' (168). A crucial consequence of this argument for literary studies is that it allows for the argument that modernist aesthetic forms usually assumed to have resulted from urban life can also be understood to have emerged from the modern colonial deprivation in Ireland. Gibbons argues that the formal experimentation of Irish writers, including not only Joyce but also going as far back as Dion Boucicault, demonstrates that an experience of rural or traditional society can be modernist. Deane, in arguing that Joyce's method in *Finnegans Wake* 'has its roots … in the phenomenon of the Irish experience of mutilation and catastrophe and the inadmissibility of "goahead plot" as a form that could encompass or characterize it' ("Introduction" xiv), makes a similar point. A modernist narrative can emerge from and express a colonial experience.[10]

These positions assist postcolonialism in both its critique of contemporary Ireland and its interpretation of the revolutionary period. It allows for understanding colonial Ireland as modern rather than a backwater, which opens room for an understanding of activity within colonial Ireland as modern. It also allows for critique of the present in a manner which allows for the retention of those aspects of Irish society which modernisation seeks to erase. This latter critique has influenced literary criticism in useful and interesting ways. Deane, for instance, warns that modernisation promotes a false universalism, where society is governed by 'the harmony of indifference, one in which everything is a version of something else, where sameness rules over diversity, where contradiction is finally and disquietingly written

[10] It may be useful here to bear in mind the most renowned account of modernity as a psychic experience of dislocation, Marshall Berman's 1982 *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Berman, drawing on Karl Marx and his account of modernity in the Communist Manifesto, describes modernity as 'a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal' (15) which offers near-limitless possibilities for both transformation and collapse. His argument is that 'to be modern is find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are' (15). Berman seeks to emphasise modernity as a two-faced experience, with both potential and drawbacks, and furthermore argues that twentieth-century modernists literature fails to represent this as well as the nineteenth-century works of Goethe, Marx, Dostoevsky, and Baudelaire.

out' ("Heroic Styles" 56). Deane makes these comments in a discussion of *Finnegans Wake*, warning that there exists a spurious notion of equality wherein the value claims of different traditions are silenced in the name of putative equality. Rather than understand society as being made up of differing blocs adhering to competing, but equally justified beliefs, modernisation requires that people abandon their existing interests in favour of a unity built around modernity. The Field Day project of reconciliation can be seen as a potential solution to this problem, with this critique of modernity resolved by the attempt to acknowledge the competing validities of the warring Irish traditions. Emer Nolan finds a version of this criticism of modernity in Joyce, suggesting that his work 'discloses how much the repressive authority shares with its "liberating" alternative by showing how the "desire" freed by the loss of religious faith is instead invested in the capitalist marketplace' (*Emancipations* 161). Nolan's reading will be explored in greater detail below. For now, it is necessary only to note the argument that modernisation replaces existing authorities and does not erase authority in general. Luke Gibbons, when he argues that modernisation in Ireland has created 'an enlightenment without hope for the casualties of this upwardly mobile form of modernity' (*Transformations* 92) makes a similar argument. The promise of modern liberalism is seen to contain the demand that one submit entirely to modernity.

Postcolonial theory and the return to tradition

Postcolonial theory, then, seeks to widen understandings about what can constitute a modern experience, suggesting cultural sovereignty is better protected by endorsing alternative models to the typical Western model. In part, what motivates this criticism is a desire to redeem or defend those traditions which modernity has indicated are to be removed. Here, postcolonialism largely shares in the project of the Revival, or, at least, the project of the Revival as it is understood by postcolonialism. Cleary, for instance, depicts the Revival as an attempt 'to recover or to invent an indigenous culture almost totally obliterated by centuries of colonialism, anglicization, and famine' (*Outrageous* 89) and parallels it with modernist movements such as Italian Futurism and Russian Constructivism. What separates the Irish Revival from these avant-garde movements is that, whereas 'for the [Italian] Futurists, modern Italy had to blast its way out from under the opulent rubble of imperial Rome and the Renaissance in order to enter modernity' (89), Ireland had to create that past in a form appropriate for modernity. Furthermore, Cleary argues, given that colonialism had prevented the establishment of an 'indigenous or vernacular post-

Renaissance high culture' (90), any modernist attempt to create some future society had as its only resource the 'folk and peasant materials, or … the pre-modern saga and epic literature of the pre-Christian past' (90). For Cleary, modernity and tradition are to be understood not so much as oppositional binaries but as related terms. The point is to demonstrate that one can have a modernity that draws on tradition and which attempts to use the traditional to direct the modern. This is how postcolonial theory in Ireland has sought to understand pre-revolutionary nationalist culture and, if only implicitly, its own contemporary practice.

For postcolonial theorists, then, the backwards look to traditions destroyed or in an advanced state of decay is really a future-oriented act. Here, the Revival is the crucial arena in which postcolonialism develops these ideas and is, furthermore, the grounds for a postcolonial treatment of revolutionary Irish culture as modernist. P.J. Mathews has done work on demonstrating the extent to which the Revival involved a 'progressive self-help ethos' (2) which interacted with social movements such as the co-operative movement, in the name of constructing an 'alternative modernity' (2). Mathews explicitly sees the Revival as being an opponent of 'colonial models of modernization which were largely antagonistic towards tradition' (2), with David Lloyd's ideas of alternative modernities being the reference. Cleary has echoed Mathews's comments, describing the Revival as an attempt 'to create hegemonic national institutions and a national public' (*Outrageous* 89). What these critics emphasise is that the Revival was an attempt to construct not only a new political state but also, and potentially more importantly, a new type of society. This constructive element in the Revival has been identified by Seamus Deane as being also present within Irish nationalism. He argues that Joyce 'had learned from Irish nationalism the power of a vocabulary in bringing to existence that which otherwise had none except in the theatre of words' (*Celtic Revivals* 105). Deane identifies in nationalist rhetoric a capacity for this rhetoric to reach beyond mere words and intersect with real forces.

Admittedly, many critics of the Revival would agree that it had attempted to create a new Ireland. These critics take issue with the Ireland that was produced, finding the Free State's disappointments to have their roots in the Revival's attempt to reconjure Gaelic Ireland. We have seen some arguments defending the turn to tradition, based around the particularities of colonial Ireland, but some postcolonial critics have argued for an inherent modernism to the Revival's use of tradition. Terry Eagleton has described the Irish modernist strategy as being that of an 'archaic avant-garde' which, rather than 'grasping the past as the prehistory of the present' (*Heathcliff* 279), in the manner of modernisation theory,

'blends the archaic with the absolutely contemporary, squeezing out the dreary continuum between them' (279). Irish modernism, so Eagleton writes, dismisses concerns that tradition is merely past and instead allows it to enter into relationships with the present. The claim that the traditional is something which is outmoded by modernity is overruled. There is a Benjaminian aspect to this thought and we find this echoed in Declan Kiberd's reading of the Easter Rising and its participants as a modernist event. Arguing against characterisations of the rebels as 'being fixed on the past', Kiberd understands them to have 'sensed their power to redirect [the past's] latent energies into new constellations' (*Inventing* 293). Tradition is seen to serve as a potential basis for radical action and Kiberd argues that 'what was modern about the 1916 thinkers was precisely their disruption of chronology, their insistence on the revolutionary idea of tradition' (294).[11] This was the case for 'the Cuchulain myth to the leaders of 1916' (293), as well as for Connolly's ideas of Celtic Communism and Pearse's thoughts on reviving Gaelic methods of education. Such thought 'put on the mask of a historical actor to bring something new into being' (293). These arguments reverse the claim that the modern is what dismisses the past and the traditional that which embraces it. Here, to be modern is to act without concern for the linearities of historical time. That something has passed does not mean it cannot come again and, so postcolonial critics claim, historical time is seen as overlapping, circular, disorganised, and nonlinear. With an eye on social transformations, postcolonial critics have argued for the transformative and progressive prospects of incorporating the past into the present.[12]

[11] Although Kiberd does not develop the comparison, his emphasis on the revolutionary qualities involved in 'disrupting chronology' could be seen to contain a criticism of the parliamentarian and gradualist strategies of Redmond's Home Rule Party, which were shunted off the political stage by the revolutionary actions of the Volunteers. Such a reading could be compared to other accounts of modern revolutions, such as Antonio Gramsci's description of the Bolshevik Revolution as a 'revolution against *Capital*', meaning a revolution against the understanding of history as linear stages promoted by the Second International. When we bear in mind also James Connolly's Syndicalism, we can see how modern the Easter Rising was.

[12] Where the turn to tradition can go wrong is when it is used to recreate the past, in the present, rather than allow the two to fuse. Kiberd's discussion here provides an example of this, warning that 'the common nationalist view of tradition' (*Inventing* 294) seeks 'to recover the past as fetish rather than to live in the flow of actual history' (294). 'Endless harping on an idealized past … is used as a distraction from the mediocrity of the present' (294). Kiberd further argues that the endpoint of this type of conservatism is the transformation of the supposedly-revered traditions into tourist kitsch. What is only slightly-concealed here is that Kiberd is critiquing the Free State and Republic, reminding us again that Irish postcolonialism has always been a discourse critical of all sides of the post-1922 settlement.

Postcolonialism at its limits and the critique of the Free State

There is no single position within Irish postcolonial criticism as to whether cultural activity takes priority over political activity in the question of social transformation, or if the pair are partners in a more equal relationship. We have already seen Kiberd's argument that Joyce 'had done more than any politician to liberate Irish consciousness into a profound freedom of form' (267), which takes the former position. Mathews points to a more equal relationship in suggesting that while 'the early theatre movement [was] inflected with the wider politico-cultural tensions of their moment' (1) it also 'intervened materially in the political debates of the period' (1). Culture is here treated as matching the social importance of politics, with the pair in a sort of mutually-supportive relationship. The quotations from Kiberd and Mathews here, notably, discuss two different time frames. Mathews describes Ireland in the 1900s, whereas Kiberd addresses the 1920s. The Free State severs the proposed relationship Mathews posits between culture and politics, leaving culture and politics as binaries. For Kiberd, after 1922, 'at the level of practical politics, the "green" and "orange" essentialists seized control, and protected their singular versions of identity on either side of a patrolled border' (*Inventing* 7). The essentialists saw the Irish as 'a pure, unitary race, dedicated to defending a romantic notion of integrity' (7) and are identified by Kiberd with the state. Artists such as Joyce, Yeats, Beckett, and so on, by contrast saw 'the Irish as a hybrid people … exponents of multiple selfhood and modern authenticity' (7). Kiberd argues that Irish identity is a diffusive construct, capable of expressing differing positions, along the lines of Deane's 'more generous' cultural model, and the Free State is charged with abandoning such a project.

We find this repeated throughout postcolonial theory. Enda Duffy talks about 'expos[ing] nationalism and other chauvinist ideologemes of "imagined community" chiefly as inheritances of the colonist regime of power-knowledge they condemn' (3). Gregory Castle talks about the Free State 'as a nationalist formation that more or less consciously reduplicates the structures of colonial power' ("Post-colonialism" 107) in opposition to 'non-aligned marginalised social groups' (107). The Free State becomes another instance of the imperialist, universalist, and destructive efforts found in colonialism. The limitations of this approach, at least as a means of producing historical scholarship and understanding, result from the method postcolonialism uses to retain the category of the nation. Working within the parameters of an argument which sees culture as the primary source of social change, the attempt to retain the national can only be carried through by making national

identity synonymous with this change. Kiberd clearly states this underlying premise of much Irish postcolonialism in his statement that Joyce had succeeded in the fight for liberation whereas 'the politicians … cleaving to tired, inherited forms, failed to be modern and so ceased being Irish in any meaningful way' (*Inventing* 267). We find that Kiberd comes to the conclusion that to be meaningfully Irish is to promote 'freedom of form', that is, to endorse the diffusive concept of identity postcolonialism had developed. By implication, then, to be Irish is to reject the Free State.

Irish postcolonial scholarship, as seen, owes a debt to poststructural thought. In its emphasis on culture as a political form of superior importance to institutional and more formal methods of politics, however, we can see some of poststructuralism's faults. Gillian Rose, in a discussion of these faults, describes poststructuralist thought as reacting to 'the perceived failure of reason' (*Judaism and Modernity* 3), seen to have manifested in actually-existing modernity, with 'the abandonment of reason as such' (3). Poststructuralism responds to the failure of nineteenth- and twentieth-century projects of social reconstruction by promoting 'sheer affirmation of cultural and political diversity, "plurality"' (6). This affirmation disavows institutional forms entirely and 'is consciously and deliberately *gestural* because it has renounced any politics of principle, any meliorist or revolutionary intentions' (6). The philosophical mistake made here, so Rose argues, is a refusal 'to comprehend how the outcome of idea and act is effected by the interference of meanings, that is, by institutions, which were not taken into account in the original idea, but which mediate its attempted realization' (7). Proposing a pessimistic account of the realization of ideals, Rose suggests that ideals are inevitably altered or transformed through what she calls their 'mediation' (7) by 'institutions which are extraneous to [the] idea' (7).[13] This should not mean that the effort be abandoned, but only that one acknowledge this practical reality. That there is a 'diremption between the moral discourse of rights and the systematic actuality of power, within and between modern states' (47) should not be an invitation to embrace 'the perpetual carnival market' (47) in which all positions are exchangeable. It is this which Rose claims has been the response of poststructural philosophy.[14]

[13] Rose's philosophy leans heavily on what she calls, with explicit reference to Hegel, speculative propositions. As an example of a speculative proposition, Rose cites Hegel's account of 'the speculative identity and non-identity of the state and religion' (*Hegel Contra Sociology* 61). 'Speculative identity' refers to the attempt to make religion identical with law, while non-identity here refers to the inevitable failure of such an effort. Hence the idea of the 'speculative proposition'. For instance, were one to propose that the 'real is rational', to borrow Hegel's phrase, this would lead to an exploration of how real institutions have sought to express the rational, rather than a demonstration of how a particular set of institutions are a complete embodiment of the rational.

[14] Aijaz Ahmad has also argued that the weaknesses of poststructural philosophy have found expression within postcolonial theory. For Ahmad, seeing the problem through a more explicitly Marxist lens, adopting a

Can this criticism be made of Irish postcolonialism? Certainly, criticisms such as this have been made from within postcolonialism. We have already seen Deane warn about 'the harmony of indifference … where contradiction is finally and disquietingly written out' (56). Emer Nolan, in the same volume as Attridge and Howes's essay, criticises some postcolonial scholars for failing to answer the questions they set themselves. Exploring Lloyd's discussion of the relationship between feminism and nationalism in revolutionary Ireland, Nolan claims that Lloyd fails to explain 'how would a *conscious* opposition to the state-form as such have advanced either nationalism or feminism' (87). Reading in Lloyd a commitment to 'forms of subaltern or nonstatist resistance to capitalist modernity' (86), Nolan argues that Lloyd provides no exploration of the relationship between feminism and nationalism as a practical problem. Andrew Kincaid has made a similar warning, writing that 'within studies of Irish nationalism – its origins, prejudices, and goals – the state itself is often ignored' (xv), while Michael Rubenstein has argued that the attack on the Free State and the call for alternative modernities has led to scholarly neglect of the successful modernising projects the Free State did pursue. These included the Shannon scheme and the creation of 'the world's first state-controlled national electric grid' (1), but acknowledging these, however, involves abandoning certain preconceptions about the Free State and about how art and state can relate to one another. We have seen that postcolonialism has often been criticised for relying on the idea of the national and this reliance has, for instance in the controversies surrounding the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, proven to be extremely debilitating. The problem, however, lies not so much in the attempt to use the national as a governing concept as it does in the limited range the national is allowed to embrace. The commitment to have 'Irish' signify 'radical' means that too much has to be either interpreted as radical, so as to bring it into the fold of 'Irishness' or dismissed as failure. The nation, as a cultural entity, is seen as the correct locus of political thought, reducing the role of the state to that of mere repression and ignoring the various, undeniably flawed, attempts that were made to effect social change through the Free State.[15]

poststructurally-influenced postcolonialism led one 'to make sense of the world of colonies and empires much less in terms of classes, much more in terms of nations and countries and races' (41), the consequence being that 'the material conditions of life which include the instance of culture itself' (41) are overlooked. In this Marxist language, then, Ahmad argues like Rose that the poststructural prioritisation of culture and identity leads the critic to underestimate crucial political problems.

[15] Liam O'Dowd, writing in 1988 about intellectuals such as those associated with Field Day, indicated that 'the new "traditional" intellectuals [postcolonial theorists] have reached for the problem of identity and a belief in the primacy of ideas to the near-exclusion of the evolving material context of these ideas' (16). Ironically, O'Dowd notes, even postcolonial intellectuals, such as Richard Kearney, themselves 'decried the partitioning of socio-political debate dealing with "reality" from the literary debate dealing with imaginative vision' (16), but, seeing this partitioning to have been carried out under the influences of modernisation theory and to the

Visual critical practices as a model for literary criticism

The problem postcolonial criticism encounters, then, is that the need to interpret an Irish work as radical risks distorting or neglecting material, depending on whether the work can facilitate a radical reading or not. I would like here to turn to two models of criticism which, while relying on the use of Ireland as a governing concept, nonetheless avoid this problem. Here I will look to criticism of visual art and design practice and also to historical accounts of Ireland which emphasise the development of Catholic middle-class power. Turning first to visual criticism, we can begin from Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch's investigations into how 'art was harnessed into service by the state in th[e] turbulent and disturbed period' (*Ireland's Art* 180) of the Irish revolution. Bhreathnach-Lynch, in a gesture similar to the political readings made by postcolonial critics, argues that critics should not place 'emphasis on the concept of the autonomy of the work of art' (136) and instead should explore the intersection of politics and art. In her work, the Free State is seen to have been an avid cultivator of the arts from its inception. Aware that any state's claim to legitimacy involved a demonstration of its cultural capital, Bhreathnach-Lynch explains that the Free State sought to 'imitate modern Continental states … tradition of State collecting and commissioning of works of art' ("State and Visual Arts" 1). With its legitimacy under attack from anti-Treaty forces, the Free State sought to sanctify its leaders Collins and Griffith, recently deceased, through the commission of portraits and monuments commemorating them. As Jacqueline Moore explains, the state acquired and commissioned art which 'acknowledged its struggle for independence and paid tribute to its leaders' (11).

We find here an account of art in Ireland which emphasises how art emerged within a political horizon, developing within channels shaped by political demands. For instance, Bhreathnach-Lynch uses a discussion of the sculptor Albert Power, a nationalist artist of Irish-Irelander convictions, to explore how careers could be shaped by the realities such as 'the biggest patron of the arts [being] the Roman Catholic Church' (*Ireland's Art* 104) or what Bhreathnach-Lynch calls 'the low level of artistic consciousness of the nation at large' (122). The former situation led to a demand for 'pulpits, baptismal fonts, and memorials, as well as assorted statuary' (104), while the latter, a product of the popularity of sentimental or kitsch religious artwork, led to the establishment of popular education programmes. Indeed, even the sourcing of material could be drawn into political debate and Bhreathnach-Lynch

expense of the imaginative, what O'Dowd called the 'new' (8) intellectuals had responded by 'neglecting the material dimension' (8).

explains that 'given the choice, Power would have carved the figure in Irish limestone, … [feeling] that the importation of foreign stone was to the detriment of Irish firms' (105). If such a question appears remote from a study of literature, it is worth noting that the material sources or basis for art increasingly occupied Joyce also, as he worked on *Finnegans Wake*. Without conceding the political role of art or the importance of the nation as a category for understanding practice in the Free State, Bhreathnach-Lynch is able to demonstrate the complexities that could emerge even from conservative, state-identified aesthetic practice. Acknowledging the complexities or mediating steps involved in such identification is not the same as political endorsement and awareness of these steps can help develop understanding of how writers could explore a productive relationship with the state.

We find the same process repeated by Linda King and Elaine Sisson in their essay collection *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture: Negotiating Modernity, 1922 – 1992*. Again, King and Sisson insist on scholarship which pays close attention to practical political questions. For King and Sisson, the Free State required visual expressions of its new authority, writing that if 'the concrete expression of political and cultural change was made tangible and quantifiable by the apparatus of state authority' (29), then this tangibility took the form of 'potent symbolism in the form of a new currency, philately and the authoring of official insignia including a state seal' (30). Everyday social objects, such as stamps, were redesigned to demonstrate that they belonged to the Free State and not the British Empire. King and Sisson describe all this as 'attempts to fix meaning' (33). If this sometimes took pathetic form, such as the repainting of Royal Mail postboxes green, a project scorned a decade before by James Connolly, it could embrace the sort of modernist experimentation the Free State is more commonly seen to have rejected. King and Sisson's anthology contains an essay from Paul Caffrey detailing Yeats's successful efforts to have the design of the new coinage incorporate contemporary European influences. We also find an essay from Sorcha O'Brien which explores the modernist dimensions of the Shannon scheme, paying attention to how Cumann na nGaedheal was altering established ideas of 'Irishness' by associating an Irish government with a technological project. The point is not to rehabilitate the Free State, something emphasised in King and Sisson's criticisms of protectionism for delaying the development of 'professionalised design practice' (33). Rather, the point is to demonstrate how art was part of the project of making the state a 'political reality' (30), as well as an exploration of the directions art could develop within this situation. This does not preclude a study of art produced along modernist lines. Studies of Mainie Jellett, for instance, have traced her path from aesthetic outsider in 1922 to state representative at the 1939 World

Fair. What this criticism allows for is an understanding of art as developing within the horizon of a political environment. Art is seen to take shape according to the demands of a political situation.[16]

Catholic middle-class power and the legitimation of the state

The question of how the state legitimated itself, in the face of civil war, has been important for some cultural critics and this has found occasional manifestation in postcolonial literary criticism. Emer Nolan's *Catholic Emancipations*, for instance, tracing a lineage from the early nineteenth-century work of Thomas Moore, through to Charles Kickham and on to Joyce, argues that these works attempted to perform the '"major" cultural function' (xii) of shaping culture according to the needs of a Catholic state-building project. From 'the emergence of the native Catholic middle class from its penal bondage' (ix) and through the gradual acquisition of political rights and power, a process concluding with the creation of the Free State, Nolan finds that Irish literature sought 'a concept of Irish national identity that would be at once faithful to a revamped notion of the traditional and appropriate to a modern civil polity' (ix). Nolan's analysis, here, breaks from certain rules of the culturalist paradigm as explored above, portraying art as working in service of the state – or, at least, of an anticipated state – while also avoiding the claim that this culture produced that state. As my own thesis endorses and seeks to expand on this approach, it is worth noting some relevant historical depictions of the process of securing the Free State. In an echo of postcolonial criticism, much has been made by historians of the state's failure to realise the ideals of the Revival. Dermot Keogh scathingly notes that 'a Gaelic utopia did not rise from the ashes of 1916' (35) and quotes, as exemplary of Free State cultural policy, a Labour senator's claim that the Free State had 'little use for idealism and less scope for utopianism' (37).[17] Roy Foster has claimed that 'Gaelicization', the attempt to realise the ideals of the Revival, was more pose than reality and, instead, 'continuity with the values and priorities of the old Irish Parliamentary party was … more evident' (519). Whereas postcolonial critics have seen this absence as a betrayal or an expression of dependency, some historians have emphasised it as a product of internal tensions and needs. The need to secure Catholic middle-class power

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[16] See, for instance, Bruce Arnold. *Mainie Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991. Print.

[17] The Senator was Patrick Lynch, an anti-Treatyite and Attorney General from 1936 – 1940.

has appeared in the works of historians such as John Regan and Mel Farrell and this theme is worth noting, given the use Nolan has put it to in literary criticism.

Regan describes how, having won the Civil War, 'the Cumann na nGaedheal elite … viewed radicals within its own camp as a threat to its hegemony' (148). Central to Regan's argument is the idea that Ireland experienced a counter-revolution from 1922 onwards. In its broadest conception, Regan defines this counter-revolution as the 'defence of constitutional politics' (xvi) against 'the use of violence' (xvi).[18] In Regan's account, this 'defence of constitutional politics' was not only a civil war strategy, but expanded into a wider policy of removing the Sinn Féin and Volunteer revolutionaries from power and replacing them with representatives of the Catholic middle-class who had identified themselves with the Home Rule movement. We find some echo of Foster and Keogh in Regan's description of Cumann na nGaedheal's public social programmes as 'broadly aspirational but essentially non-committal, offering platitudes but not hard policies' (138). In other words, again, Cumann na nGaedheal was guilty of striking poses, so as to 'accommodate' (138) supporters. What Regan adds, however, is that this pose concealed a 'treatyite elite [which] had now spun full circle into counter-revolution' (137-38). Regan writes:

> [Cumman na nGaedheal] wanted to create a new party appealing to and consisting of what was referred to as "the best elements of society" … the middle, educated and professional classes of whatever creed or former political colour. The middle class's desire for stability had been crucial in getting the treaty accepted in 1922, and the party and the elite now wished to consolidate that support base which was considered the most influential in Irish society and central to the stabilisation of, and reconciliation to, the new post-revolutionary order (148)

Stability and legitimation, to be accomplished through development of middle-class power, was Cumann na nGaedheal's policy. Regan highlights that the preeminent politician of the

[18] Regan describes the 'use of violence' as 'the only truly radical and revolutionary aspect of what should be accepted without ambiguity as the Irish revolution' (xvi). The odd presentation of the argument here – that the 1916 – 1922 period must be named as a revolution despite only its use of violence being revolutionary – requires clarification. Regan argues that to describe this period as one of ''national struggle' or 'national liberation'' (xiv) implies 'an immutable … progression of the nation from subjection to freedom' (xiv). Only the concept of a revolution implies a historical break and avoids supplying the historical account with the appearance of a teleology.

early Free State, Kevin O'Higgins, formed a 'formidable troika within the early treatyite Governments' (89) with colleagues Patrick Hogan and Desmond Fitzpatrick. What is worth noting here is the background shared by the three. All had attended 'elitist Catholic boarding schools [and were] imbued with a mission to mould a Catholic middle class and for that matter ruling class' (89). To this group, 'republicanism, militarism, Gaelicism, secret societies, and spiritualist and fanatical nationalism proved themselves false creeds' (87). Instead, the 'Irish nationalist middle-class elite, which had emerged through politics and the professions in the nineteenth century, and which had been swept aside at the moment of their inheritance by a Sinn Féin revolution' (87) were to be returned to power. This reassertion of Catholic middle-class power, after the more plebeian turmoil of 1916 – 1922, was the Irish counter-revolution and provides a frame within which cultural activity in the Free State can be understood.

Although Mel Farrell suggests that to talk of a counter-revolution is overly conspiratorial, he nonetheless argues that Cumann na nGaedheal found its 'core support [in] the urban middle class and commercial farmers' (280). Further agreeing that 'bedding down the new state and ensuring its security was the government's priority' (38), Farrell emphasises the Free State as an instance of post-World War I reconstruction. For Farrell, 'the world view espoused by Cosgrave's party from 1922 … was in keeping with the general theme of the years 1918-1922' (209) and, in any case, the 'initial years in government were marked by the stabilisation of international relations and European politics' (196). Farrell points out that Ireland's situation was in many ways typical of European states created in the aftermath of the First World War, all of which struggled to construct a liberal democratic state under pressures from left and right.[19] Some of the visual critics noted above, such as Sorcha O'Brien, have made similar comparisons, and go as far as to argue that Irish politicians were aware of the parallels their situation had with other European states. Farrell's work usefully emphasises, in the face of presentations of the Free State which suggest a rapidly enforced insularity, that its course found analogues throughout Europe. European developments were not absent from discourse within and about the Free State, a reality well attended to by the authors in this thesis.

It is worth noting that these accounts of the Free State which emphasise the class nature of the state find support in the work of economic historians. For instance, although he also

[19] Ireland was one of the few European states created after the First World War to have remained intact at the end of the Second World War. For an account of the general collapse of the post-war settlement, see Mark Mazower's *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, in particular, pp. 1 – 40.

does not employ the concept of a counter-revolution, Conor McCabe makes similar arguments to Regan. For McCabe, the Cumann na nGaedheal government was overtly a class government. Home ownership schemes 'favoured the middle classes and the higher-paid, skilled members of the working class' (9), while 'trickle-down principles' (76) which cut spending on social services 'provid[ed] a helping hand to the graziers and livestock exporters, as well as urban middle-class house buyers' (76). For McCabe, 'Cumann na nGaedheal was protecting the financial self-interests of the class it represented' (77), a combination of the middle-class professionals Regan describes, and the large cattle farmers based mostly in the east. McCabe here resembles earlier work by economist Cormac Ó Gráda who sardonically notes that 'while Cumann na nGaedheal policies bore all the signs of being grounded in orthodox economic theory, they also happened to suit most of the party's voters … the urban middle class and the more substantial farmers' (386).[20] We can also find this account of the Free State as a class state, rather than one organised around a monologic identity, in Bew, Hazelkorn, and Patterson's account of the Free State and Republic. Attacking criticism which fails 'to grasp the complex and changing *internal* balance of economic and political forces' (12), the trio argue for paying attention to the different class demands of rural Ireland and the 'social and political weight of the Irish rural bourgeoisie' (19). Drawing on the above accounts, I will demonstrate how the work of establishing the legitimacy and security of the Free State was one which these authors saw value in. If, on the one hand, disappointed by much of the results of independence, they also held a contradictory unwillingness to reject these results *in toto*, being restrained by a desire to maintain the gains made by Irish nationalism.

Layout for chapters

To explore these themes of how politics acts as the limit of cultural activity, I will explore the work of four Irish modernists, James Joyce, Eimar O'Duffy, Brian O'Nolan, and Kate O'Brien. I will attempt to move chronologically through these writers and their works. Given their overlapping careers, however, this will be only loosely possible. The thesis will begin with a chapter on *Ulysses* (1922), before turning to Eimar O'Duffy's "Cuanduine Trilogy" (1923 – 1933), Brian O'Nolan's first two novels (1939 – 1940), *Finnegans Wake* (1939), and

[20] These were complaints made by Cumann na nGaedheal's critics. J.J. Walsh, for instance, resigning from the party in 1927, complained that 'the party itself has gone over bodily to the most reactionary elements of the state' (qtd in Bew, Hazelkorn and Patterson, 29), naming 'ranchers and importers' (29) as the principle malign influences.

finally Kate O'Brien's fiction until the outbreak of the Second World War (1931 – 1941). Obviously, then, this will not be a strictly chronological approach. Nonetheless the thesis explores issues concerning Irish politics in the early years of the Free State, such as the justification for revolution, the prospects for independence, and the question of who now held power, through to later issues such as economic collapse and ideological security amidst the rise of fascism. 1941, with Joyce and Yeats dead and war raging in Europe, serves as an endpoint for this thesis. While modernist visual art continued to thrive in wartime Dublin, through the White Stage group, broadly the war served to turn the dial of experimental Irish writing away from modernism and towards the postmodernism Brian O'Nolan is sometimes seen to anticipate. From a political perspective, the war allowed Ireland to assert its independence through neutrality, clarifying and securing what had been gained from the Treaty in 1922. The question of state legitimation that will be explored in this thesis was settled by neutrality. Finally, 1941 serves as a practical limit, given that by that date two of the authors in this study were dead, while a third, Brian O'Nolan, would not publish a novel in English again until 1961. The priority the practical has over the aesthetic is an important theme in this work and these deaths seem as a good a reason as any to mark out the study's limits.

Before turning to the chapters themselves it is, given the wide range of texts a study of Irish modernism can draw upon, worth taking a moment to explain both the choice of writers and certain notable absences. Of the writers examined here, Joyce's presence requires the least elaborate justification. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are of such importance to the histories of both modernist and Irish writing that it would be their exclusion, rather than inclusion, which would attract attention. With that said, it is worth noting here two particular qualities of Joyce's novels which I would like to focus on. The first is Joyce's importance to modern critical debate. In the last forty years his work has been used by postcolonial, poststructural, Irish revisionist historiography, and Marxist schools of thought, among others. As my thesis is involved in debate with many of these schools, Joyce's presence helps further my engagement with these debates. Secondly, Joyce was carefully attuned to how political and aesthetic debate interacted, an attention he gave evidence of even when writing as a young man in the early 1900s. Postcolonial criticism in particular has helped demonstrate this political engagement, although I wish to use this criticism in a quite different way. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* provide avenues into exploring these relations between the political and the aesthetic which are central to this thesis. Joyce's two major works addressed this theme

to a high level of sophistication and a reading of them can assist in sketching out the contours of the political/aesthetic debate as they existed in interwar Europe and Ireland.

In contrast to Joyce, Eimar O'Duffy is a rarely studied figure. His work, although experimental in form, does not have the aesthetic significance of Joyce's work. Rather, his importance lies in the explicit politics of his novels, which use these formal experiments to attempt political interventions. O'Duffy produced a wide range of works and I have chosen here to examine four of these, his 1919 novel *The Wasted Island* and the three novels making up his Cuanduine Trilogy. Being more nakedly political than most other Irish modernist works, O'Duffy's novels can complicate critical models which imagine politics – meaning parties, bureaucracies, the state – and literature as having separated after independence in 1922. O'Duffy can demonstrate how literary experimentation and political propagandising were not opposed, but could work together. This complicating of the critical argument is a good and necessary thing if existing critical positions are to be developed. It should also be noted here that I examine only the 1919 edition of *The Wasted Island* and not the edited republication produced in 1929 for Macmillan Press, which featured many stylistic changes but made no major adjustment to the political arguments of the work. In examining *The Wasted Island*, I want to read it as being engaged with debates over republicanism fought in the midst of revolutionary action. The novel's value, I argue, lies in its closeness to the Rising and the War of Independence. Examining the 1929 publication obscures this closeness.

Brian O'Nolan has, in recent years, become of major critical interest to scholars of modern Irish literature. This critical upsurge has been brought about in part through an increased awareness of the scale of his experiment and the range of his thought. His work is examined here as it allows my discussion of the relation between politics and literature to enter fields, such as that of science, which it could not otherwise go. Furthermore, his first two novels have often been taken as evidencing precisely the sort of anti-authoritarian politics I wish to dispute and complicate. O'Nolan's diversity and anarchy, manifesting in his literary forms, his range of themes and subjects, and his relentless parodies, can and should be problematised. It must be noted that I examine here only O'Nolan's first two novels and not *An Béal Bocht*, despite it falling with the timeframe set by the study. This is largely a question of which political debates I am intervening in. O'Nolan's first two novels have often been explored using the concept of the carnivalesque and as anti-authoritarian works, something I aim to overturn. *An Béal Bocht*, although it does trade in these themes, has as its major political theme the question of the Irish language. The language question is one of the most important themes in modern Irish literature. This means, however, that the

interactions of language, politics, and literature constitute an object of study in their own right. To ensure this thesis does not become bloated or inattentive to its themes, these interactions have been put to one side both in the study of O'Nolan and also when addressing *Finnegans Wake*, another text where the Irish language has an important presence.

Although certainly not neglected like O'Duffy, Kate O'Brien has not been subject to the sort of critical attention directed upon O'Nolan, far less Joyce. This alone provides some reason for including her in a study of interwar literature in Ireland, but more important to my concerns here are her direct political engagements. Like O'Duffy, O'Brien's work openly declares its willingness to take political positions. Her novels argue the case of the Irish middle class, variously battling austere Catholicism, English condescension, censorship, and patriarchal authority. Her novels provide me with a useful example of how complex an argument for liberty could be and I use her works to show how even a demand for freedom from strictures required one to associate oneself with the ambitions and attitudes of one group or another. O'Brien having published extensively in the 1930s, I have chosen here four novels to study. These four novels can themselves be split into two groups, *Without My Cloak* and *The Ante-Room* exploring identification with Ireland, while *Mary Lavelle* and *The Land of Spices* explore separation from Ireland. Criticism has generally found *The Ante-Room* and *The Land of Spices* to be O'Brien's most accomplished works, while a study of *Without My Cloak* and *Mary Lavelle*, the former being O'Brien's first publication and the latter being a transitional moment in her thought, allows me to track how her position on the Free State developed in response to Irish politics.

Alongside these exclusions, two major absences must also be explained, that of Samuel Beckett and Elizabeth Bowen. While some of Beckett's 1930s critical work, such as his "Recent Irish Poetry" and "Dante… Bruno. Vico.. Joyce" essays, will be referenced, I will not be looking at any other work from either writer. While Beckett's renowned "Trilogy" was published after the war and outside this study's timeframe, works such as *More Pricks than Kicks* and *Murphy* were written before 1940. Although Bowen did publish major works after the war, she also published many important novels in the 1930s. Chronology, then, can only offer limited justification for leaving Beckett and Bowen out. What provides greater reason for this exclusion is the political theme I have chosen to follow. This is a study of four Catholic writers, from similar middle-class backgrounds, who all attended the National University, a crucible of the strain of Irish nationalism which would dominate in the Free State. These writers had class, religious, and biographical reasons for seeking identification with the Free State and this study is an exploration of the divided loyalties and political

concerns this identification brought on in these artists. Beckett and Bowen, by contrast, had none of these motivations. Variously associated with the upper classes in Ireland, Trinity education, and, most importantly, both Protestants in a Catholic-dominated state, neither writer had much reason for identifying with the Free State. This is not to say that an individual with such a background could never identify with the state. As historians such as Regan and Farrell have shown, Cumann na nGaedheal cultivated supporters among precisely this class. Beckett and Bowen, however, were not among these.

The chapter on Joyce's *Ulysses* will explore the relationship between that work and the revolution in Ireland that took place during its composition. Building on, but also responding critically to, other readings of *Ulysses* as a novel of the 1916 – 1922 period, such as Enda Duffy's, I argue that *Ulysses* is an exploration of how the intellectual demands made on Irish intellectuals by colonial and pre-revolutionary Ireland were transformed by revolution and the creation of an Irish state. To do this, I use Hungarian Communist Georg Lukács's theorisation of alienation as a specifically bourgeois phenomenon, taken from his *History and Class Consciousness*. I use this theory to draw out how Joyce, having portrayed the situation of the alienated colonial intellectual through Stephen Dedalus, turns to examining the problems of bourgeois alienation which, he anticipates, will plague independence. While *Ulysses*'s account of Dublin in 1904 has often been seen as shot through with reference to the years of its composition, I argue that this awareness of the present drives Joyce to explore the insufficiency of his and Stephen's stances in the face of the world of 1916 – 1922. Thomas MacGreevy described *Ulysses* as a journey through 'the inferno of modern subjectivity' (123) and, expanding on this, I argue that *Ulysses* depicts how revolution transformed this inferno, creating new problems for, and distortions of, subjectivity.

The second chapter of this thesis will focus on the work of Eimar O'Duffy, principally his satirical "Cuanduine trilogy" written between 1923 and 1933, but with some attention paid to other works. O'Duffy provides a useful example of how the politics of Irish modernism cannot be easily disentangled from the Free State, while his work and biography provide testimony to the political confusions of the era. Although he wrote as a severe critic of the Free State, he nonetheless had worked as a propagandist for the state during the Civil War. His work attacks independence and, indeed, the whole revolutionary project, from the perspective of Sinn Féin's pre-Rising strategy of constructive disobedience and 'self-defence'. Drawing on debates about post-war capitalism and social trends in the 1920s, O'Duffy provides a distinctive account of how and why the Free State failed to progress the modernising agenda of Irish nationalism. While recent postcolonial treatments of O'Duffy

have seen his work as an example of utopian or 'alternative' thinking, I argue that his work is firmly wedded to practical questions and seeks to expose why eminently possible advancements did not occur.

Turning next to Brian O'Nolan, this chapter looks at O'Nolan's first two works, *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*. Given O'Nolan's radical formal experimentation, his work is often taken to represent a critique of, and alternative to, a dour and conservative Free State culture. Here, however, building on Carol Taaffe's description of O'Nolan's work as displaying 'radical conformity' (33), I argue that O'Nolan's work channels its formal experimentation through the prism of Free State social and cultural attitudes. Fear of mob rule, a disregard for individual radicalism or rebellion, and the threat of philosophical breakdown, are all explored by O'Nolan in a manner reminiscent of the paranoia and conservatism of the Free State middle-class. *At Swim* will be read as a carnivalesque novel, with attention paid to reinterpretations of the carnivalesque provided by critics such as Boris Groys and Galin Tihanov. These accounts of the carnival as a frightening and oppressive experience will then be read back into *At Swim*, demonstrating that novel's sharing in the political atmosphere of Free State Ireland. My reading of *The Third Policeman* will identify this same atmosphere, although now located in philosophical, scientific, and theological discussion, read in the context of O'Nolan's dispute with Erwin Schrödinger. Rather than simply recoiling from the Free State, O'Brien's work evolves in precisely this highly recognisable social and cultural context. I seek to underline his sympathetic as well as his critical responses to this milieu

The fourth chapter in the thesis returns to James Joyce and provides a study of his final work, *Finnegans Wake*. Having seen Joyce explore the prospect of revolution and the consequences it has in *Ulysses*, this chapter on the *Wake* explores how Joyce intensifies his sense of the relation between history and art. Reading the *Wake* in the light of both European and Irish projects of social reconstruction and revolution, projects which ranged from public works to mass political spectacle, I argue that Joyce uses his final novel to explore the limited capacity of the artist to effect social change when compared to the powers possessed by practical political organisation. As seen, Deane has claimed that 'Joyce's critique of writing has its roots, in the *Wake* as in his other works, in the phenomenon of the Irish experience of mutilation and catastrophe' ("Introduction" xiv). This chapter seeks to expand on Deane's argument by arguing that the precise experience motivating Joyce's critique is the experience of constructing an independent Ireland that took place in the 1920s and 1930s.

The fifth chapter in this thesis explores Kate O'Brien's novels between 1931 – the year of her first publication, *Without My Cloak* – and 1941. Here, I argue that O'Brien, having initially attempted to identify with and express the problems of the Catholic middle class in *Without My Cloak* and *The Ante Room* (1934), increasingly began to despair of succeeding in this as the decade passed. In these early novels, O'Brien portrays the tragic dilemma of middle-class Catholics attempting to reconcile their religious and social duties with their personal desires. By contrast, in *Mary Lavelle* (1936) and *The Land of Spices* (1941) we find characters who renounce these duties in the name of an individualistic liberalism. This chapter will build on a recent trend in O'Brien scholarship which has emphasised what Michael Cronin calls her 'commitment to bourgeois liberalism' (32) and which problematises earlier readings of her as a non-conformist rebel. Like the other writers in this study, O'Brien sought to reconcile her work with the new state. What will separate her work from the other work in this thesis is that O'Brien came to reject the possibility of producing work within the values and structures of the state and instead chose to write work thematised around the explicit rejection of these values. Irish politics continued to serve as the organising concern of her works, but now seen from a wholly critical perspective.

This, then, is a study of novels and does not pay sustained attention to Irish modernism as it manifested in poetry, drama, painting, or other forms, although some reference to these arts will be made through the thesis. The novel is the object of investigation here as, due to Joyce's immense presence, the novel has become a major site for critical arguments about the relationships between form and politics. Seamus Deane, in his *Short History of Irish Literature*, has described how 'the modern novel … in its endless interrogation of traditional forms, was to prove so attractive to Irish writers, for whom such interrogation was a necessity if they were to write at all' (174). Whereas nineteenth-century Irish writers had struggled to adopt the linear historical narratives of the realist novel, the more diffuse modernist novel served to better fit the historical experiences these writers sought to express. For Deane, 'Joyce found Irish history and Irish tradition so fragmented that, in spite of his systematizing imagination, no hope for coherence could be entertained' (186), provoking an experimental drive which would be repeated in many Irish writers following him. For critics, the Irish novel, in the first half of the twentieth century, set itself the task of trying to create a sense of a historical narrative for a country with a history of rupture. Although Kate O'Brien cannot be said to have been as formally experimental as the other writers in this thesis, her work was similarly concerned with attempting this act of construction. As my thesis argues that the political values which have been tied to these

experiments and constructions require reassessment, it has been necessary to make this a study of novels.

In this thesis, the question I ask is to what extent did Irish writers form positive relationships with the Free State? To do this, I build on the work of postcolonial scholarship, which has made an enormous effort to demonstrate the importance of national questions to Irish writing. This scholarship has also helped to break up the more common understandings of concepts of tradition and modernity, exposing concealed positive and negative qualities and, so, allowing for understandings of twentieth-century Irish history as being a narrative other than that of the halting journey of progress, however this progress is defined. Postcolonialism replaces the restrictive concept of nationalism which was deployed in the conventional politics of the 1970s and 1980s with one which endorses experiment, freedom of thought, exploration of subversive traditions, and so on. This creates room for studies of culture which allow for readings of literature as variously international, Irish, traditional, modern, rather than insisting that it must occupy one of these terms in an opposition to another.

The problem is that the very success postcolonialism has had in loosening the study of literature from the restrictive demands of the 1980s political spectrum has resulted in loosening art from politics altogether. Although, theoretically, the readings remain political, the concept of politics deployed has tended towards dismissing all conventional or traditional political forms as merely repressive, responsible for the impasse postcolonialism was called to solve. It has followed, then, that works must be read to reveal their own attempt to escape these traditions and literature comes to be read as a resource of radical opposition. What is lost here are the political conflicts the writers existed within. Hence, I have turned also to historical studies of counter-revolution in Ireland and to accounts of the state's use of the visual and plastic arts. The former provides a strong governing concept for understanding Irish politics in the 1920s and 1930s, while the latter provides models for relating art to state politics in ways that do not rely on the assumption of antagonistic relationships. This problem of overly oppositional readings of Irish literature is central here. As seen above, Kiberd has argued that Ireland's writing has served as a sort of alarm, warning the citizens about the various abuses and failures perpetrated in the nation. Although there is no denying that Irish artists have been dissatisfied by the state, the writers here had underlying sympathies for aspects of Free State Ireland which complicated their attacks. If they were sounding an alarm, then, it was a strangely silent one and this is the contradiction I will unpack.

I: *Ulysses* and the Irish revolution: alienation and critique

It is with a keen awareness for the historical realities of revolution that Frantz Fanon describes 'decolonization [a]s always a violent phenomenon' (27). For Fanon, decolonization is 'the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men' (27) and entails 'a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up' (27). Of interest for a study of Joyce is Fanon's claim that 'where a real struggle for freedom has taken place … we can observe a genuine eradication of the superstructure built by … intellectuals from the bourgeois colonialist environment' (36). This is the superstructure which teaches 'the triumph of the human individual, of clarity and beauty' (36) and which is replaced by a decolonization process which 'unifies [the] people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial basis' (35). Bourgeois intellectuals experience this replacement through a collapse of 'the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity' (36) and a renewed effort to relate to 'the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged' (36). Decolonization, Fanon emphasises, does not immediately institutionalize a utopia, but is rather a violent and complex temporal process. It is with such an understanding of decolonization that this chapter will read Joyce's *Ulysses* as a novel responding to the collapse, brought about by revolution, of the intellectual superstructure of colonial Ireland.

Many critics have drawn connections between Joyce and decolonization. Enda Duffy has described *Ulysses* 'as *the* text of Ireland's independence … preoccupied … with both the means by which oppressed communities fight their way out of abjection and the potential pitfalls of anticolonial struggles' (1). Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*, a major work in modern Irish postcolonial studies, has insisted that if *Ulysses* is 'a definitive account of the mind of modern Europe in 1922 … it is also a recognition that Europe of itself was nothing without its colonial holdings' (327). For Marjorie Howes and Derek Attridge, 'the full measure of Joyce's achievement cannot be understood without relating it to the Irish struggle for independence' (16). Postcolonial criticism of Joyce, then, rejects what Emer Nolan calls the 'image of Joyce as an Irishman unswayed by patriotism' (*Nationalism* 2) and seeks to locate his work within the various nationalist currents which dominated Irish society in the first half of the twentieth century. In contribution to these efforts, this chapter will restore

to criticism how a shift in aesthetic thinking, brought about by the First World War, is registered in *Ulysses*. The stance of the alienated and rebellious intellectual, employed by the young Joyce of the 1900s, collapsed entirely in the face of armed insurrection and *Ulysses* both dramatizes and thematizes attempts to respond to this.

To do this, I will first examine one of the major treatments of this 'mind of modern Europe' written in the period of war and revolution that spanned the years Joyce wrote *Ulysses*. This is the work of Georg Lukács, the Hungarian communist and philosopher, principally his 1917 *The Theory of the Novel* and his 1922 *History and Class Consciousness*. In these works, Lukács argues that the central philosophical problem of modern Europe was alienation, although alienation is itself construed in quite different ways in the different studies. These different accounts of alienation can be used to demonstrate that Joyce too explored quite different versions of alienation in *Ulysses*. Joyce uses the experience of alienation, and the different ways it manifests in different historical situations, as a means of exploring different aspects of a rapidly transforming Irish society. Joyce uses the question of the relation between individual and society raised by alienation as a means of exploring the relation between the individual and Irish society in its colonial, revolutionary, and prospective postcolonial phases. Duffy, in language which echoes Fanon, has described how Irish history after 1916, with its leap into revolutionary action, had scuppered the aesthetic project Joyce had portrayed in *Portrait*. To portray his art as being produced in conditions of heroic exile was no longer so tenable when measured against the more socially impactful actions of Irish revolutionaries. Actions performed solely in the mind had to compete with practical revolutionary actions and the pressures this placed upon Joyce, it will be shown, generate much of the intellectual debate in *Ulysses*.

Alienation as a response to war: Lukács and *History and Class Consciousness*

Perry Anderson has argued that there are three crucial contexts for modernist art. These are 'a highly formalized academicism in the visual and other arts' (104), the 'emergence … of the key technologies or inventions of the second industrial revolution' (104), and 'the imaginative proximity of social revolution' (104). Some have contested Anderson's attempt to associate modernism with a precise historical conjuncture. Nonetheless, his emphasis on the interaction of capitalist development, social revolution, and what Arno Mayer has called 'the persistence of the old regime' has been echoed in many accounts of the European avant-

garde in the first half of the twentieth century.[1] Walter Adamson, for instance, has described modernism as emerging from 'the perception of a civilizational crisis in which the expansion of commodity culture loomed large' (18), while Gail Day has described how for European artists in the 1910s, 'the very fact of social revolution altered perceptions' (319). Joyce, whose work registers social tensions, technological innovation, and a valorisation of art as form, certainly fits within Anderson's conjuncture. This typicality, however, can obscure Joyce's specificity behind a presentation of his work as the modernist revolution exemplified. His work engages with a specific problem of modernity – the question of alienation – as it emerged in colonial and revolutionary Ireland. To draw out this engagement, I will first present one of the major accounts of modernity and alienation, Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. Composed as Joyce wrote *Ulysses*, *History and Class Consciousness* depicts alienation as being, ultimately, the bourgeois experience of modernity. For Lukács, the psychological experience of alienation is ultimately a social problem, which is overcome through certain types of social action. It is through crisis and revolution, of the kind experienced in Ireland between 1916 and 1922, that alienation is broken up. Lukács provides an approach to a major social and philosophical question of Anderson's modern conjuncture and here I will use Lukács's account of bourgeois alienation as a key for understanding Joyce's depiction of colonial alienation as depicted in *Ulysses*.

That Lukács expresses the problems of his historical moment has been attested to by Edward Said, who describes *History and Class Consciousness* as having been written '*for* as well as *in* a situation' (236). Writing a reflective preface to the work in 1967, Lukács describes his major conviction as being 'that the purely contemplative nature of bourgeois thought had to be radically overcome' (xviii), this being responsible not only for the lurch into war in 1914, but also for the failure of the workers' movement to prevent this. For Lukács, a distinction was to be drawn between contemplative bourgeois thought and a proletarian 'practical objectivity' (xviii). While 'both bourgeois and proletarian thinkers' (xxii) had recognised 'that the alienation of man [was] a crucial problem of the age' (xxii), bourgeois thinkers, unable to confront this problem as one caused by their own modes of organisation,

[1] Anderson made these remarks in a review of Marshall Berman's *All that is Solid Melts into Air*; Berman in turn responded by claiming that 'Anderson loads his history with far more weight that it can bear' (114). For Berman, Anderson's insistence that modernist art could have only occurred within these precise historical coordinates amounted to a claim that 'the absence of these conditions since the end of World War Two must lead to the absence of any creative triumphs' (114 – 115). Berman prefers to define modernism as 'the hope of making ourselves at home in the maelstrom, of becoming subjects as well as objects, of making the modern world our own' (115 – 116), leading to the claim that modernist art requires much less precise historical coordinates to be brought about.

had 'convert[ed] an essentially social alienation into an eternal "condition humaine"' (xxiv). Even bourgeois thinkers who could recognise these problems as specifically modern remained contemplative, insofar as their understanding was founded on a supposed separation between the individual and the society that individual comprehended. Proper recognition of alienation as a modern phenomenon should, Lukács argued, bring about a transformation in the relation between subject and society.

The course of Lukács's own career testified to this transformation. His major work before *History and Class Consciousness*, the 1917 *Theory of the Novel*, while recognising that alienation was a specific product of the modern 'age of absolute sinfulness' (*Theory* 153), claimed that recognition of the 'totality of men and events is possible only on the basis of culture' (147). Here, the social roots of alienation are to be understood through reference to art; later, in *History and Class Consciousness*, they are grasped through a proletarian understanding of society. Michael Löwy has described *Theory of the Novel* as having been brought by 'the great crisis of 1914' (111) to '*the very frontier between literature and politics*, aesthetics and revolution' (111). Löwy's point is that although *Theory of the Novel* calls for a utopian transformation of a dissatisfying capitalism modernity, it 'lack[s] a concrete social perspective' (112). While *Theory of the Novel* sits on the precipice of revolutionary politics in its belief that art can perform a radical, consciousness-raising activity, it does not indicate what 'real force … might open the road to the new world' (112). The account it provides of alienation and modernity explores literary rather than political forms. Central to *Theory of the Novel* is the claim that whereas the epic literature of the Greeks emerged from an epoch in which 'being and destiny, adventure and accomplishment, life and essence are … identical concepts' (30), the modern novel expresses an epoch in which there is 'an unbridgeable chasm between cognition and action, between soul and created structure, between self and world' (34). A gap is seen to have opened up between personal values and practical actions. Modernity is understood as a time when action can no longer satisfy individual spiritual needs. As a consequence of 'the outside world [being] no longer adapted to the individual's ideas' (78), Lukács argues, 'individuality … becomes an aim unto itself' (78). Hence the novel appears, its 'inner form' (80) being 'the process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself … towards clear self-recognition' (80). The divide between self and society which is definitive of modernity is not so much resolved as shunted aside, through the demand that the individual become self-satisfying. The modern dilemma, 'the conflict between what is and what should be' (80), remains. Furthermore, even assuming the novelist

is successful in producing a novelistic account of the self capable of satisfying the whole array of modern needs, this satisfaction can only be experienced in the cultural sphere.

This gap between self and society reappears in *History and Class Consciousness* with Lukács's account of the commodity fetish and the reification attendant upon it. Lukács describes how, in capitalist societies 'a man's own activity, his own labour becomes something objective and independent of him, something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to man' (87). This is reification, in which relations between humans, as well as between humans and their actions, appear as forces in their own right. A factory worker who, because he is capable of a certain daily workload, is forced to meet this workload every day, has his labour power reified. Organising production in this way leads to rationalisation which 'break[s] with the organic and qualitatively determined unity of the product' (88-89) and treats heterogenous objects as homogenous commodities. Self and world are split in that whatever subjective value an individual may place on their productive action does not correspond with the value placed on it by capitalist commodity production. This procedure, it should be noted, is not restricted to the factory by Lukács. As Gillian Rose notes, Lukács 'generalizes Marx's theory of commodity fetishism' (*Hegel* 30), with the result that 'legal, bureaucratic and cultural forms have the same status as the commodity form' (30). Reification, then, 'determines the structure of all the capitalist social forms' (30) and if the industrial worker can provide an exemplary instance of this reification, it is nonetheless the case that all individuals, through their participation in society, are subjected to it.

For Lukács, this division between self and action promotes certain modes of thought which he defines as bourgeois. Rationalised production, he argues demands 'specialisation' (88). Specialisation demands that 'labour [be] progressively broken down into abstract, rational, specialised operations' (88). As a result, 'the specialised "virtuoso" … lapses into a contemplative attitude *vis-à-vis* the workings of his own objectified and reified faculties' (100). Work, having become the fulfilment of external laws and not a personal expression, is experienced passively. This passive mode of experiencing work, Lukács goes on, comes to define the individual's experience of society. As 'man's activity does not go beyond the correct calculation of the possible outcome of the sequence of events' (98), individuals are led to disbelieve in their capacity for action. A passive position in the labour process gives rise to passive and contemplative thinking generally. With this retreat into passivity comes an intensification of utopian thinking. Utopianism, Lukács explains, fails to resolve the split between action and the world which contemplative thought facilitates and instead relies on a '"hiatus irrationalis" between theory and practice' (192). As the values of any proposed

utopia will not correspond to the values either of the society the proposals emerge from or from the values of the actions used to bring about that utopia, the 'real actions [of utopians] … appear … wholly independent of the … utopia' (192). Contemplative thought is overcome only in appearance, as the individual promoting the utopia remains 'independent of … concrete historical life' (192).

It is worth emphasising that these bourgeois forms of thought arising from a divorce between self and society do not only impede action. Bourgeois thought is led by this passivity to misapprehend reality. Capitalist 'rationalisation of isolated aspects of life results in the creation of – formal – laws' (101), which promotes the belief society is maintained by a 'unified system of general "laws"' (101). These formal laws, however, only refer to those aspects of reality suitable for being rationalised into the production process. The 'qualitative and material essence of the "things"' (99) which have been rationalised is ignored. To maintain the 'pretence that society is regulated by "eternal iron laws"' (101), it becomes necessary to ignore all qualities of life which fail to submit to rationalisation.[2] When Löwy describes 'one of Lukács's greatest merits' (20) as 'to have reformulated, in the Marxist terms of the theory of reification, the confused, romantic critique directed by intellectuals against the inexorable process of quantification characteristic of the capitalist mode of production' (20), it is this he refers to. Alienation, ultimately, is shown to be not only the experience of a divorce between self and society. Alienation also tends towards a failure to apprehend the society the individual is alienated from. The bourgeoisie, Lukács argues, are not merely unable to intervene in their society but are unable to understand it.

Before moving on, it is worth taking another moment to clarify what is involved in the change of perspectives found in the development from *Theory of the Novel* to *History and Class Consciousness*. Given that this change in perspective involved Lukács changing the agent of revolutionary transformation from art to politics, it is of importance to my discussion here. To illustrate how this change in perspective alters theorising, Löwy quotes from two editions of Ernst Bloch's *The Spirit of Utopia*, a 1918 edition written before Bloch's adoption of a Marxist viewpoint and a 1923 edition updated to reflect Bloch's newly acquired Marxist politics. In the 1918 edition Bloch describes 'the totality of Utopia [as] a hierarchy which is

[2] Said offers food and hunger as that which resists this rationalisation. It follows that food shortages can serve as consciousness-raising activity as 'when instead of inexplicable shortage of bread you can imagine the human work and, subsequently, the human beings who produced the bread but are no longer doing so because there is a baker's strike, you are well on your way to knowing that crisis is comprehensible because process in comprehensible' (232). Given that, as Said notes, Lukács suggests that among the irrational things obscured by rationalisation are 'sentiment, passion, chance' (232), the point here is that suffering from hunger, as a result of food shortages, becomes comprehensible

no longer economically profitable, which has at its base only peasants and artisans, and which is distinguished at the top by honour and glory, a nobility … the authority of a spiritual aristocracy' (qtd in Löwy 54). The new 1923 edition of this passage, Löwy explains, runs as follows: 'the distant totality of Utopia presents the picture of an edifice without a single economically profitable part; with everyone producing what he can, everyone consuming what he needs' (qtd in Löwy 54). Motifs taken from late nineteenth-century Romanticism, of peasant artisans and spiritual nobilities, as means of describing a utopian society, are replaced by themes of production and consumption. Although the relation to modern industrial capitalism remains antagonistic, the new perspective sees it as something to be overcome rather than withdrawn from. In the Irish context, much of the Revival movement maps onto the 1918, or pre-revolutionary, position as mapped out by Löwy. Yeats's celebrations of aristocracy and peasantry, for instance, are a good example of this. Certainly, examples of the revolutionary position do exist in Irish thought, with James Connolly being the obvious and most famous example. In Irish literary modernism Joyce, as we will see, is often cited as such a figure, but claims that Joyce imagined a future beyond capital are contestable. However, before turning to such claims, and to avoid locating Joyce's work solely within a European context, we must first explore how the crisis which Lukács set out to diagnose had its specific Irish manifestation.

Alienation in Ireland before and after 1916

I want to argue here that although Joyce's portrayal of an alienated bourgeoisie in *Ulysses* shows deep thematic links with Lukács's own ideas, *Ulysses* registers an awareness of its and Joyce's inability to go beyond bourgeois alienation. That the struggle for Irish independence became a military struggle is something which interfered with Joyce's career. Hence, to understand Joyce's relation to the independence movement, the forces which made this movement up must be clarified. Ireland was not exempt from the European crises of the 1910s which had dismayed intellectuals such as Lukács. The outbreak of war in 1914 split the nationalist movement just as it had the social democratic movements in continental Europe. Yeats's ambivalent reaction to the Easter Rising, as recorded in "Easter 1916", demonstrated an uncertainty about artistic passivity which was reminiscent of a mood among continental artists during the war. The conditions producing these uncertainties would remain in place for some time. The republic declared in 1916 was reaffirmed by the First Dáil in 1919 and would continue to exist, in a state of semi-legality, until 1922. Although

this republic was, as Charles Townshend calls it, a 'counter-state' (83), it carried meaning, for nationalists at least, and the Civil War would begin in part over the question of fidelity to the Easter Republic. The counter-state had a programme, built around 'the ideal of "self-reliance"' (83), expressed in a strategy of 'undermining the already fragile legitimacy of the UK regime' (83) and 'construct[ing] an alternative focus of legitimate government' (83). Although largely a government on the run, individual ministers nonetheless put ideas into action which had been germinating in Irish society for decades. Arthur Griffith, for example, established a Commission of Inquiry into Resources and Industries, which aimed to catalogue the natural and economic resources of Ireland, with a view to working out the basis of economic self-sufficiency (Townshend 93). Joyce had, in the 1900s, described Sinn Féin's as 'the most formidable' (*Occasional* 140) Fenian strategy yet developed and events in Ireland now provided the opportunity to see this strategy in practice.

Given that what had been in Joyce's youth ideological debate was now political reality, it is worth noting some of the contours of those debates. Townshend credits Bulmer Hobson's 1910 work *Defensive Warfare* as a central text for Sinn Féin's 'passive-resistance' (83) strategy. Hobson himself described his strategy as a 'policy of complete non-co-operation with the Castle Government' (503), complemented by the Irish Volunteers employing guerrilla tactics which 'would be very difficult for a foreign force to suppress' (503) should the British deploy the military to break up the Volunteers. This limitation placed on the Volunteers, that military action could only be used as a reaction to British aggression, was a crucial detail and men such as Hobson and Eimar O'Duffy would break with the nationalist movement on this issue during 1916. The policy of political non-co-operation was that of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin, who had proposed abstention from Westminster, although the policy, as Heather Laird has noted, had roots in nineteenth-century republicanism and land agitation. Indeed, even the United Irish League, a body organized by Home Rule MP William O'Brien, was involved in Hobson-style defensive warfare tactics. As Laird explains, the League, initially created as a land agitation group, increasingly took 'on a *de facto* governmental role, distributing funds to those in economic distress, and establishing an alternative court system that ran parallel to and sometimes threatened to supplant official law' (122). The 'counter-state' of the First Dáil was a deployment of this tactic on a national scale, but what Laird demonstrates is the depth of the separatist tradition in Irish society. It had roots that went deeper than Arthur Griffith and encompassed much of the radical separatism of the nineteenth century.

Ideas of a *de facto* government have also been found to be central to this period by P.J. Mathews, who argues that the Irish Revival pursued a strategy of asserting cultural self-reliance before seeking political independence. For Mathews, there was a connection between 'those forces which gave birth to the Abbey Theatre and those energies which brought about the evolution of Sinn Féin' (1). Seeing the Revival as a response to Parnell's fall and the subsequent stasis of parliamentary politics in Ireland, Mathews suggests that the Revival be understood as 'working for a form of *de facto* home rule despite its unattainability *de jure*' (8). As Home Rule had failed as a project, the Revival sought to produce the institutions and civic and cultural behaviour of an independent Ireland. The success of this project, Mathews adds, can be seen in the Abbey Theatre, the Gaelic League, and the National University of Ireland, 'the major cultural, political and educational institutions' (10) of the Free State, all being established as part of the Revival. For Declan Kiberd, working towards self-reliance was also a reform of consciousness. Associating self-reliance with 'the republican ideal [of] the achieved individual, the person with the courage to become his or her full self' (119), Kiberd suggests that the Revival was a project of recognising the cultural intermingling of Irish and English that defined Ireland in the early 1900s. To create the institutions of a polyglot and culturally diverse Ireland would involve the erasure of the 'either-or polarities' of the 'Anglo-Irish antithesis' (6). Only then could the 'hybridity of the national experience' (7) be expressed in institutions. Hence, for Kiberd and Mathews, cultural activity, in *fin de siècle* Ireland, was seeking to overcome its isolation and assume a leading political role. Aware that an independent Irish state was imminent, the Revival sought to make culture central to the new state's forms. To be clear, particularly when it comes to Kiberd's emphasis on these strategies as means of personal transformation, we must note the difference between the sort of land seizures described by Laird and the setting up of cultural institutions described by Mathews and Kiberd. The latter describes political struggle in cultural terms, whereas Laird focuses on struggles over property manifesting in politics. As seen in the account of Lukács above, although culture is certainly political, a politicised approach to culture differs from a politicised approach to property.

While, as Townshend and others have noted, Irish republicans in the 1910s and 1920s were not strong on theories of a republican state, the few major attempts at such theorisation had emphasised culture.[3] Writing in the heat of revolution, Aodh de Blacam's 1918 *Towards*

[3] Bill Kissane, for instance, has claimed that 'Sinn Féiners … had no state tradition, and the regeneration of society [they pursued] at that time drew its impetus from civil society, not the state' ("Celtic Tiger" 12). In a more severe assessment, Tom Garvin has described the Irish revolutionaries of 1916-1922 as having worked in a 'pre-political

the Republic found, in older Gaelic practices, answers to the challenges of forming a new state. De Blacam proposed basing the new republic on 'the communal Gaelic State' (984) which, rather than rely on 'central authority' (984), had possessed a 'many-headedness, as of the hydra' (984). This 'state was based on self-supporting stateships' (984) with their own 'pasturage, tillage, lea, wood, and fresh or saltwater fisheries' (984). Each 'stateship' amounted to 'a complete apparatus for independent and varied life' (984) and, so, had proved uniquely resistant to colonialism, in that there was no central institution for the British to destroy. Instead, '*the national war was … a social war*' (984) fought through the maintenance of Irish economic and social habits, rather than through pitched battles.[4] This insistence on grounding the independent Irish state in existing social practices led de Blacam to claim that 'any attempt to base the Irish Nation on racialism is absurd' (983). We can see here the sort of argument and project Kiberd identifies with the Revival, one which facilitates a more diverse sense of Irish identity through basing identity on social forms. It is notable that central to de Blacam's argument is the claim that Ireland had never possessed the sort of well-developed objectification of itself represented by the modern European state. This did not mean, he argued, that there was not such a thing as Irish civilization. This civilization could be identified through attention to everyday social and economic practices. James Connolly would prove able to turn this attention to ancient practices into the basis for communism in Ireland, noting that 'the Irish system was … on a par with those conceptions of social rights and duties' ("Erin's Hope" 987) considered to represent modern Socialism. For Connolly, 'the conflict between rival systems of land ownership was the pivot around which centered all the struggles and rebellions of which [Irish] history has been so prolific' (986-987). A turn to history, depending on what one chooses to take from history, can itself provide the practical basis for going beyond the present.

Now, there were many forces in Ireland other than those critical of capitalist property rights. Roy Foster, for instance, has argued that the sort of cultural struggle Mathews and Kiberd acclaim only became a political force after 1914. Admittedly, to demonstrate this he cites the United Irish League, which, as seen, had its own form of radicalism. As Foster argues, there were powerful conservative forces finding expression in Irish society through 'the initiatives of "constructive Unionism", notably the Land Acts of 1903 and 1909' (434),

condition' (53) and as having come unwillingly to the 'realisation of the necessity for a political process and a further realisation of the desirability that this process be an open, law-bound and democratic one' (53).

[4] In an explanation of de Blacam's 'many-headed' state, Luke Gibbons suggests that Ireland was 'regulated by an alternative public sphere' (*Transformations* 143) based in cultural practices not objectified into any 'legal-rational administration' (147). Gibbons notes that the historic absence of an Irish state resembling the English or continental states was understood as an 'embarrassment' (142) by many nationalists in Ireland.

which relied on a 'conference plus business' (434) approach to politics, rather than agitation and rebellion. Foster describes these social forces as representing a 'rural *embourgeoisiement*' (439) or 'Catholic nationalism' (438). This was a force resistant to 'social expenditure and secular welfarism' (438) which found its leading figures in would-be 'enlightened and ostensibly "unpolitical" landlords"' (435). Often, these figures found their political party to be the respectable Home Rule movement, which lost out during the radicalization of Irish society after 1913. These forces also, however, proved to be the victors of the independence struggle. As John Regan has described, 'by the mid 1920s the post-revolutionary elite, in terms of its composition and its dominant political culture, appeared to share much in common with the pre-revolutionary nationalist elite' (378). Cumann na nGaedheal sought to restore power to 'the risen Irish nationalist middle-class elite … which had been swept aside at the moment of their inheritance by a Sinn Féin revolution' (87). The business-like middle class politics Foster emphasises, then, although eclipsed during the Irish revolution, were to regain importance after 1922. Irish society, even during a period of revolution, contained forces other than those participating in that revolution.

In other words, while scholarly attention has rightly been focused on the radical forces which pushed through independence, the conservative movement which took power after 1922 and disappointed the radicals had been present in Irish society all along. Among the Irish revolutionaries, Connolly appears to have been most cognizant of this reality. As early as 1897, Connolly had argued for 'a reorganisation of society on the basis of a broader and more developed form of that common property which underlay the social structure of Ancient Erin' ("Socialism and Nationalism"). His justification for this, that otherwise an independent Irish state would 'guard the fraudulent gains of capitalist and landlord from "the thin hands of the poor" just as remorselessly and just as effectually as the scarlet-coated emissaries of England do today' ("Socialism and Nationalism"), anticipated the process Regan describes. From a Joycean perspective, what is of major interest here is that although Joyce is more often associated with modernity's revolutionary aspects, he was closer to this 'embourgeoisiement' than he was to the radicals. Emer Nolan, in a persuasive study of Joyce, has suggested that his work emerges from the struggle of Irish Catholicism to develop 'a concept of Irish national identity that would be at once faithful to a revamped notion of the traditional and appropriate to a modern civil polity' (*Emancipations* ix). Having begun from 'penal bondage' (ix), Irish Catholicism, so Nolan argues, found itself tasked in the nineteenth and early twentieth century with explaining how 'the religious and cultural practices of the majority' (xi) could 'be reformed and yet preserved in a modern democratic dispensation'

(xi). Catholic novelists, then, were called upon to perform a "major" cultural function' (xii). Crucially, Nolan says, Joyce 'appears to embrace the multiplicity and excess of modern capitalist culture' (153) and portrays Dublin's citizens as being 'preoccupied with the political project of recreating a purportedly once lively and commercial Irish nation' (155). The Ireland he explores is, at the least, as much the Ireland described by Foster and Regan as it is the revolutionary Ireland explored by Kiberd and Mathews. The society Joyce sought to depict in *Ulysses* was a dynamic one. Competition between nationalism and colonialism existed alongside the competing social projects of the Revival and the Catholic bourgeoisie. Lukács's argument for adopting a proletarian standpoint resolved the problem of reconciling oneself to a disparate society through arguing for identification with the most progressive force in that society. Joyce, as will be shown, took a less left-wing position and, so, was confronted with the complex task of finding some relation to a radically diffuse Irish society.

"a horrible example of free thought": alienation in the "Telemachiad"

For Nolan, *Ulysses* 'successfully forecasts one of the eventual results of [the Irish] revolution – not the Free State repression that followed shortly afterward, but the regime of modern consumerism of which Bloom is the avatar' (*Emancipations* 155). *Ulysses*, says Nolan, is a novel about a commercial Ireland, an Ireland defined by its participation in capitalism and the integration of the market into the lives of its people. From Bloom to the Citizen, the reality of modern Ireland, as well as the prospects of its future, are understood to be tied to various forms of capitalism. As we will see, consumerism, mass industry, and mercantilism, are all explored in Irish terms, with the alienation sociologists had deemed integral to capitalism in attendance also. Nolan has elsewhere noted that, in a critique of readings which impute to a writer a position above or beyond the social conflicts of their era, 'real historical actors must … decide to ally themselves with one side or another of a particular question' ("State of the Art" 87). Keith Booker, in his Ulysses, *Capitalism, and Colonialism*, makes a similar point in arguing that 'Joyce might very well have decided, in his work, to become an advocate of the Irish working class. That he chose … not to do so, poses an extremely difficult problem for critics who would see Joyce as an antiauthoritarian defender of the oppressed' (6). Invoking Fanon's portrayal of the 'wretched of the earth' as the agents of decolonization, Booker draws attention to the middle-class milieu of Joyce's novels. Joyce chooses not to explore in any great detail the Irish working class, as found in, say, James Stephen's *The Charwoman's Daughter*. *Ulysses* explores what Booker calls 'the educated postcolonial elite' (13), those who

would go on to govern and define the Free State. For instance, Buck Mulligan's real life analogue, Oliver St. John Gogarty, would go on to become a Free State senator. More important than any individual biographical detail, however, is the class Joyce explores, defined by Nolan as the 'petit bourgeoisie'. Nolan describes Joyce's 'Dubliners [as] preoccupied with the political project of recreating a purportedly once lively and commercial Irish nation, but also with the pleasures of drink, food, conversation, gossip, and sex' (*Emancipations* 155). This, I will argue, is accurate, but I wish to add that Joyce's Dubliners are also undergoing the typically modern experience of alienation. The more the novel moves into Bloom's commercial world, 'the regime of modern consumerism', the more we find the portrayal of alienation switching from an exploration of Stephen's colonial alienation to an alienation increasingly derived from capitalist conditions.

Lost in thought while on Sandymount Strand in "Proteus", Stephen remarks that even when his eyes are closed, the material world is 'there all the time without you' (31.27). The problem Stephen feels to be confronting him, in the "Telemachiad" sections of *Ulysses*, is that of alienation. At the end of *Portrait*, Stephen had declared that his mission would be to 'encounter reality'; we see in "Proteus" his frustration with a reality he cannot form a positive relationship with. This failure extends to an alienation from his own physicality. Seeing his face in a mirror in "Telemachus", Stephen asks 'who chose this face for me?' (6.136-137). His discomfort with his own body recurs throughout the "Telemachiad" and is extended towards the bodies of others. Imagining one of the schoolboys in "Nestor" to have 'weak watery blood' (23.142) and to be a 'squashed boneless snail' (23.142), Stephen considers that 'like him was I' (24.168). The most regular expressions of alienation from the physical are found in Stephen's memories of his mother's corpse, a 'wasted body' (5.104) in a grave which gave a 'faint odour of wet ashes' (5.106). Crucially, his alienation from the physical is paralleled to an alienation from colonial society. Rejecting any assessment of himself as an 'example of free thought' (17.625-626), Stephen insists that he is a 'servant of two masters' (17.638), the Catholic Church and British imperialism, and worries that he is 'made not begotten' (32.45). In the latter comments, with their echo of Stephen's concern over 'who chose' his face, we see how Joyce weaves physical and social forms of alienation together in the "Telemachiad" episodes. This weaving is prominently found in Stephen's distaste for physical labour and preference for the more abstract pleasures of the mind, but the roots of this distance, we find, lie in Stephen's fear that his experiences are not his own, but are governed by church and colonialism.

These ties between Stephen's physical and social alienations are developed throughout the "Telemachiad". The ease with which Haines and Deasy identify as British, for instance, is compared to Stephen's own struggles to identify as Irish. Haines repeatedly identifies as a 'Britisher' (18.666), while Deasy openly identifies as an Irish subject of the British crown, describing both himself and Stephen as 'kings' sons' (26.279-280). In contrast to these secure identities, Stephen, in "Proteus", frets about violence in Irish history with thoughts about 'my people, with flayer's knives, running, scaling, hacking in green blubbery whalemeat' (38.305-306). Here, again, we find a physical dimension to Stephen's reflections on his relationship with Ireland, as he considers how 'their blood is in me, their lusts my waves' (38.306-307). A notable instance of this intertwining of the physical and the social occurs with the appearance of one of Stephen's 'people', the milkwoman in "Telemachus". The milkwoman's political subordination, 'serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer' (12.405), provokes Stephen to imagine 'her woman's unclean loins' (12.420-421) and 'old shrunken paps' (12.398). This sense that Ireland's political situation manifests physically in the body is most thoroughly expressed through the parallels developed between Stephen's mother and the "Mother Ireland" or "Cathleen ni Houlihan" trope. "Circe" sees the appearance of both the deceased May Dedalus and a parodied version of the Sean-Bhean Bocht, named here as 'Old Gummy Granny'. The Granny, carrying 'blight on her breast' (485.4580) and demanding that Stephen kill Private Carr so as to 'be in heaven' (490.4738), shares both appearance and attitude with May's apparition. Her insistence that Stephen 'repent' (474.4398) and her 'black withered right arm' (475.4218) also recall Stephen's memories of his mother. Joyce once wrote to Nora Barnacle that, regarding his mother's death, he 'cursed the system which had made her a victim' (*Selected Letters* 48). While we should not draw straight parallels between Joyce's letters and his art, there is, in this comment, an echo of the association *Ulysses* makes between Irish colonial society and personal sufferings and tragedies.

It is, admittedly, open to question as to whether Stephen's experiences can contain the entirety of Irish colonial experience. As Enda Duffy has argued, to read in *Ulysses* the claim that 'Ireland the oppressed and servile nation … serves as an analogy to the oppressed and misunderstood would-be artist' (30) is to reduce the complexity of that history. It also implicitly reproduces the stereotypes of idealistic Celt and practical Englishman by transforming Ireland into an aesthetic experience. Admittedly, this is also true of Joyce's use of female bodies to present these alienating conditions, which, although aiming to subvert the 'Mother Ireland' imagery of *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, nonetheless reduces the particularity of

these experiences into a negative account of colonialism. For Duffy, however, although *Ulysses* begins with 'paralleling of narrative strands of personal alienation from community … and nationalist integration within it' (27), these 'stereotyped versions of communal subjectivity' (27) are abandoned after the "Telemachiad". Instead, he argues, we find 'a strikingly different version of the rapprochement between individual subject and imagined community' (27) based on the theme of the 'simultaneously occurring national life' (27). Duffy reads the "Telemachiad" episodes as 'ironically cast, tableaus of the colonial oppression of Ireland' (26) and suggests that they represent 'a way of imagining community that has been borrowed by the colonized people from their colonial masters' (31). Certainly, as Duffy and many other critics have argued, Leopold Bloom's entry into *Ulysses* signals a change in the work's approach to Irish society. To say that this represents a blunt rejection of the "Telemachiad", however, may go too far. As the brief account of "Circe" above suggests, the themes found in *Ulysses*'s early episodes are not entirely abandoned. Hence, while Duffy's emphasis on seeing the switch from Stephen to Bloom in political terms is useful, it should not be overstated. A change or development does not necessarily indicate a rejection. Rather, Joyce explores how the problem of the world being 'there all the time without you' (31.27) appears in different guises. Stephen's battles with colonialism represent what Joyce finds to be only one facet, albeit a vital one, of Irish historical experience. There is colonialism, represented in Haines, and colonial capitalism, represented in Deasy, but there is also bourgeois capitalism, which Bloom introduces. Stephen demonstrates not only the limitations colonialism places on the intellectual, but also the limits a portrayal of Stephen's situation has for a portrayal of wider Irish history.

"Nestor", 1916, and the alienated experience of historical events

As seen, many European intellectuals found that war and revolution had raised to major importance the question of history's relation to one's art and Duffy echoes this in suggesting that the Easter Rising had provoked a crisis in Joyce's writing. As Duffy explains, Joyce had used *Dubliners* and *Portrait* to mythologize 'his alienation from … subservient Irish society' (14). This myth, Duffy notes, was 'summarized in the "*Non serviam*" of *A Portrait*' (14) and had 'made [Joyce] a figure haughtily self-excluded from local political pragmatism' (15). As long as Ireland continued to be paralyzed politically, this myth was tenable grounds for Joyce's identity. It was the 'eminent reversal of Irish political subservience' (14) brought about by 1916 and evident at least since the establishment of the Volunteers in 1913 which

transformed 'the dialectic between the artist and his nation' (15) Joyce relied on. From his first publication, the 1901 pamphlet "The Day of the Rabblement", Joyce had condemned the artist who 'joins in a popular movement' (51) and insisted that only when an individual has 'freed himself from the mean influences around him' (52) is he 'an artist at all' (52). While Joyce had begun to ironise Stephen's postures even in *Portrait*, this criticism of Stephen, and so of artists, intensifies in *Ulysses*. In *Ulysses,* with war and revolution more immediate concerns, Stephen's artistic position is exposed to a more intense interrogation.[5] Revolutionary politics were now directly intervening in Irish history, as seen, for example, with the Volunteers or the Lockout and also with the radicalization of cultural politics as expressed in a figure such as Pearse. Joyce's art had sought to diagnose the problems of Irish society, but he now found that the very movements he had condemned in an essay such as "Rabblement" were attempting practical actions which erased or resolved those problems.

Gail Day describes how a feeling of 'complete social irrelevance' (322), brought on by the First World War, induced many artists to adopt more avant-garde techniques. Nolan's argument seen above that 'real historical actors must … decide to ally themselves with one side or another of a particular question' (87) asserts its importance in this context. Faced with the failure of traditional aesthetic forms to prevent the war, artists who imagined their work to be of social relevance were obliged to reconsider both their methods and their attitudes. This question of one's relationship to historical events is explored in "Nestor", with Stephen's declaration that 'history … is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' (28.377) being vital. Stephen's statements in "Nestor" do not indicate an attempt to 'ally' himself with any one force within history. Rather, history to Stephen is 'corpsestrewn plain[s]' (20.16), 'shattered glass and toppling masonry' (20.9). These images of urban violence and killing fields, invoking the battles of the Easter Rising and the First World War, lay the two historical periods of 1904 and 1916 alongside one another. Stephen's decision, in 1904, to reject history, is brought into the Irish and European society of the First World War. As James Fairhall notes, 'the characters of *Ulysses* live not only in their fictive time frame but … that of the world ushered in by the Great War' (168).

Stephen's desire, then, to go outside what is understood as history and explore the 'infinite possibilities' (21.50-51) historical events have 'ousted' (21.51), speaks to two different contexts. For David Lloyd, when Stephen asks the question, 'was that only possible which came to pass' (21.52), Stephen suggests a 'critique of a singular developmental model and the rethinking of historical time in terms of its possibilities rather than its

[5] As will be seen in the chapter on *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's criticism of art continued to develop after *Ulysses*.

determinations' (100). In contrast to Deasy's claim that 'all human history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God' (28.380-381), Stephen's thought, Lloyd says, seeks to 'unweav[e] the chain of history' (100). Lloyd's reading of "Nestor", then, reads it as an anti-colonial critique of teleological – or "Whig" – histories which retroactively justify colonialism. There is obvious validity to such a reading, but it cuts away the Easter 1916 context Stephen's ruminations invoke.[6] After the Easter Rising, the violence of history now contained a positive, if tragic, aspect, tending towards Irish independence. If there were good reasons to reject much of Ireland's history before the twentieth century, there were also good reasons to accept, even if with some unease, the events of the 1910s.

A quite different perspective on Stephen's historical speculations can be found through referring again to Lukács, although here I will refer to his 1957 essay "The Ideology of Modernism". The essay attempts to correct what Lukács sees as a 'prejudice' (13) of 'bourgeois criticism' (13), this being the treatment of modernist literature as 'the essentially modern literature' (13) best capable of expressing modern history. Arguing against this, Lukács attempts to demonstrate how modernist literary techniques fail to satisfactorily express historical development, unlike realist techniques. The usefulness or otherwise of Lukács's ideas as a criticism of Joyce's own work is here less important than their applicability to the problem Joyce is depicting with Stephen. Lukács grounds the distinction between realist and modernist approaches to history in their treatment of what he calls, drawing on Hegel, 'abstract' and 'concrete' 'potentiality'. Lukács explains that '*potentiality* … is richer than actual life (21) and refers to the 'innumerable possibilities for man's development [which] are imaginable' (21-22). What separates abstract from concrete potentiality is that the former 'belongs wholly to the realm of subjectivity' (23-24), meaning that it represents the 'possibilities in a man's mind' (22) or all possible imaginings of what the future could hold. Concrete potentiality, by contrast, refers to those possible versions of the future which are brought into material existence. How this occurs, says Lukács, is that 'situations arise in which a man is confronted with a choice; and in the act of choice a man's character may reveal itself' (22). This realization of character represents 'potentialities [which] are, then, "real" or concrete' (23). Lukács concedes that 'the concrete potentiality cannot be isolated from the myriad abstract potentialities' (23) until the 'decision' (23) is

[6] As Lloyd rightly notes, it is characteristic of subjugated countries and peoples, whose history does not align with teleological narratives of national victory, to seek another sense of history. Such societies may seek 'an alternative conception of history … [which] transform[s] the melancholy of loss into a refusal to let go of the possibilities of the past' (5). Drawing on the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty, Lloyd suggests that such a model seeks 'alternative histories … that might sidestep the iron logic of developmental historicism' (126).

made. To use Stephen's language in "Nestor", history's 'infinite possibilities' (21.50-51) represent abstract possibility. The Lukácsian critique of Stephen would be that his desire for this infinity is allowed to override the need to 'make a decision' and form some relationship with society.

Duffy argues that the "Telemachiad" episodes are parodies, as their depiction of alienation relies too heavily on nineteenth-century models of reconciled communities. By referring to Lukács, however, we can see "Nestor" as a critical presentation of Stephen's alienation, with its criticism grounded in a social failure, on Stephen's part. When viewed through this lens, we can observe Joyce responding to the problem the Easter Rising posed for any idea of autonomy he may have held. Clair Wills has described how the Easter rebels 'harked back to the French Revolution' (4) and 'claim[ed] the same rights for Ireland as for other European nations, conceived in the mould of nineteenth-century theories of national distinction' (12). The Rising, in other words, was construed by its participants as a moment in the course of European history. Alienation from this history, understandable in the 1904 of Stephen's time, is a less defensible position after 1916. "Nestor", through its invocations of 1916, places the society of wartime Ireland alongside the society of Ireland in 1904. Through this paralleling, the value of an intellectual position is shown to vary according to historical circumstance and Stephen, although an intellectual rebel, is shown to be frozen in alienation and unprepared for a positive relationship with historical development.

'folio of the world': "Scylla and Charybdis" and reconciliation with reality

Given the problems history posed for Joyce's understanding of his art, it is worth noting that he complained Stephen Dedalus, his alter-ego, had 'a shape that can't be changed' (qtd in Budgen 105). We have seen some reasons for Joyce to have made this complaint. Stephen, adequate to colonial Ireland, was not adequate to revolutionary Ireland. That said, it should not be ignored that *Ulysses*, in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, does present Stephen as attempting to theorise a way beyond alienation and, so, become relevant to the society *Ulysses* emerged from. In "Scylla and Charybdis" we see Stephen making a critique of the Revival from a quite different position from the sort of arguments found in Joyce's early essays, such as "Rabblement". Stephen's critique in "Scylla and Charybdis" targets the Revival's aesthetic doctrines and their roots in idealist aesthetics such as Symbolism. The episode sees Stephen debate with John Eglinton and A.E., here yoked together as supporters of idealism in art. A.E. is seen to claim that 'art has to reveal to us ideas, formless spiritual essences' (152.48-

49). The purpose of art, says A.E., is to 'bring our minds into contact with the eternal wisdom, Plato's world of ideas' (152.52-53) and he condemns 'discussions of the historicity of Jesus' (152.48) as 'purely academic' (152.46) criticism ignorant of the 'world of ideas' (152.53-54).[7] A.E. opposes materialistic approaches to culture and treats all contexts of production as irrelevant. In this aesthete's stance, art is that which transcends its material conditions and, if successful, betrays none of its truths to a materialist reading. Stephen, aware of how colonialism determines his life and art, responds by asking which of Plato or Aristotle 'would have banished me from his commonwealth?' (153.82-83). Pitting the materialist Aristotle against the idealist Plato, Stephen reminds his critics that art must have some relation to its society. This is quite a different position from the arguments in "Nestor". History continues to exert pressure upon the artist, but this is now accepted rather than rejected. We find Stephen's aesthetic thinking to be more open to engagement than was indicated in the "Telemachiad". This is a Stephen who is attempting to change or develop his aesthetic and, of major interest here, is attempting to develop its materialist side.

Certainly, *Ulysses* begins with Stephen having good reason to be reconsidering his artistic project. As Willi Erzgräber notes, among the reasons for Stephen's alienation is his sense of having failed as an artist, being returned from Paris without completing any major work. Stephen bemoans his failures throughout *Ulysses*, mocking himself for his 'epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep' (34.141-142). For Erzgräber, that Stephen is 'intensely occupied … with his previous life' (292) is the source of his theorising, in "Scylla and Charybdis", on Shakespeare. Stephen's claim here, in brief, is that Shakespeare, playing the ghost in *Hamlet*, sought to speak as father to both 'the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare' (155.171-172). An artist is as much a parent of his work as of his own children, Stephen says, and it follows that only if we are aware of Shakespeare's deceased son Hamnet can we understand the filial drama in *Hamlet*. Biography is crucial material for art, as well as crucial material for understanding art, and Stephen insists that, for the artist, 'his own image … is the standard of all experience, material and moral' (161.432-433). Art is the reconstruction of one's lived experience, performed under the assumption that this experience, if fully expressed, can encompass all

[7] A.E.'s reference to studies of 'the historicity of Jesus' refers to a trend, which became increasingly strong over the course of the nineteenth century, to treat Jesus as a purely historical figure, reading the Bible as a historical source according to the methods of historical investigation. A particularly prominent example of this can be found in the work of David Strauss (1808 – 1874), a German philosopher and theologian, whose *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* became a notorious example of this. The work, translated into English by George Eliot in 1846, was subject to attack by Nietzsche in his *Untimely Meditations* for its lifeless academism.

possible experience.[8] In this we can hear an echo of Lukács's claim, in *Theory of the Novel*, that the novel form saw 'self-recognition' (80) as providing life with 'its immanent meaning' (80). In both theories, the individual is measure of all things, with Stephen claiming that Shakespeare 'found in the world without as actual what was in his world within as possible' (175.1041-42). If, on the one hand, the artist is a God comparable to 'the playwright who wrote the folio of the world' (175.1046-47), on the other the artist is also entirely reliant on that world to provide material for art. Even more prosaically, the artist is dependent on the world to provide the conditions to sustain their art. In the middle of these debates, Stephen worries about his financial debt to A.E. and is rebuked for demanding payment for his writing. We find "Scylla and Charybdis" exposing two material determinants of art, both its need for content and its need for security, the need for what Woolf called 'a room of one's own'.

For A.E., Stephen's theory amounts to 'peeping and prying into greenroom gossip' (155.186). Art, being for A.E. a working towards the immaterial ideal, only restrains itself with this sort of attention. With that said, if A.E. represents, in "Scylla and Charybdis", an idealism Joyce wishes to refute, he is also used to expose the insufficiency of Stephen's attempts to relate art to society. Unnoticed by the various debaters, A.E. introduces the question of revolution and, hence, the question of Irish history, into the discussion by predicting that 'the movements which work revolutions in the world are born out of the dreams and visions in a peasant's heart' (152.114-115). These comments, with their emphasis on folk culture, are the sort of comments the young Joyce was apt to dismiss in the early 1900s. By the late 1910s, as seen, the Revival had become a potent political force and while Stephen has many answers to the questions posed in "Scylla and Charybdis", he makes no contribution to A.E.'s attempt to politicise the debate. It is in this way that Stephen cannot change. As Lukács had claimed, in *Theory of the Novel*, that a 'totality of men and events is possible only on the basis of culture' (147), so too does Stephen claim that the artist's work can become a 'folio of the world'. What Stephen cannot do is go beyond culture. His theory may allow for his works to be maximally influenced by reality, but it remains wedded to an insistence on the aesthetic object.

[8] Some early responses to *Ulysses* appear to have read the work along the lines proposed by Stephen here. Reviewing *Ulysses*, Mary Colum described the work as 'the Confessions of James Joyce' (231). It was a work which said 'Here I am; here is what country and race have bred me, what religion and life and literature have done to me' (231).

Reflections of a non-political man: Bloom's consciousness in *Ulysses*

Kiberd has claimed that 'with the onset of Bloom, [Joyce] shifted his investigation from the mind of Stephen Dedalus to the setting which thwarts its articulation' (*Inventing* 347). A similar point is found in Duffy's claim that Bloom's prominence in the text is a result of Joyce switching from a narrative of alienated intellectuals to one which represents a 'simultaneously occurring national life' (27). For these critics, the switch to Bloom's perspective is part of a switch in societal focus that occurs in *Ulysses*, with the commercial aspects of Irish society moving to the fore. As I have indicated above, I agree with this, but add that the text, with Bloom's appearance, increases the attention it pays to capitalism. The question of one's determination by colonialism is less prominent with Bloom than it is with Stephen. This is not to say – and none of these critics have said – that with Bloom, colonialism exits *Ulysses*. For Duffy, Joyce uses Bloom to explore the individual's 'total interpellation by a colonial regime of surveillance' (71), while Kiberd sees Bloom as typical of his society in that he is 'perpetually defined and described by others' (347). As Bloom, the Jewish outsider in a predominantly Catholic Dublin, is continually inspected and judged by that Dublin community, so too is that community inspected and judged by the colonial regime. Certainly, Joyce uses Bloom as one means of exploring how colonialism serves to determine the colonial subject. Throughout *Ulysses*, we find that Dubliners are constantly provoked to considerations of their political subordination through encountering its manifestations. Bloom, seeing 'a squad of constables … marching in Indian file. Goosestep' (133.406-407), is moved to think about pro-Boer riots held in protest at a visit to Trinity College by Joseph Chamberlain: this sort of ruminatation is typical of the Dubliners in *Ulysses*. Tom Kernan, walking past Thomas Street, remembers that 'down there Emmet was hanged' (197.764), while, near Island Street, he thinks that 'somewhere here Lord Edward FitzGerald escaped from Major Sirr' (198.785-786). Memories of FitzGerald, one of the leaders of 1798 rebellion, lead Kernan to remember lines from "The Croppy Boy" and "The Memory of the Dead", the former a republican ballad which is referenced throughout *Ulysses*, the latter a poem from John Kells Ingram published in 1842.[9] According to Duffy, what we find in Joyce's depictions of Dublin is the process by which total interpellation creates 'the possibility of an accession to consciousness of his position' (71). Their social world being

[9] "The Memory of the Dead" begins with lines that would become famous: 'who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?". Kernan recalls a different lines, 'they rose in dark and evil days' (198.790), while the phrase he thinks of from "The Croppy Boy" is 'at the siege of Ross did my father fall' (198.794).

entirely infused with signifiers of colonial subordination, the individual is driven towards an inescapable recognition of their political condition. We see this process occurring above with Bloom and Kernan, but it must be noted that colonial experiences are far from the sum of Bloom's thoughts in *Ulysses*. Indeed, Bloom's consciousness is more likely to turn to commercial and personal, rather than nationalist, themes, and if he is to be seen as totally interpellated, then those determining forces cannot be colonialism alone. Keith Booker, echoing Nolan, has described Bloom as 'a walking embodiment of bourgeois values' (*Capitalism* 126) and how these values are portrayed must be explored.

Given his awareness of Molly's infidelity with Boylan, it is unsurprising that Bloom is as likely to be brought to thoughts of his family as he is to thoughts about Irish history. In much the same manner as Dublin's political geography can set Bloom off on considerations of colonialism, commercial culture often reminds him of his domestic life. Walking through Dublin's streets, he sees items of clothing which remind him of Molly's affair. The sight of 'silk petticoats' (147.1061) provokes the reprimanding thought 'Today. Not think' (147.1062). This personal injunction not to think of Molly and Boylan, however, is rarely successful, and the same thought pattern returns when Bloom works out if Molly's infidelity has occurred yet: 'at four, she said … the violet silk petticoats. Not yet' (214.188). Thoughts of Molly in turn lead to thoughts of their deceased son Rudy, as 'gleaming silks, petticoats on slim brass rails' (138.631) forces the self-criticism that it is 'useless to go back. Had to be' (138.633). Similarly, thinking of other families leads him to thoughts of his own broken family. Reflecting on the relationship between Simon Dedalus and his son Stephen, Bloom comes to imagine his life 'if little Rudy had lived' (73.75). Although a justifiable sentiment, given the circumstances Joyce is depicting here, Bloom's fantasy of Rudy 'walking beside Molly in an Eton suit' (73.76) is demonstrative of a wider tendency of Bloom's to indulge in speculations both utopian and lurid. Leering at a woman in the street, Bloom imagines 'a constable off duty cuddling her in Eccles Lane' (49.177-178), a more salacious fantasising which is elaborated to great length in "Nausicaa", as will be explored below. What is immediately evident is that Bloom's experience of the world does not necessarily lead him towards considering colonial Ireland. Bloom's mind can be led to non-political questions.

That Bloom's non-political thoughts emphasise fantasy, and the division between the world as it is and the world as it can be imagined, invites the sort of Lukácsian reading suggested above. As Lukács argued, the inability to reconcile thought and world is characteristic of bourgeois alienation and while it may be unfair to describe Bloom's grief over Rudy as an instance of alienation, Joyce elsewhere makes it clear that Bloom fails to

reconcile thought and world. In "Ithaca", while staring at 'the heaventree of stars' (573.1039), the episode's catechistic narrator describes Bloom concluding that these stars are a 'utopia, there being no known method from the known to the unknown' (575.1141-1142). Lukács's argument that bourgeois thought fails to find a way of mediating between thought and world finds itself echoed here. This failure is, again in an echo of Lukács, associated with alienation as Bloom, after Stephen has left the house, feels 'the cold of interstellar space' (578.1246). Brought to consider an unbridgeable gap between unknown and known, Bloom sinks into an alienated loneliness, reflecting on the death of various friends. We find that he is repeating Stephen's own expressions of alienation and personal loss in the "Telemachiad", a sense of alienation leading Bloom to reflect on death and loss.

Generally, as Booker notes, 'the unrealistic fantastic entertained by Joyce's characters lead not to activism, but to quietism' (155). When 'encountering the inevitable lack of fit between their romantic visions and the reality of Dublin life, Joyce's characters tend to respond not by attempting to change reality, but by retreating even further into nostalgia, sentimentality, and escapism' (155). We find support for such a claim in Bloom's thoughts in "Ithaca", but furthermore, we find Joyce suggesting that this problem is specifically bourgeois. Joyce insists, in "Ithaca", on connecting Bloom's thoughts to his bourgeois class position. Before retiring to bed, Bloom indulges in a utopian fantasy of his future, a cottage called 'Flowerville' (587.1580) in which he will carry out 'house carpentry' (587.1601) and 'comparative study of religions' (587.1589). Alongside this mundane fantasy we find Bloom claiming that it is 'a task for a superior intelligence to substitute other more acceptable phenomena in the place of the less acceptable phenomena to be removed' (572.1008-1009) and that there is 'a place for everything' (583.1410). Utopianism, specialisation, and a separation of thought and reality are all in evidence. Indeed, the very catechistic form of "Ithaca", where the seeming objectivity of the question-and-answer narrative is undercut by the lyricism and error found in those answers, speaks to this sense of reality as uncontainable. Even the most rationalized and instrumentalist attempt to control reality leaves something out. Nolan notes that the catechistic style of "Ithaca", which invokes a 'vision of the complete subjugation of the natural world by instrumental reason' (*Nationalism* 117) is 'juxtaposed with a sense of the futility and meaninglessness, not just of the works of humankind, but of nature and human life themselves' (117). Nolan's point is that what I am here calling alienation is shown, in "Ithaca", to emerge in tandem with rationalization. In a Lukácsian vein, "Ithaca" demonstrates how a typically bourgeois rational comprehension of the world has the opposite effect of estranging it from us.

Even a typically bourgeois politics is drawn into Bloom's fantasizing in "Ithaca". He describes his ideal politics as being 'a course that lay between undue clemency and excessive rigour' (588.1617), his desired policies ranging from 'unbiased homogenous indisputable justice' (588.1619-1620) to 'the strict maintenance of public order' (588.1624), while his ambition is to be 'loyal to the highest constituted power in the land' (588.1622-1623). As Booker rightly notes:

> Bloom's refusal to take sides … is indicative of a constant desire to have it both ways that thoroughly informs Bloom's character and that a generation of critics have tended to see as one of Bloom's more positive virtues. Bloom, so this popular reading goes, is the very soul of compromise and the antithesis of the strident "all or nothing at all" extremism that characterizes Stephen Dedalus. At the same time, politically responsible behavior sometimes demands the taking of sides (*Capitalism* 92).

Bloom can no more overcome an alienated relationship to history than Stephen can. Bloom's fantasy of retiring to a cottage, 'Flowerville' (587.1580), lacks any revolutionary millenarianism or militancy and instead expresses a moderate bourgeois politics. What appears to be non-political fantasizing is shown to be expressive of Bloom's position in Irish society, that of a typical bourgeois individual. Often, as Booker notes, this very equanimity is seen as one of Bloom's 'virtues' (92). For Martha Nussbaum, this plea for sensible, middle-of-the-road living, can be elevated into a philosophical principle. Joyce, says Nussbaum, is an 'un-Platonic' (686) thinker interested in exploring how 'thought [is] inspired by need and pain' (700). That Bloom's thoughts are motivated by lived experiences, whether personal or political, is understood by Nussbaum as Joyce's celebration of a mode of thought which produces its concepts from lived experience, rather than attempt to define lived experience according to thought. We can see an example of Nussbaum's argument in "Sirens", when Ben Dollard's rendition of "The Croppy Boy" leads Bloom to remark 'Hate. Love. Those are names. Rudy' (234.1069). Bloom here dismisses ideas and words as abstractions which cannot capture the reality they seek to express. He makes a less severe, although more politicised, version of the same argument in "Lestrygonians" when he opines that nationalist politics are 'useless words. Thing go on same, day after day' (134.477). What such a statement reveals is the problem with this reading. To emphasise an embrace of the everyday to such

a degree obscures the importance of thought. The problem raised by alienation, that of the relation between thought and society, is not solved but merely diverted. Bloom's experiences and thoughts may extend beyond colonialism in a way Stephen's do not, but this represents less a solution than a new problematic, suggestive of a society merely different from that encountered by Stephen.

"Nausicaa" and bourgeois Ireland after independence

Indeed, the extent to which Bloom's experiences of alienation can be seen to be typical of his class, and, furthermore, act as signals of Ireland's future after independence, is a prominent theme of the "Nausicaa" episode. Like "Ithaca", "Nausicaa" explores alienation and the unreal fantasies it produces as products of bourgeois capitalist conditions. Banal events are seen from the perspective of their alienated protagonists: Gerty MacDowell, on Sandymount Strand, realising she is being spied on by Leopold Bloom, reveals her legs and underwear to him, prompting Bloom to masturbate. For both, the sleaziness of the encounter is concealed behind their private and fantastic imaginings of it, each conceiving of the other as an exotic object on which dreams of escape from grubby reality can be founded. For Margot Norris, "Nausicaa" is an account of how modern cultural conditions interfere with the individual's capacity to produce images of himself, with the glamour of culture, both high and low, able to act as a release from reality rather than an as a passage to better grasping that reality. It depicts how 'modern squalor produces … the crippled connoisseur and the castrated idealist, men and women who long for beauty and significance forever outside their ken' (179). Thought, here portrayed as thoroughly determined by various high and low cultural influences, and reality are again seen to be unable to cohere. "Nausicaa" finds the basic problems of alienation, as developed with Stephen in the "Telemachiad", being repeated, but now crucially without any colonial context. The church remains important, but it is now allied to a capitalism which provides a more generic, mass cultural experience, with no suggestion of colonial subordination. The narrative of Gerty and Bloom's tryst is one determined by the cultural conditions of industrial capitalism, with this immersion suggesting a closed off and hopeless future which serves as a grim forecast for an Ireland where the determining forces of colonialism have been lifted.

Throughout "Nausicaa", banal events are elevated to a kind of kitschy grandeur. For instance, in Gerty's narration of the events, showing her legs and underwear is a 'wondrous revealment' (300.731), while we are told that she 'would fain have cried to [Bloom]

chokingly, held out her snowy slender arms to him to come' (300.733-734). This heightened and sentimental language recurs throughout Gerty's narration. In response to taunts from her friends, 'a brief cold blaze shone from her eyes that spoke volumes of scorn immeasurable' (297.578.579). As Norris explains, Gerty is attempting to 'imitate' (179) 'the venerable art of the past … classical or neo-classical forms' (178), which were prominent parts of late-Victorian culture. Gerty's problem in attempting this is that her 'access to concepts of classical form [is] already mediated by popular, ephemeral art' (178). Her cultural coordinates are scrambled, as she has been presented with two quite different cultural forms, each with their own values and modes of representing the world. This seeming wealth of available cultures, however, is a curse. Gerty has no culture of her own, no modes of representation fitted to her own situation, and so inherits a bewildering diversity of forms which cannot represent her. Alongside her neoclassical imaginings of Bloom, she also thinks of him as being like 'Martin Harvey, the matinee idol' (293.417) and indulges in a romantic fantasy that 'even if [Bloom] was a protestant or methodist she could convert him easily if he truly loved her' (293.432-43). This melding of religion and romance occurs elsewhere in Gerty's thoughts, as she fantasises that 'if she ever became a Dominican nun in their white habit perhaps [Father Conroy] might come to the convent' (294.451-452). Romantic desire and religion are hauled together in an unfitting combination. Joyce had explored before, particularly in *Portrait*, how Catholicism conflicted with Stephen's physical desires, but what we find here is Gerty fabricating romantic narratives using Catholic imagery. Although Gerty identifies as Catholic, insisting that she 'knew Who came first and after him the Blessed Virgin and then Saint Joseph' (287.139-140), her religion does not serve either as an oppressive or progressive value system. It has been subsumed into mass culture, with its iconography repackaged as the imagery of romance. Catholicism is no aid for Gerty, but the oppressive power it has for Stephen is suggested to have been subsumed into the alienating experiences provoked by capitalism.

Gerty's ability to generate fantasies and misapprehensions as to her own life extends beyond the immediate events of "Nausicaa". Reprising themes of lower middle-class failure found in *Dubliners*, Gerty's father is described as a drunk and violent man. Again, however, Gerty can only imagine her personal and familial history through the language of a sentimental mass culture. She thinks that 'had her father only avoided the clutches of the demon drink… she might now be rolling in her carriage, second to none' (290.290-292). Access to the social context which causes personal tragedies such as these, which Joyce had sought in *Dubliners*, is not a possibility for Gerty. The extent to which she is engaged in

alienated fantasy is sometimes exposed through her imaginings being revealed as outright lies by events elsewhere in the novel. While Gerty claims that she 'loathed that sort of person, the fallen women…that went with the soldiers' (299.661-663), her friend Cissy Caffrey is later seen flirting with British soldiers Carr and Compton. Admittedly, Gerty does not hold Cissy in high regard. Commenting on Cissy and Edy Bordman, Gerty thinks that 'she was not of them and never would be' (297.603), reintroducing a sense of alienation from one's peers already seen with Stephen Dedalus. This is far from the only parallel Gerty has to Stephen, with her description of her partner Reggie Wylie as a 'lighthearted deceiver' (297.584) echoing Stephen's description of Mulligan as a 'gay betrayer' (12.405). Just as art is central to Stephen's self-conception so too it is for Gerty. She imagines herself to be 'so beautifully moulded it seemed one an artist might have dreamed of' (297.583-584) and, if here she sees herself as the object of an artwork rather than as a creator of artwork, the centrality of art to a sense of self is nonetheless clear. These parallels between Stephen and Gerty seem to be made most obvious in the setting of "Nausicaa" being Sandymount Strand, the scene of Stephen's own alienated fantasies in "Proteus". With both characters insisting on being, in Gerty's words, "something aloof, apart, in another sphere' (297.602), the two retreat from reality into culturally-derived fantasies. That Stephen's fantasies are intellectually richer is only a consequence of his higher standard of education. In both cases, the problem is an inability to resolve one's own situation in life.

As seen, Stephen's alienation is shown to be a social phenomenon, rooted in the Irish political situation. Despite not suggesting any particular engagement in nationalism, Gerty's alienation is similarly presented. Indeed, whereas Stephen represents the problems of thought in a pre-revolutionary constellation of church and colonialism, Gerty represents a constellation of capitalism and church which suggests a post-independence Ireland. For Nolan, the point here is that *Ulysses* demonstrates how 'a newly repressive Irish Catholicism and twentieth-century liberal challenges to that regime' (161) are twins rather than opponents. *Ulysses* 'discloses how much the repressive authority shares with its "liberating" alternative by showing how the "desire" freed by the loss of religious faith is instead invested in the capitalist marketplace' (161). Rather than be detached from material circumstances according to the demands of Catholic doctrine, then, one undergoes this alienation according to the demands of commercial culture. Gerty, invested equally in Catholicism and commercialism, represents what is shared between these two social systems. Joyce's claim that he had switched the emphasis of his writing from Stephen to Bloom to escape Stephen's shape (Budgen 105) returns here. Among these fixed characteristics are Stephen's focus on

colonialism and Catholicism, two cultural touchstones which, potentially, would not carry as much weight in the independent commercial Ireland that many were anticipating. Bloom, being more receptive to modern commercial culture, may have been a better fit while, as has been seen, Gerty represents Stephen's intellectual themes updated to represent alienation in commercial culture. In effect, although Joyce endorses the political drive for independence, he is not here anticipating that it resolves the fundamental spiritual problems modern revolution had sought to repair.

Alienation or revolution in "Cyclops"

As mentioned above, Fairhall has described how 'the characters of *Ulysses* live not only in their fictive time frame but … [also] that of the world ushered in by the Great War' (168). Now, Joyce's interest is heavily invested in those among the bourgeoisie who existed apart from that violence and who later, in the Irish case at least, reemerged to assume power after independence. This does not mean that he avoids the question of conflict entirely. The climactic scene in "Circe", when 'brimstone fires spring up. Dense clouds roll past. Heavy gatling guns boom' (488.4661-4662) has often been taken to represent Joyce engaging with the Easter Rising. Without disputing this, I want to look at a different way in which the question of revolution, and the violence and other needs which emerge from it, are approached in *Ulysses*. "Cyclops", which stages a debate between Bloom and the insular nationalist Citizen, provides an interesting stage for watching Joyce debate questions of revolution and bourgeois alienation. "Cyclops" has often been seen by critics as an attack on Ireland's revolutionaries and, consequently, an endorsement of Bloom's own bourgeois liberalism. Nussbaum describes how "Cyclops" 'engage[s] in a send-up of the heroic, a cutting of its pretensions down to the size of the real world' (690). For Nussbaum, "Cyclops" exposes nationalism as another example of rhetoric disconnected from the realities of everyday life. Kiberd has claimed that "Cyclops" indicts 'timid men' (352) such as the Citizen for failing 'to tackle the British' (352), preferring to 'create a knock-on Jewish victim from within their own ranks' (352). For these critics, "Cyclops" is an exposé of Irish nationalism. As Nolan puts it, they 'refuse … to attach *any positive* qualities to the citizen or the kind of language that he speaks' (*Nationalism* 96), preferring to endorse, in Nolan's words, Bloom's

'liberalism' (96).[10] Bearing in mind the problems with Bloom's bourgeois politics, as explored above, the argument that "Cyclops" stages the victory of the bourgeoisie over nationalism is open to challenge. "Cyclops", I argue, explores a bourgeois anguish at a revolution it in principal supports, but finds practically too problematic to tolerate.

What the opposition opened up, in "Cyclops", between Bloom and his nationalist interlocuters explores is the difficult question of political sides, that which we have already seen raised by Nolan and Booker. This is a question which has been explored, in the context of decolonization, by Fanon, who explains how the fight against colonialism proceeded by 'unif[ying] [the] people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial basis' (35). For Fanon, in a decolonializing revolution 'individualism is the first to disappear' (36), as it is shown to 'have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged' (36). As Sartre, in his "Preface" to *The Wretched of the Earth* notes, 'in the heat of battle, all internal barriers break down … all fall into line with the stand made by the rural masses' (10). This is the situation staged in "Cyclops", seen from the perspective of Bloom, one unable to 'fall into line'. "Cyclops" clearly demonstrates that Bloom is always understood to be an outsider by his Dublin compatriots and that this status is based on racial considerations. In an echo of Deasy's joke to Stephen, in "Nestor", about Ireland having never let Jews into the country, the Citizen complains about 'allowing things like that to contaminate our shores' (277.1672). The episode's nameless narrator remarks that 'those jewies does have a sort of a queer odour coming off them' (250.451-452), while Martin Cunningham, who has previously assisted Bloom through social tensions, warns Bloom against contradicting Catholic philosophy. For Kiberd, articulating the case of what can be called the 'anti-Citizen' reading, the Citizen's 'one-track mind … leaves him intolerant of all foreigners' (350) and his exclusion of those he deems 'other' exposes how the Citizen's model of nationalism is derived from 'English models' (351). According to Kiberd, the Citizen is used by Joyce to expose the danger of Irish nationalism adopting a strict and insular notion of Irish identity, one quite opposed to the heterogenous or multifaceted ideas of Irish identity Kiberd claims to identify within Irish modernism. The Citizen, in Kiberd's reading, is a man in denial about the mongrel character of the Irish, something Joyce, by using the outsider Bloom as his 'everyman', has tapped into. Given that, as Kiberd notes, the Citizen is 'loosely modelled on Michael Cusack,

[10] Admittedly, it is not impossible to find even liberal critics acknowledging ambiguity or complexity in "Cyclops", with Richard Ellmann, for instance, claiming that 'the Citizen … is an aspect of Joyce's mind as well as the butt of his satire' (258).

founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association' (350), the question of revolution looms in the background here. The GAA, after all, was another of the institutions created in the Revival which would go on to dominate cultural life in independent Ireland. "Cyclops", so Kiberd's reading goes, intimates that the institutions of an independent Ireland, as crafted by men such as the Citizen, will be exclusionary. They will be based on a defensive nationalism unable to reconcile itself to the diversity of either the Irish historical experience or its current population.

Certainly, it is near-impossible to redeem the Citizen from charges of antisemitism. With that said, Kiberd takes the case too far when, in an echo of Nussbaum's account of Bloom, he celebrates Bloom for 'see[ing] nothing superior in employing Irish violence against its colonial counterpart' (351). The implication of such an argument is the same as that found in certain readings of "Nestor", that all Irish revolutionary action is to be condemned. As suggested, however, Joyce himself critiqued this severe detachment from history in "Nestor". The experience of history as a nightmare is shown to be a way history is experienced as alienated rather than as one's own. For all the Citizen's undeniable repulsiveness, we find a similar problem in "Cyclops", with the Citizen representing a real historical force that proves entirely alienating. In "Cyclops", we find Joyce complicates the immediately-apparent morality of the episode by contrasting Bloom's entirely abstract – and, so, alienated – politics against the Citizen's practicality. When the Citizen describes his ideas of Ireland, they are grounded in material realities rather than some putative Irish essence. Although he deploys the idea of an Irish pre-colonial golden age, he sees this glory as expressed by Irish trade rather than any spiritual theme. He refers to commercial relations struck with 'Greek merchants' (268.1248) or 'King Philip of Spain' (268.1253) and to Irish wool that was sold in Rome in the time of Juvenal' (267.1242-268.1243). It is, for the Citizen, colonialism which is to blame for Ireland's 'ruined trade' (268.1255), as well as its 'ruined hearths' (268.1255) and its terrain of 'marsh and bogs' (268.1257). The Citizen's concern is not for the Irish individual under colonialism, and the language of 'soul', 'self', or 'personality' used by Stephen as well as by critics such as Kiberd is absent here. The Citizen's concern is for material relations larger than any one individual and this theme continues into the Citizen's visions of an independent Ireland. He insists that after independence 'our harbours that are empty will be full again' (269.1301) and he anticipates Ireland launching 'a fleet of masts' (269.1303-1304) from Killybegs. The Citizen's materialist focus, drawing on the economic arrangements of Ireland's past as a means of imagining an independent Ireland's future, echoes that found in the nationalist thought of Connolly or de Blacam seen

above. What "Cyclops" presents, we find, is the Janus-face of revolutionary violence, where the meaningful alternative to colonialism is found not to lie with Bloom, who can only offer platitudes, but with an exclusionary nationalism which, although capable of fighting for independence, demands an extreme price.

That Bloom's bourgeois equivocation cannot offer anything to the cause of Irish independence is repeatedly emphasised in "Cyclops". He defends capital punishment, which Kiberd describes as merely 'inconsistent' (351) but, as Nolan notes, must be read ironically, in light of the executions of the Easter Rising. 1904 is again inflected by 1916. Nolan also notes that Bloom's identification of love and life is aptly countered by the Citizen's citation of Cromwell's cannon, inscribed with '*God is love*' (273.1508). Here, Bloom forgets his own insight in "Sirens" that 'love', like 'hate' or 'Rudy', is only a signifier which cannot stretch to encompass the thing it refers to. Faced with a politics built around a vision of social relations in Irish society, Bloom retreats into an abstract idealism. What we find is less a condemnation of the Citizen and, by extension, revolutionary Irish nationalism, than a presentation of the dilemma revolution poses to individuals who cannot form some relationship with it.

Revolution and commitment: the problem for artists

As critics have often noted, Leopold Bloom is as much a Joycean self-portrait as is Stephen Dedalus. The point was made by Wyndham Lewis, who complained that Joyce, 'thinly disguised as a middle-aged Jew tout (Mr. Leopold Bloom), wins the reader's sympathy every time he appears' (101). As we can see, Bloom explores the same problems of alienation encountered by Stephen, but in a context which stresses capitalism more strongly than it does colonialism, in a reverse of Stephen's own predicament. Following this, we can say that Joyce is, in "Cyclops", staging his own predicament. In his youth, Joyce had always sought to portray his work as being opposed to the national movement. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, it was the Rising and the outbreak of consequential revolutionary politics which had shattered this self-construction. In "Cyclops" we see the most overt staging of this. Bloom's problem of being condemned to be an outsider to the Citizen's revolution is Joyce's problem also. Maren Linett, in a reading of this employment of Judaism by Joyce, notes that 'Joyce uses the figure of the Jew to conjure his enduring sense of persecution as a writer' (263) throughout his work. *Finnegans Wake* describes the oppressed artist Shem, another Joyce analogue, as 'semisemitic' (191.02-03). Linett acknowledges the problematic aspects of Joyce's approach here, describing how 'Joyce's imagining of himself as a Jew can

be seen as another form of … supersessionist appropriation … [whereby] Joyce himself makes over the figure of the Jew in his own image' (276), reducing the specificity of Jewish oppression to the general problem of the artist. Once we recognize this approach, then the political conflict staged in "Cyclops" comes into clear light. "Cyclops" shows us the problem for the artist in a politically volatile moment. It reveals the conflict between deeply held personal values and the vulgarity of a revolutionary movement that has no concern for these.

In an attack on *Ulysses* and Joyce which has become notorious, Karl Radek, a Bolshevik politician, described *Ulysses* as 'a heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope' ("Contemporary"). Radek, expressing in a more aggressive tone the sort of criticisms Lukács would make of modernism, imagined Joyce as a symptom of a bourgeois culture in decline. Joyce, and others such as Proust and Pirandello, said Radek, were examples of how 'the material collapse and decay of capitalism is being accompanied by a parallel process – the decay of world capitalist literature' ("Contemporary"). As Robert Weninger notes, in a study of German Marxist responses to Joyce, Radek's assault has often served as 'the starting point' (149) for many Marxist and left-wing approaches to Joyce.[11] For critics inclined towards realist standards, such as Lukács, Radek serves as a point of origin, while for the left-modernist critics, Radek serves as an example of a flawed criticism that fails to see the political themes of modernist experiment. Booker has provided a strong defense of Radek's speech, noting that his modern critics have ignored how Radek's reading of Joyce 'as a combination of naturalism and symbolism' (22) accords with readings provided by contemporaries such as Edmund Wilson, in his *Axel's Castle*. For my purposes here, it is interesting to note that Radek approaches the relation between politics and individualism in a manner quite similar to that of Fanon. For Radek, 'the idea of individualism … will vanish when the battle breaks out and when the writer sees that he cannot take part in the battle except as a soldier' ("Contemporary"). Radek does not mean here that the writer must take up arms. Rather, the point is that the writer must choose what his attitude is 'to such great facts of historical development as the war, the October Revolution, and fascism' ("Contemporary"). Obviously, being a Bolshevik, Radek's

[11] Tekla Mecsnóber offers a similar account of Radek's influence, writing that Radek's views became 'a well established dogma in orthodox communist cultural politics throughout the Eastern European region' (22). As an aside, and as a defence of Radek for those modernist critics uncomfortable with Radek's realist strictures, both Mecsnóber and Booker note that Radek was later executed as part of Stalin's Terror. Radek has been a Trotskyite expelled from the Bolsheviks in the 1927 and only later readmitted after signing a false confession and betraying other comrades to the Stalinist authorities. Hence, regardless of one's position on Radek's attitudes, he can be absolved from some criticism on the basis that his words, if one so chooses, can be read as expressions of what Löwy has called, in the context of Lukács's own contorted Stalinism, a 'legitimate desire to stay alive' (30)

argument is that the successful writer in the modern era is the one who writes to attack the war, attack fascism, and support the Soviet Union, but the larger point that literature cannot avoid political commitment remains powerful regardless of one's political affiliations.

Radek's perspective can appear controversial when measured alongside contemporary criticism. With that said, it is one which we find Joyce considering in *Ulysses*. Stephen and Bloom represent past and future, the alienated individual of colonial Ireland and the alienated individual of a prospective capitalist Ireland. Indeed, although a critic such as Kiberd has seen in the Citizen Joyce's anticipatory critique of independent Ireland, it is in fact the case that Leopold Bloom, publicly masturbating to the sight of a woman raising her legs on Sandymount Strand, is Joyce's fullest critique. Independence, Joyce suspects, will not solve the angst which Ireland – like the rest of the modern world – visits on its inhabitants. Formal political possession of Ireland will not heal the divide between citizens and society. Within this critique, and for all the negativity it projects, Joyce remains enough of a nationalist to be willing to recognize the independence movement. "Cyclops" shows us both the ugliness but also the promise of the revolutionary movement which Joyce had, as a young man, written off. Richard Ellmann relates that, when the British effort to impose conscription in Ireland collapsed in 1918, Joyce remarked 'Erin go bragh' (qtd in Ellmann 399). This is only a very slight example of national sentiment on Joyce's part, but is nonetheless a reminder, which can be paired with essays such as "Ireland, Island of Saints and Scholars", that Joyce retained some allegiance to the ideas of Irish nationalism. Fanon, as seen at the start of this chapter, describes how bourgeois intellectuals experience revolution through a collapse of 'the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity' (36). In "Cyclops", Joyce represents a movement grounded in the social and economic life of Ireland which could produce – which had, in the era of *Ulysses*'s composition, produced – popular revolution. Bourgeois individualism, and the alienation which is its product, finds itself ranged against revolution. Although Bloom – and by extension, Joyce, Stephen, and the artist in general – appears to be condemned to alienation as a result of the human condition, we find that, in fact, this condemnation results only from the problem already seen with Stephen. Both cannot participate in a revolution.

II: Order, progress, and political action: themes of development and revolution in Eimar O'Duffy

In the canon of Irish modernist novelists, few were as politically active as Eimar O'Duffy. A Captain in the Volunteers, a protagonist in Eoin MacNeill's struggle to stop the Easter Rising, a propagandist for the Free State during the Civil War, and a popular evangelist for the Social Credit economics which, in modernist studies, is most commonly associated with Ezra Pound, O'Duffy lived an active life. In the midst of all this, however, he also found time to produce a unique body of work. Moving from realist novels and Revivalist theatre to modernist experiment, also writing crime and historical novels, O'Duffy worked prolifically in a career that ended early with his death, in 1935, at the age of forty-two. With O'Duffy we find an example of a fertile and experimental artist who also participated with great commitment in political action. These two facets of the man were linked. His artistic work was of an intensely political hue, while his political concerns were often inflected by concerns derived from philosophy and even aesthetics. The creativity of O'Duffy's own work found its mirror in his interest in political systems which facilitated creative thought and action.

O'Duffy's art and politics influenced one another, but both were in turn influenced by the political situations he confronted. O'Duffy lived and worked in an era when, as Eric Hobsbawm has suggested, it appeared to all that 'the days of capitalism were inevitably numbered' (73). For socialists 'contemporary history was the antechamber of ultimate victory' (73), while, for those not of a left-wing persuasion, it merely 'seemed obvious that the old world was doomed' (55). What was central to the era was 'the absence of any solutions within the framework of the old liberal economy' (94). In Ireland, where, as Mel Farrell relates, Cumann na nGaedheal was pursuing a policy of restoring 'the pre-war liberal economic order' (195), such a realization may not appear to have taken hold. Its very difficulty in carrying out such a restoration, however, with the party losing power as

‘economic chaos caused political convulsions across the globe’ (196), exposed the futility of such efforts. This chaos which engulfed the liberal economic order after the First World War, whether it manifested as economic crisis or as the appearance of alternative systems, was of enormous importance to O’Duffy’s thought, second only to Irish nationalism. Indeed, he understood Irish politics as a local expression of a general breakdown of liberalism. This, in turn, influenced his novels, which should be read as responses to this post-war economic and political turmoil, principally as it manifested in Ireland.

This chapter studies O’Duffy’s four major novels, his 1919 *The Wasted Island* and the three novels which make up his ‘Cuanduine Trilogy’, *King Goshawk and the Birds*, *The Spacious Adventures of the Man in the Street*, and *Asses in Clover*. O’Duffy’s work, I argue, explored the disappointments of Irish independence in the context of the twin failures of the liberal economic order and Irish republicanism. The Free State had disappointed nationalist ambitions because it was unable to formulate a response to the challenges of the post-war world and O’Duffy looked to the adoption of insurrectionary violence in 1916 to find a cause for this. Despite his roots in republican thought, O’Duffy also explored increasingly illiberal themes in his work, themes which interacted in unusual ways with his critique of 1916. Here I differ from the other major reading of O’Duffy, that offered by Gregory Dobbins, for whom O’Duffy sought to reveal the ‘more egalitarian possibilities’ (138) of Irish politics. Instead, my focus is on how Irish politics pushed O’Duffy away from egalitarianism and towards a despairing and illiberal critique of political action.

To demonstrate the interaction between O’Duffy’s art, his politics, and his political environment, this chapter is divided into three parts. To begin, O’Duffy’s 1919 work *The Wasted Island*, an attack on the Easter Rising written from a republican perspective, is read as a demonstration of O’Duffy’s understanding of politics as organized popular action, not as either insurrection or parliamentary activity. The second section turns to O’Duffy’s ‘Cuanduine Trilogy’, written between 1926 and 1933. Here, O’Duffy’s attack on the idea of ‘progress’, which he sees as having become distorted through unthinking adulation of modernity, is tied to his understanding of liberal economics. Liberalism, says O’Duffy, is not only socially corrosive, but also responsible for producing an authoritarian state capitalism. In the third section, remaining with the ‘Cuanduine Trilogy’, the republican and activist values of *The Wasted Island* had are found to have been transformed, in the Trilogy, into a dislike of active citizenship and a preference for enlightened elite rule. In O’Duffy’s Trilogy, a pessimistic account of society wrestles with an activist’s will to set things right and it is in

his struggle to make sense of this contradiction that we find the most interesting elements of his work.

The colonial *bildungsroman* and the politics of "bad infinity"

To begin, I want to look at *The Wasted Island*, the attack it launches on insurrectionary nationalism, and the argument it makes for civic republicanism.[1] In one of the few critical accounts of O'Duffy that exists, *The Wasted Island* is defined by Robert Hogan as 'more than the conventional bildungsroman … [it is] a coming-of-age novel which is couched in basically political terms' (29). Hogan is correct in emphasizing the novel's politics. It follows Bernard Lascelles – a loosely disguised version of O'Duffy – journey from his pro-imperial Dublin family to a career in the Volunteers and finally his participation in the Easter Rising and subsequent mental breakdown. This narrative is developed against the backdrop of nationalist activity in the 1910s in Ireland, with the Lockout, the Volunteers, the Great War, and the Rising all central activities through which Bernard comes to his politics. Many, although not all, of the major personalities within the Volunteers appear under pseudonyms, with Bulmer Hobson given particular prominence as the novel's secondary protagonist, Stephen Ward.[2] Hobson's presence indicates one of the novel's tasks, that of defending the politics of civic and non-violent social movements against the politics of insurrection. For Frances Flanagan, in a reading which emphasizes these concerns, *The Wasted Island* is a 'book of ideas' (63) which 'situate[s] Irish nationalism in the context of the long history of Western civilization' (63). Despite this intellectual interest Flanagan argues that the novel's 'literary value [is] poor' (63), upsetting its intellectual ambition. *The Wasted Island* does show signs of being early work and Flanagan is right to note the prevalence of 'schematic political types in set-piece dialogues with each other' (63). Some of the novel's formal problems, however, can themselves be revealing. The novel exists not only in a history of Western political

[1] The thesis looks only at the original 1919 publication of *The Wasted Island* and not the version edited and republished in 1929. This was largely a stylistic edit. Robert Hogan describes O'Duffy as 'eliminat[ing] detail which was flat, gauche, or insignificant' (34) and as having 'improved the book in a multitude of minor ways, but … made no major changes' (35). I have chosen not to examine this updated edition for two reasons. The first of these is that O'Duffy's aesthetic had become more experimental from 1923 onwards. There is little to be gained by tracking how he had tidied up an earlier naturalist work. Furthermore, as the very closeness of *The Wasted Island* to the events it describes is the work's major attraction, the 1929 edition imposes an unwanted distance. While, taken solely a work of art, the 1929 edition may have greater value, my interest with all these writers is their response to events. It follows that the closest response is that most deserving of attention.

[2] James Connolly and Patrick Pearse are both entirely absent from the novel, the former despite the importance the Lockout has to the narrative. Pearse's absence may be a rare example of circumspection from O'Duffy, although Connolly's absence is harder to find justification for.

thought, but also engages with a formal problem explicated by Jed Esty. This problem is that of the transformations undergone by the *bildungsroman* in imperial and colonial environments. Questions of *The Wasted Island*'s historical and political value intersect with questions of its literary value and, so, before turning to the novel's politics, it is important to note the formal problems the novel attempts to deal with.

Hogan's characterization of *The Wasted Island* as 'more than the conventional bildungsroman' (29) and the importance he places on its 'political terms' are related, as the novel's unconventionality emerges from its politics. This political theme is the problem of building anti-colonial political movements amidst colonialism and it finds a literary analogue in the difficulties encountered by the *bildungsroman* form in expressing a colonial situation. As Jed Esty argues in his *Unseasonable Youth*, attempts to bring colonial situations in line with *bildungsroman* conventions produced unconventional novels as 'colonialism introduces into the historicist frame of the bildungsroman the form-fraying possibility that capitalism cannot be moralized into the progressive time of the nation' (17). The nineteenth century *bildungsroman*, Esty explains, was a 'novel of socialization [which] figures modernity's endless revolution in the master trope of youth' (4). [3] The *bildungsroman* sought to impose order on the social disintegration modernization produced through the narrative of a young protagonist growing into the world. Modernity, Esty says, is brought to heel by the *bildungsroman* projecting a final reconciliation between youth and society, with society here referring to a national community. 'Modernity as permanent revolution' (27), Esty argues, is contained within the 'measured chronotope of national development' (42). Drawing here on Bakhtin, Esty describes the *bildungsroman* as a narrative of a youthful protagonist which, in turn, comes to be identified with the narrative provided by 'national historical time' (7). Modernity, represented in the figure of the youth, is tamed by the national narrative, or, in Esty's words, 'the crucial symbolic function of nationhood … gives a finished form to the modern subject' (4). In this way the *bildungsroman* expresses a 'counterrevolutionary impulse' (27) 'to arrest the revolutionary energies of nascent capitalism and political democracy in order to secure and stabilize bourgeois society' (27). Modernity and development are leashed for the benefit of the nation-state.

Esty suggests that this containment in part aims to resolve the problem of modernity's endless expansion, what he calls, drawing on Hegel, the "bad infinity" of development. "Bad

[3] For Esty there is no single 'conventional bildungsroman'; even Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, Esty argues, fails to meet all the criteria. The bildungsroman should instead be understood as a 'as a generic ideal more than an empirical object or set in literary history' (18).

infinity" referred in Hegel's work to the problem of a progress that was in fact repetitive, a process of change that was not governed by some overall teleological direction. Here, the new is not a movement towards something, but only new in itself. The Hegelian criticism of "bad infinity", says Leszek Kolakowski, begins from the position that 'if the idea of an ascending development is to make any sense in general, it must be a development with an effective terminus in view' (59). For Hegel 'the idea of unlimited self-perfection … repeat[s] itself over and over again without change and leading nowhere' (58). It is this problem that, in the *bildungsroman*, the nation provides a solution to and, so, Esty argues, without the nation in the picture the problem of "bad infinity" returns. So, for example, in *fin de siècle* narratives of global corporations whose commitment to growth 'had no logical endpoint other than continued growth and expansion' (*Unseasonable* 118), 'the spectre of the Hegelian bad infinity appears, raising the possibility that the novel form will expand into a never-ending story of infinite details and numberless episodes' (118). The transnational corporation survives any one individual, including founders and owners, and the end of its narrative can only be its destruction.

This conservative deployment of the nation-state in the *bildungsroman*, Esty explains, caused serious problems for writers in colonial situations. They could not avoid being 'unconventional', in Hogan's phrase, as they could not contain modernity within a nation state. Instead, says Esty, in the colonial *bildungsroman*, the young protagonist is released from the need to reconcile with the nation-state – as there is no nation-state – and so these novels 'tend to present youthful protagonists who die young, remain suspended in time, eschew vocational and sexual closure, refuse social adjustment, or establish themselves as evergreen souls via the tender offices of the Kunstlerroman' (3). Esty here has echoes of Fredric Jameson's point that 'the globalized, non-nationally contained nature of Imperialism creates the situation of a lost totality' (12). Imperialism, by breaking the integrated nation-state into the transnational system of imperial base and colony, makes the nation-state obsolete. In Esty's reading, both the novel of the corporation and the colonial *bildungsroman* express this 'growing obsolescence of national allegory as a device for inscribing European nation-state formation as the end of history' (27). Literature, to adapt to this situation, adopts 'the 'more global chronotope of endless futurity' (42), and, in this way, is forced to abandon any teleological sense of a goal for development other than the sense of development as moving towards catastrophe. Franco Moretti, in his study of the nineteenth-century *bildungsroman*, demonstrates how these novels had relied on the theme of reconciliation. The young protagonist of the *bildungsroman*, beginning from a youthful instability or 'a perennial

disequilibrium of his symbolic and emotive investments' (39), comes 'to master this multiplicity' (39) and embrace 'the more narrow confines of a circumscribed and relatively common individual life' (35). The unpredictability of youth is tamed through the choice of vocation and this choice, occurring within the boundaries of 'common life', involves an acceptance of the political situation in one's country. The problem for the *bildungsroman* in colonial situations is that this acceptance of 'common life' is impossible and, so, the protagonist is condemned to 'perennial disequilibrium'.

Education and colonialism in *The Wasted Island*

The narrative of growth in *The Wasted Island* can essentially be split in half: Bernard's growth within the education system, and his growth as a political figure within the national movement. The latter is the book's greatest interest and occupies the majority of its attention. This does not mean that the education sections are unimportant. Indeed, they prefigure important criticisms O'Duffy will make of the Free State and, furthermore, indicate O'Duffy's association with an interest, general among the pre-1916 nationalist generation, in education. This interest is most easily recalled by reference to Pádraig Pearse and St Enda's, but also by noting the various youth movements of the era. For example, Bulmer Hobson, a key figure in O'Duffy's political history of the era, founded with Constance Markievicz Fianna Éireann, which later fought in the Easter Rising. Given the novel's nationalist politics, O'Duffy's account of Irish students educated within a British system designed for British and imperial ends, takes on additional significance. Indeed, *The Wasted Island* intensifies the contradictions of nationalism and colonial education through the choice of protagonist, Bernard Lascelles. Bernard is both colonizer and colonized, being a Catholic through his mother, while his father is the latest representative of a colonial family who, we are told, 'had settled in Queen's County early in the seventeenth century, and … acquired at a very low price an estate which had been confiscated from the owners in the name of civilization and religion' (4). The novel emphasizes the family's imperialist roots, with the Lascelles being variously associated with William of Orange, the Penal Laws, the ideology of Free Trade, and support for the Union. Indeed, Bernard's father Eugene voices his desire for his son to continue this tradition by proclaiming that the point of Bernard's education to be that he 'be made worthy' (4) of the Lascelles' ancestry.

Hogan suggests that the product of this education is imagined in the novel to be a 'typical West Briton' (29), an individual 'well insulated from any significant knowledge of

Ireland' (29). The novel highlights how education divorces Bernard from Irish concerns early on, with Eugene worried about how his wife's 'Fenian brother' (2) could upset his plans to make Bernard 'a good staunch Britisher' (2). The brother himself complains Bernard's teachers will 'train his mind to run in a groove … they'll teach him that things as they are are all for the best … and that the connection with England is part of the established order of the universe' (33-34). Bernard's education at Ashbury, an English boarding school for the 'Catholic and upper class' (Hogan 29), is used by O'Duffy to develop this critique of anti-national education. The history taught at Ashbury, for example, is 'a dull tale with England as the hero, and France the villain of the piece' (61). In 'the case of Ireland … accounts of rebellions in that country were always of the most meagre description, glossed over and distorted' (83). As a consequence, Bernard, depicted in the novel as a lively debater, struggles to engage with his nationalist peers, considering the 'Irish question' as 'a small problem of local government' (96). He lacks 'the intellectual and emotional fundamentals of Nationalism essential to making the subject vital' (96) and in this way his uncle's predictions are fulfilled.

This dispassion, for O'Duffy, relates to the larger problem of students having their values and interests deflected, rather than developed, by their education. Ashbury's ideal student is described as one who 'objects to enthusiasm of any kind' (64) and 'despises the brainworker' (64), while 'ideas he looks upon with suspicion' (62). In the counterrevolutionary tone of Bernard's history lessons, this ideal student is 'distrustful of what is new, firmly believing that what is is best' (62), a statement tied to Bernard's uncle's prediction. The problems of this conservatism are developed in a sequence involved a young student, Reppington, with an interest in engineering. Having built 'a working model of a steam engine' (76), an object of fascination for Bernard, Reppington finds he has broken the school code against enthusiasm and ideas. 'Zealous defenders' (77) of these strictures attack Reppington and destroy the engine, provoking from Bernard the complaint that they have 'destroyed something you can't replace' (80), a criticism which prefigures the novel's challenge to the Easter Rising. What is addressed here is one consequence of Ashbury's conception of its duty 'to prepare her children's souls for heaven and the rest of them for governing the British Empire' (60-61). The school's ideal product is an administrator, not a creator. Anti-intellectualism is in this way connected to imperialism, as draining the student of ideas is seen to produce an incapacity to question and, thus, a reliance on existing social and political situations.

O'Duffy's critique of education, as noted, is rooted in the nationalist movement. His distinctiveness lies in that his critique targets that aspect of the education system which is to

produce the prospective rulers of colonial society. The ideal product of Ashbury is the colonial administrator, one whose course of intellectual development has been tightly circumscribed. O'Duffy's solution to the problem of education, however, is typical of the Revival movement and the return to national material. Before beginning education, Bernard's nationalist uncle gifts him a book of Gaelic legends, which leads the young boy to abandon his 'favourite heroes' (21) of 'Sir Walter Raleigh, Nelson, Washington and Lord Roberts' (21) in favour of 'Cuchulain and Conal and Fergus' who are 'more heroic, more lovable, and infinitely more real' (21). The language is that of the Revival. Bernard finds in these an inspiration he shares with his uncle, until it is filtered out by Ashbury. Horace Plunkett, whose co-operative movement tied into many Revival ideals, offers one clear summation of this concern in writing that the British policy, having 'almost extinguished native culture … dulled the intelligence of the people, impaired their interest in their own surroundings' (693). In his concern with practical tasks such as engineering, O'Duffy is indeed quite close to Plunkett, seeing a return to Irish themes as the vital first step in social reconstruction.

It is worth noting that while O'Duffy depicts education as having been successful in hollowing out Bernard's nationalism, it does not succeed in tethering him to imperialism. Instead Bernard, by his own definition at least, leaves education as a 'cosmopolitan socialist' (100) and, critically, he retains the republican values we are told he took as his 'creed' (47) when a boy. Describing the political imagination of his childhood, we are told that his ideal 'state [was] a republic of extraordinary virtue in desperate contention with the villain state, now a bigoted upholder of the *ancien régime*' (47). This political commitment never lapses, and he expresses republican sentiments during his education, prioritizing 'the fields of Yorkshire and the slums of London' (72) – his politics here being articulated through his education's British frame. To be a republican and a revolutionary, the novel claims, is to have 'the faith that moves mountains' (76). *The Wasted Island*, suggesting that this faith could survive the education process, explores how the desire for what the novel calls 'the general revolution' (47) could interact with Irish concerns.

Political passivity and the problem of reform in pre-revolutionary Ireland

O'Duffy's account of politics in Ireland is built around two central and related points. The first is that Irish society is in decay and, second, that the Irish Volunteers are a means of restoration. To take the former first, both the people and the environment of Ireland are, in the novel, represented in naturalistic terms as being in such decrepit states that each intensifies the erosion of the other. Working in Dublin's slums as a doctor, Bernard encounters women and children queuing for rations in a line 'two hundred yards long: two hundred yards of human dirt, disease and wretchedness' (197). The people of Dublin are imagined as a 'repulsive … picture' (198) of 'vermin-haunted bundles of rags with grime-enseamed faces tottering to the grave' (199).The condition of the people is seen to emerge from the conditions of the city, a place of 'skeleton walls; heaps of rubble where a house had collapsed; windows boarded up … dirt and ugliness everywhere' (198). Although O'Duffy's account of education indicated confluence with the Revival, this overlap does not lead to his attack on urban Ireland expressing the rejection of the urban for the rural associated with the Revival. O'Duffy finds the same problems in the country, noting that the peasantry have 'little sympathy for the purity and ardour of … national ideas' (421) and 'none of the fiery political enthusiasm of Dublin' (421). Again, environment plays a role. We are told that 'the land [is] poor and unproductive, but dotted all over with illmade and often unhealthy-looking cottages' (285). Bogs are believed to play 'devil with [the] national character' (385) and 'enervate the whole atmosphere' (385). Many characters in the novel have grand plans for the renovation and reform of these conditions, but all of these plans, however, are on hold, as the various nationalists all believe that any change in Ireland is dependent on the acquisition of independence and domestic political power.

This prioritization of independence over social reform is made in the novel through its critique of the labour movement during the Lockout. Discussing the Lockout, McCall, another of Bernard's nationalist allies, suggests the strike was always doomed and that 'a fight by an isolated section is bound to end that way… the workers will have to join in with the National fight now and make their cause a part of it' (220). Similarly, tacit support by Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party for partition is condemned for 'set[ting] an issue between us' (268) – that is, between the Volunteers and the Party – when Ireland's 'one hope of achieving anything is in unity' (268). This condemnation of Redmond is crucial to the novel's political narrative, as *The Wasted Island* seeks to contrast Redmond's ineffective parliamentary tactics to the activist and constructive nature of the Volunteers. For instance, after the Volunteers are defeated during Easter week, Bernard explains that they were an 'orderly, constructive, enthusiastic movement that was to have been built up until it had

become the Irish nation' (525). The Volunteers have their own 'Parliament and Executive; their Exchequer and Postal System; Industries, a Labour Exchange, and an Insurance Society' (400) and are 'a disciplined democracy: a nation of citizen soldiers' (400). The Volunteers are a precursor for the independent Ireland to come. Allowing for the fact that O'Duffy's emphasis on this constructive quality leads him to oppose the Rising, his account nonetheless echoes certain vital themes of the Revival identified by P.J. Mathews. For Mathews, definitive of the Revival was a 'self-help' (2) ethos which emerged from the critique of parliamentarianism brought on by Parnell's collapse. As Mathews explains, 'a new generation of Irish intellectuals came up with the strategy of working for a form of *de facto* home rule despite its unattainability *de jure*' (8). This new, extra-parliamentary strategy 'was to mobilize and apply the latent national intelligence of the country to the practical needs of Ireland' (8), the point being that 'an infrastructure was put in place which facilitated the "imagining" of the Irish nation' (10). Although the focus Mathews places on imagination and intellectuals differs from O'Duffy's more materialistic account, both are of the same mind in their account of the institutions of independent Ireland being created prior to, and as a means of achieving, independence.

For Frances Flanagan, this account of the Volunteers represents them in 'classic civic Republican terms as having the potential to unite party, creed, and social divisions in Ireland' (53). Flanagan notes that one function of the novel, although not its only function, is to mount 'a public defence of [Bulmer] Hobson' (81), the man responsible for formulating the ideals and operations of the Volunteer movement. Laid out in a variety of articles and pamphlets, most notably his *Defensive Warfare*, the aim of the Volunteers was, Hobson writes, 'to start a policy of complete non-co-operation with the Castle Government, a passive resistance which would clog all its machinery and by degrees makes its operation impossible' (503). Hobson here scorns the 'heroic' tradition of 'the Celt' who 'marched forth to battle – and lost' (506). The Volunteer strategy was to 'build up … strength both as regards men and arms in order to become a real power' (503). Where O'Duffy imagines the Volunteers as a movement that was to be 'built up' to 'to become the Irish nation', Hobson's influence is clear.

These 'civic Republican terms' can be usefully explicated by Hannah Arendt, who identifies political power as 'correspond[ing] to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert… [it] belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (*Violence* 113). Thinking in the republican mode, Arendt argues that 'it is the people's support that lends power to the institutions of a country' (111) and it is within this

political framework that Hobson imagines the 'non-co-operation' policy of the Volunteers collapsing the colonial government. O'Duffy's portrayal of the Volunteers as achieving political power through mass engagement endorses a similar framework, as does his attack on Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party. The novel characterizes politics in Ireland before the Volunteers as having been a 'stagnant pool' (129), lamenting how, in a situation where politics is solely the responsibility of politicians, 'the people could attend to their private affairs with a clear conscience, for when everything was being done for them all they had to do was to keep peaceful and grow prosperous' (129). The poverty evidenced in Dublin throughout the novel makes the irony of this statement clear. The problem identified is that with all power given to parliamentary activity, 'the very right to think on politics was surrendered' (129). Parliament is indeed associated with the general enervation in Ireland, with the pre-Volunteer era characterized as one during which 'the blight of Parliamentary success had settled on the land' (129). In a post-Famine context, the word 'blight' carries a particular charge, and within the novel 'blight' is elsewhere used to refer to colonialism's effects. For Arendt 'what makes a man a political being is his faculty of action' (*Violence* 142) and we find Bernard expressing similar sentiments in claiming that 'politics doesn't consist in sitting at Westminster' (235), but, rather, 'the life of man is in politics … if you desert politics you desert life' (364). The critique of the uncritical compliance bred in the education system recurs here, with Redmond, being an inactive parliamentarian, expressing a similar passivity. Just as education was condemned for isolating the student from his national community, so too is parliamentarianism attacked for the disconnection between it and the people it seeks to represent.

Arendt offers a useful political analogue to this reformist drive to revive the nation-state. In her *On-Revolution* Arendt interrogates the role the nation-state has played in revolutions, particularly the French and Russian, but also smaller affairs such as the Paris Commune of 1871. A commonality Arendt finds in these revolutions is the eruption of 'popular organs' (260) of power, 'the communes, the councils, the *Rate*, the *soviets*' (260). These forms of popular democracy were expressions of the revolutionary 'hope for a transformation of the state, for a new form of government that would permit every member of the modern egalitarian society to become a "participator" in public affairs' (268). Arendt draws attention to these forms to highlight also the force she claims overthrows them: the revolutionaries themselves. The revolutionary, Arendt suggests, is too 'firmly anchored in the tradition of the nation-state' (260). Although aiming 'at the foundation of a new state and the establishment of a new form of government' (265), the revolutionary, faced with the

general disorder of a revolution, produces the nation-state as a means of restoring order to a turbulent society. In this way the aesthetic and symbolic function Esty sees the nation-state as playing in the nineteenth-century *bildungsroman* finds its historical and political counterpoint.

On the face of it O'Duffy avoids this error. Bill Kissane notes that 'the intellectual Sinn Féiners shared a suspicion of strong central authority' ("Celtic Twilight" 12) and instead 'drew [their] impetus from civil society, not the state' (12). This sense of political actions and ideas emerging from wider civil society echoes Mathews's own account of the Revival, with the 'central authority' of parliament rejected in favour of more diffuse civic society groups. On the question of the state, however, O'Duffy is no typical 'Sinn Féiner' and demonstrates some distance from this trend of Irish revolutionary thought. As a child Bernard plays at uniting his toys into 'one vast city state' (10) and if, as seen, his childhood political games suggest an identification with the French Revolution, it is worth noting that this influence manifests as an interest in states, rather than popular organs of democracy. This attitude continues to define the adult Bernard, who at the outset of his nationalist career considers himself a 'statesman' (211). For Arendt, 'considerations of national sovereignty' (*Revolution* 16) and 'the majesty of the public realm' (16) are to the detriment of the 'establishment of a republic' (16), the latter imagined in terms of the 'division of powers' (16) and new forms of government. When the nation-state emerges, so goes Arendt's argument, revolution ceases to be about new ways of organizing. Arendt's argument can help explain the awkward position O'Duffy finds himself in as he attempts to respond to the Rising. While endorsing the *de facto* method of achieving independence, O'Duffy sees this very much as a tactic, rather than an end-in-itself. His interest is in the state which is to result from these tactics and, so, he views political actions from the perspective of this prospective state. Insurrection and blood sacrifice, having no institutional or popular component, are not a contribution to the project of state-building O'Duffy identifies with.[4] In this way, O'Duffy sought to oppose the course of the Irish revolution from a republican perspective.

[4] In his autobiography Hobson complains that 'it was not the Supreme Council of the IRB who organised the insurrection, but a small junta inside the IRB, acting with the utmost secrecy and without knowledge of the President and most other members of the Supreme Council' (509). That the republican instruments of violence were outside executive control was a feature of the revolutionary years and a problem in the Civil War and after. John Regan notes that 'the greater part of the IRA existed as a parochial guerrilla army in which strategy, organisation, and the temper and ferocity with which the war was fought were dependent on local conditions rather than the dictates of a centralised and remote General Headquarters' (5). Similarly the Civil War, for Regan, 'was a war between militarists and those who demanded nothing less than the supremacy of the civilian Government' (125)

O'Duffy and the degeneracy of Easter Week

Hogan makes the uncontroversial suggestion that *The Wasted Island*'s opposition to the Easter Rising rendered the book 'unpalatable' (31) to the Irish nation, drawing an analogy between it and O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*. O'Duffy's republican attack on the Rising has relations to O'Casey's humanist criticism, but O'Duffy draws on another, unusual source in making his critique, that of *fin de siècle* thought on degeneration, principally that of Max Nordau. Nordau is explicitly referenced in the novel, with Bernard reading his *Degeneration* and declaring it 'says everything I've been thinking about friend Mallow and his gang' (416), Mallow being the novel's representative of Joseph Plunkett. Mallow is depicted as a 'disease-worn fanatic' (270) whose 'emaciated body [is] eaten away by … a slow internal cancer' (274). His politics are different from Bernard's practical republicanism, with Mallow instead arguing Ireland has 'been too long without bloodshed and in consequence the national spirit is decaying' (427-428). For this, Mallow is characterized as a 'martyromaniac' (148) and as 'diseased' (476). Flanagan suggests that this use of 'degeneration, entropy, and decay' (65) made *The Wasted Island* atypical for its time in how it treated Irish history. Indeed, his account anticipated certain attacks on Irish revolutionary culture which would come later, such as the various scatological insults Beckett would aim at the revolutionaries.

Passages from Nordau – 'the slashing attack on Rossetti and the mystics' (*The Wasted Island* 416) – are invoked by Bernard more than once to explain the mysticism employed by Mallow and the other insurrectionaries. Nordau, for example, in his criticism of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poetry as degenerate, highlights the use of 'mystical numbers' (88) that 'signify nothing' (88) to most readers, but 'in the case of the degenerate and hysterical reader … the emotions excited by the sacred numbers … will up a general emotional consciousness' (88). For Nordau, calling up 'a general emotional consciousness' is not the ideal result of poetry as 'words … [should] arouse the definite ideas which they connote' (88) and 'awaken emotions … [which] have all of them clear reference to the subject of the poem' (88). The point of Nordau's literary criticism here is that the writers and readers of mystic poetry are not 'healthy-minded' (88) but degenerate, with 'Mysticism find[ing] its reflecting image in … movements of senile and paralytic trembling' (66). Against this mystic mind, Nordau places the 'very strong mind' (59) and only these 'can keep the processes of thought under the discipline of an extraordinarily powerful attention' (59). One of Mallow's poems is read in *The Wasted Island* and is mocked, by Bernard, for exactly these mystic qualities of 'mistiness, mystery, and brevity' (278). Nordau suggests that for the mystic 'the mere similarity of sound

determines the current of his thought' (65) and it is suggested of Mallow's work that anyone 'could produce … [their] rhyme and alliteration' (278). Again, the question of thoughtlessness seen in the critiques of education and parliament appears, with the popularity of mysticism in Ireland revealing it to be a 'nation of slackers' (278-279). Hard work, the key attribute of the healthy in Nordau, is the value of *The Wasted Island*. Bernard, upon joining the national movement, declares 'Let's be up and doing! There are heads and hands in Ireland still, and let mine be among them' (211). He is a worker, not a mystic; a statesman, and not an insurrectionary.

O'Duffy himself had a small part to play in the run-up to the Rising, having helped trigger Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order by bringing information about the insurrection to Hobson.[5] In *The Wasted Island* Bernard does get involved and kills a young soldier, before being arrested and, while in prison, having a breakdown. To further the sense of the Rising as the product of degeneration rather than heroism, Bernard's enlisting is imagined in emotional and vague, rather than precise and rational, terms. Seeing the Irish flag above the GPO, 'a longing seized [Bernard] to fight and die in its defence … the anger of Ireland was thrilling him; reason was being swamped in floods of passion' (503). The flag signifies generalities such as music, anger, the 'spirit of the rebels' (503), all encouraging Bernard to break from his republican values and embrace an emotional spontaneity. His subsequent breakdown is of a part of the general breakdown that destroys both the Volunteers and Dublin. An apocalyptic sense permeates what the novel imagines to be the fate of the people involved, with 'long sentences of penal servitude' (525) anticipated, as is the Irish people being 'tortured and dragooned, and conscripted into the armies of the oppressor' (525).[6] Given that the novel was published in 1919 these statements should not be taken as predictions. Rather, they are expressive of the political values O'Duffy sees the rebels as having abandoned. Charged with having swept aside, rather than embraced, the popular movement, the Rising is seen to have embraced the worst characteristics of Ireland and undone all the progress towards independence achieved by the Volunteers.

[5] MacNeill had issued an order on Friday, April 21st, cancelling the manoeuvres planned for Easter Sunday, April 23rd, and under the cover of which the insurrection was to be held. In part, at least, MacNeill's decision to endorse the Rising at all had been influenced by the 'Castle Document', a forgery created by the Insurrectionists which purported to be evidence of a British plan to arrest leading Volunteers. MacNeill's decision to cancel was influenced both by his discovery of this forgery and by the loss of the imported German arms which were to have been used in the revolution. O'Duffy places the emphasis for the countermanding order on the discovery of the forgery and not the loss of arms.

[6] Again we can find a parallel with Hobson, who writes of having had a similar fear: 'we fully expected that the British Government would take the opportunity of dragooning the country and enforcing conscription if there were given the excuse of an abortive rising in Dublin' (507).

The bourgeois middle-man as a product of the Rising

In *The Wasted Island*, O'Duffy portrays the problems of colonial Ireland as emerging from the passive attitude of its people, an attitude inculcated by education, parliament, and social environment. The solution to this problem, O'Duffy claims, is the Volunteers, a constructive movement which demand its members to engage with Irish social conditions, thus overcoming passivity. This engagement, in turn, is to be part of developing the Volunteers into a proto state that will replace the colonial state. Here, however, a second threat emerges from within the Volunteers, as the old habits of passivity are seen to take new form as insurrectionary violence. Although seemingly quite different from Redmondite parliamentarianism, insurrectionism too is attacked for its failure to construct. Parliamentarianism passively accepts, while insurrectionism unthinkingly rejects, but both are guilty of the same failure to reckon intellectually and, subsequently, practically, with their circumstances. For O'Duffy, both are enemies of the republican project as he understands it.

O'Duffy's critique was not an empty one. His predictions that an uncreative and conservative governing class was being raised for Ireland anticipated certain problems later encountered by the Free State. Conor McCabe argues that after independence, the Free State economy remained 'archaic' (82) and continued 'to behave as if Ireland remained a regional economy within the UK' (71). The nation functioned, McCabe argues, as it had since Cromwell, as 'Britain's larder' (82). Within the economic system of the islands Ireland's role was 'provid[ing] agricultural produce for the industrial centres of Britain' (57) and after independence the 'domestic power blocs' (57) which this practice had produced ensured this remained the central economic goal of economic policy. These blocs were, McCabe writes, a class of Irish '"middlemen" or comprador class' (59), who benefited from 'a continuation of the status quo' (68) to such an extent that they found themselves either in government or as the major influence on government policy. O'Duffy's account of conservative educational approaches, with their emphasis on engineering and construction, can so be seen as also having analytic significance, having focused on a problem of creativity that would beset the Free State for decades.

O'Duffy's education writing can also be seen as theoretically antecedent to later postcolonial work, such as that of Frantz Fanon. Fanon writes that for the nationalist middle classes – those of whom Bernard is a dissenting member – the rhetoric of returning

ownership to the nation 'simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period' (122). After independence the 'national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary' (122), that is, as the class which maintains the uneven ties of colonialism. While it must be noted that O'Duffy's critiques of the Free State, addressed below, were not precursory to neo-colonial theory, the connection Fanon draws between middle-class conservatism and education is interesting for a reading of O'Duffy. For Fanon, 'since the middle class has neither sufficient material nor intellectual resources (by intellectual resources we mean engineers and technicians)' (122) it is unable to make itself into anything other than a 'transmission line' (122). In the manner explored by O'Duffy, Fanon argues that the education received by the middle classes under colonialism leaves it 'bereft of ideas' (123). Hence that class 'lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people' (123). Fanon here hits several of the themes O'Duffy had explored in *The Wasted Island*. The importance of national feeling and contact with the people are, as seen, central to O'Duffy's vision of a properly functioning revolutionary movement. The lack of engineers and technicians produced by the education system is also a theme, as seen in the account of Reppington, the bullied student. Fanon provides a theoretical account of, and explanation for, the sorts of historical phenomenon described by McCabe, and O'Duffy anticipates this in his account of a disconnected, intellectual incurious, Irish middle-class.

O'Duffy, clearly, was occupying complex territory in attempting to oppose the Irish revolution from the perspective of a real, betrayed, revolution. Certainly, few appreciated his position in his own time and O'Duffy would never again possess the sort of political importance he had held between 1913 and 1916. To return to Esty's account of the *bildungsroman*, one can detect in O'Duffy's critique of the Rising the contours of a different version of *The Wasted Island*, one more in accord with the classic *bildungsroman* form. This would be one where, with no Rising, an independent nation is created through the Volunteers and the 'perennial disequilibrium' (Moretti 39) of youth now finds an object to reconcile itself with. In this way, the 'bad infinity' of colonial Ireland is replaced by the teleology of national destiny, in which the individual can be imagined as coming-of-age by coming to integrate their personality into the independent Irish state. *The Wasted Island* thus can be said to anticipate, although for quite different political reasons, a whole host of twentieth-century Irish novels which portrayed the insufficiency of independent Ireland as a vehicle for self-realisation. In *The Wasted Island*, the failure of the revolution is seen to have condemned another generation of Irish youth to the bad infinity of colonial deprivation.

The Cuanduine Trilogy: Social Credit and social critique

To turn now to O'Duffy's 'Cuanduine Trilogy', it is useful to begin by noting that, despite the formal experimentation of the work, the political themes remain prevalent and develop the position found in *The Wasted Island*. These political themes have sometimes been neglected by critics preferring to focus on the Trilogy's formal experiments. Reviewing existing criticism of the Cuanduine Trilogy, Gregory Dobbins notes that it 'is usually cited as yet another example of a given recurring tendency in Irish writing' (126 -127), say, as Irish fantasy in the mode of James Stephens or Mervyn Wall. So, for instance, Robert Hogan treats the novel as 'satiric fantasy' (51), while critics such as Seamus Deane and Terry Eagleton, Dobbins adds, have done similarly.[7] Taking issue with this reading, Dobbins approaches the Trilogy in the same manner as *The Wasted Island* has been approached here, by taking its politics as 'an ideal point of entry for a contemporary re-evaluation' (127) of the work. In this way the novels are returned to their postcolonial context of Free State Ireland, and their political debates, most notably regarding O'Duffy's Social Credit economics, can also be placed in their proper context. The Trilogy explores the problem anticipated in *The Wasted Island*, that of an only nominally independent Irish state which lacks intellectual and practical resources for achieving a meaningful independence. A passive ruling class, without the capacity to organize or lead people, is again charged with being subordinate to international forces. I want to first tackle O'Duffy's account of the external threats he sees facing Ireland, those of modernization, a decaying liberalism, authoritarianism, and unchecked military power. Having explored these in detail, the third section of this chapter will turn to how O'Duffy ties these problems into an Irish context.

A brief account of the Trilogy's plot can suffice for indicating its highly politicized qualities. Set sometime in the 1940s or 1950s, the Trilogy explores a world in which a monopolist of extraordinary wealth, the titular King Goshawk, buys the world's birds as a gift for his wife. In response a Dublin Philosopher, known throughout only as "The Philosopher", recruits first Cuchulain and, after Cuchulain abandons the earth in disgust, Cuchulain's son Cuanduine, to fight Goshawk. After various fruitless efforts to incite the people to revolt against Goshawk in the Trilogy's first volume, the third volume, *Asses in*

[7] For Dobbins, critics, particularly those earlier critics writing before theory, have found the politics to interfere with the art. An account of Irish Fantasy literature published in the *Irish Bookman* in 1948, by Donnchadh A. Meehan, makes exactly this argument, claiming that 'it is incontrovertible that because of his continual advertence to … injustice, the artistic, of if you like the fantastic unity of *King Goshawk and the Birds* is seriously impaired' (22).

Clover, sees Goshawk defeated by Cuanduine in an enormous air battle over Ireland. This defeat, however, proves temporary, and the forces of capitalism regroup and Cuanduine, like his father, retires in defeat. Within these events, the Trilogy's second volume, *The Spacious Adventures of the Man in the Street*, follows another plot, that of the interstellar wanderings of Irish everyman Aloysius O'Kennedy, who travels to Rathé, an alternate version of earth organised along social principles largely expressive of O'Duffy's own interests.

This account is necessarily brief and cannot provide the real flavour of the Trilogy. On his adventures Cuanduine fights a parodic version of Mussolini and Italian fascism, writes for a London newspaper, and has various other interactions with the interwar world. O'Duffy's 'European-centric outlook on Irish nationalism' (Flanagan 51) has not changed. Hence, Hogan describes the Trilogy as 'a *reduction ad absurdum* of capitalist premises' (52) with 'some affinities with the views of Brecht and Kafka' (52), although he also admits the 'satire is quite broad' (51). It is because of this broad and international outlook that I am addressing first the international and general aspects of the Trilogy's politics, before turning to the Irish aspects. This is not to suggest that these elements should be considered as isolated within the text. As will be seen, the international and national elements are bound together. For Dobbins, O'Duffy in the Trilogy represents 'Ireland's fate [as] inevitably tied to that of global capitalism' (125) but, before reading this projected fate, we must read O'Duffy's understanding of global capitalism.

The Trilogy's critique of global capitalism, deemed by O'Duffy to require three volumes to explain itself, as well as being supplemented and elaborated in a reasonably successful economic work, *Life and Money*, is broad. This critique draws heavily on the values and ideas of the Social Credit economics developed by Charles H. Douglas after the First World War. The Social Credit economists, Dobbins explains, called for 'the abolition of money in the form of hard currency and [the establishment of] a system of exchange in goods and services, the primary form of which would be credit' (130), a system which will be explored in more detail below. To find some principle for organizing O'Duffy's various discussions, some work in sociology and social criticism can be useful. In a recent work, sociologist Hartmut Rosa splits critiques of capitalism into two branches, the 'functionalist' ("Temporary" 164) critique and the 'normative' (164) critique.[8] The former takes the position that capitalism, as a 'system *cannot* continue to function over the long term … due to the crises it produces but

[8] Rosa specifies these rules as critiques of capitalism; however, there is no reason to assume these rules do not hold true for non-capitalist formations. This is relevant here as O'Duffy's Trilogy contains non-capitalist formations, including "pre-colonial" forms.

is incapable of solving' (164), which is to say that the functionalist critique seeks to demonstrate how a 'formation' (165) necessarily generates its own collapse. The 'normative' critique, Rosa writes, argues instead that 'the respective politico-economic regime creates a social reality that can under no circumstances be considered desirable, or rather, ethically defensible' (164). Theoretically, this position says, the existing formation could function, but its functioning offends human sentiments. Rosa further divides this normative critique into two parts, a '*moralistic* argument' (164) that the system, by producing 'winners and losers' (164), is indefensible, and an 'ethical' critique (165) which 'views all subjects as being "affected" by the system' (165), through 'alienation, reification' (165) and so on. The suggestion here is that the system's "offence" can be experienced in two ways, as either an offence at the inequality it produces or an offence at the mode of living it produces. Rosa later explains these positions using the metaphor of imagining the total social product as a pie. The moral critique argues that the pie is being unevenly shared while the ethical critique argues that the pie is 'rotten' ("Antagonists" 219). For Rosa 'it is theoretically possible to combine' ("Temporary" 165) these three forms of critique, only adding the stipulation that 'it is crucial to distinguish … the three forms of critique from one another' (165). These divisions are useful for understanding O'Duffy's critiques, which have both normative and functional elements. Dobbins suggests that 'work as a dominant social value' (132), expressed in the form of a modern 'work-state' (132) was for O'Duffy the major problem of interwar capitalism. It is with this normative critique of capitalism that my account of O'Duffy's critique will begin.

In Dobbins's reading of O'Duffy's politics, the purpose of Social Credit economics is to abolish the need for work. O'Duffy's *Life and Money* calls for 'a scientific method by which the age of plenty can be exploited' (248), with this 'age of plenty' referring to the post-scarcity society made possible by mass production. Given this new potential in society, O'Duffy claims that work has become 'Sisyphism" meaning, Dobbins explains, a condition in which 'repetitive, inevitable, and ultimately meaningless forms of obligatory work are regarded as the central goal of existence' (132). While 'a certain amount of work' (133) remains necessary, the demands made of the modern labourer no longer correspond to social need. Social Credit's 'scientific method', its system of credit, aims to abolish labour by ensuring the goods of necessary labour are distributed in such a way as to minimize the need for labour. The economics are not as relevant here as the values which underpin them. For Dobbins, what matters most for a reading of O'Duffy is that Social Credit sought to promote leisure rather than labour as a value. O'Duffy's goal, Dobbins writes, is 'to demystify the concept of

idleness' (135). In other words, the normative critique in O'Duffy is an ethical critique, concerned with the mode of living in society. With that said, we must note that Social Credit was not envisioned as a new form of democracy. Douglas's *Credit Power and Democracy*, the key Social Credit text, talks about establishing an 'aristocratic hierarchy of producers' (94). While Douglas imagines this 'aristocracy' as being required 'to take orders, not to give them' (94), he nonetheless makes clear that 'control … of the processes of production' (94) 'is not the business of the public, as such, but of experts' (94). The Social Credit society is a technocracy and not a civic republic. This illiberal quality of Social Credit is worth bearing in mind when I turn to discuss the relationship between O'Duffy's utopian thought and Ireland. To begin with, however, I first want to focus on his critique of work and the capitalist society which demands that people work.

There is a strong moral element in O'Duffy's arguments. Rosa suggests that ethical critiques imagine that society 'is rotten for all of "us", independent of our respective position in the social hierarchy' (219), but O'Duffy never expresses any concern for the life of the ruling class. Society in the Trilogy is rigidly hierarchical, with power in society concentrated in the hands of a few monopolists designated as 'kings' who live with all the accoutrements of monarchy: courts, castles, and so forth. Dobbins describes this society as 'a modern form of feudalism' (126) and throughout the Trilogy there are various instances, for example, of people prostrating themselves before the monopolists and their representatives. One of the first parodies in *King Goshawk* adopts a moral rather than ethical tone towards the ruling class, describing how Goshawk, having lost some of his wealth to emergency taxes during the First World War, imagines himself to be 'plundered and oppressed by a tyrannical Government' (30) in a manner analogous to a woman who loses her son in the fighting. Attacking a system for producing 'winners and losers' (Rosa 164) falls within the territory of a moral critique and so it should be acknowledged from the outset that O'Duffy's normative critique of capitalism is a critique of a mode of living created in service of a ruling elite and which wishes to replace this elite.

State capitalism and social philosophy between the wars

By emphasizing the capture of social power by monopolies O'Duffy chose a theme well suited to the economic crises of the interwar era. We began by noting Hobsbawm's account of the era as one defined by the failure of the liberal political and economic order between

1914 and 1939. The free market model, as a model for organizing society, had failed and this provoked a switch to national and planned economies. The practical political consequences of this switch were the revolutions and collapses which Hobsbawm describes, but these social upheavals found theoretical expression also. The Social Credit critique elaborated here is one such instance but, without abandoning this perspective, it is useful to invoke the most renowned critique of capitalism emerging from European society between the wars, that of the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School is commonly seen as having emerged as a reaction to the defeat of the Western European workers' movements after the First World War and as having developed its thought within this framework of a collapsing liberalism. David Held has demonstrated how the School developed in part through debates over the nature of the Nazi state, principally fought between Franz Neumann and Friedrich Pollock, with Adorno and Horkheimer supporting the latter and Herbert Marcuse the former. The subject of the debates was whether the Nazi state represented a new form of capitalism, with Neumann denying that it was 'a new social formation in which the state replaces collective capital' (Arato 13), while Pollock claimed that there had been a 'change in the function of political economy … [and an] end of the primacy of the economic' (Arato 22). In other words, Pollock argued the new interwar states did not operate according to the rules of nineteenth century political economy and, so, constituted new social formations. Part of this debate, Arato argues, was over the 'replacement of political economy as the framework and object of Marxism as a critique' (22). That is, it was a theoretical debate over critique that is not strictly relevant to O'Duffy who, Flanagan notes, attached himself to a 'non-Marxist' (74) tradition of thought that included Keynes. The aspects of this debate that are of relevance to O'Duffy are the conclusions, and the critiques built from these conclusions, drawn by Adorno and Horkheimer from Pollock's work.

In brief, Pollock argues that the new 'state capitalist' society – he uses this to cover a variety of terms including 'managerial society', 'bureaucratic collectivism', and 'State organized private-property monopoly capitalism' (72) – was a society in which 'the market is deposed from its controlling function to coordinate production and distribution' (72-73). In the market's place, 'a general plan gives the direction for production, consumption, saving and investment' (75), with this plan developed from within state bodies.[9] In this new form

[9] Pollock immediately notes a potential misunderstanding possible here; i.e., mistakenly seeing 'state capitalism' as referring to 'a society wherein the state is the sole owner of all capital' (72). Rather, it refers to a society which has seen a 'merger of the most powerful vested interests' (73). In other words, the manner of the relation between state and capital has become so close as to effect a change in the operation of society. It is not the case that the state has subsumed capital.

of society, what is politically required replaces what the market requires, i.e., fulfilment of the plan takes priority over individual actions within the market. The implications of this situation were severe, as with the disciplining power of the market lost – the individual worker, whose labour had been factored into the plan, could no longer be threatened with unemployment – labour discipline had to be provided by the state. In this situation, Pollock argued, 'the whip of unemployment is replaced by political terror' (81), or, as Horkheimer put it, 'State capitalism is the authoritarian state of the present' (96). The state capitalist society, having abandoned the market, secures itself through promoting obedience and hierarchy, while its aim is only the fulfillment of its plans.[10] Under Pollock's influence Adorno and Horkheimer turned to questions of the authoritarian state to critique the methods by which 'state capitalism' operated. However, crucial also to Pollock was his implication, against Marxism, that capitalism could, as Held puts it, 'contain contradiction and conflict' (60). From the socialist's point of view, this denied the inevitability and even the likelihood of capitalist collapse. Hence Adorno and Horkheimer's turn to a normative critique of an authoritarian society was also motivated by the possibility that functional critique had become impossible. Only morals and ethics remained.

As noted, O'Duffy, not writing from a Marxist standpoint, does not provide a critique identical to Pollock, Adorno, and Horkheimer's thought. As will be developed in more depth below, O'Duffy believed in the possibility of the sort of collapse that 'state capitalist' theory denied. O'Duffy envisioned society being torn apart by overproduction crises of the kind that a planned society was intended to negate. However his interest in Social Credit was based in the same problematic that Pollock began his study from, the problem of capitalist modernity in which, Pollock wrote, 'we have learned how to produce everything in practically unlimited quantities, but we don't know how to distribute the goods' (81). Planned economies and Social Credit systems were just two responses to this problem. On the other hand, as suggested, authority, expressed through the inculcation of 'Sisyphism', was a serious concern in O'Duffy. *King Goshawk* complains of this era of 'paternal government' (81) when 'governments had decided … that man's character was now so weak that at the mere appearance of temptation he must instantly succumb' (82). So too is the

[10] While the Frankfurt School was famously condemned by Lukacs for inhabiting 'Grant Hotel Abyss' rather than the material world, it should be noted that the 'state capitalism' discussion was part of an international conversation. Obviously the planned Soviet economy was central here, and Hobsbawm recounts how in response to the perceived success of the USSR's "Five Year Plan", ''Plan' and 'Planning' became buzz-words in politics' (96), but state planning was generally a topic of serious discussion. Mark Mazower describes how Hendrik de Man, a Belgian minister, was able to achieve popularity with a plan to organise the Belgian economy known as the '*Plan de Man*' (139)

society attacked by O'Duffy a command society, being one comfortable with using 'political terror' (Pollock 81) to secure itself. An enormous air raid on Ireland seen in *Asses in Clover* is launched by Goshawk with the objective of punishing Ireland for sheltering a bird escaped from his cages. Having broken the doctrine of private property the Irish are to be bombed. In other words, while the bases from which they begin are separate, and their projections for society move in different direction, O'Duffy and aspects of Frankfurt thought come into relation on normative questions of interwar society.

Monopoly, mass industry, and ethical critique

We find examples of O'Duffy's problems with the ethical operation of modern society in a series of meetings Cuchulain and Cuanduine have with modern workmen over the course of *King Goshawk*. Each encounter presents a worker at a more advanced stage of submission to capitalism than the previous. One is defeated by economic pressures, another is in thrall to capitalist 'reason', and a third is broken by the industrial process. The first is one of Goshawk's bird-catchers, who does his job in spite of a desire 'to carve wooden toys for children' (71). This ambition cannot provide a living in a world where the 'Toy Trust', a company mass-producing children's toys, would immediately put him out of business. Toy carving is instead only a hobby he does for his children, who are kept fed by his wages from bird-catching. This economic justification is reversed for the second worker, who performs his job as operator of a 'Regional Destructor' – a machine built for the destruction of so-called excess food products – despite a starved family. Acknowledging that his 'children are all crippled with rickets because I cannot afford to give them butter, yet I see all this butter burnt without complaint' (241), he explains that his work fulfills 'the inevitable laws of political economy' (241). These laws he reads from a manual on economics which teaches that for society to survive he must 'destroy the surplus food, sir, to keep the prices up' (240). What these workers display, for O'Duffy, is the extent to which submission to capital is integrated into everyday life. This is further evidenced with the third workman, a worker on a mass-production line. Working on part 'ninety-nine' on a production line, this worker can say only 'ninety-nine'. In this way the worker's absorption by 'Sisyphism' is complete. He has no purpose in life other than work and no means of relating to others than through work. The values of work effect a progressing dilution of freedom, ultimately determining entirely the way one relates to society.

For Pollock 'under state capitalism men meet each other as commander or commanded' (78), a statement implying both a moral critique, with the commander being the 'winner', the commanded the 'loser', and also an ethical critique of individuality being severely determined by society's commands. The nature of interwar capitalism as a system of commander and commanded is emphasised by O'Duffy's identifying the conditions of the three workmen with monopoly capitalism, here represented by 'Trusts'. 'Trusts' were a central target in criticism of capitalism in the twentieth century. For J.A. Hobson, 'Trusts', formed by 'a rapid process of amalgamation' (79) that piled the wealth of various industries 'into the hands of a small number of captains of industries' (79), quickly had destructive consequences for smaller enterprises.[11] 'The first result of the successful formation of a trust or combine', Hobson writes, 'is to close down the worse equipped or worse placed mills, and supply the entire market from the better equipped and better placed ones' (80). Hence the command nature of state capitalism does not necessarily appear in the form of one individual ordering another, but as a society making absolute demands, as is the case with the first workman. O'Duffy, whose goal is to 'to demystify the concept of idleness' (Dobbins 135), hence explores here the problems of escaping the 'work-state' and its values. Another instance of 'Trusts' occurring in *King Goshawk* is a newspaper reference to a 'Coal Trust' which is facing down a strike brought on by wage cuts. The Coal Trust insists 'that it will be impossible to work the mines at a profit unless the cut is accepted' (146). Again, O'Duffy's point is the absolute nature of the 'work-state's' demands.

The problem of monopolies is also found to have intellectual consequences If, as Pollock notes, 'political domination is achieved by organized terror and overwhelming propaganda' (92), then regarding the latter it is worth noting that the second workman, in making his arguments, relies on a handbook.[12] *Asses in Clover* describes economists generally as being individuals who in various ways prove 'the supremacy of Finance over humanity' (245) and throughout the Trilogy economists emerge to explain to uncomprehending characters the importance of doctrine. This doctrine is, in turn, repeated back by the people to Cuanduine. After Goshawk privatizes flowers, a member of a mob asks Cuanduine why,

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[11] Flanagan notes that Hobson's thoughts on interwar society 'had strong affinities with O'Duffy's outlook' (75), with both 'promoting the preservation of the 'vital' aspects of life from the tyrannies of commodification' (75) and arguing 'that any economic system must liberate 'love and friendship, knowledge and thought, joy and beauty' from the forces of commodification' (75).

[12] The handbook, incidentally, also explains why 'Socialism is an economic fallacy' (241). O'Duffy's relationship with socialism and the USSR is, throughout the Trilogy, conflicted. A regular target for O'Duffy are socialists seen to have replaced critical thinking with dogma; for example, O'Duffy parodies a left-wing publication that claims the solution to the bird crisis is to 'abolish them' (267). On the other hand, the Trilogy repeatedly presents the USSR as a force for peace or at, least, for common sense.

if he is 'so keen on flowers … can't he pay for a sniff like everybody else' (184). This trend towards automated thinking, fully realized with the 'ninety-nine' man, equates to the fate of thought anticipated by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In the rationally planned world, the fate of thought was to 'become an automatic, self-activating process; an impersonation of the machine that it produces itself so that ultimately the machine can replace it' (25). Adorno and Horkheimer here, discussing mathematics' place in their dialectic of enlightenment, describe thought when it is transformed into procedure. In the same way, the second workman with his handbook, the third workman with his mutilated speech, and the parroting mob all demonstrate thought reduced to mechanization in conditions of command.

Horkheimer, in his essay "The End of Reason", describes this as thought becoming an 'organon', an instrument, and the essay provides a gloss on this argument worth quoting at length:

> thought no longer conceives the objects as they really are, but contents itself with ordering and classifying supposedly pure data … the proper being of the object is no longer considered. Cognition thus becomes that which registers the objects and proceeds to interpret the quantified expressions of them. The less human beings think of reality in qualitative terms, the more susceptible reality becomes to manipulation (31).

In other words, the ultimate fate of this society is to make reality inaccessible except through the frames provided by 'state capitalism' or 'paternal government'. The individual in state capitalism 'experience[s] everything only within the conventional framework of concepts' (47). The climax of Cuanduine's campaign to free the birds in *King Goshawk* sees him become a newspaper celebrity in England, with his heroic idealism, interpreted as 'straightforward religious stuff … nothing very deep' (212). Using his celebrity to gain prominence, Cuanduine calls for 'the immediate liberation of the song-birds and the wild flowers from Goshawk's control' (264); such a challenge to the concept of ownership proves untenable to the public and Cuanduine is publicly mocked. A selection of newspaper responses to Cuanduine's proposal demonstrate how O'Duffy draws attention to the deep foundations concepts of work and property have in society:

> Mr. Quanduine's latest effusion can only be described as a violent attack upon the rights of property and the freedom of the individual … this anarchical proposal means the complete disorganisation of our whole social and economic system. What order or discipline is possible if the private is to have as many daisies as the colonel? … few things are so deeply planted in human nature as the acquisitive instinct (265-266).[13]

Hence O'Duffy's normative critique should be seen not merely to refer to a society that demands work, but one whose imprinting of 'work', as a value, into individuals' minds destroys their capacity to experience the world. In O'Duffy, reality can be remade through transactions and the world made to believe that birds were always the lawful property of one individual. Thought becomes impossible and what spoils the social pie, in Rosa's terms, is the insistence that, in all elements of life, there exists a demand to work.

The Leisure State: idleness as a social good

O'Duffy, in the Trilogy and his *Life and Money*, proposes as the final form of the ideal Social Credit society what he calls the 'Leisure State'. This, Dobbins explains, is a 'polity devoted to the cultivation of idleness' (128) and whose ideal citizen will be one who lives in the 'absolute idleness of philosophical contemplation' (138). Given the normative critique of capitalism developed above, this focus on 'contemplation' positions the Leisure State as the opposite of the existing state capitalist society. No freedom of thought in the latter, absolute freedom of thought in the former. We find an account of such a society in *Spacious Adventures*, with Aloysius O'Kennedy's journey through the stars – travelling as a disembodied soul – bringing him the world of Rathé. Rathean society is organised along social credit lines and much of the comedy of the work comes from O'Kennedy, an unimaginative everyman, failing to understand their economic system. Engaging a local in debate over economy systems, O'Kennedy is told that:

> each citizen works at his own trade without pay, and takes out what he wants without payment. The tribe thus resembles a family the members

[13] A running joke in *King Goshawk* is the various misspellings and mispronunciations the British make of Cuanduine's name, including 'Coondinner' (245) 'Cooney' (208) and 'Considine' (207).

> of which pay in all their wages to the mother, who boards the whole lot irrespective of each one's contribution (177).

Systems of economic planning and centralised control over certain products – cars, for instance, are unavailable to any man under the age of thirty-six – ensure that society is without want. Should overproduction occur, then this 'surplus produce is exchanged by the merchants, acting on behalf of the tribe, with the surplus of other tribes' (177), while the workers in the industry are temporarily excused from labour as a reward, without any restrictions applied to their access to the general property. Unemployment, indeed, is seen as a positive sign as it means 'that everybody's wants are satisfied' (172). There are no 'signs of class distinction in Rathé' (165) and 'not a note nor a coin had they, nor banks, nor nothing' (168). The point is that on Rathé, economics serves the people. 'The function of an economic system', O'Kennedy is told, 'is not the production of machinery, but the sustenance of mankind. Any system which fails to do that stands condemned as unfit for human use' (170).

The Leisure State, then, emerges from a normative critique of capitalism. However, the Leisure State also leads into O'Duffy's functional critique of capitalism. For Dobbins the Leisure State 'depend[s] upon a fundamental redefinition of conventional notions of progress' (128), these being the demand for constant development seen above in the discussion of Hegelian 'bad infinity'. This does not mean the Leisure State should be considered as merely filling the same role in O'Duffy's thought as a Volunteer-led Ireland had in 1919. In *The Wasted Island*, O'Duffy had argued that the nation-state offered a means of controlling the forces of development and underdevelopment which had reduced Ireland to its decrepit pre-revolutionary state. By contrast, O'Duffy's Leisure State offers a critique of development itself and, says Dobbins, imagines 'a condition in which the relentless drive for progress has finally come to a stop' (148). Hence, we are told that in Rathé 'industry and commerce … were in a very unprogressive state' (*Spacious* 68) and 'factories were few and small, most trades being carried on by individual craftsmen' (68). Ratheans then, live quite differently and more contentedly than the workmen seen in *Goshawk*. The stability of their lives does not merely provide a normative critique of capitalism but, in the reliability of their economic model, we find a functional critique of progress. Capitalist Earth, entirely subject to progress, is portrayed by O'Duffy as unstable. O'Duffy does not merely attack 'progress' as a value in the same manner that he attacks 'work'. Rather, in Rosa's terms, he sees in a

society demanding progress a 'system [that] *cannot* continue to function over the long term' (164).

O'Duffy makes clear the trend of modern development by having the destiny of modern society explained to Cuanduine. Mr. Robinson, an evangel for Goshawk's capitalism, explains to Cuanduine of the 'ninety-nine' man and the factory system that this system has already been replicated across the entirety of America. This, Cuanduine is told, is 'progress for you. That's what has America where she is' (244). All this, Robinson declares, is 'Goshawk's policy' (244), confirming the relation between increasing submission and the monopoly system. Robinson's uncritical celebration of Goshawk's factories as 'progress for you' (244) lays out the basic rule of one of O'Duffy's most common jokes in the Trilogy. Wherever technological development happens against the interests of the people, O'Duffy satirises the idolatry of progress in the face of these disasters. That 'at every street corner there were loud-speakers which yelled forth news and advertisements' (*Goshawk* 54) is mockingly feted as an achievement of progress. A Jazz Age-style party, depicted by O'Duffy as a hellish abandonment of morals, is celebrated by its participants as 'modern!' (*Spacious* 353). An economics professor in *Asses in Clover*, although acknowledging that society is in 'the dark hollow of decline' (94), insists that 'if our view is wide enough' (94) and 'the competitive spirit so necessary for further progress' (95) is maintained, then affairs will improve. An impoverished tramp asks to learn more about these 'hollows', but the professor ignores his question, continuing to insist that 'progress' will right society. In a manner reminiscent of Horkheimer's account, the professor's capacity to interact with reality vanishes through his adoption of rationalised schemas for thought. This understanding of progress as occurring against human needs rather than for them saturates the Trilogy and is a danger O'Duffy finds to be emerging in legal, medical, cultural, economic and various other fields.

As noted, while O'Duffy intersects with Critical Theory on ethical questions regarding capitalism, his functional critiques are of quite a different kind to those proposed by Adorno or Horkheimer. Dobbins suggests that O'Duffy presents the modern world as one where 'social control … results from the inculcation of a subservient, obedient desire for work discipline' (132), an inculcation produced by the monopoly state. The normative problems O'Duffy has with this society have been seen, but it should be added that he does not imagine it to be inescapable. Dobbins suggests that Weber's 'iron cage' (132) expresses concerns similar to O'Duffy's, a view which again invokes German social philosophy and, ultimately, the Frankfurt School. This fatalistic image of an all-encompassing, omnipotent

bureaucracy, however, does not express the society O'Duffy imagines himself to be critiquing. Facing into a seemingly fatal overproduction crisis, Goshawk calls a council of monopoly Kings to discuss their response. The various organs of discipline, those of propaganda and terror, are deployed but ultimately the monopolists concede these to be of limited use. Rather, they agree that 'if there's a milk shortage, the folks won't worry whether it's caused by a bug or a trade agreement. They'll start shooting anyway' (23). The point is that disciplinary apparatuses can only do so much if basic needs cannot be met. In *King Goshawk* Cuanduine reads a newspaper's 'Houses to Let' section, which advertises various houses – 'cosy house', 'five-roomed house', 'perfect house' (149-150) – available only to individual purchasers rather than families. The single advertisement without a 'no children' clause reads 'Pigstye to let. 10s weekly. Suit large family' (150). What O'Duffy depicts is precisely the sort of problem that Pollock and Adorno saw as done away with by state capitalism and planning, that of overproduction. In O'Duffy's thought, authority cannot resolve imbalances of production and these imbalances, as the monopolist council notes, will not be tolerated by the people indefinitely.

Economic progress and the need for imperialism

O'Duffy, here, is closer to those described by Hobsbawm as feeling 'the days of capitalism were inevitably numbered' (73) than to Frankfurt School pessimism. O'Duffy holds the belief that existing capitalist society can collapse. O'Duffy's critique still assumes the possibility of a functional problem, based on distribution, upsetting the various technologies of social control. By paying attention to problems of production and distribution O'Duffy was placing himself on territory staked out by Hobson in his imperialism study twenty years before. For Hobson, the monopoly that emerged from an 'era of cut-throat competition' (79) and 'rapid process of amalgamation' (79) could not be considered stable. The logic of this process of expansion and incorporation, Hobson argues, was imperialism. Having become so powerful in their territory as to have made business unprofitable, the monopolists 'are faced with the dilemma of either spending more than they know how to spend, or forcing markets outside the home area' (82). The former choice implies overproduction, flooding the home territory with goods to destroy the monopoly's profits. The latter implies 'the adoption of Imperialism as a political policy and practice' (83). Lenin's own study of imperialism, drawing heavily on Hobson, indicated that imperialism did not resolve the problems that had provoked it, but merely postponed them. For Lenin, the belief 'that cartels

can abolish crises is a fable' (29); rather, the violent competition that produced monopoly conditions is repeated on a global scale. Monopolies are not a means of imposing order on society. Instead 'the monopoly created in *certain* branches of industry increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production *as a whole*' (29). In the imperialist age crises and competition would become global rather than national and the result of this, Lenin argued, was the First World War.

Hannah Arendt, in her study of totalitarianism, describes this problem as imperialism's constant need to expand, writing that 'expansion as a permanent and supreme aim of politics is the central political ideal of imperialism' (125). For Arendt, the functional problem this need produces is easily discerned. Life is finite and so expansion must be also. Imperialism, Arendt suggests, was not unaware of this contradiction between its ideology and life, and Arendt cites a passage from a biography of Cecil Rhodes as having captured the problem:

> "Expansion is everything," said Cecil Rhodes, and fell into despair, for every night he saw overhead "these stars … these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could" (124).

The stars cannot be annexed, and so imperialist war is inevitable. As Arendt explains, the demands of capital produced 'constant transformation and expansion' (137), a process analogous to the damage caused by progress. To emphasize this point Arendt quotes an A. Carthill, a Civil Servant in India, who wrote that "'one must always feel sorry for those persons who are crushed by the triumphal car of progress'" (143). What expansion, when made the goal of society, guarantees is that this triumphal car must crash. Once imperialism reached the limit of the earth, Arendt explains, it could … only begin a series of destructive catastrophes' (144). We find that the values of expansion, those of work, production, and progress, are functionally flawed, being guilty of the crime of 'bad infinity' and of failing to offer a meaningful endpoint. Expansion without limit, so this critique says, tends towards global – as well as self – destruction.

The critique of expansion and progress is in evidence throughout the Trilogy. Indeed, as seen above, the configuration of work as 'Sisyphism' imagined work as constant and pointless production. Throughout the Trilogy the demand to 'get ahead' is central to the world's mood. Despite the material security and stability of their society, O'Kennedy attempts to persuade the people of Rathé to adopt capitalism, claiming that that 'get on or get under's the motto' (*Spacious* 212). An extended account of the problem is found in *Asses*

in Clover, which introduces Mac Ui Rudai, a sort of downtrodden everyman 'entirely superfluous' (69) in the modern world. Seeking consolation for his low position in life, Rudai turns to the religions of the world, but finds their doctrines to have been hollowed out and replaced by the ideal of progress. A Jesuit, the most sympathetically rendered religious figure in the Trilogy, can only advise Rudai to get a job; an editor of a religious journal, less respectfully drawn than the Jesuit, tells Rudai 'to be happy to suffer in the cause of financial orthodoxy' (64). The editor recommends works of religious inspiration to Rudai, which advise him to believe 'in the Stream of Progress' (62). Describing the new 'True Religion' the editor explains that 'the musty dogmas and decayed canons of the churches are the principal obstacle to [its] development' (60). Instead of these, the 'True Religion', with its 'temple' (7) being a modern skyscraper with the message 'THE SKY IS THE LIMIT ... GET GOING AND GO GETTING' (8) inscribed on its walls, preaches that 'religion and business go hand in hand' (7). As Goshawk's monopolies represent a new feudalism, so too does the new 'True Religion' represent a new theocracy, with emphasis on the 'mysteries of economics' (10) and 'reverence for economic laws' (10) enforced by an Inquisition and elaborating itself in artwork celebrating Saints Sisyphus, Procrustes, and Progressa (10-11). As discussed above, the promotion of these values is attacked on normative grounds, with the extension of progress into religion implying the sort of reducing of the range of experience O'Duffy critiqued. However, their presence in society also highlights O'Duffy's concern with expansion and progress as functional issues. As Goshawk's council notes, expansion as an ideal relies on expansion producing material rewards, something which can no longer be guaranteed.

Annex the stars: imperialism and the capitalist apocalypse

The final sequence of the novel, which describes the forces of global capitalism attempting to colonize the moon, and the subsequent economic catastrophe this triggers, provide the clearest instance of O'Duffy's functional critique. Hogan gives this section cursory treatment in his account of *Asses in Clover*, but it is crucial to understanding the fatal problem O'Duffy identifies in modernity. Colonization of the moon is provoked for the reasons flagged by Arendt. On the one hand, an unceasing desire to expand; on the other, an equally unceasing need for expansion coded into the functioning of world capitalism. Having discovered a civilization living on the dark side of the moon, the world's economists realize the earth can use this 'primitive lunar population' (279) as a 'constant market' (279) for their goods, in the

manner Hobson and Lenin described as constitutive of imperialism. While this incorporation is initially bloodless – 'the customary manner of civilized pioneers' (299) of 'massacring, enslaving, and plundering the natives' (299) is abandoned given the 'necessity of obtaining work' (299) – colonization is not presented as aiming to provide mutual growth. The economists predict their plan will 'drive the native manufacturers out of the market' (279) and 'win for ourselves the whole of the enormous volume of employment required to clothe an entire world' (279-280), smashing the lunar economy so as to benefit their own.

O'Duffy highlights the transformative nature of this imperialist act. Firstly, it inaugurates the era of the global work-state, completing Mr. Robinson's prophecy to Cuanduine regarding Goshawk's factory system. The scale of the market discovered on the moon forces the earth to become a single industrial unit, a place where 'the whole human race toiled and moiled' (308) and 'there were plenty of machine handles … to pull' (308). In this moment Pollock's monolithic state capitalism appears realized, with no prospect of decline such is the scale of the market to be exploited. At the same time, the moon too transforms. The development of terrestrial capitalism over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is repeated at breakneck speed as roads, railroads, canals, factories, and department stores are built on the moon and its 'native industries all rapidly close' (314), as per prediction. What upsets the predictions is the Selenite's practice of O'Duffy's Social Credit economics, which organizes the moon's new imported wealth in such a way as to prevent their societal collapse. Instead collapse is visited upon the earth, as the limits to expansion highlighted by Arendt are again reached and profit begins to fall, with unemployment again devastating the earth's economy. In one of the Trilogy's few optimistic moments, the subsequent attempt of British, American, and Japanese forces to seize the moon for earth, and so keep their economy in motion slightly longer, is defeated by the Selenites, who banish the earth from the moon. Capitalism, 'deprived of the only available market' (317), the novel explains, 'sank into the blackest trade depression it had ever known' (317). A brief post-apocalyptic coda, in which an elderly man explains to his grandson how capitalism collapsed, identifies overproduction crises as the reason a final, annihilating war broke out. The development of machinery, out of step with both the needs of humanity and the methods by which distribution was carried out, bring about society's end. In a final example of the Trilogy's most prevalent joke, the elderly man explains that 'it was all along of what they called Progress' (320) that society was destroyed. The need to always expand is not only divergent from human needs but, ultimately, proves to be the force that destroys

humanity. For O'Duffy, for a system that can only grow there will ultimately be a reckoning with the limits to growth written into existence.

It is through this frame that we can see that the Leisure State served as a solution to the problems O'Duffy identified in capitalism. On the one hand, then, the Leisure State would remove the limits to thought placed on the individual by the work state. However not only are these values imagined as being destructive to intellectual freedom, but they are furthermore imagined as destructive for all society. Unlike the Frankfurt theorists, who imagined a durable and self-repairing capitalism, O'Duffy critiques capitalism as a recklessly self-destructive system. As in *The Wasted Island* O'Duffy ends on an apocalyptic note, with humanity, destroyed by its wars, replaced by rabbits, among whom there 'was no bustling nor hustling nor business efficiency' (*Asses* 328). The last man alive, observing the new rabbit society, remarks that 'the existence of this peaceful community would have been impossible if man still lived upon the earth' (328). In this final apocalyptic moment, then, O'Duffy takes the most pessimistic position possible on the human future. Flanagan notes that O'Duffy's 'sense of a society that was resting on a precarious, and morally decayed, economic foundation' (71) was common to the British Liberal circles he moved in during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As with *The Wasted Island*, although now on a planetary scale, O'Duffy concludes with a sense of absolute failure and universal ruin.

Liberation and repression in the Leisure State

O'Duffy's pessimism emerges not because he can imagine no alternative to capitalism, but because the alternative he has in mind is not being instituted. However, his portrayal of social credit and the Leisure State has a darker side which should be acknowledged. The account of Selenite struggle against imperialism makes clear that O'Duffy is making his critique of capitalism with an eye on independence movements. We will see shortly below how this aspect of his thought is made explicit through his use of Irish mythology. First, however, it is necessary to look again at O'Duffy's account of Rathé's version of the Leisure State as even in his utopia O'Duffy struggles to escape the problems of modernity. For instance, we saw above how O'Duffy imagines modern workers being indoctrinated through the distribution of economic manuals. In Rathé, a similar process is seen when a workman found to have overconsumed is sentenced to a study of political economy, although on Rathé this means a study of Social Credit. Indeed, this use of discipline to control the workforce is shown to be central to Rathé. O'Kennedy is told that Rathé considers laziness

a deadly crime, as 'a murderer only takes a life or two, but idlers are a danger to the whole tribe … everyone who idles puts more work on the rest' (75). In the Leisure State, then, although the need for work has been greatly lessened, where work is required this is a matter of central social importance.

Indeed, law in Rathé is shown to be organised around ensuring labour discipline. For instance, the legal system does not use judges, but instead relies on 'a sort of committee of experts … who have … undergone a prolonged training, not only in Law and Philosophy, but in Psychology, Medicine, Science, and the art of Detection' (198). Incarceration is unknown and criminals are instead obliged to make restitution. Serious offences can be punished with banishment to the 'Tiger's Island' (177), which is revealed to be a modern capitalist society similar to that of 1920s Europe. Punishment, here, is rendered as comic, but the severity of Rathean justice is a recurrent theme. The trial of a man for 'consum[ing] one hundred and eighty calories more than you have produced' (199) is observed, as is the trial of this man's teacher, found guilty of having failed as an educator. Again, there is an element of comic exaggeration here, but what is evident is that O'Duffy imagines the Leisure State to be a quite straightforward place. One either accepts its ideals or one is rejected. This is made explicit by a Rathean who explains that 'no ordinary Rathean wants to shirk his due proportion of work … if they don't, he is simply stamped as an inferior, whom we get rid of' (178) – in other words, the citizen is exiled. If the principle of 'from each according to his ability' is being applied here, then it is being applied in a severe fashion.

O'Duffy's portrayal of politics in a Social Credit society also has a disturbing undercurrent. Just as the law is administered by experts, so too is politics. We are told that the 'Ratheans have virtually no politics' (188) and 'have no government' (188). Instead, 'the work of administration is carried out by a committee of ministers chosen by lot from amongst those citizens who have taken an honours degree in political and economic science at a University' (188). How these bodies relate to the 'Chief' said to be Rathé's highest power is never addressed in the text, but in both instances O'Duffy's emphasis on the importance of an authority is clear. We encounter a very serious shift in O'Duffy's understanding of politics, when compared to *The Wasted Island*. As seen, in *The Wasted Island* Bernard declares that that 'the life of man is in politics' (364). In *Spacious Adventures*, politics has been replaced by administration. What we find is a concession of power to the elite reminiscent of the relationship between the Irish Parliamentary Party and the people which *The Wasted Island* had condemned. O'Duffy's point is that, without class or economic conflict, and 'by transferring the burden of getting subsistence from the individual to the community'

(*Spacious* 184), Rathé has removed the need for politics. What he avoids acknowledging, however, is the social power handed over to experts, whether these are the legal experts, the administrators, or those who, like a 'mother' (*Spacious* 177), board up the pay of the tribe. It is here where the importance of Douglas's reference to an 'aristocratic hierarchy of producers' (94) becomes evident. Social Credit, even in the utopian account O'Duffy provides of it, remains a society under rule. This rule may be provided by enlightened technocrats, but beneath this rule the individual remains a passive figure.

This ideal of passivity is emphasised when O'Kennedy travels to the paradisiacal 'Isles of the Blest', a heaven-like archipelago populated by winged humanoids – the phrase angels is not used – who live in perfect contentment. The Isles of the Blest demonstrate the ideals of the Leisure State scaled up. They are technologically underdeveloped compared to Rathean society, their towns being a 'a regular bunch of native huts … beehive shaped things of wicker and straw' (273). The people here, again, do not 'go in for politics' (275), having 'settled all political problems ten thousand years ago' (275). Instead, 'they discuss philosophy, think, and pray' (276). The Isles of the Blest, then, is a place of learning and intellectual wisdom, but also of human passivity. Although the social system of the Isles is not clarified, it remains the case that as in Rathé there is a Chief ruling over society, even if expression of this rule is not seen. That concerted human action is not what defines the Isles of the Blest is emphasised in an account of evolution on the Isles. The people of the Isles are 'born able to read and write' (274) as this information has been 'transmitted by heredity and used unconsciously' (275). It is anticipated that as this evolution continues, babies will be born with a complete grasp on all conscious knowledge, rendering literature and learning obsolete. The business of the individual, then, is personal improvement on behalf of humanity. Politics and social organisation is no longer the common affair of people, but only that of a select intellectual few.

O'Duffy and the Free State's need for order

This retreat from republicanism in O'Duffy's economic and social thinking invites the question of what became of the specifically Irish republicanism of *The Wasted Island*. O'Duffy criticizes modern society for its refusal to cease. Modernity demands that the individual commit to endless and pointless work, while it also seeks to expand endlessly. The Leisure State appears in O'Duffy's work as a solution to these two problems, it being a society that does not change and demands of its people only that they relax and think. O'Duffy's dream,

says Dobbins, is that 'idleness will replace work as a central social value' (147). Leaving aside for a moment the dark side of this society explored above, it is clear that O'Duffy ties his ideal society to anti-imperial independence movements. The 'primitive', that is, non-Western, quality of both Selenite and Rathean society is noted, while the Selenite's are shown to use their alternative social system as a means of throwing back imperialism. What must be noted, however, is that in his Trilogy, O'Duffy does not retain the civic republican stance of *The Wasted Island*. This is clear from his adoption of indolence, rather than political activity, as his work's major value. I want to argue here that this change emerges from his response to Irish political conditions and indicates that O'Duffy is not exploring a purely egalitarian society. The technocratic and elitist politics of the Leisure State are a response to Irish political problems. Provoked by the Civil War to believe that the people must be managed rather than roused to action, O'Duffy develops a utopia of popular passivity.

Certainly, the influence of Irish nationalism is evident in O'Duffy's use of Irish mythological figures to critique capitalism. Struggling to accept a social system that demands payment for food, shelter, services, and art, Cuchulain complains that 'there is not another planet in the universe … that acts so scurvily' (62) as Earth. He questions why modern medicines are expensive and unavailable, with only cheap 'quack' cures such as 'Peppo' available for average individual. Irish mythology, we find, cannot make sense of capitalism. The point is that, as Dobbins puts it, O'Duffy is using 'the cultural imaginary of the Revival' (139) to critique the society which ultimately emerged out of the Revival. Ever fatalistic, however, O'Duffy also imagines that first Cuchulain and, eventually, Cuanduine will be dispirited by the challenge of defeating capitalism. Cuchulain quickly declares that modern capitalist society is 'a dunghill of meanness and silliness' (*Goshawk* 95) he will not try save, while Cuanduine, despite overthrowing the militaries which uphold capitalism, surrenders in the face of capitalism's entrenchment as an ideology. The point remains that capitalism and Irish mythology are opposing value systems, but now with the pessimistic indication that the former will overwhelm the latter. That said, in the Trilogy, Irish myth and contemporary Irish culture are two quite different things. Dobbins notes that the Revival is being invoked as a critique of a Free State which justified itself using Revival ideals. This is true, but it is important to be aware that while O'Duffy is a critic of the Free State, the perspective from which he criticizes it is unusual and must be clarified.

The complexities of O'Duffy's Irish politics were apparent before he began work on *Goshawk*. On August 19th, 1922, three days before the death of Michael Collins, an article entitled "Economic Slavery" was published in *an t-Óglách*, the newspaper of the Free State

army, seeking to explain the futility of the anti-Treaty position. Although articles in *an t-Óglách* went unsigned, O'Duffy had been appointed editor of the publication in the summer of 1922 and, furthermore, the article bore his personal stamp. Claiming that 'Irregular political philosophers profess to despise economic (or, as they, call them, "materialist") arguments' ("Economic Slavery" 1), O'Duffy sought to introduce a more materialist or even pragmatic argument into the Civil War debate. Citing claims from George Russell, O'Duffy argued that:

> the present struggle … has already cost so much that Ireland will be compelled to borrow. In her present state of confusion and impoverishment she can scarcely borrow at home. They must, therefore, borrow abroad. And, when a small country borrows abroad, conditions are always demanded. The lending Power, or Powers, wants to safeguard its money, and, with some justice, requires a voice in the spending policy of the borrower. Foreign control of money means foreign control of everything else … if the Irregulars beat the National Army, and then, after yet another costly struggle, beat the British Empire, they must, in order to reconstruct the country, borrow money … whoever lends will rule Ireland. The South American States are all Republics, and nominally free. But all are in debt to foreign countries, who exercise, unseen, a control over their policy such as Great Britain can never claim over an economically independent Free State ("Economic Slavery" 1).

In its invocations of materialism and idealism and in its awareness of the international frame within which Ireland's revolution had occurred, the article expressed typical O'Duffy themes. It is possible here to still detect the author of *The Wasted Island*, with O'Duffy remaining concerned about the hollowness of the independence which could be won by purely military might. What has changed is that whereas in 1919 O'Duffy was deprived of any state to identify with, by 1922 he had the option of endorsing the Free State. Having been an outsider during the War of Independence, O'Duffy immediately gave his support to the Free State, returning to political activity after six years of isolation. He was no longer a revolutionary. On the face of it, a counter-revolutionary tendency implied in his rejection of the Rising was now manifesting itself. However, by 1924, O'Duffy would be gone from Ireland and any state service entirely, living as a journalist in London. Having rejected

physical-force republicanism, he now rejected the Free State as a conservative and insufficient project. His opposition to the Free State was quite different to that made by anti-Treaty republicans and was instead built around economic and social policy.

O'Duffy's appointment to *an t-Óglách* can be seen as a part of a wider Cumann na nGaedheal policy of purging the state apparatus of revolutionaries through replacing them with middle-class professionals who had not taken part in the revolution. As John Regan explains, 'the Cumann na nGaedheal elite … wanted to create a new party appealing to and consisting of what was referred to as 'the best elements of society … the middle, educated and professional classes of whatever creed or colour' (148). Kevin O'Higgins in particular, the most powerful politician within Cumann na nGaedheal after the Civil War, had 'contempt for much of the personnel which the revolution had coughed up on the treatyite side and placed in charge of the new state at the expense of his generation of National University graduates who had grown up … in the expectation of Home Rule … [and] for leadership in a new Irish parliament' (245). O'Duffy was one of these graduates and if his political activity before 1916 had set him against the Home Rule movement, his opposition to the Rising and the anti-idealist approach he employed made him an obvious candidate for a Free State in need of officials it could trust to promote stability. The latter, indeed, was Cumann na nGaedheal's primary concern in the Free State's early years. As Regan notes, Cumann na nGaedheal saw as their responsibility 'the creation of a civil society out of the chaos they had inherited' (97), something echoed by Mel Farrell, who describes how 'bedding down the new state and ensuring its security was the government's priority; everything else was secondary' (226-227).

The "Economic Slavery" article in *an t-Óglách* certainly sought to advance this sort of position, arguing for a cessation of hostilities due to the difficulty of achieving an economically independent state. Even if O'Duffy did not write this article himself, he was quite willing elsewhere to sign off on arguments which called for civic responsibility and were hostile to the anti-Treatyites. Surprisingly, a particularly trenchant example of this argument came in a review he wrote of *Ulysses* for *The Irish Review* in late 1922. His review of *Ulysses* was positive and, in some ways, quite far-seeing, but what I wish to note are the political themes that emerged in the review. The review began with a paean to the sort of civic virtue celebrated in *The Wasted Island*, declaring that 'the gunman and the political theorist have so long claimed the monopoly of patriotism in this unhappy island, that it is time a case was made for less obtrusive practitioners of the virtue' (42). Claiming that patriotism and public spirit were 'really identical' (42), O'Duffy went on to argue that 'the

tram conductor, the milkman, and the fireman who carry on with their work while the bullets are flying round them are better patriots than the men who are firing the rifles … the common man who does his work and obeys the law is in fact, the backbone of this and every nation' (42). This attack on 'political theorists' echoes the attack on 'Irregular political philosophers' seen in the *t-Óglách* article, while the emphasis on the common man recalls the republican sentiments of *The Wasted Island*. Indeed, it also echoes thoughts Kevin O'Higgins was having at about the same time. In April 1922, O'Higgins argued that 'the increased contempt of [the] rabid Republicans … for the opinions, rights and interests of the "plain people" is certainly remarkable. In his innocence the writer was accustomed to associate Republicanism with robust democratic principles' (*Civil War* 42). O'Higgins's point was that, as he understood it, republicanism meant popular will and action, as O'Duffy himself had argued. What was new in O'Duffy's *Ulysses* review was the introduction of 'obedience' into O'Duffy's thought, an idea much less prominent in the pro-Volunteer *The Wasted Island*, but which we have seen in *Spacious Adventures*. The Free State call for stability was influencing O'Duffy's thought and, subsequently, order received a new prominence in O'Duffy's intellectual makeup.

Civil War and Irish democracy in the Trilogy

This Free State call for order emerged, in part, from a fear within the political elite that the Irish people were proving themselves unsuited for self-rule. George Gavan Duffy believed it needed to be proven that Ireland was 'a nation and not a rabble' (qtd in Ferriter, *A Nation* 1). Eoin O'Duffy, after a meeting with Desmond FitzGerald, complained that FitzGerald felt 'there was a lot of the "mob" about the people of this country' (qtd in Regan 90). Although still officially republicans, Cumann na nGaedheal were quickly moving away from ideas of popular democracy and organisation. Regan, summing up this attitude, explains that 'the re-establishment of order, the social fabric and morality … were part of a greater moral crusade. The institutions of the Free State became vehicles for the regeneration and ultimately the vindication of the Irish people and Irish nationalism' (181). The push for stability and order, then, was both a civic and a cultural project. The Free State elite saw order as a reassertion of the righteousness of the Irish character. Bernard, in *The Wasted Island* had proclaimed that an independent Ireland 'would be a land of courtesy and hospitality free from the curse of commercialism … would show the nations how to be

strong without being aggressive … and how to be great without being large' (238). Cumann na nGaedheal's law and order approach was an attempt to reclaim this sort of faith.

The Ireland explored in the Trilogy is a post-revolutionary Ireland. Early in *King Goshawk*, the novel describes a panoramic view of Dublin as it stands after the civil war, one which emphasizes the destruction inflicted upon the city:

> First there were the ruins of Sackville Street and Westmoreland Street, almost covered over with huts and small houses. Then came the two great mounds of rubble where the Bank of Ireland and Trinity College had once stood. Then the vast slum area of Grafton Street, Stephen's Green, Rathmines, Rathgar, Terenure, and Rathfarnham (159)

As with *The Wasted Island*, there is a naturalist impulse driving these descriptions, with 'immortal Zola' (52) invoked to describe 'houses … so crazy with age and so shaken with bombardments that there was scarce one that could stand without assistance' (53). The reference to 'bombardments' here signals that O'Duffy has found a new cause for Dublin's urban decay, compared to *The Wasted Island*. Whereas in that novel, Dublin was run down due to colonial neglect, *King Goshawk* suggests that war must now carry some responsibility for the condition of urban Ireland.

Crucially, those guilty of bombarding Dublin are not the English. The devastation described in *King Goshawk* is said to be the product of a second Civil War which reimagines the tragedy of 1922 as a farce fought by rebels seeking reunification with Britain.[14] That this Civil War is a parody of the first is clear. It begins with a reunification motion being defeated in the Dáil by seven votes, leading Seamus Vanderbags – an obvious parody of de Valera - to declare 'that the right of Ireland to belong to the British Empire was inalienable and indefeasible' (16). The war itself sees 'half the city of Dublin… laid into ashes' (16) and puts 'the civil population into submission' (16) to the victorious rebels, who in turn are only defeated by an invading British army which re-establishes the Republic by force. The threat of civil war reappears in *Asses in Clover*, this time over the issue of how Ireland should organise its military against the invading International Air Police. Again, the Irish split into two factions, the 'Slashers' and the 'Trimmers', the former proposing a single 'pitched battle'

[14] While O'Duffy portrays the idea as ludicrous, a similar policy was considered by Kevin O'Higgins. Regan describes how O'Higgins, in 1926, considered 'dual monarchy' (266), that is, a plan to 'create a Kingdom of Ireland' (266) related to the British monarchy, as a viable solution to the problems of partition in Ireland.

(178), while the latter suggests a 'policy of harrying the invaders in numerous skirmishes' (178). The strategic debates staged in *The Wasted Island* cast a shadow here, particularly in the description of the Trimmers as pursuing a 'Fabian policy' (178), but now O'Duffy is not out to vindicate his opposition to the Easter insurrection. His interest is in what he sees as an Irish tendency towards acrimony. The dispute over tactics sees 'reason and persuasion rapidly [give] place to rancour and recrimination' (179). Although, here, civil war is averted through the inspirational leadership of the Philosopher, the narrator nonetheless laments that 'the god Crom Cruach … [has] cursed the people of Eirinn … [so] that whenever an enemy should attack them, and their need of unity be greatest, then should division and hatred disrupt them' (183). While this use of myth is partly parodic, it does suggest that the roots of civil war in Ireland lie in the Irish character, rather than any social or political pressure. Furthermore, whereas *The Wasted Island* argued that it had been only a small faction which had been responsible for the Rising, we find the Trilogy indicting the people of Ireland for possessing within themselves a tendency towards infighting.

That the Irish cannot be trusted to organise is seen, throughout the Trilogy, to lead to a dysfunctional and stage-managed political system. Indeed, while O'Duffy's account of a Second Civil War clearly attacks anti-Treaty Sinn Féin, his account of Irish politics critiques Cumann na nGaedheal also. *King Goshawk* explains how Ireland is ruled by two political parties, the Yallogreens – those responsible for this Second Civil War – and the Greenyallos. As the names suggest, these two parties are identical to one another. For instance, we find that the candidates have mirrored names. Election posters advertise the candidacies of 'O'Codd' and 'Coddo' respectively, with O'Codd standing for 'Peace, Unity, Freedom' (14) and Coddo for 'Tranquility, Homogeneity, Liberty' (14). Later, we find more competing candidates, 'Blithero' and 'Blathero' (179). O'Duffy, clearly, is parodying the close similarities between the two major political parties, but the theme of an Irish tendency towards anarchy emerges here also. The Philosopher, explaining the electoral contest Blithero and Blathero are fighting, describes how all elections produce both a 'victor and a moral victor' (182). This, he says, is because:

> in the old days … it was custom after an election for the defeated party to claim a moral victory, and on the strength of it to commence a civil war. To obviate this we have arranged that there shall be no defeated party in an election. The candidate who gets the most votes gets the seat and the salary, the other gets the moral victory and the glory (182).

We find that the whole Irish political system has been organized to alleviate an Irish tendency towards civil war. That politics in Ireland is a sham is mentioned throughout the Trilogy, with the Philosopher regularly decrying it as a 'system of flamboyant posters, mean little hand-bills and dirty language' (85). What this account of the system's rigging adds, however, is that it exists as a control. Politics in Ireland is organized to prevent the Irish people from indulged their 'cursed' nature towards civil war. Indeed, when the Philosopher attempts to explain to a crowd how fraudulent the system is, he is immediately attacked. The tendency towards violence cannot be overcome by reason.

Violence and the mob in modern Ireland

In *The Wasted Island*, O'Duffy had written that 'the life of man is in politics' (364) and in the Trilogy he does not abandon this idea entirely. What does change is his confidence that the Irish can live up to these ideals. That the Philosopher is attacked upon attempting to explain the rigged system is just one of numerous outbreaks of spontaneous violence which recur throughout the Trilogy, on the part of the Irish. Cuanduine, attempting to preach against hypocritical religious practices, is immediately attacked, as he is when attempting to preach against capital. In the latter instance, we are told that 'the people were moved to such a fury of inexpressible anger that they danced upon the pavement, foaming at the mouth, beating their heads with clenched fists, and howling demoniac imprecations' (*Goshawk* 189). This depiction of the Irish as descending to a sort of subhuman level is also recurrent. Later, in *King Goshawk*, we are told, of the response of an Irish crowd to a speech of Cuanduine's, that 'some shrieked like cockatoos; some yelped like hyaenas; others brayed like donkeys, bleated like goats, or yowled like amorous cats' (197). It is not that O'Duffy no longer believes that the life of man is in politics, but that the Irish people, being incapable of political organization, are not fully human.

Particularly in *King Goshawk* but throughout the Trilogy as a whole, it is women who O'Duffy charges with being those most liable to lose their humanity and embrace violence. The first outbreak of violence in *King Goshawk* describes how women 'who could not get near [the Philosopher], went into paroxysms of fury, foaming at the mouth and yelling "Kill him" … kicking up their legs and screeching like demoniacs' (21). We find later, in a riot sparked by Cuanduine's speeches, that 'the women, in particular, were so carried away that they flung themselves on the ground … shrieking till their throats gushed blood' (189). The

account of the Second Civil War launched by 'Seumas Vanderbags' notes that he was ably supported by 'Madame Przemysl and Miss O'Grady' (15), the former a clear reference to Constance Markievicz. O'Duffy partakes in a trend common among Free State supporters in believing that Irish women had been both particularly responsible for the outbreak of civil war and had been among the most violent and irrational. This was an attitude which had existed since the Treaty debates. Margaret Ward explains how, in the face of 'the united front represented by the women of the Dail' (166) against the Treaty, 'the only comeback, on the part of those who supported the Treaty, was to discredit their testimony by raising doubts about their mental stability' (166). Despite what Ward calls the 'inherent consistency of the feminist position' (175) in its opposition to the Treaty, the fraught nature of the debates pushed Treatyites towards 'attribut[ing] malevolent intentions' (175) to their opponents. This attack on republican women became a theme of political discourse in the Free State and Regan describes how part of the Cumann na nGaedheal project of promoting stability was to react against the presence of women in political struggle. Various bills placed before the Dáil, by Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil, which sought to restrict women's access to jury duty, employment, birth control, and so on, evidenced this desire to identify women only with the home, thus re-establishing a more traditional form of society.

This Free State discourse did have some intersections with that of degeneration, which had been so central to O'Duffy's thought in *The Wasted Island*. While degeneration is not explicitly invoked throughout the Trilogy, its presence can be felt. Daniel Pick has described how prominent theorists of degeneracy, in the nineteenth century, 'conflated the crowd and women' (92). Theorists such as Gustave Le Bon, Pick explains, argued that 'social disorder exacerbated the constitutional and emotional differences of the sexes, pointing up the weakness, hysteria and dangerousness of women. Women were seen … as not only the passive victims, but also the active agents of revolutionary disorder' (92). So too in the Trilogy do we find O'Duffy claiming that it was women who were most transformed by social disorders. Given the prominence of Free State arguments about the dangers of revolutionary women, it must be admitted that degeneration discourse can only be considered a secondary source of O'Duffy's position here. However, O'Duffy's portrayal of politics in the Free State did invoke one of the major questions degeneration discourse had posed, one Pick finds best expressed in Zola's *Germinal*. This was 'the question of whether democracy and equality might somehow be "against nature"' (88). We find that this is answered in the Trilogy: democracy is somehow against the Irish nature.

Elite politics and mob rule: the authoritarian turn in O'Duffy's work

From the beginning of his career, O'Duffy was aware of the challenges an independent Ireland would face. In *The Wasted Island*, his criticism of insurrectionary tactics was that these failed to appreciate that independence would involve more than overthrowing a government. Independence would be a social transformation demanding the reconstruction of cities and the remaking of the Irish land. This task, O'Duffy foresaw, could only be achieved through a mass movement which would engage the majority of the Irish people in the creation of a new Irish society. This enormous vision of the possibilities of transformation remained in place in his Trilogy, but what changed was his understanding of who the agents of such creation were. In *The Wasted Island*, the prospect of 'a great national fight for liberty' (351) had been spoiled by an insurrectionary cabal; in the Trilogy, the prospect of such a fight is inconceivable. In the 'Cuanduine Trilogy', the social problems which had once been seen to be products of colonialism are now understood as products of capitalism. This change would not, in itself, rewrite O'Duffy's politics were it not for a second adjustment. In his Trilogy, O'Duffy has lost all faith in popular action, even when that action is to be organized by a figure from Irish myth. Indeed, the presence of the myth serves only to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the people for action, with their own acquisitive and destructive tendencies trumping the communal need. If capitalism is the problem, the people cannot offer a solution.

There is no denying the utopian impulse underlying O'Duffy's Leisure State. For Dobbins, we can understand the Leisure State through reference to an attitude of Adorno's, summed up in Dobbins's remark 'that once utopia has been realized, the future needs no longer be planned for' (148). This is precisely the utopian dream O'Duffy explores in his Trilogy, 'a condition in which the relentless drive for progress has finally come to a stop' (Dobbins 148). The ambition for social reform and transformation which was present in *The Wasted Island* is evident and, indeed, has grown. However, the ideal individual which O'Duffy imagines to be populating this utopia is quite different from the active citizen of *The Wasted Island.* It is not only progress which is to come to a stop but activity altogether. Virtue is no longer to be found in activity but in silent and passive contemplation. Furthermore, society is now to be organized by an enlightened elite rather than through any sort of citizenry. In part, we can see here O'Duffy expressing technocratic ideals typical of many interwar economic thinkers interested in state planning. What must be added, however, is that

O'Duffy's move to this technocratic and anti-activist politics emerges from his response to Irish politics. As Dobbins has said, O'Duffy 'brought a more explicitly political dimension to the modernist break with the Revival' (132) than any other Irish modernist, but this political dimension involves O'Duffy's viscerally felt hatred of physical-force republicanism. For O'Duffy, Ireland had been betrayed by the eruption of violence after 1916. His politicization of Revival culture, then, is not merely an attempt to imagine an alternative. It expresses the dissatisfaction of a thwarted republicanism. Accepting that the liberal capitalist society of the nineteenth century was in collapse, political experience drove O'Duffy away from the belief that any response to this could be found in popular action. For Flanagan, O'Duffy's work sought 'to try detach the enterprise of nationalist development from military triumphalism and hagiography' (81). Although true, it should not be taken to mean that O'Duffy was only seeking to downplay any heroizing of violence. His work sought to puncture any form of triumphalism related to the achievement of independence, recasting it as the product of an unthinking and crude people, led by a nationalist sect with a sclerotic fixation with violence. Increasingly feeling himself to be surrounded by disaster, O'Duffy alternated between apocalyptic historical pronouncements and authoritarian social solutions.

III: Reconciliation with the state: Flann O'Brien's early novels

The Irish Free State disappointed many of its supporters. Whether it was the predominance of Catholic power, the failure to achieve thirty-two county sovereignty, the limited economic ambitions of the government, or the presence of censorship, there was much that could be interpreted as a betrayal of some aspect of the revolution. Despite all this, the Free State was capable of provoking high passions amongst its defenders. At the height of the Irish Civil War, Minister for External Affairs Desmond FitzGerald wrote a letter to an American anti-treaty politician, Chester A. Arthur, to justify his own support for the Treaty and the waging of Civil War.[1] The minister writes: 'the difference between you and us is that you are an individual, able to consider your feelings, to act on them and give expression to them. We are charged with the responsibility of saving our country and the people in it from ruin' (qtd in Regan 116). As John Regan notes, FitzGerald's theme of 'the impending threat of anarchy' (86) was recurrent in Free State political discourse, during and after the Civil War. Many within the Free State suffered from a paranoid fear of losing the gains of 1922, with Cumann na nGaedheal election material in 1932 exhorting voters to 'Protect Your State' (qtd in Regan 280). FitzGerald's apocalyptic sense that the Free State was in need of defense was typical of the conservative or counter-revolutionary strand in Irish politics and this fear for the supposedly-imperilled Free State remained a theme of political discourse in the 1930s. Having made his living as a civil servant, Brian O'Nolan certainly reaped some benefit from Cumann na nGaedheal's strong-state approach. This is hardly definitive of his art, but it is a corrective to the cliché Carol Taaffe describes as claiming 'monotone, provincial Ireland … killed off "Flann O'Brien"' (6). In these readings, O'Nolan's formal and thematic innovations are compared either to counter-revival writers such as O'Faoláin, with their emphasis on naturalism, or to more state-sponsored nationalist rhetoric, and found to be of more lasting value than either.[2] There is, certainly, some justification for such a reading. O'Nolan's metafictional forms were innovative by either Irish or international standards,

[1] Arthur was the grandson of Chester A. Arthur (1829 – 1886), 21st President of the United States.

[2] O'Nolan worked under numerous pseudonyms, most notably Flann O'Brien and Myles na gCopaleen, but also others such as Brother Barnabas. In this essay I refer to works written in various names. To avoid confusion, I will refer to the author as "Brian O'Nolan" throughout.

and the thematic range of his novels, extending from Irish saga to modern physics, was of a kind rarely matched in Irish writing. Given the direction O'Nolan's career took, failing to publish *The Third Policeman* and failing to publish any novel at all between 1941 and 1961, as well as his early death at 54 in 1966, the temptation to read him as 'killed off' by Ireland is clear. Here, however, I will follow the lead of Taaffe and other critics in complicating this picture. O'Nolan's reputation as an outsider in the Free State, or as an esoteric alternative to Ireland's official culture, rests on a failure to understand that there are meaningful relationships between his work and the society it emerged from. To explore these relations, I will here look at O'Nolan's first two novels, *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*. Generally regarded as O'Nolan's most formally radical and, thus, oppositional and alternative, works, I will show how these works express rather than resist their society.

Before turning to the novels, it is important to clarify that the story of O'Nolan's career, as sketched above, is quite incomplete. While it is certainly true that success as a novelist eluded O'Nolan, at least when it came to publication, these difficulties did not provoke O'Nolan to seek exile. O'Nolan, rather, had made a personal investment in the Free State. Indeed, for John McCourt, O'Nolan fitted comfortably into the 'middle-class, Dublin-based, Church-going […] power elite in the country' (115), this elite being a 'conservative' and 'anti-intellectual' (116) class. There is an irony in associating O'Nolan, a well-read and informed intellectual, with anti-intellectualism, but McCourt argues that this contradiction was characteristic of O'Nolan's circle. Taking their responses to Joyce as emblematic, McCourt describes O'Nolan and his peers as being 'riddled with doubts' (114) towards the sort of intellectual radicalism Joyce represented. These may have been purely intellectual doubts and not the sort of political uncertainty FitzGerald, for example, was dealing with. Nonetheless, that fear, rather than any post-revolutionary disillusionment, recurs, is noticeable. Taaffe provides a similar account in describing how O'Nolan's disdain for both 'an inscrutable and playful Joyce, or an earnest and slightly didactic O'Faoláin' (33) as models of the artist 'reveals a lingering attachment to the mores of the Irish middle class and its ideas of social value' (33). As will be seen, O'Nolan preferred to describe his art as a commercial venture and if he failed to find financial success, this nonetheless evidences a desire for conformity, albeit, as Taaffe notes, a 'radical conformity' (33). O'Nolan, in other words, approached art and intellectual matters in a way suitable to, and also suited to, his own middle-class milieu. His anarchic texts, sometimes read as critiques of the sort of conservativism FitzGerald represents above, in fact contain certain accommodations with this attitude.

Political ambiguities in O'Nolan

At Swim-Two-Birds, when read politically, is often read as a carnivalesque rebellion against the attempt, made by politicians such as FitzGerald, to establish cultural and social norms for the Free State. Tess Hurson sees O'Nolan as having written 'in a time of enervation and grey confusion, works of surpassing spryness and profound despair' (ix). Fintan O'Toole, writing in the *Irish Times* to celebrate the centenary of O'Nolan's birth, has put the issue starkly in claiming O'Nolan was 'far too radical' (53) for his time. For Keith Booker, *At Swim* practices 'pluralism and dialogism' (*Flann* 5) as a means of 'challeng[ing] … the monologism of the Catholic Church' (5) and related Free State authorities. Booker adds, however, that to introduce these political coordinates introduces also the question of efficacy. Challenging monologism 'do[es] not necessarily produce preferable alternatives' (5). A reading of O'Nolan's work as political must 'determine just what [the work] subverts and just what kind of politics they represent' (13). For example, O'Nolan's opposition to the realist novel is evident and is well-trodden critical ground. Associating a politics with this opposition is a more complicated task.

Booker suggests that a problem for determinations of O'Nolan's politics lies in his many-sidedness and ambiguity. For example, Trellis, the in-text author who battles against much of *At Swim*'s cast, is depicted as a 'reprehensible and dictatorial figure who deserves to be overthrown' (11). To take this as an anti-authoritarian comment on the evils of authority, however, is to miss that 'the characters' rebellion [against Trellis] is clearly ridiculous' (11). As a result, 'the characters appear just as cruel and heartless as Trellis' (11) and no positive political statement can be extracted from the work. Admittedly, this absence has been read as a strength. Jed Esty argues that O'Nolan's refusal to take a position is an effort 'to avoid speaking for Ireland in the stereotypical language of imperial/national myth' ("Flann O'Brien" 41). O'Nolan's achievement, argues Esty, is that he deconstructs the demand for writers to be the 'voice of the nation' (35). Kim McMullen also sees *At Swim-Two-Birds* as attempting to get beyond anti-colonial binaries and hears the novel as giving voice to the 'rich cacophony of a nation emerging from colonial domination' (66). For McMullen, ambiguity emerges only in that O'Nolan fails to be sufficiently diverse. Absent voices from this 'cacophony' include the Northern Irish and Anglo-Irish, while women are present only as 'objects of narration' (79). O'Nolan is shown to have failed to go beyond the exclusions enacted by Free State politics and only gestures towards a means of doing so. The attempt to produce a reading of O'Nolan as politically progressive runs aground on the

absences and contradictions in his work. McMullen's work suggests that the relation between O'Nolan's work and the politics of his time cannot be neatly resolved.

In recent criticism Carol Taaffe has framed this problem as resulting from the uneasy relationship between O'Nolan's 'stylistic brilliance' and his 'radical conformity' (33). Taaffe convincingly demonstrates that 'unmooring [O'Nolan's] work from its historical context obscures the degree to which his uneasy dissatisfaction with the status quo was complicated by a lingering sympathy for many of the tenets of the new State' (2). As Taaffe emphasizes, 'the experimental comic was also a senior civil servant' (2). The problem faced by Taaffe, and which this chapter wishes to explore, is how to explore the relation between O'Nolan's style and his 'conformity' that does not dilute either. I propose that the discussion of O'Nolan's style should not confuse 'radical' with 'emancipatory'. Through a closer examination of the brand of radicalism promoted by the carnivalesque, themes and attitudes which 'moor' O'Nolan closely to his historical context can be discovered.

One major attempt to connect O'Nolan's problems with authority to his formal experiments is Keith Hopper's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist*. For Hopper, the disregard for writerly authority O'Nolan displays in *At Swim* can be read within the frame of Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque. For Hopper, *At Swim*'s melding of genres and layers of narratives constitutes a 'carnival discourse' (228) in which the hierarchies which partition fiction into high and low literature are broken down. The capacity of any one genre to make a claim to truth is resisted. Furthermore, the novel's 'revolt against the author' (74), seen in the various travails of Sweeny, Trellis, and the narrator himself, frees interpretation from author-centred meaning. Hopper sees this battle against authorial authority as being 'politically subversive' (37). Authoritative figures and texts are subjected to the carnivalesque 'power of laughter to destroy authority' (37). Carnival, however, is not only parody. As Hopper notes, whereas parody 'uphold[s] what it mocks' (32), carnival offers itself as an alternative to the travestied authority (32). Bakhtin's notion of carnival is rooted in his understanding of medieval festival days which took place 'outside the official serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture' (4). Carnival is 'a second world and a second life outside officialdom' (1). It refers to a temporary suspension of ruling discourses and the liberation of the popular and unofficial ways of living these had constrained. Carnival, in other words, is the world that the official does not allow. It follows, then, that employing the concept in a reading of *At Swim* does appear to point towards a radical reading.

Hopper is far from alone in summoning up the carnivalesque to explain the tensions in *At Swim*. Booker, for instance, has argued that *At Swim* possesses 'carnivalesque energies'

(44) which provide it with a 'strong antiauthoritarian statement' (44). For Kimberly Bohman-Kalaja, *At Swim* relies on a Bakhtinian notion of 'transgression' (58) of generic boundaries which encourages the reader to engage in 'play' (58) with the text. In this way, *At Swim* 'compel[s] readers to piece together incompatible styles, genres, structural lapses' (65). Engagement rather than passive reception of authorial design is promoted. McMullen draws on Bakhtinian notions of cultural relations to suggest *At Swim* opposes 'official language', which 'attempt[s] to exert a homogenizing and hierarchical influence' (64) to 'decentralizing, heterogenous centrifugal languages' (65). McMullen is right to emphasize that *At Swim* is engaged in a sort of contest, and that this contest involves the status of the author. What remains open to question is how this challenge to the author can be interpreted.

The Carnivalesque as Stalinism

We can see, then, that the carnivalesque is an important theme in debates over O'Nolan's radicalism. The radical potential in the carnivalesque invites its being projected into O'Nolan's work. It must be noted, however, that such interpretations of the carnivalesque provide a specific and even partial account of Bakhtin's idea. Galin Tihanov describes a widely held understanding of the carnivalesque 'as an emblem of the people's revolt against […] the oppression emanating from official power' (264). This revolutionary reading does find textual support in Bakhtin's regicidal characterisation of the carnivalesque as a series of 'crowning and uncrownings' (104). However, Tihanov notes, this revolutionary reading has appeared in two quite different forms. The first depicts carnival as 'the playful face of revolution, a celebration of disobedience and freedom' (264) and we have already seen a version of this approach to carnival in the above arguments for *At* Swim's anti-authoritarianism. The second revolutionary reading quite differently 'regards carnival as the […] expression of a traumatic life-experience under Stalin's totalitarian regime [… and] the embodiment of sinister energies which threaten to destroy liberal values' (265). Such suspicion of the carnivalesque has become prominent in O'Nolan criticism. Maebh Long, for instance, refers to O'Nolan's engagement with 'the grisly underside of the carnivalesque' through a focus on 'the physicality, the absurdity, and the excessiveness of the tragic farce' (110). Here I would to tend towards Long's sense of O'Nolan as employing a more ambivalent and less emancipatory, celebratory or playful use of the carnivalesque.

The various aesthetic rules O'Nolan lays out in *At Swim-Two-Birds* – such as the famous claim that 'a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham' (25) – demonstrate that

O'Nolan's carnival is not straightforwardly lawless. Rather its laws are what Bakhtin calls 'the laws of [carnival's] own freedom' from which 'while carnival lasts there is no other life outside' (7). As regards these laws, their 'theme [is] the madness or stupidity of the hero' (104), a madness which directs the hero away from the logic of the official world he sets out to defend and instead towards 'carnivalesque fancies' (104). Certainly, the depiction of would-be heroic figures as mad or stupid is recurrent in O'Nolan, such as Mad Sweeny in *At Swim* and de Selby in *The Third Policeman*. The representation of James Joyce, in *The Dalkey Archive*, as a Jesuit ignorant of his own writing is also worth noting. In this case, Joyce's madness makes literal the uncrowning of an aesthete's heroic postures already seen in *At Swim*, where the weight given to the discussions between Stephen and Cranly becomes the 'casual dialectics' (102) of O'Nolan's novel.

Whilst many critics have discussed the relation between Bakhtin's carnivalesque and Stalinism, Boris Groys is distinctive in reading Bakhtin also in the context of the revival of religious thought in Russia during the first half of the twentieth century. The major influence of this revival, on Bakhtin, Groys contends, was nineteenth-century religious philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, a figure who Andrzej Walicki describes as having held 'the posthumous reputation of being Russia's greatest philosopher' (392) in the early twentieth century. Walicki describes Solovyov as having sought to reverse 'the denial of substantial reality' (375) that had resulted from Western philosophy and its interest in 'individual reason' (375). Echoing this understanding of Solovyov, Groys sees Solovyov influencing Bakhtin through Solovyov's 'emphasis on abstract reason to the detriment of the world and matter' (*Introduction* 171) and his identification of this reason with the 'Western individualistic tradition' (174). For Solovyov, and so subsequently Bakhtin, individual reason separated thought from reality, making the two alien forces in confrontation with one another. Reason is seen as a rejection of the world and as the elevation of the self above it.

The carnivalesque, then, emerges in part as an expression of a purely theoretical critique of reason. The Stalinist context reveals itself in the compromised position in which this posture placed Bakhtin as regards Stalinism. Despite having no associations with Bolshevism in any of its forms, Bakhtin's intellectual beliefs, Groys explains, left him unable to offer any opposition to 'the new Stalinist regime from the position of individualism, the rights of man, moralism, democracy, and so on' (*Introduction* 174). These types of criticism endorsed the separation of world and man which this Russian religious philosophy sought to repair. Such opposition would have been what Groys calls 'morally motivated protest' (195) based on purely individual or personal, rather than socially produced, reason. Hence, so this argument

goes, the carnivalesque is an attempt by Bakhtin to make some reconciliation with the course the Russian Revolution had taken, within the framework of his own philosophy. Central to Bakhtin's thought, Groys argues, is the notion that carnival tends 'not towards the achievement of truth or consensus, but towards the vital victory of one side or the other' (184). The uncrowning of one is followed by the crowning of another and so 'if it is justifiable to see a metaphor for official Stalinist culture in Bakhtin's monologism, then carnival is not a 'democratic alternative' to this culture, but its irrational, destructive side' (186). Carnival refers to the process by which one authority is dissolved and another raised to power. The individual is not freed during this process but is only faced with a choice between dissolving along with the old authority or embracing the flux of the new.

It follows, then, that carnivalesque dialogue is not an end in itself but rather, Groys argues, 'a form of living conflict' which tends towards the 'vital victory' (184) of one side of this dialogue. In a sympathetic reading of Groys, Slavoj Žižek observes this movement of reforming, or uncrowning and crowning, in the Stalinist Show Trials of the 1930s. Giving an example of Groys's reading in action, Žižek notes that in the Trials 'the ultimate form of treason' was 'sticking to the minimum of personal autonomy' (106), with the rights and freedoms of the individual always assumed to be subordinate to those of the Party. The 'vital victor' here is the Party, whose rule is the authority formed out of a carnivalesque revolution in which old authorities were dissolved. To accept the process of carnival, the individual is obliged to accept the rule of this new victor. Demonstrating the unusual endpoints of this logic, Žižek references another Bolshevik, Nikolai Bukharin, who pleaded guilty to false charges, so as not to oppose the new law of the Party, but requested his innocence be privately acknowledged. In Žižek's reading of the Show Trials, the dialogue between Party unity and Bukharin's flaccid individualism confirms the authority of one voice, that of the Party, over another's, that of Bukharin. Carnival does not refer to an achieved state but to the struggle through which one state replaces another. In Žižek's reading, Bukharin represents the fate met by those 'uncrowned' in this struggle.

Žižek's use of the carnivalesque to explore the Show Trials is useful in that it demonstrates Bukharin being forced to adopt the sort of intellectual position which Bakhtin was aiming to avoid. Although not a Bolshevik himself, to oppose Bolshevism as an individual as Bukharin had done would have been to submit to Western values of individualism. Bakhtin instead locates himself within the carnivalesque erosion of the old and establishment of the new, recognizing in the dissolution of the old the victory of a new and less individualizing state. In Groys's reading, Bakhtin saw his 'own creativity [...] as

being in a dualistic relationship with Stalinist authority' (*Introduction* 195). Bakhtin's individualism was to be 'the sacred Dionysian sacrifice' (195) through which Stalinism would realize itself. Bakhtin's carnivalesque is understood in such a way as to make the annihilation of opposition a good thing. Bakhtin strips himself of individuality – something Bukharin could not do – and imagines his own self as an obstacle which must be overthrown on the way to the establishment of a 'second world'. Carnival, then, does not describe freedom, or even a new authority, but rather the process by which one authority replaces another through the temporary eruption of madness in society.

Carnivalesque Submission in *At Swim-Two-Birds*

That Groys connects carnival not only with release from authority, but also to the establishment of a new authority, takes on greater importance when we consider those carnivalesque readings of *At Swim* which argue for the work's anti-authoritarian qualities. *At Swim* depicts not merely some release from authority, but rather the struggle of one world to replace another. In this regard, the diverging fates of Sweeny and the uncle are particularly telling. Sweeny, on the one hand, is a transformed figure, beginning *At Swim* as a poet before becoming, in his final appearance, a judge. By contrast, the uncle is largely unchanged. Nominally an authoritarian father figure, the uncle is, to be clear, subject to a sustained mockery throughout the text. His lectures on the sin of laziness are interrupted by the student noting the uncle's 'flushed appearance' (95) and 'the roll of fat he was accustomed to wear at the back of his collar' (95). His authority is symbolically undermined when the student discovers he has been playing the part of a policeman in a theatre, using 'a policeman's hat of the papier-mâché type' (59) as part of his costume. The uncle, a symbol of paternal authority now taking on the symbolism of state authority, is suggested to be capable only of performing, rather than possessing, power.

There remains, however, ambivalence in O'Nolan's political argument. Bakhtin has stated that during the carnival, 'all who are highest are debased, all who are lowest are crowned' (384). We can say that the uncle is debased through the text highlighting how false his authority is. The question of who is crowned, however, remains unanswered. It is important that the uncle, although parodied, remains authoritative and leaves the text as he enters it. In his final appearance the uncle shares a sentimental reconciliation with the student, the latter having passed his exams. Taaffe rightfully points out that 'the convenient tidiness of [this] conclusion undermines the conventional *Bildungsroman* ending' (58), which

certainly returns us to the satire of the novel discussed above. Ultimately, although the uncle's crown – his authority – is clearly shaken, he is not deposed, despite being a most conservative figure who believes 'there is such a thing as Procedure, there is such a thing as Order, there is such a thing as doing things in the right way' (*At Swim* 133).

Missing from the uncle's characterisation is the struggle for 'vital victory' Groys finds in the carnivalesque, with this absence being all the more notable for there being examples of this contest elsewhere in *At Swim*. Sweeny, for example, appears in the text first as the narrator of the Gaelic legend *Buile Suibhne*, which describes the tortures he endures from a priest's curse. The carnivalesque's madness and stupidity are in evidence here, as the text comically describes the cursed Sweeny as 'beleaguered by an anger and a darkness, and fury and fits and frenzy and fright-fraught fear' (66) and suffering from grotesque violence which leaves 'not one inch of him from toe to crown that was not red-prickled and blood-gashed' (67). Torture and degradation, to a degree not seen with the Uncle, is visited upon Sweeny, in a manner more fitting to the sense of carnivalesque as struggle described by Groys.

This violence inflicted on Sweeny presages his appearance in the trial scenes towards the novel's end. In these he appears as a judge speaking a legal language indistinct from all other members of that trial's expansive judiciary. For Jennika Baines, Sweeny has been 'transformed from the voice of authority speaking the truths of nature to a more mundane, more modern voice of authority: that of a judge of the court' ("Murders" 211). Baines describes this change as a murder which 'transforms [Sweeny] from a character who is real and genuine to something contrived and fantastical' (212) resulting in Sweeny being 'reduced to a character more in keeping with the botched narrative of the trial' (211). Furthermore, this transformation is not represented as a movement towards freedom, or a release into a sudden state of freedom. It is a 'descent' (212) from the 'genuine artistic expression' (209) of the *Buile Suibhne* recitals down into 'a narrative peopled by shams, imposters, plagiarisers and thieves' (209), a descent Sweeny embraces by adopting the language of his new role as a judge. Sweeny, then, is not stripped of authority but merely has the facts of his authority changed, from artist to judge.

Baines's comments on Sweeny's 'genuine artistic expression' have been variously developed by critics. Writing on Sweeny's early appearances in the novel as a poet reciting from *Buile Suibhne*, Cathal Ó Háinle sees O'Nolan as displaying 'genuine sympathy' (35) for Gaelic cultural values. Although O'Nolan 'seems constantly to be seeking to create a certain whimsical quality in his version' (33), his aim is to be 'fantastic' (33) rather than corrosively parodic. Ó Háinle is not alone in detecting sympathy for Gaelic culture in O'Nolan. Citing

O'Nolan's scholarly engagement with early Irish culture, Louis de Paor argues that *At Swim* shares with 'precolonial Gaelic Irish literature' (203) 'the dream of an unalienated language' (203). This 'unalienated language' would provide a 'fully integrated relationship between language and reality' (202). Word, sentence, and narrative would no longer be intellectual products supplanting 'lived experience' (202). Rather, what de Paor calls 'the immediacy of orality' (202), found in Sweeny's poetic recitals, would be restored. De Paor does not cite Bakhtin or the carnivalesque in this argument, but carnivalesque echoes can be heard here. Individual expression and the wider world, understood to be in conflict, are sought to be reunited.[3]

Carnival and Class Consciousness

Concern for some unity of art and world was not some forgotten ideal for O'Nolan. It was, as McCourt argues, a characteristic intellectual position for O'Nolan and his mid-century Irish peers. They too disliked 'art divorced … from real, domestic and even national life' (118). McCourt ascribes this to O'Nolan's sense of his 'real-life responsibilities at home in Ireland' (118), but a broader explanation can be sought in O'Nolan's use of the carnivalesque and in Sweeny's transformation. In the course of his tortured recitals, Sweeny is encountered by a trio of modern-day Dubliners – Paul Shanahan, Anthony Lamont, and John Furriskey – who appear throughout the novel as unwitting agents of populist anti-authoritarianism. Encountering Sweeny reciting his poetry, they interrupt and Shanahan offers the following criticism:

> Now take the stuff your man was giving us a while ago […] I liked it and liked it well. I enjoyed that […] but the man in the street, where does he come in? By God he doesn't come in at all as far as I can see (75)

Instead of mythology Shanahan advocates the work of Jem Casey, the 'people's poet'. Casey's 'Workman's Friend' (76), which he proceeds to speak over Sweeny's own recital,

[3] Booker makes a similar point in his work on Menippean satire in O'Nolan. For Booker, 'the 'treatment of language in At Swim can in fact be usefully read within the context of medieval Catholic meditations on the linguistic implication of the fallen state of humanity' (36). In such a reading, O'Nolan can be seen looking back to the 'rule of the medieval episteme' during which 'words and things were connected in the direct, mystical way suggested by the Word of God' (35). For more on this, see Booker's *Flann O'Brien, Bakhtin, and Menippean Satire*, pp. 34-36.

with his voice not in unison with, but in opposition to, Sweeny's. Unity is only achieved upon Sweeny adopting the judge persona. It is the Dubliners who force a contest and win a vital victory by dissolving and reforming Sweeny.

Another reading is possible here, as offered by Alana Gillespie. For Gillespie, O'Nolan should be seen to be 'deconstruct[ing] … the aura of history's authoritative texts and their place in cultural memory' (207). It is true that what Gillespie calls 'Revivalist discourse and post-independence cultural nationalism' (207) have their authority smeared here. As Booker has noted, however, this only leaves *At Swim* in the position of being a negation of certain authorities. It does not investigate what O'Nolan offers as a replacement, which is culture as organised according to the three Dubliners. We encounter the same overthrow and replacement in the fate of Orlick Trellis. Although hired by the Dubliners to write for them, Trellis is denied creative freedom by his new employers. Rather, the Dubliners regularly interject and demand, in place of what Orlick calls his 'artistry' (167), what they call 'a nice simple story with plenty of the razor' (169). The authority claimed by traditional artists is upturned, but it is not replaced by some more open society. Defeated artists instead are conscripted into new positions with Orlick writing what Baines calls 'the botched narrative of the trial' ("Murders" 211) and Sweeny participating in it.

We find not a new freedom but rather submission to new authorities. The attempt to assert personality, seen in Sweeny and in Orlick, is overwhelmed by the dictates of a larger cultural background. In an examination of *At Swim*'s early drafts, Taaffe finds a similar fall taking the form of O'Nolan censoring his own work through the deletion of potentially controversial representations of Catholicism (55). Characters such as the Pooka and the Good Fairy were once explicitly an angel and devil; persecutions such as Sweeny's curse were more explicitly Catholic punishments; the Irish folklore had originally been a 'more explicit Christian universe of good and evil' (55). In accordance with Free State Catholic morality, O'Nolan swerves away from any negative depictions of Catholicism. In doing so, he finds himself working according to the advice Orlick receives from Furriskey, that he avoid anti-Catholic references as '[he] won't get very far by attacking the church' (172). Taaffe describes this caution as O'Nolan 'waver[ing] somewhere between criticism of the Free State's censorship culture and a certain complicity with it' (60). This wavering demonstrates the logic of O'Nolan's aesthetic strictures. Central to the carnivalesque is the attempt to seek unity between individual and culture. What this means, for *At Swim*, is that the work must be reconciled to a society placing limits on artistic expression.

At Swim undeniably erodes the stature claimed by authors. Without disputing that this erosion occurs, any emancipatory politics claimed for this gesture can be challenged. *At Swim* has its Dubliners fear saying the word 'books' out loud, preferring to spell it as 'bee-double-o-kay-ess' (168). For Taaffe, O'Nolan is partaking in a more widespread anti-intellectualism in 1930s Ireland, the spirit of which was the question 'what respectable Irishman of the 1930s would be caught writing' (54). An anecdote Taaffe relates regarding O'Nolan's attempts to promote *At Swim* is of interest here. Attempting to win praise from a 'popular novelist' (51), O'Nolan described his work to Ethel Mannin as either 'a belly-laugh or high-class literary pretentious slush' (51).[4] In Taaffe's interpretation of O'Nolan's communication with Mannin, O'Nolan saw in his work a 'fairly domesticated brand of modernism [which] made his novel palatable to the "ordinary intelligent reader"' (52) and sought reassurance from an arbiter of public taste that this was the case. O'Nolan sought reassurance that his work as an author had not dissociated itself from popular literature. Rather than claim the author's crown, he wished for *At Swim-Two-Birds* to be comprehensible only as an expression of the existing culture.

The carnivalesque demands that one reconcile oneself with the carnival. For Bakhtin, this had meant rejecting an embattled individualism and embracing mass ideals. That O'Nolan makes a group of Dubliners into his agents of carnivalesque dissolution is evidence of his own reconciliation to his class. This move shares in a common myth of the Free State that, as historian John Regan puts it, during the Civil War the Irish had proved 'the worst misgivings of the British about the Irish people's ability to govern themselves' (86). In Regan's reading, for the Free State's elite, 'the civil war shattered perceptions of the super gael, Catholic purity and national superiority' (181) and it was now the task of the 'Irish nationalist middle-class elite' (87) to restore order. Seeing a similar phenomenon, Diarmuid Ferriter describes how 'after the revolution […] new dismissals of the "rabble", involving cynicism and snobbery on the part of some about democracy itself' (11) could be heard amongst political leadership. O'Nolan's association of the carnivalesque and Dubliners

[4] Mannin (1900 – 1984) certainly wrote popular novels and produced 'over one hundred books' (Rooney 142) in her life. However, it is worth noting that her work was far more explicit in expressing political themes than anything O'Nolan wrote. *Red Rose* (1942) was a life of Russian anarchist Emma Goldmann, while *The Blossoming Bough* (1943) was a story of Irish involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Caroline Rooney describes her as 'what may be termed "a revolutionary woman", one who could be considered, in many respects, before her time: as a committed feminist, as a persistent believer in social revolution, as an anti-colonialist, as a supporter of Arab liberation and pro-democracy causes and as an activist for the Palestinian cause' (142). Mannin had also been one of Yeats's lovers late in his life (142; Foster, *The Arch Poet* 511-518), indicating that O'Nolan was not entirely abandoning the circles of high culture in seeking Mannin's advice.

trafficks in this same sensibility. As in the mindsets described by Regan and Ferriter, the ordinary person is in *At Swim* an agent of destruction.

This identification might suggest the sort of 'morally motivated protest' Groys saw the carnivalesque as seeking to avoid. It could be argued that, by drawing a distinction between the individual and the mob, without clarifying which side he is on, O'Nolan risks setting himself against the popular. This contradiction, however, can be resolved. O'Nolan's voice is a class voice. The muted punishment faced by the Uncle, as seen, demonstrates O'Nolan's submerged connection to the class that character represents. Concerns about an unruly mob parallel the concerns of FitzGerald and others, whose fear was the anarchy they suspected the Irish people to be capable of. The implicitly endorsed uncle, after all, states, 'there is such a thing as Order' (134). To locate the threat of anarchy in the ordinary person is not some individualist fear for one's personal liberty, but a wider concern that the order established in Ireland, and to which O'Nolan belonged, remained imperilled.

For Bakhtin, 'destruction and uncrowning are related to birth and renewal. The death of the old is linked with regeneration' (217). We find the carnivalesque is not to be thought of as a release as much it is the description of a cycle that moves from one form of authority to another. It is this experimental attitude towards authority which provides the ambivalence of O'Nolan's rebellion in *At Swim*. Although he is in support of the overthrow of realist standards and modernist superiority, he nonetheless shares with Free State officials a fear of rebellion. In *At Swim*, as in the official Free State mind, rebellion was always a potentially uncontrollable affair and was to be associated with the masses and their putative unruliness. It is this understanding which produces the rendering of Sweeny's transformation as a fall and the emphasis on Orlick as surrendering his own creativity. On the other hand, sharing with Bakhtin a desire not to write from an individual and alienated position, *At Swim* is committed to degrading heroic aesthetic postures. It is within these poles of reconciliation and ambivalence that we find the variations in the treatment of Sweeny, Orlick and the uncle. Sweeny, an artist, and thus potentially an authoritarian, endorses individual values vulnerable to carnivalesque uncrowning, whilst being an intellectual capable of protest makes him representative of a danger to the Free State. Even if he represents a culture which O'Nolan respects, Sweeny is to be brought low. By contrast, although the uncle does not represent a democratic alternative, he is representative of the Free State. It follows that he can be mocked, but never uncrowned. *At Swim*, then, is not a conflict between the official world and its rebellious adversary. It is an exploration by an artist of the possibilities of abandoning rebellion and embracing the official.

O'Nolan, Taaffe writes, 'declined to take the business of literature as anything other than plain business' (29). O'Nolan saw as his target 'the vanity and self-importance of the Irish writer' (28) and here, realists such as O'Faoláin were seen to be as guilty of this crime as Joyce. It was the writer's duty to be of his time and not an opponent of it and, for Taaffe, this 'self-reflexive preoccupation with the nature of art and the persona of the artist betrays a crisis of identity ultimately rooted in the cultural dynamics of post-independence Ireland' (2). As seen at the outset of this chapter, Desmond FitzGerald gave voice, in the political field, to this desire to identify and, even, submerge oneself within, the state. In literature, we can find such sentiments in Daniel Corkery's comments in *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* that 'the writers in a normal country are one with what they write of. The life of every other people they gaze upon from without, but the life of their own people they cannot get outside of. That is why they belong' (1010). O'Faoláin himself, after all, was also seeking to achieve closer union between writer and society. Having seen O'Nolan explore this question theoretically in *At Swim*, we can now turn to a concrete instance of O'Nolan attempting to unite his own literary and philosophical interests with those of his state. This opportunity is afforded to us by the strange and unlikely instance of O'Nolan's brief dispute with the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger. In 1939, Schrödinger was invited by de Valera to take a position at a new scholarly institute in Dublin, the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, DIAS. Partly, this was an offer of asylum to a figure who had become a target and opponent of the Nazi state. As well as altruism, however, De Valera also had scholastic ambitions, fitting to a one-time mathematician and schoolteacher. De Valera intended for DIAS to have two schools, one in Celtic Studies and one in Mathematical Physics, with this pairing providing Ireland and Irish studies an international scholarly reputation. Schrödinger certainly had international renown, having won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1933. His fame, however, did not shield him from controversy. His arguments about quantum theory, and its philosophical implications amounting to atheist heresy (W. Moore 360), he was attacked by many in Ireland. Given the notorious conservatism of Free State Ireland, this may not be surprising. Perhaps surprisingly, however, the intellectually curious O'Nolan was numbered among these critics. Although O'Nolan's direct engagement with Schrödinger amounted to a single letter exchange in the pages of the *Irish Times*, with a few glancing references in columns thereafter, the themes of O'Nolan's criticisms not only echoed those

of the Irish intellectual community, but can be found in the pages of *The Third Policeman*. In *The Third Policeman*, we find radical science depicted as the product of anti-social intellectualism, the latter being attacked as it had been in *At Swim*. Far from being, as O'Toole had it, 'too radical' to be an 'establishment intellectual' (O'Toole), O'Nolan attempts in *The Third Policeman* to use literature to defend the unstable philosophical and theological positions of the Free State. Behind the absurdist portrayal of science found in *The Third Policeman*, we find a fear that popular and socially accepted ideas are in danger of being subverted.

Quantum theory as a "heretical" science.

In being condemned as heretic and heresy, Schrödinger and quantum theory were joining a long tradition of science earning the ire of the Catholic Church. A thorough account of such quantum theory is here both impossible and unnecessary, not only due to the scope and complexity of the theory but also due to the nature of O'Nolan's engagement with it. What I will focus on are some of the philosophical implications of quantum theory and how these implications emerge in O'Nolan's writing, particularly in *The Third Policeman*. Even by the eclectic standards of O'Nolan's knowledge, his engagement with quantum theory is remarkable. Quantum theory, in 1940, was a new and controversial development in physics, being 'a theory of atoms' (Popper 11) whose consequences were devastating for established scientific thought. Although it had some history in earlier twentieth-century thought, quantum theory's establishment can be traced to work done between 1925 and 1927 by physicists such as Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, Max Born, and Schrödinger himself. Being led by the Copenhagen-based Bohr, this work came to be known as the 'Copenhagen interpretation' of quantum mechanics and its radical claims were controversial for decades to come.[5] Unsurprisingly, for a science led by German and Jewish scientists, quantum theory was attacked by the far-right, but it was also criticised by liberal scientists and thinkers such

[5] Writing in 1982, Karl Popper numbers himself specifically among the opponents of the 'Copenhagen interpretation', although he describes it as being 'almost universally accepted' (35). Admittedly Popper contradicts such a claim by listing the numerous scientific thinkers who oppose the 'Copenhagen interpretation' (36-37), but certainly quantum was and remains today a source of controversy. For example, Jeffrey Bup writes that 'we do not yet understand the significance of the transition from classical to quantum mechanics' (241), while Philip Stehle describes the attempt to make this transition as 'slow, difficult, imaginative, and frustrating' (309) and James Polkinghorne argues that the supremacy of the 'Copenhagen interpretation' has retreated to be replaced by a more realist thinking (91-92).

as Einstein and Karl Popper and by left-wing thinkers in the Soviet Union.[6] Indeed, Schrödinger himself became a critic of the 'Copenhagen interpretation'. That Ireland's most reliably conservative institutions lined up in opposition to quantum theory does not mean the debate was one between progress and reaction.

Quantum theory's heresy was that it rejected and indeed destroyed the Newtonian physics which had been dominant in European scientific thought from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The Newtonian school had taught there were 'universal laws that apply to the motion of any material body without distinction' (Stehle 5), these laws being Newton's 'laws of motion'. Newton's laws, Philip Stehle explains, 'provided a general framework in which the motion of any material system was expected to fit' (9). As long as enough information was available, the laws could be used to 'consider the universe as a machine' (9). It followed that an informed user of Newton's laws could adopt 'a deterministic picture of the world' (9) where the laws explained not only what had happened but also, in theory, what would happen. It was this deterministic certitude which quantum theory toppled. As David Lindley writes, whereas 'in classical physics, when anything happens, it happens for a reason … in quantum mechanics, things just happen one way or another, and there is no saying why' (137). This inability to say why is the theme of Heisenberg's famous 'uncertainty principle', which stated it was 'impossible to determine with accuracy both the position and the *momentum* of a particle (e.g. an *electron*) simultaneously. The more accurately the position is known, the less accurately the momentum be determined' (Isaacs *et al* 400). By claiming that the more we could know in one field the less we could in another, quantum theory made itself an opponent of the ambitions of classical physics.

It was this uncrowning of the Newtonian ambition which made Karl Popper a critic of quantum theory. He understood the 'Copenhagen interpretation' as stating that '*quantum mechanics does not represent particles, but rather our knowledge, our observations, or our consciousness, of particles*' (35). Knowledge and theory, it followed, were not truth but 'instruments, or calculating devices' (42) and could in no way describe 'a real *physical property of the system*' (46). James Polkinghorne suggests the 'Copenhagen interpretation' was an empiricist approach amenable to those for whom 'ontological questions (What is really there?) are an irrelevant luxury and best discarded' (82). These physicists rejected the claim that 'the role of science [was] to discover what the physical world is actually like' (84). Quantum theory was only a

[6] David Cassidy notes that quantum mechanics became a target of ire in Nazi Germany not only for its associations with Jewish scientists such as Einstein, but also for it having deposed the classical physics in which the great scientific names of the German Empire had been made (340-344).

'better [way] to do the sums' (85) and that it 'got results' meant only that it was an effective instrument for doing experiments and not an expression of the workings of reality.

Popper's frustration with this rejection was that it introduced what he called 'subjectivism' into science. Classical mechanics presumed a reality on which it could test the validity of its theories, or 'clash with reality' (3) as Popper put it. In this clash, a theory would prove itself to be a false or true expression of reality's workings, but for the quantum theorists 'quantum mechanics was not a description of reality … because no such reality existed' (9-10). Here Popper refers to a popular and idealist interpretation of quantum theory which proposes that reality is created through conscious interaction, or, in Polkinghorne's phrase, that reality is 'observer created' (90). According to this understanding, uncertainty tells us that when we interact with atomic reality, that reality is created by our decision to observe it according to this or that ratio of position and momentum. The notorious 'Schrödinger's Cat' thought experiment, in which a cat sealed in a box with a poison we cannot know will be released is both alive and dead until we look inside the box, expresses this idea. It is an expression of the idealist theory that consciousness not only comprehends but creates reality.[7] If at the base of science since the Renaissance has been Francis Bacon's claim that reality had to be obeyed before it was mastered, quantum theory's subjectivism had undone this rule by claiming reality, as well as the rules which humanity believed it had spent millennia uncovering, was not there.

Critics have noted that Irish literature has often had an uneasy relationship with science. Michael Rubenstein, for instance, has described how 'the Irish experience of the principle of utility in the nineteenth century was, almost invariably, not only humiliating, but also grandly, historically traumatic' (23). Modernity, as it manifested in rationalism, technology, and science, was understood to be a severe threat to the nation. Contemporary Irish writers have continued to find the question of the antagonistic relationship between science and society productive. John Banville's *Doctor Copernicus* explores, in part, the problems Copernicus's heliocentric theory causes for an unprepared culture. Indeed, although *The Third Policeman* is, as Hopper says, a sort of epistemological 'whodunnit' (229), it is worth

[7] Bohr and Heisenberg furthered this idealist understanding of quantum theory, with the former in particular notorious for gnomic statements such the claim that 'when it comes to atoms ... language can be used only as in poetry. The poet, too, is not nearly so concerned with describing facts as with creating images and establishing mental connections' (qtd in Lindley, 86). Heisenberg went further into both idealism and obscurantism by claiming that 'the path only comes into existence through this, that we observe it' (qtd in Cassidy 236). Contemporary quantum theory has retreated from this thorough an idealism. Polkinghorne reasserts reality by stating that 'what was not already in some sense potentially present could never be brought into being' (91).

noting that the issue which provoked O'Nolan, writing in *Cruiskeen Lawn* as Myles na gCopaleen, to attack Schrödinger, was quantum theory's atheism. Schrödinger's problem in Ireland, Walter Moore explains, was that whereas 'official Catholic philosophy … trace[d] an uninterrupted chain of cause and effect back to the first cause, which is God' (360), quantum theory had inadvertently demonstrated the non-existence of God by demonstrating the non-existence of cause. To say a thing had a cause was to assume a rule, which in turn was to assume there was a reality that rule could belong to. Moore understatedly notes that Schrödinger's 'scientific dissection of causality did not please every philosopher in Dublin' (360). O'Nolan's complaint that 'Schroedinger has been proving lately that you cannot establish a first cause' (qtd in W. Moore 378), and so had been arguing that there was 'no God' (378), put him among these displeased philosophers.

O'Nolan's attack on Schrödinger doubled as an attack on DIAS as a whole, with his column also criticising DIAS for publishing work which suggested Saint Patrick was a composite of two historical figures. DIAS, so O'Nolan said, had argued that there were 'two Saint Patricks and no God' (qtd in W. Moore 378) and, for O'Nolan, this 'propagation of heresy and unbelief has nothing to do with polite learning … [and] will make us the laughing stock of the world' (qtd in W. Moore 378). O'Nolan saw in quantum theory a ridiculous aspect and in this he echoed a common theme of criticism. Popper, for example, bemoaned that the victory of the Copenhagen interpretation 'would be a major blow against common sense' (26) whilst Polkinghorne, in a more optimistic tone, suggests that 'a slogan for the quantum physicist might well be "No undue tyranny of commonsense"' (87). O'Nolan did not here summon up his 'plain people of Ireland' but, in his defence of one Patrick and one God, the presence of their everyday beliefs, as well as a sense that to refute these is to be an enemy of the everyday, can be felt.

This blow against causality, and the atheist implications of it, was one such blow; another attack on received wisdom was the overthrow of Newton's mechanical worldview. Abraham Pais explains that Newton's approach to reality, which encouraged thinking of it as the predictable unfolding of laws, promoted a 'continuous world picture' (75). Central to Newton was the belief that 'Nature does not make a leap' (75), it being held to a course set out by its laws. Reality, then, was reliable and progressive. What quantum theory 'found [was] that nature does leap' (75) and consequently history could develop in ways other than

the nineteenth-century conception of progress.[8] Admittedly, this much could have been, and often was, gleaned from a reading of Irish history, but uncertainty undermined not only progress as a worldview, but all worldviews.[9] That there is no reality on which secure facts can be founded means, Polkinghorne explains, that 'there is no universal epistemology' (87). Quantum theory is the reverse of the Newtonian optimism that there could be 'a general framework in which the motion of any material system was expected to fit' (Stehle 9). Every single atomic event required its own framework and this framework, provided by a physicist's observation, would itself be part of that event. Reality may have been 'observer created' but the reality created was to be momentary and never universal. At the same time as the 'Copenhagen interpretation' was, as Popper put it, subjectivist, it also placed severe limits on the capability of the observing subject. That O'Nolan numbered among those who found quantum theory to be destructive and limiting, and not those who saw it as the next step on the march of science, will be addressed for the remainder of this chapter.

Science in *The Third Policeman*

Reading O'Nolan's work as exploring a world in which traditional meaning has failed is a major critical theme and Jennika Baines suggests these problems of meaning in O'Nolan are analogous to 'an existential, Sartrean absurd' ("Murders" 217). His major works, Baines writes, all evidence 'a world that is made ridiculous by its futility' (217). That Baines specifies this as a quality of the major works is important, as this nauseated absurd is absent from the early fiction. The arrival of the absurd in O'Nolan's work is a change that coincides with another, related development: an adjustment in O'Nolan's treatment of science fiction. O'Nolan had decried any attempt to connect his work to science-fiction (Fennell 33), but an interest in it stretches from early fiction such as "Naval Control" to the inventions of the 'Myles na gCopaleen Research Bureau', a staple of the *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns. While *At Swim* developed the early metafictional themes, Jack Fennell has tracked how the treatment of science changes between *Comhthrom Feinne* and *The Third Policeman*. In *Comhthrom Feinne*,

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[8] Peter Gay describes Newton as having been a 'hero' (128) and 'representative figure' (128) for the French *philosphe*s of the eighteenth century and notes the idolatry he inspires in famous figures of the Enlightenment such as Voltaire.

[9] Luke Gibbons's comment that 'the disintegration of experience visited by the city and modern life … was brought about by the antinomies of colonial rule in Ireland' (*Transformations* 168), with the result that the Irish experience was always of history as 'a series of external shocks' (166) is apposite here. Evidently, the understanding of history as a process of steady progress is a belief which can be undermined in ways both historical and scientific.

Fennell explains, technological development was seen to occur in tandem with achieving the goals of cultural nationalism. The Ireland of "Revenge on the English", for example, is both technologically advanced and Irish-speaking, which Fennell sees as an acceptance of 'a teleological view of the universe in which Catholic teaching and economic progress are compatible with Newtonian science' (36). In citing Newton, Fennell understands his influence in a similar manner to that described by Pais above, and similarly ascribes the breakdown of the Newtonian worldview to developments in quantum theory. In *The Third Policeman* Fennell describes the treatment of science as taking a 'grimmer turn' (36) and as accusing 'the new physics' (37) of triggering an 'ontological breakdown' (36). This grim turn evidences why O'Nolan may have wished to avoid being described as a science-fiction writer, with his interest not in the science so much as in the philosophical and cultural implications of it.

Admittedly, for Fennell to claim that O'Nolan showed 'anxieties regarding the cultural implications of the march of science' (44) may be surprising if these anxieties are limited to those triggered by quantum theory. Quantum theory was hardly the first theory that had become a critic of religion, and was certainly not the first to fall afoul of the Church. However, Fennell demonstrates that it was in 'the consoling fictions of Newtonian physics and teleology' (45) that O'Nolan reconciled God and science, as well as science and culture. The breaking of Newtonian thought had destroyed the belief that 'time ha[d] a 'forward' direction, allowing for the acquisition of material wealth as well as the salvation of the soul' (36). Soul and science had become opponents after quantum mechanics. Samuel Whybrow offers a similar reading and suggests O'Nolan explores the 'difficulties and sorrows of … epistemological impotence … [which] descends in the wake of scientific progress' (128). For Whybrow, the destruction of meaning brought about by science renders the world absurd and, complementing Baines's reference to Sartre, he cites Camus as a frame for understanding O'Nolan's thought. Camus's claim that 'the absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need [for reason] and the unreasonable silence of the world' (26), is seen by Whybrow as descriptive of O'Nolan's understanding of science. Having sought knowledge, the world has rewarded science with ignorance.

Just as he provides a radical reading of *At Swim*, Keith Hopper also suggests that the confrontation with science in *The Third Policeman* may not be as mournful as Fennell and Whybrow suggest. For Hopper, science in *The Third Policeman* is not seen to produce the absurd, but instead has the basis of its claims to truth exposed as nonsense. For Hopper, O'Nolan's 'critique of science and philosophy … has at its core the question of conscience'

(238), which questions the value for humanity of a science which imposes itself as a 'system of order' (167). These 'systems of order', Hopper explains, are the socially-constructed frames through which we understand the world and Hopper reads *The Third Policeman* as an exposé of how any science – Newtonian, quantum, or otherwise – fails to satisfy humanity's need for 'spiritual health' (237). Science is attacked in *The Third Policeman*, so Hopper's reading goes, because 'imposing any system of order on an infinite plane – no matter how seemingly exhaustive and methodical … – is an exercise doomed to failure' (164). Whereas Whybrow and Fennell argue O'Nolan mourns what has been brought about by scientific advancement, Hopper suggests these advances are critiqued.

Where Whybrow and Baines cite the absurd as a reference for O'Nolan's attitudes towards science, Hopper cites nineteenth-century nonsense fiction, specifically Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. For Hopper, reality's 'infinite plane' ultimately exposes as nonsense all attempts to find order in, or make order out of, reality and it is that science turns to nonsense in its effort to explain reality which is definitive of *The Third Policeman*'s critique of science. In *The Third Policeman*, science 'mimics the construction of normal logical syllogisms, carefully establishing a premise, an argument, and a conclusion' (254). The theories are not and cannot be true, but their creators know how to give them the logical consistency associated with truth. Hopper cites a comment from Carroll, regarding nonsense, that 'it isn't of the slightest consequence to us, as Logicians, whether our premises are true or false; all we have to make out is whether they lead logically to the conclusion' (qtd in Hopper 254) and Hopper reads this into *The Third Policeman*. Hopper's O'Nolan argues that there is no truth and argues that science must serve, rather than impose on society the rules of its fruitless search for truth.

Certainly, there are instances in *The Third Policeman* which see science parodied as nonsense, most famously in Sergeant Pluck's atomic theory and its explanation as to how the people of The Parish have begun turning into bicycles. Beginning from a reasonable basis, Pluck explains that all objects are made of atoms or 'small particles of itself' (84). For example, 'a sheep [is] only millions of little bits of sheepness whirling around and doing intricate convolutions inside a sheep' (84). However, Pluck continues, as these atoms perform their convolutions, they must be colliding with and moving from one atomic orbit to another. It follows, then, that if they are being exchanged, a human riding a bicycle has his or her human atoms exchanged with the bicycle's bicycle atoms. People, Pluck explains, 'who spen[d] most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles … get their personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycles' (85). A man named O'Feersa, Pluck tells the

narrator, has become twenty-three percent bicycle; another named Gilhaney is forty-eight percent bicycle. Carroll's presence can be felt twice here. First, in Pluck's nonsense, which develops in the logical but obviously false manner described by Carroll, moving from stating that all things are made of atoms (true) to atomic sharing turning people into things (false, but syllogistically presented). Second, Carroll can be felt in the use of the body as a site for demonstrating the working of science. Katherine Ebury notes that this was a common trope in popular explanations of quantum theory such as those of Arthur Eddington, known to have been read by O'Nolan, and which were explicitly influenced by 'the transforming body of Alice in Lewis Carroll's novels' (Ebury 88). Yet, as much as the treatment of science as nonsense is evident in Pluck's theory, this latter point also indicates that O'Nolan's approach to science had a more specific target than Hopper's quite general 'systems of order'. 'Conscience' and 'nonsense' are key themes of *The Third Policeman*, but they are posed in relation to quantum theory. That the critique of science has a specific target changes Hopper's radical reading and indicates the absence of any positive element to O'Nolan's critique of science.

Quantum theory in *The Third Policeman*

Pluck's nonsensical atomic theory is far from being the only indication that we are encountering here not a general critique of science, but a critique of quantum theory. Although the model of atomic movement Pluck employs – that of discrete particles moving in orbits – may be entirely familiar today, it was an invention of living memory in 1940. Even in the very late nineteenth century 'no body of evidence had accumulated' (Stehle 58) which could prove the existence of atoms and arguments for their orbital structure were not made until 1913, by Niels Bohr and Ernest Rutherford. It was this pair who were responsible for proposing that 'instead … of the electrons … vibrating in some generic way … they orbited the nucleus as the planets orbit the sun' (51). Previous models of the atom had suggested the relation of electrons making up an atom was 'generic' (Lindley 51) as though, so the metaphor went, the atom was structured like a 'plum pudding' (40). Merely by describing atoms as 'whirling about' Pluck was, although putting his own twist on it, articulating the arguments of a reasonably modern science and not long-held scientific commonplaces. Furthermore, he was articulating a theory which 'was essential to establish a link between classical and quantum physics' (Pais 152). That atoms had a substructure which was not fixed but mobile meant that they could be split; that atoms could be split introduced the

strange atomic reality which had demanded uncertainty theory. That O'Nolan has Pluck turn this into nonsense confirms that nonsense is 'weaponised' in *The Third Policeman*, but indicates that this is done as a reaction against a contemporary development.

As seen by Whybrow, quantum theory's major presence in *The Third Policeman* is registered in that novel's shift from a Newtonian understanding of reality to an absurd and uncertain understanding.[10] Whybrow describes the absurd critique of science found in *The Third Policeman* as asking how can 'science, pursuing the calling of knowledge … reward most only with failure to understand?' (140) and this accords, although in a despairing tone, with Polkinghorne's claim that quantum theory develops the argument that 'there is no universal epistemology' (87).[11] Here, rather than reality being an 'infinite plane', Whybrow suggests that insufficiency and absence define reality in The Parish. That something is, in some obscure manner, missing from The Parish is a recurrent theme in the novel. Here, for example, is the narrator attempting to describe his first view of The Parish's police barracks:

> it looked as if it were painted like an advertisement on a board on the roadside and indeed very poorly painted. It looked completely false and unconvincing. It did not seem to have any depth or breadth … my gaze faltered about the thing uncomprehendingly as if at least one of the customary dimensions was missing, leaving no meaning in the remainder (52-53).

Rather than an 'infinite plane' whose meaning-making potential is smothered by order, the narrator finds reality lacks something 'customary' from which meaning is made. Neither is

[10] Tamara Radak usefully reminds us that there are two realities in *The Third Policeman*: The Parish and what Radak calls 'Divney's world', meaning the reality the narrator left after his death and which behaves on realist lines. These different rules are highlighted by 'time pass[ing] differently in the fantastic world of The Parish as opposed to the realist rules of temporal progression in Divney's world' (244). Radak associates the latter with 'a Newtonian view of time and absolute physical values' (244) which is evidenced when the narrator briefly returns to Divney at the novel's end and 'a rational explanation of events' (247) is provided. Hence O'Brien himself makes a distinction between Newtonian realism and quantum physics. More tellingly still, the passage from realism to quantum mechanics is marked by death.

[11] Camus indicts the new physics for having failed those people who sought meaning: 'all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that this world is mine. You describe it to me and you teach me to classify it. You enumerate its laws and in my thirst for knowledge I admit that they are true. … you teach me that this wondrous and multi-coloured universe can be reduced to atoms and that the atom can itself be reduced to the electron… you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realise then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know' (18). In describing the quantum scientists as being reduced to poetry he concurred with Bohr's own beliefs as what science could offer but, writing from the point of view of one wishing to know truth, Camus finds such limits distasteful.

this an isolated incident in the novel, as a similar problem occurs when the narrator uses one of the machines in Eternity to produce boxes. As with the barracks, the narrator finds these boxes indescribable:

> it was not their unprecedented hue that took most of my attention … *they lacked an essential property of all known objects*. I cannot call it shape or configuration since shapelessness is not what I refer to at all … their appearance, if even that word is not inadmissible, was not understood by the eye and was in any event indescribable (135)

Again, a lack rather than an overabundance of meaning is the problem. Hopper claims that The Parish is a 'death world' (229) created by the 'sinister forces of science and technology' (229) and errs only in suggesting that it is a general science which constitutive of The Parish. Instead, the epistemological consequences of quantum theory are the principle upon which The Parish is built, it being a world expressive of modern science's claim that no meaning can be made.

We have seen that the 'Copenhagen interpretation' of quantum physics had promoted a subjectivism that was not interested in truth and was instead designed to find 'better ways to do the sums' (Polkinghorne 85), or to find better theories which could satisfy experimental data. As Bohr put it, 'our task is not to penetrate into the essence of things, the meaning of which we don't know anyway' (qtd in Pais 446) and what we find in *The Third Policeman*, in the scenes noted above, is the narrator attempting to penetrate through to the essence of things only to find there is no essence to be found. Although not himself interested in the novel's scientific themes, Hugh Kenner's description of 'the world of *The Third Policeman* [as] nearly naturalist' ("Fourth Policeman" 66) and the narrator as 'a man who has seen something outside the pale of anyone's experience [and] is taking lengthy pains to find the words for it' (63) describes the narrator's predicament. The absurd makes itself felt here. In Baines' description of the novel's absurdity residing in its portrayal of a 'world that is made ridiculous by its futility' ("Murders" 217) we see Kenner's problem in a different philosophical register. The world cannot be described and the attempt to do so becomes absurd. *The Third Policeman*, then, concedes the epistemological destruction caused by quantum theory and dramatizes the consequences of this for an individual attempting to live by the old Newtonian rules in the new quantum world.

While Hopper's poststructural theme of a critique of science in general, and of this critique standing in for a critique of systems of order as a whole, is rejected here, his 'question of conscience' and the problem of 'spiritual health' (237) are important. The narrator's reaction to The Parish's insufficiency make this clear: his encounter with the boxes leaves him 'wild-eyed, dry-throated' (135) and he finds the barracks 'momentous and frightening' (53). When the narrator hears Policeman Fox claim to have been using omnium to create the strangeness of The Parish, the narrator is 'stupefied and appalled by [his] modest claim' (188) and describes his memories of The Parish as 'terrible recollections' (188). Quantum theory, then, is a spiritual wasteland for O'Nolan and so Hopper's characterisation of the representation of science, in general, in the text as 'reductive and dehumanising' (238) holds true for the portrayal of quantum theory. Where Hopper goes wrong is in categorising O'Nolan as a radical who wished to go beyond science. O'Nolan's parodies, in their deployment of nonsense, were a defence against science. That they contained no positive or progressive element in the manner Hopper contends can be explored by returning them to their full context, the DIAS controversy and the argument with Schrödinger.

Schrödinger, Fine Gael, and Brian O'Noaln

It should be noted that another radical reading, as an alternative to Hopper's poststructural take on O'Nolan, could be a postcolonial reading of O'Nolan as engaged in expressing what David Lloyd calls the 'non-modern' (*Ireland After* 2), this being an 'alternative … incommensurable set of cultural formations' (2) to modernity. This postcolonial reading would suggest that science in *The Third Policeman* is rewritten from the perspective of an author seeking to decolonise knowledge by critiquing 'the political and epistemological forms that make alternative modalities invisible' (17) and subsequently 'construct[ing] an archaeology of the spaces and temporalities that have been occluded' (17). Such a reading, however, is complicated by Lloyd's further injunction that postcolonialism mount 'a critique of state-oriented nationalisms and their modernizing institutions' (41). If negation of the post-independence state is an aspect of the postcolonial project, then Taaffe's definition of O'Nolan as displaying 'radical conformity' (33) with the Free State, which has provided the foundation of this chapter, would have to be abandoned.

Whereas Hopper suggests *The Third Policeman*'s radicalism is found in its general critique of science, Taaffe locates 'radical conformity' specifically in the novel's confrontation with quantum theory. We have already seen how quantum theory collapsed the worlds of God,

Newton, and progress; for Taaffe *The Third Policeman* 're-establishes the traditional universe' (84) by rewriting quantum theory according to the rules of popular science in the 1930s, specifically the Serialism of J.W. Dunne. Dunne, Taaffe explains, had superficially taken on ideas within quantum theory, such as the rule that 'science must factor the observer into the phenomena observed' (85), but in a way which 'neutralise[d] contemporary science for the Christian believer' (85). Whereas quantum theory disproved the existence of God, O'Nolan pares back the edges of Schrödinger's thought by filtering it through Serialism. Science is made safe, Taaffe argues, so as to allow O'Nolan to stage a conflict between 'Celtic paganism, Christianity, and their latest rival, secular science' (86) without risking the latter overwhelming the former.

Lloyd's called-for critique of 'state-oriented nationalisms' is absent from *The Third Policeman*, but Taaffe, correct in ascribing to O'Nolan a desire to re-establish tradition, misses the mark in suggesting O'Nolan's approach to quantum theory was to negate its consequences. As evidenced in *Cruiskeen Lawn*'s DIAS column, O'Nolan's method of attacking quantum theory was to portray it as elitist. DIAS, which had made itself an enemy of both the popular faith and the popular mythology of Saint Patrick, did not belong, and O'Nolan would later complain about the 'thousand good-lookin' pounds a year' the researchers in DIAS got for 'doing "work" that most people regard as an interesting recreation' (qtd in W. Moore 378). As seen in the discussion of *At Swim*, O'Nolan attempts to be 'one with what [he] writes of' (Corkey, *Synge* 1010) and is consequently quick to condemn intellectuals for taking up residence in the infamous 'ivory tower'. DIAS is condemned as one such tower, with Schrödinger its chief resident.

Portraying DIAS and Schrödinger as alien to Ireland was not unique to *Cruiskeen Lawn*; it was, indeed, the preferred method of attack for enemies of DIAS and its founder de Valera. In a study of the controversies surrounding DIAS, Alana Gillespie identifies Fine Gael as both the most prominent political critic of DIAS and the critic most likely to take this line. For Richard Mulcahy, Fine Gael's leader from 1944 to 1958 and Minister for Education between 1948 and 1951 and again between 1954 and 1957, DIAS represented an abandonment of the government's main tasks in educational and cultural affairs. Condemning DIAS, he stated that 'the more seriously we take our responsibilities in respect of maintaining the living language … the better, rather than joining whatever band of advanced workers there are' (Mulcahy *et al*).[12] Mulcahy described himself as 'descending to

[12] In making these criticisms, Mulcahy was well supported by Fine Gael. James Dillon – son of John Dillon, the last leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party – made as his argument against DIAS that 'the primary concern at

the Pat Murphy argument' (Mulcahy *et al*), meaning that there was a distinction between 'advanced workers' or 'the McCullaghs and the Hamiltons' (Mulcahy *et al*) and the ordinary person or 'Pat Murphy'.[13] 'Pat Murphy's' cultural needs would be better served by a popular Irish language movement than an Institute of Celtic Studies; his educational needs would be better served by a reform of second-level maths teaching. Although a pragmatic populism could be detected in such sentiments, Alana Gillespie notes that, when Minister for Education, Mulcahy's pragmatic approach led him to conclude that 'since the Irish economy was based on agriculture, it was only logical that education should prepare pupils for life on the farm' (175). Under Mulcahy education was geared to serve immediate needs and adopted the belief that 'more education than was strictly necessary … [had] the potential to give people ideas and aspirations above their station' (175). This latter belief is the endpoint of assuming that 'Pat Murphy' and 'advanced workers' could not relate to one another and the practical result of this was a belief that 'education should prepare young people for jobs' (175) and nothing more.

'Radical conformity', then, is a closer definition of O'Nolan in *The Third Policeman* than any politically radical reading, either postcolonial or poststructural, with the anti-intellectualism of *At Swim* manifesting in *Cruiskeen Lawn* as opposition to DIAS and in *The Third Policeman* as opposition to quantum theory. With that said, although O'Nolan's comments on DIAS contain Mulcahy's position they cannot be reduced to it. O'Nolan displays an understanding of what is at stake in the debates surrounding quantum theory which is – understandably – absent from the Fine Gael contributions. Indeed, O'Nolan's grasp of this philosophical debate is such that when he has the narrator attempt to express the existential dread visited on him by The Parish, the language used and implications explored echo a lecture Schrödinger gave in 1943 in Trinity College, titled "What is Life?". For Schrödinger, among the 'philosophical implications' (60) of his science was the death of the individual. To reconcile the experience of free will with the behaviour of atomic reality, Schrödinger claimed that the individual is an expression of a larger world, that 'there is only one thing and that what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing' (63). To imagine that the world was a plurality of beings or souls was a 'greater nonsense' (63) than anything which could be attributed to ancient thought. Our perception

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this time or most of us is the preservation of the Irish language as a living language' (Mulcahy *et al*), whilst Timothy Linehan, announcing that he 'oppose[d] the whole Bill whether for Celtic Studies or mathematical physics' made the colourful complaint that 'you can justify anything you do in this country by tagging on to it the name of Celtic' (Mulcahy *et al*).

[13] James McCullagh, 1809 – 1847, famous for him work on optics, and William Rowan Hamilton, 1805 – 1865, creator of Hamiltonian mechanics which were later influential in the development of quantum theory.

of a self or an 'I' is a misunderstanding. The self can be compared to a canvas on which 'a collection of single data (experiences and memories) … are collected' (63). These collected experiences are inessential trinkets serving to distract us from our underlying oneness with reality.

Whilst the philosophical soundness of Schrödinger's claims may be open to challenge, O'Nolan does evidence a reckoning with similar themes in *The Third Policeman*. Attempting to sleep in the police barracks, the narrator fears that the night's darkness is 'robbing me of the reassurance of my eyesight … disintegrating my bodily personality into a flux of colour, smell, recollection, desire … I was deprived of definition, position and magnitude' (116). The narrator wonders 'was I in turn merely a link in a vast sequence of imponderable beings, the world I knew merely the interior of the being whose inner voice I myself was' (118). As Schrödinger had argued, the self is tied to senses and impressions and their fading does not entail 'a loss of personal existence' (63), with the narrator continuing to exist 'considerably diminished' (*Third Polceman* 116). What separates O'Nolan from Schrödinger is his attitude towards this. Schrödinger welcomes it and, with reference to Schopenhauer, suggests he has returned to the position of 'the early great Upanishads' (61) and their claim that, as the self is identical with everything, 'I have become God' (60). O'Nolan's narrator, by asking 'what monster in what world was the final uncontained colossus' (118) also ponders whether human identification with a deity is the truth of reality. If, however, the narrator has become God, he fears that he has become a 'monster'.

Contained in this account is the difference between O'Nolan's and Mulcahy's anti-intellectual stances. Whereas Mulcahy derides intellectuals because he can see no use for them, O'Nolan not only disdains but fears intellectuals. We have already seen Whybrow's comment that O'Nolan's theme is the 'difficulties and sorrows of … epistemological impotence … [which] descends in the wake of scientific progress' (128) but, in his dispute with DIAS and Schrödinger O'Nolan finds something to blame for the new absurdity of the world. O'Nolan is not quite accusing the intellectuals of treason, nor is he disputing their discoveries. Rather, his is the most extreme version of what Gillespie calls the 'what's the point' (173) attitude taken by Mulcahy towards DIAS. Given the implications of quantum theory, O'Nolan despairs as to why anyone would want to make such discoveries, regardless of their truth. An encounter between the narrator and MacCruiskeen, in which Pluck demonstrates his miraculous inventions to the narrator, demonstrates O'Nolan's attitude. MacCruiskeen shows to the narrator a series of boxes he has built, each of a size which will have it fit snugly in its predecessor. As can be expected, however, MacCruiskeen goes

beyond what commonsense tells us is possible and has built boxes so small they are invisible and tells the narrator 'the [box] I am making now is nearly as small as nothing … the dear knows where it will stop and terminate' (74). Having first heard Pluck theorise about atomic reality the narrator now sees MacCruiskeen work within atomic reality, one too miniature for sense to comprehend. With the horrors of the atomic age in mind, the narrator describes what MacCruiskeen is doing as 'no longer wonderful but terrible. I shut my eyes and prayed that he would stop while still doing things that were at least possible for a man to do' (73). That quantum theory, as expressed in the 'Copenhagen interpretation', was destructive, was remarked on by many. That O'Nolan shared the complaints which Einstein and others made is evident. For O'Nolan, however, the problem was the scientists themselves. In a sense, then, Hopper is right to say that the novel 'has at its core the question of conscience' (238) and is only wrong in claiming that, for O'Nolan, the conscientious science is 'predicated on its resistance to "truth, knowledge and authority"' (105). From *The Third Policeman*, we can see O'Nolan would prefer if science were made submit to human needs, but this submission is not so that science be made the tool of humanity. Anthony Cronin's definition of O'Nolan and science remains effective. O'Nolan was 'a medieval Thomist in his attitude to many things, including scientific speculation and discovery. For the Thomist all the great questions have been settled and the purpose of existence is clear' (104). Science was to be made serve because it had concluded: answers had been found and a satisfactory system for reality constructed. As O'Nolan saw it, that the quantum theorists were attempting to go beyond this was a disaster which his satiric gift attempted to defuse.

Radical conformism and Flann O'Brien's class consciousness

What we can see, then, is that in his first two novels O'Nolan shared with his class a certain fear of political, social, and technological development. The emphasis on 'the impending threat of anarchy' (Regan 86) Regan finds to be central to official political discussion in Free State Ireland returns in O'Nolan's novels. Anarchy and a concurrent collapse in values appear in both of these works and, if these fears are sometimes subjected to parody, they nonetheless provide a centre around which O'Nolan's work pivots. His anti-intellectualism, sometimes interpreted as a call for fuller democratic representation, should be seen alongside this conservative panic. O'Nolan's criticisms of intellectuals as 'highfalutin' or as ivory-tower figures disconnected from society, has less to do with a desire to widen popular representation than it has to do with a concern that action, whether it takes the form of

political activism or intellectual work, has a long-term corrosive effect on society. O'Nolan shares something of a sentiment with those members of the revolutionary generation who, after the establishment of the Free State, began to dismiss the broader ideals of the revolutionary years as, in Kevin O'Higgins's words, 'largely poetry' (qtd in Lee 124). For all the intellectual fireworks O'Nolan was capable of, he too favoured hard-headedness. The need to maintain society rather than transform it, and the dangers of attempting the latter, are O'Nolan's themes.

Indeed, given that O'Nolan had gone as far as openly, if comically, criticizing Schrödinger, he had very tentatively indicated grounds for reading his work as a defense of this Free State pragmatism. Such defense was wrapped in enough layers of comedy and irony to be useless as any kind of official line and O'Nolan was certainly no poet laureate for the Free State. What is evident, however, is that his work was entirely capable of acting as a conduit for the conservative intellectual mood of the Free State and this despite his work's formal radicalism. There is, admittedly, a certain tension in the reading of O'Nolan I have offered here. Whereas *The Third Policeman* indicts lone intellectuals for, ultimately, destroying the world, *At Swim-Two-Birds* worries about the effects contemporary mass society has on the individual. Certainly, O'Nolan is not exploring an identical problem in both novels, but we can say that he is exploring the problem of conforming from different angles, that of conformism. We have seen how O'Nolan expresses what Taaffe calls his 'complicity with the social and cultural values of contemporary Ireland' (2). What his first two novels explore are the opposed forces, that of mass society and that of modern science, which are working to pull contemporary Ireland apart. Modern physics challenges the religious basis of a unified Irish community while mass society disturbs the balance of social power. Although O'Nolan's use of literary form remains radical even today, he uses it to express a concern about stability and the prospect of its loss. In a 1935 work, *Could Ireland become Communist?*, James Hogan had written that 'it is surely one of the strangest ironies of history that the more power man gains over nature, the more technical knowledges increases, the less power he seems able to exercise over himself, and the more rapidly he drifts towards intellectual anarchy' (ix). While 'intellectual anarchy' may be a good way of describing O'Nolan's heteroglossic novels, the fear underpinning Hogan's words is one which could have come from the writer of *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*. In O'Nolan, parody and satire, by being targeted against the pretensions of would-be heroic individuals seeking to oppose their society, deflect his work away from any oppositional impulse. Denying the right of individual protest and insisting on the preservation of the socially accepted cultural and

philosophical norms, O'Nolan provides an example of a writer exploring the ways a radical and even revolutionary literary practice could seek some reconciled position within a state.

IV: *Finnegans Wake* and the avant-garde: the place of art in interwar Ireland

Writing in February 1922, John Eglinton claimed that Ireland was entering a 'new phase of its political and spiritual history' (qtd in Foster, *The Arch Poet* 209) which would see the Revival movement 'cast into the shade' (209). The establishment of the Free State, Eglinton prophesised, would replace Yeats and Gregory with some new aesthetic movement, just as Redmond and Home Rule had been replaced by Collins and republicanism. Although Eglinton was wrong in predicting Yeats's irrelevance to post-1922 Ireland, his anticipation that the upheavals of the 1910s and early 1920s would result in new hierarchies and standards in art, as much as in politics, was shared across Europe. As the art historian Gail Day has put it, 'social revolution [had] altered perceptions' (319), and this was as true of the failed revolution in Germany as it was of the successful revolution in Russia or, for that matter, Ireland. The bourgeois society of the nineteenth century, whether it had manifested as colonial or industrial society, had been exposed as fragile and capable of being remade. This sense, general throughout European art, 'provid[ed] a new point of identity, and stimulat[ed] anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles' (319) among radical artists. Faced with the seeming imminence of social transformation, artists were, says Day, seized by 'concrete ambitions' (319) of forming 'close association with the idea of social emancipation' (316).

Yeats, as early as January 1922, was working to 'identify the Abbey with government propaganda' (qtd in Foster, *The Arch Poet* 207), that is, with the propaganda of the Free State provisional government. Yeats, demonstrating what Joyce had once called his 'treacherous instinct of adaptability' (*Occasional* 51) was being seized by 'concrete ambitions' brought on by political upheaval. Joyce, in contrast, does not appear a likely candidate for such a reading. He had last been in Ireland in 1912 and made no effort to follow Yeats into the state, even as a civil servant in the manner of later writers such as Brian O'Nolan or Denis Devlin. This exile from the Free State has helped ground the now-classical reading of Joyce as a cosmopolitan who rejected an insular Ireland for the high modernism of Eliot, Pound, and Proust. More recent postcolonial scholarship, such as that of Emer Nolan, David Lloyd, and

Seamus Deane has disputed this characterisation and demonstrated the centrality of Irish concerns to Joyce's work. While the postcolonial turn in Joyce studies is now broadly accepted, the question of where Joyce fits in an era of 'close association' between artists and revolutions is not addressed enough. If a new vista for writerly engagement with states had opened up in the 1920s, what sort of relation did Joyce – and *Finnegans Wake*, the work which absorbed his attention for the majority of the interwar period – have to this? In much, though not all, postcolonial studies of Joyce, his work is read as critiquing the Free State for maintaining the structures of British rule. Enda Duffy's *The Subaltern* Ulysses*,* for instance, reads Joyce as understanding the Free State as colonialism's 'postcolonial mirror image' (187). In other instances, the question is merely avoided. Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*, a central text in Irish postcolonial studies, does not contain a single reference to the Free State in its chapter on Joyce. Neither of these approaches to the issue are entirely adequate. Presenting Joyce as the judge of the Irish revolution risks redeploying high modernist concepts of the artist as an autonomous social critic. It also suggests that Joyce experienced no qualms in dismissing the Free State. Given that the Free State was the fruit, admittedly bitter, of decades of campaigning, it is worth considering the extent to which Joyce would have been willing to reject it.

This chapter proposes that Joyce, far from being an enemy of the state, used *Finnegans Wake* to explore how the political achievements of both revolutionaries and politicians exposed the insignificance of his own attempts to use art to transform Ireland. The formal radicalism we find in *Finnegans Wake* should not distract from the account it provides of art and artists, with Joyce offering multiple presentations of the artist and the creative process which strip both of the sort of spiritual aura he had imbued them with in earlier works such as *Portrait*. I argue that this combination of radical form and politically motivated critique of art participates in a general post-war critique of art made by avant-garde and avant-garde aligned artists. Some of the more renowned manifestations of this movement include Walter Gropius's Bauhaus School, Brecht's epic theatre, and Surrealism. In his monumental 1984 study of the avant-garde, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger has theorised the avant-garde as a historically local movement, occurring in the first half of the twentieth century, and which sought 'the destruction of art as an institution' (83) as a means to 'reintegrate art into the praxis of life' (22). Occurring in the context of a transformation in social relations, due to both revolution and modernisation, Bürger sees the avant-garde as an attempt to transform the relation between art and society, transforming the autonomous art of the bourgeoisie into a social art which produced a new aestheticised society. As we will see, over

the course of their lifespan, these avant-garde movements switched from a messianic faith in their own power to a sort of *realpolitik* of the arts, seeking alliances with state forces so as to achieve their project. *Finnegans Wake*, despite the enormous formal ingenuity it demonstrates, is a work which explores this *realpolitik* in its Free State context. Paying attention to projects pushed through by Cumann na nGaedheal, and, later, Fianna Fáil, Joyce explores how these projects, despite their insufficient fulfilment of the old revolutionary aspirations, represented a greater advance than anything his work could produce.

Central themes and devices in *Finnegans Wake*

Like even Joyce's earliest fiction, central to *Finnegans Wake* are the neuroses of a small Dublin family. What is different, even from *Ulysses*, is the scale of literary experiment involved in the *Wake* and it is important to first explain what makes the *Wake* formally different from Joyce's earlier work, before turning to theoretical matters.[1] Central to the *Wake*'s formal complexity is the extent to which it treats its characters as allegories for various historical events and personages, ideas, mythologies, and so on. Nominally the plot revolves around the Earwicker family, owners of a pub in suburban Dublin. Earwicker, the family patriarch, most commonly identified in the *Wake* through the initials HCE, appears in the *Wake* in the various guises of a near-innumerable list of historical and mythological figures, ranging from Adam and Christ to Oliver Cromwell and Julius Caesar. He may appear as 'Haroun Childeric Eggeberth' (4.32), a figure lifted out of chivalric legend, or as 'Here Comes Everybody' (32.18-19), the definitive everyman 'worthy of any and all such universalisation' (32.20). Indeed, as a logical development of this universalization, HCE can also appear as landscape. Taking the form of a fallen giant, we are told his 'tumptytumtoes' (3.21) can be found 'upturnpikepointandplace is at the knock out in the park' (3.22); Earwicker's penis becomes the Wellington Monument in the Phoenix Park. In this way we can see how, depending on what the text requires of him, Earwicker can be hero, myth, everyman, or nature and this principle is extended out to the family as a whole. His wife Anna, designated throughout the text as ALP, is a similarly universalized symbol and appears as figures such as Eve, Mary Magdalen, or as the Russian dancer Anna Pavlova, 'Annushka Lutetiavitch Pufflovah'

[1] There is a wide variety of guides and introductions to the *Wake*. I have drawn on here Roland McHugh's essential *Annotations to Finnegans Wake.* 4th ed. John Hopkins University Press, Maryland, 2016; William York Tindall's *A Reader's Guide to* Finnegans Wake. Syracuse University Press, 1996; and the essays collected in *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake*. eds. Luca Crispi and Sam Slote. University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 2007

(207.8-9). While HCE can be the mountains surrounding Dublin, ALP often appears as the Liffey flowing through Dublin to the sea.

At the same time as this pair are the entirety of actors in human history, they also appear in different forms as their own children. Issy, the daughter of the family, is within the *Wake* also ALP's young self. Variously a narcissist and an object of desire, including of incestuous desire on the part of HCE, Issy's youth and beauty mean she stands to one day take the place of the now-aging ALP. This same threat of usurpation of the old by the young is found in the family sons, Shem and Shaun. This pair represent a division of HCE's own attributes, with Shem expressing his father's subversive or rebellious aspects, whereas Shaun is HCE as patriarch and authoritarian, being sometimes a swaggering, and at other times quietist or conformist, member of the bourgeoise. The divisions between Shem and Shaun often come to represent various conflicts, whether familial, aesthetic, philosophical, or political. The Civil War, the central event of Irish politics in the 1920s, often appears in the *Wake* through the fraternal conflict between this pair, while the Civil War itself is elevated, Emer Nolan explains, into one of the *Wake*'s many 'particular historical instances of human effort and failure and so take[s] [its] place within Joyce's overarching vision of comic and redemptive recurrence' (*Emancipations* 175). In the *Wake*, the particular always resolves back into a wider structure, a notion partly borrowed from Giambattista Vico's historical cycles, which provide one of the *Wake*'s structuring principles. Sons become fathers who have sons, and this principle is found to apply not only to families but to states and political projects, with unity becoming disunity before forming into unity again.

The children, then, represent an arena within which various personal, theoretical, and political anxieties can be played out. Indeed, the children are often more central in the *Wake* than the parents; much of Book III, for instance, is dedicated to exploring Shaun, while the famous "Shem the Penman" and "Nightlessons" episodes, to be explored in greater detail below, also prioritise the children. This is not to say that HCE and ALP have only a marginal presence in the work. Crucial in the *Wake* is a crime of indecency HCE has committed, or is alleged to have committed, in the Phoenix Park, involving his exposing himself to two women. This act in turn was seen by three soldiers and has become a ruinous topic of gossip about the Earwicker family. At times this gossip takes on mythological proportions and becomes 'this Eyrawyggla saga' (48.16-17) and at times it is the more prosaic chatter of washerwomen at work. A major product of this scandal is a letter, seemingly written by Shem at ALP's dictation, which justifies and defends HCE from this gossip. What the Letter says, where it can be found, and who wrote it, prove to be recurring questions within the

text, with the Letter itself becoming another symbol, this time of all other writing, including *Finnegans Wake*. If the Letter is potentially all writing it also is potentially very specific pieces of writing, particularly Irish writing. At times it is the Book of Kells while elsewhere it is Eamon de Valera's ill-fated Document no.2, the alternative Anglo-Irish Treaty de Valera offered up as a solution to the diplomatic impasse which would produce the Civil War.

That the Letter serves as an in-text representative of the *Wake* itself allows Joyce to explore his work's own writing process and publication history. Written over a seventeen-year period between 1922 and 1939, demanding challenging redrafting and complex shuffling of material, work on the *Wake* was an ordeal. Just as *Ulysses* had been serially published in *The Little Review*, so too were extracts from the *Wake* published, from 1927 onwards, this time in the Paris-based journal *transition*, although Joyce had previously published short extracts in journals such as *Criterion*. Having decided to keep the title of the work secret, Joyce published his writing under the title *Work in Progress*, a title he retained until 1938. The work's forbidding complexity produced controversy, with figures such as Seán O'Faoláin and Wyndham Lewis offering public criticism, while others such as Harriet Shaw Weaver and Ezra Pound made complaints privately. Concurrent with these criticisms were ongoing difficulties with *Ulysses*, as that work struggled to overcome critique and censorship. These professional complications were themselves overshadowed by personal problems, as Joyce's daughter Lucia's health deteriorated in the 1930s. These various personal and professional difficulties occurred against a backdrop of political tension in Ireland and Europe, with events such as the Irish Civil War and the Wall Street Crash, 'the fall … of a once wallstrait oldparr' (3.15-17), making their presence felt in Joyce's work. The *Wake*, then, shows an interest in the circumstances surrounding its production, both political and personal. Indeed, it is this interest in its own production which provides it with the avant-gardist themes which, I will argue, mediate between its political content and its formal experiments.

Situation of the avant-garde in the 1920s

This chapter argues that *Finnegans Wake* mounts a critique of writing which employs the themes of the interwar avant-garde. Furthermore, I argue, the motivation for employing these themes emerges from the Irish political environment, where first militant revolutionaries and later constitutional politicians proved to be more effective agents of social transformation than artists. *Finnegans Wake*, I argue, is part of a post-war reassessment

of the avant-garde project and of art's social role, brought on by the successes state and capital were having in reconstructing post-war Europe. Here, I will first clarify what I mean by avant-garde, drawing on Peter Bürger's account of the movement, before exploring historical manifestations of this project in the 1920s and noting the problems they faced. The post-war European avant-garde, with some exceptions, was characterised by a willingness to identify its project with the state it operated within, becoming an auxiliary or even a subordinate of political power rather than an alternative to that power. A radical approach to aesthetic form remained central to the avant-garde's practice. However, its commitment to social transformation and recognition of its own inability to achieve this encouraged a political realism in its understanding of the relation between art and political power. Joyce, isolated from Irish developments through exile, may not appear an obvious representative of such an avant-garde. As we will see, however, the man who had once sought to 'forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' (*Portrait* 288) found, in the Free State, a force far more capable of transforming Ireland than he ever had been.

Peter Bürger's 1984 *Theory of the Avant-Garde* remains one of the vital attempts to define and explain the radical European art of the first half of the twentieth century. Described by Astradur Eysteinsson as a 'considerable influence on present and future avant-garde studies' (163), the accuracy of this claim, made in 1990, has been borne out by Bürger's importance to more recent studies of the avant-garde such as those by Walter Adamson, Andrew J. Webber, and Richard Murphy. While Bürger's work has often been challenged, most notably for my purposes due to its problematic account of avant-garde and modernist works as separate modes, it remains essential. For Bürger, the avant-garde should be understood as a historically local movement, occurring in the first half of the twentieth century and which found its ultimate expression in the Dadaists, who Bürger calls 'the most radical movement within the European avant-garde' (22). Avant-garde artists, Bürger writes, sought 'the destruction of art as an institution' (83), meaning the abolition of art as it was understood and practiced by nineteenth century bourgeois society, which had produced an art 'absen[t] of any consequences' (22). This abolition was to form the negative or destructive stage in a process of 'reintegrating art into the praxis of life' (22).

Bürger's understanding of the avant-garde as the opponent of bourgeois art does not draw on attempts by the avant-garde to shock the bourgeoisie, such as we might associate with Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* or Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. What Bürger sees as the real value of the avant-garde project was that it exposed 'the social function of the ideological

object' (10) – that is, art – to critical scrutiny. The avant-garde sought to understand how artworks acquired the 'status [of] objects that are set apart from the struggle of everyday existence' (12). Provoked by war and revolution, avant-garde movements such as Dada critiqued the attempt to isolate art from society, which had found its supreme expression in the aestheticism of the late-nineteenth century but which was definitive of bourgeois art as a whole. The point of the avant-garde was not that it critiqued one form of writing in the name of another – say, for instance, a critique of naturalism in the name of realism, or a critique of realism in the name of expressionism – but that the entire social function of art and artists was challenged. Hence, the avant-garde was indifferent to style, insofar as stylistic debates assumed that one style could be superior to another. For the avant-garde, the question of style was subordinate to the question of writing's function in society. It was characteristic of avant-garde works, Bürger explains, to treat 'the artistic process of creation … as a process of rational choice between various techniques, the choice being made with reference to the effect that is to be attained' (17). Such stylistic heterogeneity aimed to break down the concept of 'the organic work of art, [where] the political and moral contents the author wishes to express are necessarily subordinated to the organicity of the whole' (90). What Bürger calls 'the weight that art as an institution has in determining the real social effect of individual works' (83), analogous to what Walter Benjamin called art's 'aura', was to be broken down. What was to result, eventually, from this breakdown would be the assertion of these 'political and moral contents' in such a way as to lend them the strength of the aesthetic without having them be eclipsed by the aesthetic. Having been stripped of the enclosure imposed on art by the bourgeois idea of art, art would, in this way, be 'reintegrat[ed] art into the praxis of life' (22).

Joyce shared this desire to critique art and in the *Wake* any sense of grandeur in art is absent. This desire, however, must be complicated. As Bürger's model suggests, the avant-garde can be split into separate phases of critiquing bourgeois art and of formulating the 'reintegrated' alternative. Historians of the avant-garde have often seen this destructive avant-garde to have emerged in the 1910s, through movements such as the aforementioned Dadaism and Italian and Russian Futurism. The constructive avant-garde is, in turn, seen as a post-war phenomenon and is associated with movements such as the Bauhaus movement, the Dutch *De Stijl* movement, or the Russian Constructivists of the NEP era; in literature we can cite figures such as Alfred Döblin, Vladimir Mayakovsky's work after the October Revolution, or John Dos Passos. We find this sort of historical division made by, for instance, Gail Day. For Day, Dada 'express[ed] frustration with traditional mores and official

culture … [and was] nihilistically inclined and anti-bourgeois' (311), whereas Bauhaus was a "constructive" avant-garde … identified with the social reform movements and economic reconstruction that followed in the wake of the [First World] war' (311). Walter Adamson provides a similar argument and periodisation in stating that the pre-war avant-garde fought to 'mov[e] art into the center of public life' (16), as a means of organising an incipient modernity according to aesthetic values. By contrast, the post-war avant-garde 'tended to surrender their political independence and to pursue their politics by means of one form or another of alliance strategy' (17). For Adamson, what distinguishes the two phases of the avant-garde from one another is their approach to politics. Avant-gardists in the 1920s decided that to transform the relationship between art and society would require a vehicle of transformation greater than that which could be provided by art. The post-war avant-garde tended to create institutions and schools, to take up commissions from the state or from major businesses, and to offer itself to political programmes it deemed acceptable. The project of replacing bourgeois art was maintained at the cost of a measured submission to political forces outside art. As Adamson explains, a pre-war Futurist such as Marinetti had 'compet[ed] for influence in the public sphere with traditional elites whose capital was economic and political' (77), believing that the Futurist artist could replace the old elite. After the war, however, and the establishment of Fascism, Italian avant-garde artists 'devoted themselves to making their movements into an official state art' (229).

We can, very briefly, suggest as an example of this development, the course taken by Dadaism as it moved from Zurich to Germany, and then from a period of revolution to one of comparative stabilisation within Germany. Tristan Tzara's "Dadaist Manifesto 1918", written in Zurich, had expressed ideas typical of the destructive avant-garde in claiming that 'there is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished' (252) in the field of art. Bourgeois art, so Tzara argued, had become 'sweetening to decorate the refectories of animals in human costume, illustrating the sad fable of mankind' (250). Tzara sought to destroy 'morality and logic … putrid rats infecting the bowels of the bourgeoisie which have infected the only luminous clean corridors of glass that remained open to artists' (252). Although Tzara, then, sought the complete overthrow of bourgeois society, he sought to achieve this through art and for art's benefit. Richard Huelsenbeck, a German Dadaist who had been a part of Zurich Dada during the war, demonstrated an increasing politicisation of the movement in his 1920 account of German Dada, "En Avant Dada". Here, Dadaism was associated with communism and Bolshevism, with Huelsenbeck baldly stating that 'Dada is German Bolshevism' (259). This politicisation, however, was checked by Huelsenbeck's

sense of what politics was. He described communism as a movement which 'has abandoned the principle of "making things better" and above all sees its goal in the destruction of everything that has gone bourgeois' (257). Communism, in other words, was to be assimilated into Dadaism, the latter continuing to believe 'it necessary to come out against art' (258). Politics was now considered part of the wider movement, but only a politics which had its aims redefined according to the aesthetic goals of Dadaism. By 1921, German Dadaists such as Georg Grosz were attacking artists for failing to show proper commitment to revolution and remaining bourgeois in their understanding of art. For instance, the "Open Letter to the Novembergruppe", signed by artists including Grosz, Otto Dix, and Raoul Hausmann, declared 'the necessity of integrating artists into the body of the workers' (264). Speaking in the third person, the authors declared that 'a certain section of the membership did not wish to be artists in the bourgeois-cultural sense, *because they saw ways to fulfil themselves not in promoting an apparently revolutionary aesthetic*, but instead sought the justification of the artist's existence as the instrument of the people's latent desires for a new, untainted way of life' (264). The anti-bourgeois themes of Dadaism remained central, but these were now identified with the demands of the revolutionary workers. In contrast to Huelsenbeck's piece, this open letter assimilated Dada to politics and not the other way around. Unlike a movement such as Bauhaus, these Dadaists remained revolutionary. Nonetheless, we can see the gradual transformation Day and Adamson refer to, from an absolute faith in the artist's role in social transformation, to an awareness of other forces which the artist was required to align and develop with.

Fitting Joyce into this schema presents two difficulties. The first, as noted, is that he cannot be considered an activist or engaged writer. Joyce signed no political programmes and cultivated few relations with institutions. A second difficulty is that *Finnegans Wake*, although it evinces many themes and similarities with the pre-war avant-garde, was only begun in 1923. By this point, as I have shown, the avant-garde had moved away from attempting to work solely through art. In other words, the avant-garde that Joyce's work is apparently most redolent of had passed by the time he began his final novel. What I want to argue here is that the spirit which informs *Finnegans Wake* is that of the later, constructive avant-garde. The sense that art cannot, of its own accord, 'mov[e] … into the center of public life' (Adamson 16) and so must 'surrender [its] political independence' (17) informs the *Wake*. The central criticism of art in the *Wake* is precisely this, that art finds itself exposed as impotent before the powers of traditional politics. Joyce, unwilling to submit his work to

practicality, nonetheless depicts the humiliation of the artist brought about by the modern state.

The Free State and the avant-garde

This framing invites another question: can we really suggest that such a humiliation could have been inflicted by the Free State? After all, the common criticism of the Free State is that it had failed entirely to produce the sort of transformation pre-revolutionary nationalism had desired. Joe Cleary, for instance, notes that while 'by the 1930s the various continental avant-garde movements were stirring new debates about the role of cultural institutions … in mediating the relationship of art to its public' (*Outrageous* 140), Irish art continued 'nineteenth-century' debates about 'the content of the novel or drama' (140). Referring here to the counter-Revivalists, including Seán O'Faoláin and Frank O'Connor, Cleary correctly observes how unmoored from European aesthetic debate the Counter-Revival was. Terry Eagleton has made a similar claim, noting that although 'there is a high modernism in Ireland, there is little or no avant-garde – little of that iconoclastic experiment which seeks to revolutionize the very conception and institution of art itself, along with its relations to political society' (*Heathcliff* 299).[2] With that said, Cleary himself warns against relying on too-static a picture of Free State society, pointing out that the repressive aspects of what he calls 'de Valera's Ireland' (*Outrageous* 8) were 'unequally allocated across classes and genders' (8).[3] As seen throughout this thesis, recent critics have taken such injunctions to heart and have challenged what Andrew Kincaid calls 'the popular image of the postindependence decades … [as] a rural, Catholic country in which an agrarian way of life not only predominated but precluded all other possibilities' (xi). Such a questioning has extended to a re-examination of the place of avant-garde sensibilities in Free State art and critics such as Sorcha O'Brien, Paul Caffrey, and Elaine Sisson have identified projects with avant-garde leanings taking place in Ireland in the 1920s.

As Michael Rubenstein reminds us, for all the characterisations of the Free State as a developmentally-backwards state, it nonetheless 'planned, funded, and built the world's first

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[2] Confusingly, Eagleton refers, in the same text, to the presence of an 'archaic avant-garde' in Ireland, represented by the Revival. Given that he locates the Revival as an entirely pre-Free State phenomenon, however, his point that Ireland in the interwar years lacked an avant-garde remains as support for Cleary's own.

[3] Cleary notes that these portrayals of Irish history in twentieth century as a place of 'soul-killing Catholic nationalist traditionalism' (7) have often relied on the epithet of 'de Valera's Ireland' (7). Cleary suggests as antidote Elizabeth Butler Cullingford's 'Re-Reading the Past: *Michael Collins* and Contemporary Popular Culture', in Robert J. Savage, ed. *Ireland in the New Century: Politics, Culture and Identity* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 174-88.

state-controlled national electric grid' (1). This sort of incongruity speaks to the problem Kincaid describes. The 'popular image' of the Free State does not readily facilitate discussion of the sort of modernity associated with the mass engineering projects of Weimar Germany or Soviet Russia. This is all the more unfortunate for scholarship as electrification, Rubenstein argues, provides 'an example of an Irish engineering initiative that could delineate an Irish modernity, set apart, especially from its most immediate neighbour and former master, Britain' (133). Electrification provided exactly the opportunity for elaborating an Irish identity that was not merely regressive, an attempt to reinstate existing social values in the face of and against existing modernity. As Sorcha O'Brien demonstrates, the Shannon scheme in particular represents an attempt by the Free State to redefine Irish identity as something that could accommodate and, ideally, control, modernisation. Crucially, this was a redefinition which took influence from developments in German engineering culture. For O'Brien, the appointment of German engineering firm Siemens as leaders of the project is compelling evidence of the Free State's addition of European developments to its own practices. O'Brien explains how German engineers had moved away from a purely rationalist understanding of technology and towards a 'repositioning of the engineer within the dominant ideals of selfhood and authenticity' (61). In the face of a perceived divide between culture, tradition, and community on one side and modernity, rationality, and technology on the other, German engineers, O'Brien says, began to promote a 'technological romanticism which posited the engineer as the modern hero, working within and for progress in Germany society' (61).

For O'Brien, this reconciliation of culture and civilisation is typical of the interwar avant-garde. Walter Gropius, laying out the programme for the Bauhaus, declared that the new architecture would be one 'in which no barriers exist between the structural and the decorative arts' (340) and it is this sort of unity of technology and culture which we find in O'Brien's account of the Shannon scheme. Reading the government's propaganda material for the Shannon scheme, O'Brien finds that Cumann na nGaedheal were attempting a similar redefinition of cultural identity which would incorporate technology and elements of modernity. Cumann na nGaedheal, O'Brien explains, portrayed the scheme as 'a physical manifestation of their 'nation-building' efforts' (59) and used it as an opportunity for 'the 'Irishness' of the new state … to be constantly reasserted and claimed' (66). O'Brien cites Seán Keating's painting series on the Shannon scheme as having represented this new

understanding of modernisation as an expression of a culture, rather than its negation.[4] Culture and state-building were being drawn together, breaking from the Revival identification of Ireland with the pastoral.

State building in the Free State, then, could draw on contemporary avant-gardist efforts at unifying culture and politics. Indeed, other examples of this can be found in the Free State. Paul Caffrey has shown how the development of a distinct Irish coinage, through the work of the W.B. Yeats-led Coinage Committee, preserved a 'modernist approach … [which] stripped complex forms to their basic essentials [and] resulted in fresh, clear, almost abstract designs' (87). All this was achieved, Caffrey relates, in the face of pressure to produce work more in accord with Revivalist traditions. Although this was a development which had to be won, it nonetheless demonstrated that the Free State could provide a home for modern art, if, as the continental avant-garde was also discovering, it satisfied certain political needs. The Cubist painter Mainie Jellett's attempts to establish herself in Ireland in the 1920s exemplify both the repressive and positive facets of the Free State. Having had a 1923 exhibition of her work denounced as a 'freak' (qtd in Coulter 22) in the *Irish Times*, by 1930 Jellett had been commissioned to produce work for the Free State, while Ireland's pavilion at the 1939 World Fair included Jellett's *Achill Horses*. Given that Bürger has described avant-garde art as work which 'directs itself to the way art functions in society' (49), this latter instance may not immediately appear avant-garde. Here, Adamson's note on the interwar avant-garde's strategically reduced ambitions, often amounting to an attempt 'to establish a greater presence for art within the public sphere and in the projects of other elites' (17-18), is worth citing. Making modern developments in art acceptable within the hierarchies of official culture, rather than working within bohemian isolation, demonstrated an attempt to redefine the relation between experimental art and the modern state. The practical consequences of this, for artists, can be quickly demonstrated. Whereas Joyce relied on the patronage of Harriet Shaw Weaver, there was employment with the state, whether within cultural, diplomatic, or administrative spheres, for writers such as Thomas MacGreevy, Brian O'Nolan, and Brian Coffey, as well as for artists such as Jellett, Evie Hone, and Seán Keating.

[4] Brian Kennedy, in a study of painting in the early years of the Free State, argues with reference to Keating that his work was 'characteristic of the work of artists who had grown up in a time of tumult, war and deprivation, but also intense excitement' (147). See "The Irish Free State 1922 – 49: A Visual Perspective" in *Ireland, Art into History*, eds. Kennedy, Brian P., and Raymond Gillespie. Town House, Dublin, 1994.

“Nightlessons”: the birth of a nation and the avant-garde

Despite his exile, Joyce was entirely aware of these developments and of their implications. Ardnacrusha, for instance, appears in the *Wake* in the “Nightlessons” episode, in the phrase ‘Erdnacrusha, requiestress, wake em’ (262.15). As Rubenstein notes, we find here that Joyce invokes Ardnacrusha as ‘both a celebration of “bringing light into darkness” and an act of mourning: the official end, with the bringing of the light, of premodern Ireland’ (130). Ardnacrusha, Rubenstein suggests, is being seen as a double-edged development. The new Ireland of electric lights is displacing traditional Ireland. Given the ‘fierce parliamentary and public debate about the nature of the state’s role in national development’ (Rubenstein 131) which the Shannon scheme triggered, we can add that Ardncrusha can represent the coming of a different type of power in Ireland, that of the constructive, interventionist, all-governing modern state. Interestingly, Joyce’s reference to Ardnacrusha occurs within a narrative about the life of HCE, with that life doubling as a narrative of Irish history. Moments after invoking Ardnacrusha, the *Wake* declares ‘sow byg it’ (262.19), referring phonetically to ‘so build it’, but also to the famous description in *Portrait* of Ireland as ‘the old sow that eats her farrow’ (231). The Janus face found in associating Ardnacrusha with a ‘wake’ immediately returns. Ardnacrusha is a development to be met with resigned acceptance, but also a development that somehow does not leave behind the ‘sow’ of colonial Ireland. Clarity is offered in footnotes to this comment, which explain, of ‘sow byg it’, that so ‘says blistered Mary Achinhead to beautified Tummy Tullbutt’ (262.n6).[5] Mary Aikenhead had founded the Irish Sisters of Charity in 1815, the institution which went on to operate the Magdalene Laundries, while Matt Talbot was a famous ascetic who had lived in Dublin in the early twentieth century (McHugh 262). Joyce, then, puts the command to build Ardnacrusha in the mouth of conservative Catholic Ireland. Here, we find a socially-specific presentation of modernisation as a two-faced process. If, on the one hand, Ardnacrusha represents the rise of technology and the modern state, it also represents the continued rule of Catholicism in

[5] Some explanation of the unique form taken by “Nightlessons”, complex even by Joyce’s standards, may be of use here. The chapter, according to Joyce, is intended as a ‘reproduction of a schoolboy’s (and schoolgirl’s) old classbook complete with marginalia by the twins … footnotes by the girl’ (qtd in Crispi 214). Hence the chapter contains four separate columns of writing, three vertical, with the central being the main narrative of chapter and the two side columns being comments from Shem and Shaun, and a horizontal column at the bottom of the page representing footnotes from Issy. The left margin comments are written in italics, while the right are in block capitals. The left margin comments begin as Shem’s, the right as Shaun’s, but this swaps from page 293 until the end of the chapter.

Ireland. Tradition and modernity are seen to have found a way of advancing themselves in tandem.

Amy Lilly, in a provocative account of the "Nightlessons" episode, has argued that it contains Joyce's exploration of avant-garde and, indeed, Italian fascist, attempts to generate new mass forms of theatre. Lilly offers some documentary evidence to support such a claim, noting that Joyce had been a member of the editorial board of the interwar Italian art journal *900*, headed by Massimo Bontempelli.[6] *900* was an organ of the *Novecento* movement, an aesthetic movement tied to Italian fascism and Lilly describes 'the issues debated in *900* [as] centering on the combination of traditional Roman and modernist-rationalist elements that would best signify the new Italy' (110). These debates in turn 'fed into the debates surrounding … mass theater production' (110) in Italy, which sought ways 'to overcome bourgeois theater's insistence on a separation of the domain of representation into stage and audience, drama and life' (120). The sort of avant-garde themes explored by Bürger, then, were present here. Aiming to complicate readings of the *Wake* as a straightforward 'rejection of proto-fascist themes' (107), Lilly argues that Joyce 'revisit[s]' the ideas of *900* as part of his 'turn from individualist to mass or collectivist social systems' (107).

The fascist 'theatre of masses' (121) developed in *900* had aimed at 'transforming its audience in a spiritual manner by conjoining the real and the ideal' (121). The ambition was that the audience of fascist theatre would leave the production spiritually transformed along fascist lines, with a new love for the state, action, duty, and so on. "Nightlessons", which refers to 'real life behind the floodlights as shown by the best exponents of a royal divorce' (260.n3), invokes ideas of the real emerging through theatre, although such a quote does not in itself evidence any particular avant-garde sympathies. The reference to 'floodlights' does invoke modern technology and Lilly finds that technology and the production of the real through theatre become increasingly prominent themes as "Nightlessons" progresses. In a typical Joycean move, "Nightlessons" imagines a mythological event through a modern lens by describing modern broadcast technologies in which the 'turrises of the sabines are televisible' (265.11). Here, the rape of the Sabine women, an event from Roman mythology,

[6] The *900* publication was run by Massimo Bontempelli and was an organ of the *Novecento* movement. An avant-garde understanding of the fascist experiment can be detected in Bontempelli's writings for *900*, for example, the statement 'today the whole of Italy at every level, in every walk of life, in the most prosaic of activities … is working as it intent on writing a mythic poem, with a precise sense of its role as the protagonist on the stage of a theatre' (Bontempelli 61). Roger Griffin, in his work *Modernism and Fascism*, describes Bontempelli as having called for the 'linking of Fascist politics to Fascist dramaturgy' (238). Bontempelli's ambition, says Griffin, was to 'creat[e] a theatre in the form of a mass liturgical spectacle' (238). The avant-garde ambition of using art to intervene in life, as well as that movement's subordination to political forces, can both be seen here.

is reimagined as a televised spectacle, a grim and voyeuristic suggestion of what will be the content of television. Joyce's interest in new mass entertainment technologies can be further seen, Lilly notes, in the comment that amongst the 'televisible' is 'a phantom city, phaked of pilim pholk' (264.19-20) and it is here where we find a description of avant-garde theatre strategies. What is on television is first of all a fake. The 'folk' are 'film' rather than real people and their city is a 'phantom'. These 'film folk', however, are certainly enacting a real story as they continue to act out the narrative of Irish history seen in the reference to Ardnacrusha above. These folk are 'bowed and sould … for a price partitional of twenty six and six' (264.20-23), or, in other words, are bought and sold for the price of partition in Ireland. What we find televised is the establishment of the Free State and the partition of Ireland, a development associated with the rise to power of Catholicism and the middle class, occasioning as it does the appearance of 'the brandnewburgher' (265.13). As the passage moves on, we see modern Ireland emerge 'by ribbon development, from contact bridge to lease lapse' (265.24-25). The new technologies of film and television are seen to be telling a cinematised version of the creation of modern Ireland.

Lilly cites, as exemplary of the fascist avant-garde theatre, a production called the *Mostra delta Rivoluzione Fascista*, a 'monumentally-scaled exhibit commemorating the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's March on Rome' (112). An enormous public exhibition which sought to 'not only illustrate the events leading up to the "revolution" but simultaneously shape and inspire the crowds of visitors as they moved through the exhibit' (112), this exhibition, like others of its kind in fascist Italy, aimed to use theatre to shape the masses according to the needs of political power. It was a typical example of the interwar avant-garde as portrayed by Adamson, wherein experimental artists deployed their new forms in the service of constructing the modern, post-war and post-revolutionary state. The film in "Nightlessons" is, Lilly argues, attempting a similar achievement. The point is not that Joyce was a supporter of fascist theatre, but that he was paying attention to the methods used by interwar European states to, as Lilly puts it, 'form a collective by way of exposing itself to its own view' (111). Recreations, either through mass theatre or film, of recent events were common throughout interwar Europe. Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* provides us with an example from Soviet cinema, while the Nuremberg rallies in Nazi Germany, with their recreations and ceremonies, also demonstrate these efforts. "Nightlessons" displays its interest in these forms of subject formation through Shaun's comment on 'THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLLECTIVE TRADITION UPON THE INDIVIDUAL' (268.11-16). Mass entertainments, of which the avant-garde is here a sort of sub-section,

become a means of projecting this 'collective tradition' back into the individual. Declan Kiberd has argued that Joyce's interest was in the individual 'becom[ing] his or her full self' (*Inventing* 119), but, even if this is true of a work such as *Portrait*, we can see here that "Nightlessons" pays attention to the efforts made by states and the artists working for them to push the self in a certain direction.

What we find here is an account of the relation between subject and state that is more nuanced than Stephen's description in *Portrait* of the 'nets' thrown to 'hold [man] back from flight' (*Portrait* 231). "Nightlessons" does not portray the state as seeking only to block individual development, but instead as attempting to channel individual development in certain ways. The power to engineer souls, in Stalin's phrase, is now seen by Joyce to reside in the state and its employment of new media technologies and aesthetic techniques. Joyce's changed understanding of how the state interacts with the individual can be measured in how Shaun, representative of the state in the *Wake*, functions within "Nightlessons". As noted, Shem and Shaun represent opposing poles of rebellion and conformism, or bohemian and bourgeois values respectively. For Finn Fordham, however, Shaun should not be mistaken for the villain of the *Wake*. Rather, 'the relation between Shem and Shaun is like that between two parts of [Joyce's] self: the visionary artist who conceives forms, reflects, and creates; and the revisionary critic who chides, reproaches, denigrates, and even slanders' (221). For Fordham, 'Shaun's attack is partly Joyce's self-critique' (221) and so, as is suggested in "Nightlessons", the two are less opposed rivals than 'doubleparalleled twixtytwins' (286.n4). Shaun, the state, serves as 'Joyce's self-critique' by being the agent of 'THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLLECTIVE TRADITION UPON THE INDIVIDUAL' (268.11-16) in modern times. Shem, by contrast, offers comments which are, in his own words, '*menly about peebles*' (260.9-10). If Shem is demotic, he is also irrelevant, unable to move the levers of society as Shaun does. By implication the critique of Shaun is that he lacks, in some way, humanity, or an interest in the people he influences. Fearing and disliking the transformative efforts of modern states, Joyce also acknowledges that their capacity to effect these transformations far outstrips, and so acts as a critique of, his own.

The avant-garde critique of art and its presence in *Finnegans Wake*

It is worth taking a moment to register how Lilly's association of Joyce and fascism intervenes in awkward critical ground. Readings of Joyce as being, in some way, anti-fascist were made even during the publication of *Work in Progress*. Defending Joyce against criticism

from Wyndham Lewis, Eugene Jolas criticised 'any narrow ideological Fascistic conception of the West' (Jolas *et al* 168) claiming that the work published in *transition* belonged to 'a tradition of the international imagination' (169). For the writers in *transition*, Jolas claimed, 'all forms of politics are outside the range of our interests' (175). Jolas was not characterising Joyce correctly, but the critical trope of an international, apolitical, and aesthete Joyce as an opponent of fascism only grew in strength after the war. As Joseph Brooker explains, Joycean criticism was the principle tool through which 'the diverse politics of modernism were homogenized and neutralized' (*Joyce's Critics* 91) to create 'an "international" aesthetic compatible with the global ambitions of the United States. Apolitical aestheticism became a Cold War tool used by the West against Communism – now associated with fascism through totalitarianism – and Joyce was co-opted heavily into this project. As seen, postcolonial criticism has helped correct this depoliticization. Nonetheless, in the contemporary era of reading Joyce politically, an emphasis on him as primarily anti-fascist remains vital for many critics. For instance, Len Platt claims that 'it is difficult to see how Joyce can hold any serious status as a radical writer, politically engaged with his society and culture, if he ignores or is "indifferent" to fascism' (147). Notably, Platt's argument that Joyce was directly critiquing fascism made Irish politics of secondary importance. For Platt, 'the politics of the *Wake* … however much they make sense and resonate in Irish terms, do belong to a wider European context' (166). For Platt, Joyce uses Ireland to explore particular Irish manifestations of European fascism.[7] Lilly intervenes in these debates by seeking to destabilise the consensus that Joyce was writing as an anti-fascist or that his work functioned as an anti-fascist statement. The avant-garde and the debates which surrounded it were politically complex and need to be clearly elucidated.

In an account of what he called the 'revolutionary art' of the twentieth century, Herbert Read described as central to these movements the belief that 'the greatest obstacle to the creation of th[e] new social reality is the existence of the cultural heritage of the past … the whole complex ideology of the bourgeois mind' (505). Singling out the Surrealists in particular, but describing the avant-garde as a whole, Read noted that, for these artists, 'the object of their movement is therefore to discredit the bourgeois ideology in art, to destroy the academic conception of art. Their whole tendency is negative and destructive' (505).

[7] It follows from these principles that Platt treats the Free State as fascist. It should be noted that while I echo Platt's method in exploring Irish expressions of European developments, the trend of my argument goes against identifying the Free State with fascism. The Free State, I am contending was not fascist for Joyce, but an instance of state-building as it appeared throughout Europe between the wars. Fascist state-building was just one form of state-building which Joyce was in dialogue with.

Writing in 1935, Read was identifying themes we have seen in Bürger's study. Read added to this account, however, an argument about the motivations of the avant-garde not found in Bürger. This was the claim that 'the artist cannot in any effective way avoid the economic conditions of his time … reality, on one guise or another, forces the artist along a determined course' (504). Read's point is that it was typical of the avant-garde attitude to recognise and even embrace this determination. Certainly, avant-garde artists often made statements which aimed to degrade the sanctity of art by noting how subject art was to external influence. George Grosz, for instance, wrote that the artist 'does not produce the content of his creation but processes (as a sausagemaker does meat) the worldview of his public' (485). Vladimir Tatlin, designer of the *Monument to the Third International*, offered a similar, if less scabrous, definition of the artist in writing that the 'individual is the collector of the *energy* of the collective … invention is always the working out of impulses and desires of the collective and not the individual' (309). The point for both was to destroy the idea of the artist as an individual creator. We have seen how Joyce juxtaposed the individual artist Shem to the state power embodied in Shaun. This, however, is only one smaller aspect of a much larger work of humiliating the artist carried out in the *Wake* and one which shares in the avant-garde anti-artist mood.

As seen, the post-war avant-garde had been forced to identify their work with larger political bodies due to the power imbalance between art and state. Adamson notes the avant-garde understood that 'industries of mass entertainment … threatened to negate them' (99) if artists continued to function as bourgeois artists. It was not only the avant-garde who drove this project of degrading the stature of bourgeois art. This had been begun by mass industry and the avant-garde had only tried to wrest control of this process, so as to direct it according to the avant-garde's ends. Certainly, *Finnegans Wake* registers an awareness of the impact industrialisation and mass production had on artwork. In one of the work's many accounts of its own production, it is described how the *Wake* was made through a 'smeltingworks exprogressive process' (614.13) which 'receives through a portal vein the dialytically separated elements of precedent decomposition for the verypetpurpose of subsequent recombinations' (614.33-35). Literary production is here imagined as an entirely formalised and mechanical process. Writing becomes the melting down of existing works into raw materials, which in turn are poured into new moulds. The artist's importance is reduced to the status of being the one who pours the materials. That creativity is absent from this process is signalled in the *Wake*'s announcement that the products of its 'vicociclometer' (614.27) have 'in fact, the sameold gamebold adomic structure' (615.6-7) as

their predecessors. Producing art is repetition rather than consciously willed aesthetic construction. We in fact discover that art is wholly determined by the materials that have gone into making it. Joyce here explores the idea that his most sustained work as a writer, sixteen years spent on a single novel, amounts to a sort of recycling project.

Indeed, Christa-Maria Lerm-Hayes has described the *Wake* as having a 'recycling' (191) aesthetic, in which 'one work emerges out of the other, [from] a store of materials … kept for later inclusion' (191). Art is envisioned as a process through which all the contexts of one's life are processed. The *Wake* describes the process of aesthetic creation as a kind of re-creation, or 'recirculation' (1.2), in which works are not created from nothing but are instead reformed and rediscovered. We find the heroic portrayal of the artist, which sees the artist as separate from society, entirely reversed, as the artist is imagined as one who works through and with the detritus and cast-off materials of society. Indeed, although in the industrial metaphor works are re-formed through melting down, Joyce also sees 'recirculation' occurring through a literal recovery of rubbish and disposed-of materials. Joyce refers to the discovery of the Ardagh Chalice by potato diggers, or 'the finding of the Ardagh chalice by another heily innocent and beachwalker' (110.35-36), which itself is analogous to the discovery of 'fragments of orangepeel' (110.29) by a hen digging through a dump. In a layering of analogies, this 'orangepeel' is also the Letter, which, again, is a version of the *Wake* itself. Joyce's writing, then, is recycled waste, and this idea is also entertained in the famous description of Shem using his own excrement, produced 'through the bowels of his misery' (185.33), as ink for writing. Hayes describes how, in this idea of art as recycling, art is understood to arise through the 'accumulation and sedimentation' (191) of all history and culture, including microscopic historical details such as rumours and gossip. We find Joyce depicting the artist exactly as Grosz imagined the artist to work, processing existing materials as a means of producing art. Unlike in *Portrait*, nothing that results from the artist's pen can be previously 'uncreated' and the artist is understood as an organiser rather than an artificer.

Even in *Portrait* Joyce had been ironizing Stephen's pretensions and certainly in *Ulysses* Stephen is shown to have failed entirely in his youthful ambition. What makes *Finnegans Wake* different is that this idea of artistic insignificance assumes greater importance, even in Joyce's own approach to writing the *Wake*. A minor biographical event, absent from the finished *Wake*, can demonstrate this. In 1927, Joyce, concerned with the negative response his *Work in Progress* had received even from his adherents, proposed that James Stephens, the Dublin author of works such as *The Crock of Gold* and *The Charwoman's Daughter*, could

complete *Work in Progress*. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, written as justification for this notion, Joyce claimed that 'if [Stephens] consented to maintain three or four points which I consider essential and I showed him the threads he could finish the design' (qtd in Ellmann 592). Although Joyce did not stop writing, he continued to believe that Stephens could finish the work and Ellmann relates how Joyce 'spent a week in November [1929] explaining to James Stephens the whole plan of *Finnegans Wake*' (619). Joyce was exploring his idea of writing as recycling and organised production. As long as his work's schematics were provided, meaning that as long as it could be explained where the material was to go, any Dubliner with sufficient literary education and local knowledge could finish the work. Admittedly, Joyce's seriousness here can be open to question, but it is nonetheless an interesting instance of Joyce attempting, in a very practical way, to 'erase the author as an individual' (Deane, "Introduction" vii).

Forgery and lies as art in *Finnegans Wake*

Art, Joyce indicates in the *Wake*, must be stripped of its aura as a creative act. The critique, however, does not merely stop at reimagining the role of the artist. *Finnegans Wake* contains not only a retheorisation of the nature of art, but also an attack on the dignity the bourgeois artist sought to claim. As Seamus Deane, in his introduction to *Finnegans Wake*, argues, 'no one so dedicated to [writing] ever brought it into question as much as [Joyce] did' (xxv). The account of *Finnegans Wake* as being constructed through a 'smeltingworks exprogressive process' (614.13) is only one of many descriptions of writing found within the *Wake* and many of these accounts explore the theme of the *Wake* calls 'stolentelling' (424.35). It is not enough for Joyce to denigrate the artist's creative power. This reliance on external materials and, indeed, the determined nature of writing itself, are portrayed as thievery throughout the *Wake*. The artist, the novel says, is a thief and this moral judgement creates room for a wider attack on the place the artist finds in society compared to other, more apparently useful, members of society. As we will ultimately see, Joyce's condemnation of the artist's place in society arises from a concern about how little he could contribute to or influence independent Ireland.

Margot Norris has provided a persuasive account of Joyce as an avant-garde critic of bourgeois writing practices, seeing in his later works a 'negation of artistic autonomy [achieved] by betraying their genesis in Irish colonialism and lower class poverty, in reputable and disreputable fundraising and patronage, in censorship and amateur publishing' (7). For

Norris, Joyce's early work, up to and including *Portrait*, had been marked by modernism's 'commitment to aesthetic formalism, to verbal craft and classical discipline, … its autotelic constitution, its [projected] redemption of modernity by transcending its social and economic degradations' (23). Making explicit use of Bürger's work, Norris argues that 'the myth of artistic autonomy allows bourgeois society … to use art as the idealistic supplement to heal the spiritual lacks and deprivations its materialism and commercialism produces' (7). All this occurs 'at the very moment that capitalism and censorship, colonialism and world war, class struggle and revolution, inscribe themselves on [art's] production, reception, and form' (23). Joyce, as we have seen, registers the influence social forces have on art in the *Wake*, a move typical of the avant-garde, and Norris insists that emphasising this avant-garde quality of Joyce's work is vital as it provides 'a means of rehistoricizing *Finnegans Wake* to restore its significance as a text of the politically volatile thirties' (5).

Before turning to how Joyce's assault on his own career can be related to the interwar era, however, it is necessary to explore the theme of thievery he uses to attack his own work. Deane describes how, in the *Wake*, 'it is writing that produces criminality; it is the rescue from writing that cancels it' ("Introduction" xxxiii). In part, the crime is that of 'stolentelling', but, furthermore, and in a reprise of the questioning of reality and its production found in "Nightlessons", the *Wake* charges writing with being lies and falsehoods. In one of its many displays of self-referentiality, *Finnegans Wake* is named within the text as 'Wimmegame's Fake' (375.16-17) and described as 'an epical forged cheque' (181.16). It is the *Wake* itself which is 'the last word in stolentelling' (424.35) and this phrase is used in a passage which also sees Shaun complaining that Shem's writing is plagiarised from his own. Shaun's claim is that 'every dimmed letter in [Shem's] is a copy and not a few of the silbils and wholly words I can show you in my Kingdom of Heaven' (424.32-34). This association of writing with theft recurs throughout *Finnegans Wake* and is applied to other stories. A narrative of HCE and ALP's courtship, which among other narratives doubles as that of Tristan and Isolde and Adam and Eve, is a 'stole stale mis betold' (396.23). As well as being stolen or plagiarised, the secondary copy is always also a mis-telling of its original. Writing, being the product of other materials, proves to be a crime twice over. That it must use other materials amounts to theft, but the very representation of other materials distorts the original and, so, becomes a lie.

Joyce emphasises this theme of forgery by associating writing with particular historical instances of forgery and deception. For instance, he refers back to Parnell and the Pigott forgeries. These were documents, written by Richard Pigott, which purported to be texts

Parnell had written in support of the Invincibles and the Phoenix Park murders. Parnell's name had been cleared through the discovery that Pigott had misspelt 'hesitancy' as 'hesitency' and Joyce makes use of this misspelling in the *Wake*. Throughout the work, 'hesitency', or some variant of it, appears as a signal of forgery. The Pigott forgeries are associated with art when Shaun is asked about 'the penmarks used out in sinscript with such hesitancy by your cerebrated brother' (421.18-19). Here Pigott's forgeries become another version of Shem's writings, which in turn are associated with sin. This falseness identified with writing can manifest, says the *Wake*, as propaganda. Roy Benjamin notes that the *Wake*'s forgery theme explores falsehoods found in the *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*. The *Cogadh* was a twelfth-century Irish history which offered up false praise to Brian Boru as a means of securing his successor's claims (Benjamin 312). Here, written history is a lie and, Benjamin notes, this appears in the *Wake* in the comment 'Hasatency? Urp, Boohooru! Booru Usurp!' (16.26-27). Brian Boru, or at least his chroniclers, are another version of Pigott and the written historical document is no more reliable than the politically motivated forgery.

This radical doubt as to the value of writing emerges also in depictions of the Letter, that representative of *Finnegans Wake* within the text. One object of speculation within the *Wake* concerns the Letter's official title, the possibilities of which include 'first and last only true account all about the Honorary Mirsu Earwicker, L.S.D., and the Snake (Nuggets!) by a Woman of the World who can only Tell Naked Truths about a Dear Man and all his Conspirators how they all Tried to Fall him' (107.1-5). This title's very overstatement reveals its motivation. Like the *Cogadh*, the Letter is here a propaganda document, whose words are ALP's, although she may not have written it, and which aims to undo the damage done to HCE's reputation by gossip and slander. ALP's intentions, we are told, are only to 'tell the cock's trootabout him' (113.12). When the text of the Letter is finally revealed – or rather, the text of a letter, for there can be no concrete certainties regarding it – this same concern with gossip is heard in comments such as 'once you are balladproof you are unpearceable to haily, icy and missilethroes' (616.31-33). Protecting HCE, rather than establishing truth, is the motivation behind the Letter. Given that the Letter stands in for the *Wake*, which itself is presented as all writing, the implication is that the written word has no higher motivations. Writing is presented as a product of interest rather than as some aesthetic object.

Indeed, Dominic Manganiello has found that Joyce codes another layer of forgery into the Letter through the associations drawn between it and de Valera's Document No. 2. Studying the debates which surrounded the Treaty, Manganiello finds that Document No. 2, although presented as de Valera's construction, was of uncertain authorship. Michael

Collins speculated as to the document's origins, hinting that Erskine Childers may have been its true author (Manganiello 179). While, as Manganiello states, 'the Letter represents all writings and all documents, particularly *Finnegans Wake* itself' (182), those 'aspects of the letter as the Treaty or as Document No. 2' (182) reinforce how engaged Joyce is in questioning the ownership of writing. For Manganiello, there is an element of Joycean arrogance to his attempt to tie the Treaty documents to his own work, perhaps jokingly implying that de Valera had 'receiv[ed] inspiration' (184) from Joyce. It is perhaps more useful to note that Joyce is again paralleling the artist and the politician. Politics, no less than art, is beset by questions of origins and authenticity. Where a document comes from – whether it is a treaty written by Collins or de Valera, or a novel written by Shem or Shaun – is a question that proves both important and complex. As Manganiello notes, 'Document No. 2 provided a personal alternative expression of Ireland's national destiny' (179) to the Free State which was created by 'Document No. 1', the Treaty itself. Forgery and authorial uncertainty are found to lie at the heart of Irish independence. Art and politics, the *Wake* says, have, if not quite an identity, then certainly a family resemblance, each being presented with similar challenges that are approached in quite different ways.

If the case of the Treaty presents an instance of Joyce's concerns with writing manifesting on the national political stage, a far more personal question of forgeries and lies became a major issue in Joyce's personal life after the publication of *Ulysses*. His new celebrity had brought attention to his life and he complained in letters to Harriet Shaw Weaver that 'a nice collection could be made of legends about me' (*Letters* 165). Amongst these rumours was the claim that he was 'extremely lazy and will never do or finish anything' (166) and that he 'could write no more, had broken down and was dying in New York' (166). These rumours Joyce characterised as 'imaginative painting' (166). Indeed, Ellmann describes Joyce seeking to counter these by commissioning a biography which would provide the world with a picture of him 'as little distorted as possible' (631). The irony of this effort, given the *Wake*'s depiction of writing, is not commented on by Ellmann, but it was not the only contradiction between Joyce's theories and his life. Samuel Roth's pirate publication of *Ulysses*, throughout the 1920s, found Joyce fighting to assert ownership of a piece of writing just as he was describing writing as 'stolentelling'. I do not here intend any moral judgement of Joyce. That his theory and practice did not map onto one another is less notable than the impact biographical or personal problems have on the meaning and form of his art.

Ulysses and its critics – the response to Joyce in the 1920s

Furthermore, biographical matters must be given some consideration here as returning Joyce to the 'politically volatile 1930s' must also involve returning him to what was a personally volatile period. Roth's pirating was far from the only personal problem Joyce encountered while writing *Finnegans Wake*. His own health deteriorated, with numerous operations attempted on both eyes, while his daughter Lucia experienced sustained problems with mental health throughout the 1930s. As an artist, too, he was struggling. The extracts of *Finnegans Wake* he published, as *Work in Progress*, met with confusion and dislike even among previously solid supporters such as Pound and Weaver. *Ulysses* itself was censored, banned, defended unsuccessfully and successfully in court, all the while meeting sustained criticism throughout the Anglophone world in particular. Typical of the recycling aesthetic he had developed for *Finnegans Wake*, these criticisms found their way into the text and, so, it is important to note some wider themes in the criticisms made of *Ulysses* and also of the early published extracts of *Work in Progress*. Richard Aldington in a 1921 review of *Ulysses*, at that stage still only partly published in *The Little Review*, declared that the work was a 'libel on humanity' (186) and this tone became a recurring theme. Aldington placed Joyce on a trajectory which included another hated modern movement, Dadaism, writing that 'from the manner of Mr. Joyce to Dadaisme [*sic*] is but a step, and from Dadaisme to imbecility is hardly that' (186). Criticism of Joyce's work as an expression of mental and physical weakness, then, began before *Ulysses* was even finished and the claim that Joyce had put himself outside the bounds of culture and society would quickly become another common attack.

Given the 'politically 'volatile' era Joyce published in, it is unsurprising that Joyce's critics often sought to condemn Joyce through association with revolutionary politics. Shane Leslie described *Ulysses* as 'literary Bolshevism' (207), meaning to say that *Ulysses* was 'experimental, anti-conventional, anti-Christian, chaotic, totally unmoral' (207). He furthermore associated Joyce with Fenianism and described Joyce's conception of *Ulysses* as of it being a 'Clerkenwell explosion in the well-guarded, well-built, classical prison of English literature' (211).[8] Critics employing these political categories appear to have used them indiscriminately. John Murry described Joyce as 'anarchic' (195) and as being 'in rebellion against the social morality of civilization, … [and] in rebellion against the lucidity and comprehensibility of civilized art' (196). For these critics, what connected the disparate

[8] Clerkenwell had been a prison which had been the subject of an attempted breakout attempt by Fenians in 1867. Explosives, detonated in an effort to break down a wall, caused numerous casualties and provoked outrage in England.

movements of Bolshevism, Fenianism, and anarchism to Joyce was that all were seen to be against the existing European order. None appeared to identify a specifically "Bolshevik" or "anarchist" aesthetic in Joyce, beyond this sense of opposition. Murry demonstrates this in calling Joyce an 'extreme individualist … the egocentric rebel in excelsis, the arch-esoteric' (195). Just as Bolshevism, Irish republicanism and, indeed, the First World War, were challenges to the Europe of *Pax Britannica*,[9] so was Joyce seen as a threat to the culture of the era.

Despite the scattershot nature of these associations of political radicalism with Joyce's work, these critics were not entirely inaccurate. Leslie, complaining that there were 'sacred themes and characters' (209) which should not be 'ridicule[d]' (209), was expressing the sort of plea for culture's special place in society which the avant-garde found so revolting. These critics were not wrong to find Joyce to have broken ranks with so-called European civilization. Continental responses to *Ulysses*, made by bourgeois writers, often found similar themes but viewed this destruction in a more ambivalent or even positive light. In Germany, for example, Thomas Mann compared Joyce to Schoenberg and described Joyce as 'outrageous to the mind trained in the classical romantic, realistic traditions' (qtd in Weninger 58). By grouping the otherwise quite different romantic and realist movements together, Mann meant that Joyce was setting himself against all sides of the bourgeois cultural heritage. Furthermore, he meant no insult here to Joyce; Schoenberg's own revolution in music was a major influence for Mann's 1947 novel *Doctor Faustus*. That there might be something productive to come out of Joyce's destructive treatment of the canon was clearly stated by Austrian author Hermann Broch. For Broch, Joyce was 'an end and not a beginning. … the end of an era of our culture' (qtd in Weninger 50). What had ended was the novel, but Broch further claimed that Joyce had 'dismantled the form of the traditional novel to reach beyond to a new form' (qtd in Weninger 60). These artists felt *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* had blasted open a new channel for the novel and so, like Murry, Leslie, and Aldington, they saw Joyce as destructive. All agreed that the bourgeois culture these writers had themselves emerged from was being disposed of by Joyce. The difference was that, for some, it was possible to imagine this destruction as a necessary prelude to a new, non-bourgeois culture.

A more rigorous definition of what Joyce had destroyed and how he had done this was offered by Harry Levin in his 1941 *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*. Levin, looking to the

[9] For historical explanations of this breaking down of nineteenth-century ideals, see Felix Gilbert & David Clay Large, *The End of the European Era: 1890 – Present* and Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes*, particularly pp. 54-84. For an account of transformations in cultural practice, see Modris Eksteins *Rites of Spring*.

Wake for a summation of Joyce's aesthetic theory, found Joyce declaring the futility of artistic projects. In the *Wake*'s description of Shem's work as 'an epical forged cheque' (181.16) Levin sees the claim that 'the finest literary imitations of life are fakes' (126). For Levin, the late Joyce had a despairing belief that 'the artist, god of his own world, is no better than a criminal in this one' (126). Deane's comment on the *Wake*'s criticism of art as 'criminality' finds a predecessor here, although Levin's reading has some vital differences. The crime, so Levin's reading goes, is that art has gone 'astray' (150). Novel writing is 'an exercise of individualism' (147) which, regardless of its intentions, reflects rather than critiques 'the shortcoming of a *laissez-faire* society' (147). Reduced to mere reflection, novels are seen to be crimes because they have no 'function' (150). Joyce had once called *Dubliners* a 'nicely polished looking glass' (qtd in Ellmann 222), only to later qualify this assessment of his art by associating *Ulysses* with 'the cracked lookingglass of a servant' (*Ulysses* 6.146). He was aware, then, of a problem of representation in art and, for Levin, the *Wake* intensifies this problematic by questioning the purpose of representation for society. Criticism, then, journeyed from attacking Joyce for exposing the falsities underlying bourgeois cultural traditions to celebrating that he had done so, in anticipation that Joyce was clearing the ground for new literary forms.

The artist as a liar in *Finnegans Wake*

Although not all of these critics invoked the avant-garde, they all agreed that Joyce was the enemy of the bourgeoisie and its art. *Finnegans Wake* explored these attitudes in the "Shem the Penman" episode, the account of the life of the artist Shem as told by his brother Shaun. We have already seen examples of these criticisms above, but "Shem the Penman" is the episode of the *Wake* where this criticism is most stridently advanced. This account of Shem draws heavily on the themes of forgery and recycled culture discussed above, deploying them in a critique of an artist whose biography, like Stephen Dedalus's, is an echo of Joyce's own. The episode, narrated through brother Shaun's voice, begins by announcing that:

> [Shem's] back life will not stand being written about in black and white. Putting truth and untruth together a shot may be made at what this hybrid actually was like to look at (169.7-10)

The problems with clarity and truth in writing return here and are associated with the artist himself. Like his work, Shem is an obscure figure and, appropriately, telling his life story relies on rumour and hearsay rather than established fact. The rumours Joyce complained about to Weaver are relevant here. Shem is described as the 'Malingerer in luxury' (192.5) and as a man who 'never had the common baalamb's pluck to stir out and about' (178.13). Joyce had always drawn on biographical details for his work, but what is noteworthy here is that he now draws on speculation about his life, rather than his life's concrete details, as material for his writing. As Joyce remains central the difference can seem slight, but what matters is the recognition this gesture affords to the public sphere. What the world made of Joyce, rather than what Joyce made of the world, becomes the source of his art.

Along with rumours, "Shem the Penman" also draws on the criticisms made of *Ulysses* and *Work in Progress*. For example, a review of *Ulysses*, published anonymously in the *Sporting Times* in 1922 under the pseudonym "Aramis", is repeatedly referenced in "Shem the Penman".[10] One passage from the review runs as follows:

> '[I] understand why the Yankee judges fined the publishers of *The Little Review* one hundred dollars for the original publication of a very rancid chapter of the Joyce stuff, which appears to have been written by a perverted lunatic who has made a speciality of the literature of the latrine' (192).

In "Shem the Penman" this passage appears in the following:

> Up and down the four margins of this rancid Shem stuff the evilsmeller … used to stipple endlessly inartistic portraits of himself (182.17-18).

This is Shem as begot by 'Aramis' and not by himself. Worth noting is the echo, in the phrase 'inartistic portraits', of *Portrait.* Here, the reversal of heroic understandings of art I have been suggesting permeates the *Wake* is made explicit. Whereas *Portrait* had concluded with Stephen promising to break free of Ireland and become an artist, "Shem the Penman" presents Shem to us as a creation of others and their own words about Shem. If *Portrait*

[10] For more on Joyce's use of the "Aramis" review, see Ingeborg Landuyt's chapter "Cain-Ham-(Shem)-Esau-Jim the Penman *Chapter I.7*" in *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake: A Chapter-by-Chapter Genetic Guide*, eds. Crispi, Luca and Sam Slote, p. 146

sought to imagine, albeit in a manner ironically undercut, how the artist could achieve autonomy and 'fly the nets' his environment throws at him, "Shem the Penman" argues that the artist is produced out of the words of others.

Although this construction of Shem from the words of others denies him a conscious role in his own construction, he is not wholly absent from this process. "Shem the Penman" argues that Shem, in part, is a product of his unconscious. He is not a product of reason and will but of submerged mental and physical energies. This idea is, again, introduced through reviews of Joyce's work. Claims in the "Aramis" review that *Ulysses* exposed Joyce as a 'perverted lunatic' expressed a wider tendency in reviews, which found in *Ulysses* symptoms of supposed maladies. An example of this appears through a recycling of a review by a Dr. Joseph Collins. Collins had endorsed Joyce's work in *Portrait* but his review of *Ulysses* described the novel as symptomatic of ill-health. A particular passage from the review which reappeared in the *Wake* ran as follows:

> [Joyce] is the only individual that the writer has encountered *outside of a madhouse* who has let flow from his pen random and purposeful thoughts … revealing the product of the unconscious mind of a moral *monster*, a pervert and an invert, an *apostate* to his race and his religion (qtd in Landuyt 145).

Collins's review reappears throughout "Shem the Penman". Of the sordid details of Shem's life, Shaun asks 'would anyone, short of a madhouse, believe it' (177.13). Shem is later described as a 'monstrous marvellosity … this mental and moral defective' (177.15-16) and as a 'national apostate, who was cowardly gun and camera shy' (171.33-34). For Collins, *Ulysses* is less the product of an artistic will than an erroneous revelation. "Shem the Penman" repackages this criticism as a critique of Shem and argues his work is the product of a sordid subconscious. The artist is denied the sort of Apollonian shaping power classic ideas of art had always granted him.

That he was being subjected to pseudo-medical diagnoses through a reading of his work is something Joyce registers his awareness of in the *Wake*. There is much evidence of this in "Shem the Penman" and, again, Joyce relates these attacks to the *Wake*'s questions of art. Another doctor whose work becomes a criticism of Shem is French graphologist Jean Crepiéux-Jamin. Graphology was a nineteenth-century pseudoscience which claimed that illness could be diagnosed, and personality defined, through an analysis of handwriting. A

passage from Jamin's work has been identified by Ingeborg Landuyt in Joyce's *Wake* notebooks and runs as follows:

> the writer of fig. 166 changes the truth because of weakness, vanity, and laziness. He has the twisted handwriting of the weak-minded, the small and threadlike tracing of the depressed … He is a *canaille*. *He has never been sentenced*, but his profound shortcomings have plunged him with his family into black misery. *He lives on loans*, on mendacity, and *he is thirty-five*' (qtd in Landuyt 148 -149).

This appears in descriptions of Shem as someone who 'lives on loans and is furtivefree yours of age' (173.6-7), as well as a self-referential description of "Shem the Penman" as 'the whole lifelong swrine story of his entire low cornaille existence' (173.19-20). In the same passage Shem's father, HCE, is introduced as 'Mr Humhum, whom history, climate and entertainment made the first of his sept' (173.22-24). That the individual is determined and not autonomous is, again, in evidence. Shem's writing, regardless of its intentions, is to be seen as determined by his own class and personal background.

We have seen Norris argue that Joyce's work is avant-garde in its attempts to expose its own roots 'in Irish colonialism and lower class poverty, in reputable and disreputable fundraising and patronage, in censorship and amateur publishing' (7). Speaking with the words of his critics, Joyce endorses their most severe criticisms, only to invert them into a criticism of artists as a whole. Just as *Finnegans Wake* can appear, in the text, as the whole of literature, so too is Shem a representation of all bourgeois artists. In effect, what "Shem the Penman" says is that it is not only Joyce who is the abject prisoner of his circumstances, as his critics claim. All artists are prisoners. It is typically Joycean arrogance to imagine that his own career can stand in for that of all writers, but whether or not one concedes the validity of this claim, the larger criticism of the bourgeois artist remains. For Norris, *Finnegans Wake* 'portray[s] the artist as ineluctably inscribed with history, bearing the scars of class and colonialism whose materialist imprint on his sensibility will leave its mark on poetic production, form, and reception' (92-93). What Norris calls 'modern art's aspirations to serve as [a] latter-day vanguard of liberalism' (92) – and here we can refer as much to the early avant-gardes of Futurism as we can to the bourgeois ambitions of, say, the Bloomsbury group – is shown to be a sham. The very idea of art taking a leading role is exposed as fraudulent.

As seen, Joyce represents the Free State as an instance of a modern state behaving as an engineer of souls, using the power accumulated in the state to enact social transformations which, in turn, transform individuals. For Joyce, seeing the Free State in this way involved acknowledging the incapacity of the artist to cause such transformations. The question of bourgeois autonomy and the critique of it also involve questions of politics. Claims for artistic autonomy are shown to be theoretically unsound, in *Finnegans Wake*, but Shem's attempts to practice autonomy are, furthermore, historicized and considered in the light of historical developments said to have occurred during this mirror-Joyce's career. "Shem the Penman" sees Shem condemned as a 'national apostate, who was cowardly gun and camera shy' (171.33-34). Rather than enter into some national service, Shem is said to have fled to Europe to write his 'usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles' (179.26-27). Shem is shown to have chosen art over the nation, his own interests over service, and this criticism, with sometimes overt references to Joyce's career, recurs through "Shem the Penman". We are told that:

> on that surprising bludgeony Unity Sunday when the grand germogall allstar bout was harrily the rage … a rank funk getting the better of him, the scut in a bad fit of pyjamas fled like a leveret for his bare lives (176.19-27).

References to the First World War and the Croke Park massacres of Bloody Sunday 1920 are in evidence here and, rather than participate in conflict, we are told that Shem, in flight, 'kuskykorked himself up tight in his inkbattle house … there to stay in afar for the life' (176.30-32). Shem's 'inkbattle house' is another version of *Ulysses*, the work imagined as a house with walls 'persianly literatured' (183.10) with 'once current puns, quashed quotatoes, messes of mottage' (183.22-23) and 'yeses and yeses and yeses' (184.2). Here, "Shem the Penman" weighs the value of Joyce's decision to write *Ulysses* and seek autonomy in art against the possibility of a more direct engagement with historical events. If it may seem unfair to suggest that the artist should submit to political concerns, it is worth remembering that *Finnegans Wake* strips away the value of artistic autonomy or disengagement from society by treating it as a fraud. The most obvious justification for not taking part in historical events is thus denied and *Finnegans Wake* presents what is, at least according to the account of art it provides, an unanswerable criticism of Joyce's career.

While the broader history of Europe in Joyce's lifetime is being invoked here, this question of a choice between art and engagement is most elaborately explored through questions of engagement with Irish politics. We are told that Shem's 'birthwrong was, to fall in with Plan, as our nationals should, as all nationists must, and do a certain office' (190.12-13) and, indeed, 'do your thrupenny bit and thus earn from the nation true thanks' (190.19-20). Rather than do this work for the nation, however, Shem, 'shirking both your bullet and your billet' (190.28), chose 'to beat it backwards like Boulanger from Galway' (190.28-29) and, again, become an artist. *Finnegans Wake* explicitly considers how this decision to become an artist involved a rejection of the nation and the work of national liberation. Shem's potential national service is described as taking place 'in a certain holy office' (190.14), invoking the idea of religious service which in the Irish context is tied quite closely to national service. That said, in an instance of Joyce finding unity in opposites, the phrase 'holy office' also refers to his 1904 satirical poem "The Holy Office", which had viciously attacked the Dublin literary scene, including peers such as Oliver Gogarty and Padraic Colum, and had served as a supreme statement of Joyce's individualism. In representing the choice between service and individualism, or between nation and art, Joyce refuses to award priority to one or the other. Both choices have their demerits. Whereas service erodes the individual, art imposes isolation and irrelevance.

Deane suggests that Shaun represents 'a version of Stephen Dedalus …attempting to disinfect himself of experiences that are both fundamental and humiliating' ("Introduction" xxxvi). Shaun, so Deane says, is attempting to escape history and all its determination, but the criticisms of Shem in "Shem the Penman" direct a very similar charge at Shem. It is Shem, so this episode claims, who has attempted to escape history through a retreat into art. His decision to become an artist is described as becoming 'self-exiled in upon his ego' (184.6-7). That this exile cannot escape history is seen in the description of Shem, in exile, as being 'the worse for boosegas' (176.31) and as 'growing megalomane of a loose past' (179.21). Shem in exile is seen to embody the unheroic theme of the Irish exile as a sentimental drunk mourning for his or her lost home. Rather than escape Ireland, Shem has become 'the tragic jester' (171.15) who 'sobbed himself wheywhingingly sick of life' (171.15-16). Despite attempting to use art as a means of escaping the demands Ireland makes of him, it proves impossible for Shem to liberate himself from his nation. The artist's quest for autonomy is seen to end in a similar fate to that faced by Kevin Egan in *Ulysses*. Just as *Ulysses* could state 'they have forgotten Kevin Egan, not he them' (37.3-4), *Finnegans Wake* can show that Shem cannot forget Ireland or 'disinfect' himself of his Irish experience.

The inescapability of one's background and history returns *Finnegans Wake* to the question of recycled culture. Precisely because the artist is not autonomous and cannot escape roots, regardless of how committed to exile they may be, they find that their work serves as a recycling of the rejected culture. In a parody of a scholar's attempts to understand the handwriting style of the Letter, it is stated that 'the use of a homeborn shillelagh as an aid to calligraphy shows a distinct advance from savagery to barbarism' (114.12-13). National symbols are associated with certain handwriting styles and so, in turn, particular cultures are seen to produce certain types of writing. This deterministic theory is given further voice when, in one of the many transformations in *Finnegans Wake*, the Letter becomes the Book of Kells and Joyce's parody becomes a parody of the scholarship surrounding that text. Borrowing from a 1914 introduction to the Book, written by Sir Edward Sullivan and which claimed that 'the dots of which the punctuation is formed are... almost always square in shape, or quadrilateral — not round... here may perhaps be found an additional argument for ascribing a later date to the Book of Kells' (Sullivan 36), the *Wake* describes how a 'fourleaved shamrock or quadrifoil jab was more recurrent wherever the script was clear' (124.20-22). Joyce notes that punctuation and script are also mediums through which a culture can express itself. In this case, *Finnegans Wake* claims to see in the visual style of the Book of Kells signs that it was written with a shamrock, a traditional symbol of Ireland. Traditional Irish culture, in other words, is stated to have written the Book of Kells, and not any author. Given the associations drawn between the Book of Kells, the Letter, the *Wake*, and Document No. 2, indeed we can say that Manganiello in fact has it precisely in reverse when he suggests Joyce is portraying the Treaty as a product of the *Wake*. Rather, the Treaty – Documents 1 and 2 – as much as the *Wake*, are products of Ireland. Politics battles with the same determinism as faced by art.

On the one hand, what we reach here is the now-classic postcolonial reading of Joyce which suggests that Irish historical experience provides a counterpart to the form of his work. According to Deane, for example 'Joyce's critique of writing has its roots, in the *Wake* as in his other works, in the phenomenon of the Irish experience of mutilation and catastrophe and the inadmissibility of 'goahead plot' as a form of narration that could encompass or characterize it' ("Introduction" xiv).[11] Without disputing this, we can see that

[11] In his essay "Joyce and Nationalism", Deane expands on his reading by describing how, for Joyce, 'since history could not yield a politics, it was compelled to yield an aesthetic' (92). For more on this see *Celtic Revivals*, pp. 92-93. Similarly, Kiberd claims that Joyce's problem was 'how to express the sheer fluidity and instability of Irish experience in a form which would be nonetheless comprehensible to the arbiters of international order' (328). For a further account of this theory being applied to the visual arts in Ireland, see Luke Gibbons's "Visual Modernisms"

there is not a straightforward correspondence in Joyce's thinking between Irish historical experience and literary form. Rather, the relationship between the two is mediated, for Joyce, through the avant-garde and its criticism of autonomous art. The attempt to create a writing which is the direct expression of its material emerges from an avant-garde dissatisfaction with how autonomous writing led to the dissociation of the artist from society. *Finnegans Wake* exposes the futility of such attempts at dissociation by demonstrating the extent to which the artist is always the product, rather than the producer, of society. Both the artist's own character and the artist's materials are severely determined, resulting in work which can only ever be of its time.

Failure and resignation in the face of politics

As seen, many recognised that Joyce's work was an attack on bourgeois values, although how this attack was understood depended on the interests of the critic. Less common was an understanding of how central Ireland was to Joyce's project. One of the few reviewers who did notice this was Mary Colum, Joyce's one-time peer in Dublin in the 1900s and a friend consulted for advice during work on *Finnegans Wake*. For Colum, *Ulysses* was 'the Confessions of James Joyce' (231). It was a work which said 'here I am; here is what country and race have bred me, what religion and life and literature have done to me' (231). Like those who saw in *Ulysses* some statement about Joyce's background, Colum understood *Ulysses* to be autobiographical. What made her review distinctive was that, firstly, she recognised this background to be Irish and, secondly, that Joyce was consciously aware of this influence and was incorporating it into his design. Colum, indeed, was far-seeing, identifying in *Ulysses* the theme that would dominate *Finnegans Wake*, that of the subordination of writing to circumstance. It is worth noting that Joyce is expansive enough to explore varying forms of subordination, even if these ultimately return us to the question of Irish politics. Feminist questions of women's role in patriarchal society are incorporated into Joyce's critique of writing, as located by Norris in the gossiping washerwomen of the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" chapter. Despite the chapter being famed for its lyricism, Norris demonstrates how this lyricism develops out of the subject it describes. Work is foregrounded in passages such as:

> And where's the starch? That's not the vesdre benediction smell. I can
> tell from here by their *eau de Colo* and the scent of her oder hey're Mrs.

> Magrath's. And you ought to have aird them. They've moist come off
> her. Creases in silk they are, not crampton lawn. (204.33-34).

Here, everyday life is not merely the occasion for literature, as it was for the Romanticism of, say, Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*. Everyday life is the constituent material of literature. For Norris, Joyce 'reverses the forcible dissociation of art from manual labour' (139) by insisting that his art emerge out of circumstance. The language of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" is 'coterminous with [the women's] labor, beginning with their washing, conditioned and shaped by the motion and rhythms of their scrubbing, and ending when it is done' (139).

Again, what Norris finds is Joyce exploring the idea of writing which emerges from and is determined by circumstance. Deane's comment that *Finnegans Wake* opposes attempts to 'disinfect [the self] of experiences that are both fundamental and humiliating' ("Introduction" xxxvi) finds another practical expression here, with Norris describing the *Wake*'s method as being to oppose the 'disavowal of the material and social relations of life' (18). In another of the many self-criticisms Joyce makes of himself in the *Wake*, "Penelope", *Ulysses*'s final episode, is critiqued for showing signs of such a 'disavowal'. Framing the eight, long, punctuation-free sentences of "Penelope" as 'vaulting feminine libido' (123.8), *Finnegans Wake* describes how the 'penelopean patience of its last paraphe' (123.4-5) is 'sternly controlled and easily repersuaded by the uniform matteroffactness of a meandering male fist' (123.9-10). Here, the expression of women's sexuality seen in Molly's soliloquy finds its formal counterpart in "Penelope" and its flow of language. "Penelope", so the *Wake* claims, is a style of writing which avows the material it emerges from. Given, so this argument goes, that 'feminine libido' cannot be expressed in writing presented according to abstract grammatical standards, the use of punctuation represents an attempt to 'disinfect' the writing of its material.

Indeed, Hélène Cixous has argued that Joyce's work is a formal attempt to express the experience of the women it depicts. For Cixous, Joyce's writing 'depends not on the moment of creation but on the object of the work; [his] writing is intended to be a comprehension of reality, and the form of what is written is a language which resembles the reality, not the writer' (*Exile* 687). This type of writing is seen to have begun at the end of *Ulysses*, as Cixous claims that Molly's soliloquy in "Penelope" 'carr[ies] *Ulysses* off beyond any book and toward the new writing' (*Laugh* 884). There is here an echo of Beckett's "Dante … Bruno. Vico.. Joyce", which claimed that Joyce's writing in the *Wake* 'is not about something; it is that

something itself' (14). With that said, it is worth noting that the implication of Cixous's claim here, that there exists a generic women's experience which Joyce translated into writing, has been disputed. As Norris notes, insofar as the *Wake*'s fidelity to reality can be considered feminist, it is 'a feminism without women – a feminism of no benefit to historical or material women' (11). Although Joyce can claim to have adapted his art to express, in this instance, the life of women, the charge remains that even an authentic expression of content benefits the artist and not that content. Marian Eide, for instance, worries that despite Joyce's efforts to erase the writer's authoritative grasp on reality, women in the *Wake* 'serv[e] only as an erotic vessel for men's needs' (78-79).

Joyce, himself, appears to have been aware of this problem. In the final section of *Finnegans Wake*, a soliloquy from ALP which explores questions of futility and repetition, we find a pessimistic critique of men's attempts to intervene in women's lives. ALP, recounting the life she has lived as HCE's husband, remembers him 'bidding me do this and that and the other' (620.25). Having 'wrote me hopes and buried the page when I heard Thy voice' (624.4), ALP describes how subordination to HCE and disappointment with HCE have been central to her life. ALP generalises this disappointment across men as a whole, imagining of her sons that 'the child we all love to place our hopes in for ever. All men has done something. Be the time they've come to the weight of old fletch' (621.31-33). These disappointments, we find, can also be shifted into a political register as, despite HCE's 'pearse orations to them jackeen gapers' (620.24), what results is only in 'the sehm asnuh' (620.16). Again expressing her disappointment, ALP complains to HCE about 'all your graundplotting and the little it brought' (624.12-13). Here, we can sense the critique of the artist folding into a wider social critique, as grand plans, whether for epic novels, content bourgeois lives, or political revolutions, are seen as instances of 'graundplotting' doomed to failure. Nolan has described how Joyce explored historical and personal failures within an 'overarching vision of comic and redemptive recurrence' (*Emancipations* 175) in *Finnegans Wake* and, if ALP's closing words lack some of this redemption, morosely recounting her 'years within years in soffran, allbeleaved' (625.30), recurrence and failure is certainly present.

All this could appear quite far removed from the question of politics. Nolan's note that, within Joyce's visions of 'redemptive recurrence', 'partitioned Ireland and the Free State are particular historical instances of human effort and failure' (*Emancipations* 175) is helpful in placing the presentation of ALP's life in a political context. As the reference to 'pearse orations' suggests, the Irish revolution itself is being presented here as one more instance of failure and disappointment. This may suggest, in contrast to what I have argued throughout

this chapter, that Joyce is suddenly critiquing a state he otherwise portrays as a social power. Here, it is important to bear in mind again that artist Shem and state official Shaun are 'doubleparalleled twixtytwins' (286.n4) or, as ALP has it, 'two bredder as doffered as nors in soun' (620.16). Art and state are as different, yet similar, as the northern and southern Irish states. This, as we have seen, is an idea embodied in the discussion of Shaun as a representative of state social engineering. The difference between Shem and Shaun was not a disagreement over whether or not such engineering should occur, but over the capacity to advance such a project, and the contrasting value humanism finds in the project of each. As we have seen, the point of the interwar avant-garde was to close the gap between art and society which was deemed to have opened up under bourgeois conditions and which, so this avant-garde believed, could not be resolved through the allocation of supreme power to the artist, as this earlier avant-gardes had hoped. Deane has made the point that Joyce 'had learned from Irish nationalism the power of a vocabulary in bringing to existence that which otherwise had none except in the theatre of words' (*Celtic Revivals* 105). Joyce, says Deane, saw in nationalism a competitor or a rival, one which understood, as Joyce believed he himself did, the creative capacity of language, art, and culture. What Joyce finds, late in his career, is how similar the ambitions of politicians are to his own. The difference is their medium, with Joyce finding that writing is a less useful tool than parties, policies, proclamations and guns. Like the artist, the state will fail and here we can find Joyce reserving room to critique the Free State. This room, however, is only earned by invalidating the alternative project for Ireland embodied in the aesthetic. Joyce's attitude here can be glossed with a comment Raymond Williams has made regarding Joyce's aesthetic model, Ibsen. Williams reads in Ibsen the theme that 'although everybody is defeated … the defeat never cancels the validity of the impulse that moved him' (63). Ibsen's work is about the inevitable failure of all projects, where failure does not render the effort less meaningful. In Williams's reading, Ibsen blames this inevitable failure on 'physical inheritance, social inheritance, every sort of circumstance' (68). Central to Ibsen is 'the idea that in the process of composition towards a project you accumulate from an environment that is not of your will or choice traits which frustrate the vocation' (63). Joyce never left any reading of Ibsen which expressed similar themes. This mood, however, is very much the mood of *Finnegans Wake*. All projects come to ruin; no individual can stand outside circumstance. The Irish revolution, Joyce says, will ultimately fail, but this can offer no succour to the artist, for the artist will have failed long before.

V: Counter-revolution and individual dignity: Kate O'Brien's novels and Free State reaction

In 1934, in a speech given to the Irish Society at Oxford, Thomas MacGreevy made the claim that Ireland had gone wrong by having a political revolution before having a cultural revolution. Independence, so MacGreevy said, had 'given us licensing laws modelled on those of England … the Griffith-Collins-O'Higgins plaster memorial in Leinster Lawn, new banknotes, a new coinage and new postage stamps' (14). What it had not given Ireland was any distinctive culture and Ireland remained an 'Anglo-Irish-cum-London-Irish cultural province' (qtd in Hutton-Williams 14). Today, critics such as Declan Kiberd argue that 'what makes the Irish Renaissance such a fascinating case is the knowledge that the cultural revival preceded and in many ways enabled the political revolution that followed' (*Inventing* 4). MacGreevy's claim, then, can seem surprising to contemporary literary-critical standards and appears more to express the opinions of Ireland's revisionist historiography, that the notion of a culturally-derived political revolution is only 'superficially attractive' (Foster 433) and is without basis in fact. MacGreevy, certainly not antipathetic to products of the Revival, indicates that some Irish cultural figures felt the social and cultural forms of an independent Ireland had not yet been conceptualised.

MacGreevy's sense that independent Ireland had not produced a society which was culturally distinct from England is one which can be tied to varying political tendencies. His complaints about stamps and coins echo James Connolly's prophecies about the weaknesses of a nationalism which sought only the formal separation represented in the changing of the flag. What MacGreevy also echoed were the concerns of the suite of Cumann na nGaedheal ministers and associated intellectuals who had ruled Ireland in the 1920s and early 1930s, only to be thrown out of power by de Valera in 1932. These figures, surveying the country in the aftermath of revolution and civil war, worried that Ireland was not capable of surviving, whether politically, economically, or culturally, as an independent state. 'Nothing has been more remarkable', wrote P.S. O'Hegarty, 'than the evidence which the last three years have brought that, as a nation, we have no real patriotism and that we are eaten up with class selfishness and materialism' (177). 'The question of the general character of the

people' (177) was 'far from secure' (177) and there was a need for the Irish people to 'rediscover work and rediscover honesty' (181).

These were arguments not merely over whether independence had created an Irish society which was both distinct and sustainable. These arguments extended to questioning whether there were, within the Irish people, the resources to create such a society. What this chapter will do is locate the novels of Kate O'Brien within these debates and argue that her work, despite appearances to the contrary, agreed with this section of Ireland's conservative elite. O'Brien, I will show, sought to prove the good character of the Irish people by celebrating the virtues she found in Ireland's Catholic bourgeoisie. To do this, I will look at four of O'Brien's novels, *Without My Cloak* (1931), *The Ante-Room* (1934), *Mary Lavelle* (1936), and *The Land of Spices* (1942), with some reference to her other writings. O'Brien continued to write after 1942, and did publish other works, including novels, within the timeframe I explore here. I have chosen to examine these particular works as each illustrates a different aspect of O'Brien's project of, as Eibhear Walshe has put it, 'invent[ing] a literary tradition for her own Irish bourgeois class and a successfully realised fictive independence for … her young Irish female protagonists' (2). O'Brien's work, I will show, presented the Irish bourgeoisie as the ideal subjects for those who felt independent Ireland lacked a people or class capable of carrying the responsibilities of independent rule.

For the critic Anthony Roche, 'O'Brien is at one with the other writers of the 1920s in writing about and diagnosing the failure of a revolution, the betrayal of the promise of Ireland to gain a full and meaningful independence' (95). What I demonstrate here is that there was more than one way to sense that independence and the revolution had failed. O'Brien is not necessarily a forerunner of the sort of open society created in the 1960s by Sean Lemass. For example, Eavan Boland has called O'Brien a 'romantic elitist' (18), arguing that O'Brien's works celebrated the battle of the individual against circumstance. This reading finds some echoes in Aintzane Mentxaka's suggestion that 'O'Brien may be said to be an existentialist writer in her Nietzschean and Sartrean investment in choice and responsibility' (130). What such readings can imply, when applied to the question of O'Brien's response to the 'failure of a revolution', is that O'Brien was formulating an elitist reaction to the disappointments of independence. Her work, I will demonstrate, portrays the dignity of her class through an examination of how an Irish Catholic bourgeois individual can respond to the predicaments of modern life. O'Brien shares with Ireland's conservative reaction a desire to disconnect Irish identity from nationalist categories and instead promote a civic and bourgeois identity. Although often critical of Irish politics, we will find that

O'Brien sees Irish politics not through the lens of separatism, culture, and so on, but in the light of her interest in the individual and the importance of asserting personal, rather than political, sovereignty.

Counter-revolution in Ireland

Michael Cronin suggests that O'Brien's 'fiction was entirely in step with the gradualist, counter-revolutionary value-system shared by many liberal and conservative intellectuals' (33) in the 1920s and 1930s. Analysis of Irish counter-revolutionary thought and its associations with the middle-class has been extensively carried through by John Regan. Regan's work explores how what he calls the 'Irish counter-revolution' took place in the 1920s and early 1930s in Ireland, carried out through a 'defence of constitutional politics' (xvi) and the defeat of those 'advocating revolutionary violence as a force for change' (xvi). This reassertion of the state as that within which political action was required to move asserted the Free State's status as the legitimate product of the fighting of 1916 – 1921. Events such as the Army Mutiny of 1924, when a haphazard coup launched by disaffected soldiers within the state army was swiftly defeated by the government, serve for Regan as instances of this assertion of state legitimacy over that of the revolutionary actor. Indeed, the Civil War is understood by Regan as being fought 'between militarists and those who demanded nothing less than the supremacy of the civilian Government' (125). The point of counter-revolution, then, was to make the gunman subordinate to the state machinery, a process to be achieved through 'the constitutionalisation and the centralisation of power in the Free State' (192). This centralisation was often a bloody process, won through execution and atrocity, and sometimes a legal process involving the disempowerment of autonomous local institutions such as the Dáil Courts or powerful Local Government bodies.[1] The point was to establish the legitimacy of the Free State and to demonstrate the illegitimacy of continued nationalist struggle.

Counter-revolution involved the creation of a powerful central state, one which, we will see, was to become a noted opponent of O'Brien's throughout her career. With that said, there are elements of this counter-revolutionary project which could have appeared far less objectionable to O'Brien. Foremost amongst these was the attempt, led by Kevin O'Higgins,

[1] For an account of Cumann na nGaedheal's centralising policies, as they manifested through attacks on local government, see Matthew Potter, *The Municipal Revolution in Ireland: A Handbook of Urban Government in Ireland since 1800*. Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2011. Print.

Free State Minister for Justice, to replace those revolutionaries who had found positions inside the state machinery with middle-class professionals who had not participated, or only participated briefly, in the fighting of 1916 – 1921. As Regan explains, revolution had 'created an exciting meritocratic flux where raw talent had an opportunity to advance itself free of class, social or employment conventions' (247), but now that the revolution had passed, the pre-revolutionary social elite sought to claw back their dispossessed power. There was, to be sure, an element of realism to this replacement. As Regan explains, it had been 'the middle class's desire for stability [which] had been crucial in getting the treaty accepted in 1922' (148). It now made sense to turn that class into the supporter base of Cumann na nGaedheal, the party which was to carry out the work of consolidating and legitimating the Free State.

This realism was highly convenient for its beneficiaries. Reversing the social consequences of the revolution's 'meritocratic flux' involved a partial restoration to power of those who had thrown their lot in with the Home Rule party, the dominant political force in Irish politics until its dismemberment in the 1918 General Election. While the Home Rule party itself could not be reconstituted, the Cumann na nGaedheal counter-revolution did involve returning many of its supporters to power. O'Higgins, despite having fought in the revolution, identified himself with 'the risen Irish nationalist middle-class elite, which had emerged through politics and the professions in the nineteenth century' (Regan 87), but which had been wrongfooted by the Easter Rising and left out of the Irish political scene thereafter. In a study of the UCD student body between 1879 and 1922, Senia Pašeta has argued that historians have neglected this 'Catholic university intelligensia' (2) which had been 'self-consciously preparing itself for important roles in a Home Rule Ireland' (3). The 'constitutional mind' (150) of these graduates had 'dominated nationalist politics before the momentous changes initiated by the European War' (150) brought militant republicanism to the forefront. For Regan, however, it was precisely this generation which Cumann na nGaedheal were now restoring to power. Cumann na nGaedheal conservatives such O'Higgins or Desmond FitzGerald saw this restoration, in part, as a rejection of nationalist and revolutionary pieties by common sense and practical ability.[2] The implicit position of this counter-revolution was that what had been missing in Ireland, before 1916, had been

[2] For instance, Regan quotes O'Higgins, in a letter to a Mrs Powell, defending his support for Patrick McGilligan on the basis that despite having 'no particular "record" and no "Gaelic soul", [McGilligan] ha[d] done more in two weeks than his predecessor in two years' (245). O'Higgins's point was that these non-revolutionary men, deemed to be hard-headed realists, 'could do more for the country in a year … than all the Clans and Brotherhoods could effect in a generation' (245).

an Irish parliament. This achieved, there was no need for further revolutionary activity, and it was a source of some regret that revolutionary activity had been required at all.[3]

This regret did not merely manifest in a reassertion of the rule of a particular class. Counter-revolutionary distaste for the revolution expanded into an ideology of recrimination directed against the violent activity which had produced independence in the first place. This recrimination focused on the Civil War, which had, Regan explains, 'shattered perceptions of the super gael, Catholic purity and national superiority' (181). Having turned on one another in 1922, the Irish had 'conformed to the worst prejudices of British imperialist and unionist opinion' (264). Once the Civil War was over, the Irish people were deemed by the counter-revolutionaries as needing to prove their virtue all over again. O'Higgins himself wrote that 'the savage primitive passion to wreck and loot and level' (*Three Years* 7) had seized Ireland during the Civil War and even the War of Independence. Now, the Irish would have to demonstrate their ability to 'think and work and legislate and administer in accordance with the requirements of our own problems' (11). The counter-revolutionaries were distancing themselves from the very methods which had brought them to power, arguing that they had now become statesmen atoning for the errors of the past.[4] Indeed, the tenor of this counter-revolutionary journey towards civilian life and away from violent action became, Regan says, a 'moral crusade' (181). That the Irish were civil and stately had to be demonstrated. Furthermore, in the eyes of the counter-revolution, as the agents of the 'savage primitive passion' which had shamed Ireland were the revolutionaries themselves, the reassertion of middle-class power was understood as a moral victory won by civilisation over barbarism.

Kate O'Brien as a product of bourgeoisie

Kate O'Brien's place within this counter-revolution is complex. On the one hand, her work found little favour within the state establishment, evidenced in the banning of *Mary Lavelle* and *The Land of Spices*. On the other, however, O'Brien was a member of the bourgeoisie

[3] The counter-revolutionary emphasis on the creation of a parliament as the sole goal of political struggle was identified by Michael Hayes, Ceann Comhairle from 1922 to 1932, who complained of O'Higgins that 'he didn't understand what it [the revolution] was all about … he reduced it to the notion of the Irish people getting a parliament' (qtd in Regan 87).

[4] The problem of attempting to separate the state from the violence which created it was a problem which would never be solved. As has often been noted, the Northern Irish Troubles and the return of the I.R.A. to prominence, created the contradiction whereby southern politicians were condemning the same actions which had brought about their own polity.

now coming to power in Ireland and her work, with the exception of the historical novel *That Lady*, was a thorough exploration of the political, social, intellectual, and personal predicaments of her class. Born in 1897 to a middle-class Limerick family, her family's wealth and status, Eibhear Walshe explains, had been earned by her 'grandfather and father [who] made money from horses, educated their sons with the Jesuits in Limerick and moved class from evicted tenant farmer to solid bourgeoisie' (3). O'Brien's family, then, rose quickly in the nineteenth-century, having only found 'a place within the culture of th[e] bourgeois world' (6) in her grandparents' lifetime. O'Brien was very much a member of Regan's 'risen Irish nationalist middle-class elite' (87). In her education, too, O'Brien's life demonstrates affinities to those who came to power after 1922. Initially educated in Limerick at the Laurel Hill convent, a location which would inspire the convent portrayed in *The Land of Spices*, O'Brien studied at UCD from 1916 to 1919, that training ground for the most successful of the Catholic middle-class in both politics and art, as Pašeta demonstrates. Despite the intense politicisation of life at UCD, however, Walshe and others have drawn attention to the absence of these experiences from O'Brien's work.[5] As Walshe has it, O'Brien's 'attention was focused on the recreation of her lost world, the Limerick bourgeoisie, and on her imaginative connection with Europe' (22) and 'however much she enjoyed the experience of university life, the national struggle held little interest for her as a writer' (22).

O'Brien's background, then, was that of the middle-class which came to power after 1922. O'Brien herself, however, did not participate in this rise in any immediate way. Offered a position in the new state's Foreign Ministry by Harry Boland in 1922, O'Brien stated that she was 'not keen enough on the new government to wish my hand to become its servant' (qtd in Walshe 28). The Free State work of elevating those of the Catholic bourgeoisie who had been somehow disinherited by the revolution, then, was not sufficiently attractive to O'Brien. Instead, she worked as a journalist in London, while also spending some time as a governess in the Basque Country, publishing some theatre in the late 1920s before publishing her first novel, *Without My Cloak*, in 1931. After the success of this, O'Brien was able to dedicate herself to writing fulltime, publishing *The Ante-Room* in 1934, *Mary Lavelle* in 1936, *Pray for the Wanderer* in 1938, and *The Land of Spices* in 1941. *Mary Lavelle* and *The Land of Spices* were both banned in Ireland by the Censorship Board, the latter as a consequence of the novel's single reference to homosexuality. For the Censorship Board, the sentence

[5] O'Brien does not appear to have been heavily involved in this political scene at UCD and Walshe's description of her time at university, making 'a virtue of her new-found slackness as a student' (22) and being 'contemptuous of the poor standard of Irish being taught' (23), suggests her experience of university had similarities to Brian O'Nolan's.

'she saw Etienne and her father, in the embrace of love' (165) was outrageous enough to justify banning. This ban was overturned after an extended campaign and did not severely impede O'Brien's writing, which continued consistently into the 1950s. After the 1958 novel *As Music and Splendour*, however, O'Brien published no more novels, continuing to produce travelogues, journalism, and memoirs, with a final work, *Constancy*, in only an early stage at her death in 1974.[6]

This biography can suggest that, although O'Brien was born into the class which inherited power in 1922, she rejected it – as evidenced in her refusal of Boland's offer – while her class, eventually, rejected her, through censorship. This has led many critics to interpret O'Brien as a renegade from class and country. Despite this, no critic has been able to ignore O'Brien's imaginative interest in 'her lost world, the Limerick bourgeoisie' (Walshe 22). Reynolds, for instance, argues that O'Brien's major success lay in her use of 'new material – the educated, middle-class of Ireland during the end of the last century and the beginning of this, and especially the girls and women of that class' (131) in her novels. What Reynolds calls O'Brien's 'originality' (131) lies in her accounts of these women in their 'struggle to escape from the lot of women everywhere – the condition of being the passive victims of the social mores of the time' (131).[7] Adele Dalsimer makes a similar argument in suggesting that O'Brien, as an 'upper-middle-class Catholic' (59), explored 'the shortcomings of middle-class Irish Catholic life' (34). For Dalsimer, O'Brien 'presents and preserves the world that gave rise to her fiction' (6), particularly in early works such as *Without My Cloak*. Rejecting the opportunity to be its representative in politics, O'Brien chose to be its representative in literature, exploring the situations encountered by women negotiating the strictures of a bourgeois and Catholic world.

[6] Walshe attributes this reduction in O'Brien's production relocate to Connemara in 1950, living there for ten years in conditions which left her 'isolated and poor' (132), in ill-health, and severed from the creative relationships which had sustained her creatively. As O'Brien's late career does not fall within the scope of this essay, this partial silence will not be greatly examined. It is interesting, however, to note in passing that while their careers are in many respects quite different, O'Brien shares with O'Nolan the fate of having suffered a partial, but terminal, decline in post-war Ireland.

[7] Walshe provides a more finessed version of this argument by suggesting that while O'Brien does have precursors in 'Maria Edgeworth, George Moore and Somerville and Ross' (76), these writers had worked 'from the perspective of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy' (76). Hence, 'in many of these writings, the emergent Irish Catholic bourgeoisie was depicted either as lovably idiotic or else as grasping, unscrupulous and vulgar' (76). In other words, what was new in O'Brien was that this class was being granted a positive portrayal.

Moral crusade and counter-revolution from Ireland

To say that O'Brien came from and wrote about the class which was the agent of counter-revolution in Free State Ireland is of only limited value. It indicates the political direction of the class O'Brien portrays and cannot be said to establish any strong link between O'Brien and counter-revolution. Ironically, we can develop a sense of this connection by examining the most extreme intellectual expressions of counter-revolution, those which produced the austere near-theocracy which O'Brien's work criticised. A useful source here is P.S. O'Hegarty's 1924 *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How it won it, and how it used it*, a work Regan suggests 'amplified' (181) the concerns and thoughts of treatyite politics. We have seen that counter-revolution in Ireland sought to reverse the importance of violent action in politics, reasserting the authority of constitutional and legal methods, and deploring the use of violence. O'Hegarty certainly amplified these concerns, declaring Ireland had 'derided the Moral Law, and said there was no law but the law of force. And the moral law answered us. Every devilish thing we did … boomeranged and smote us ten-fold' (125). The consequence of this had been 'a general moral weakening and a general degradation and a general cynicism and disbelief in either virtue or decency, in goodness or uprightness or honesty' (125). For O'Hegarty, the anti-Treatyites 'drove patriotism and honesty and morality out of Ireland' (125).

The use of violence, said O'Hegarty, had led to the moral collapse of Irish society. Such an extreme anti-revolutionary position led friends such as novelist Francis Hackett to question whether 'O'Hegarty has a mind' (qtd in Regan 181), but O'Hegarty's concern as to 'whether any ordered or settled Irish Government was possible' (141) expressed in dramatic language the problem felt to be facing the Free State. O'Hegarty's concern that revolutionary violence had destroyed Ireland's moral case for self-government found echoes throughout the Free State government. Ernest Blythe, for instance, declared the Irish an 'untrained and undisciplined people with practically everything to learn of the difficult business of organising national life on a stable basis' (qtd in Garvin 60), while O'Higgins argued that, of the 'two conditions … attach[ed] to a people's right to the fullest self-government – a desire on their part to undertake their government and a fitness for that responsibility' (*Three Years* 4), Ireland had not yet satisfied the latter. For those of this conservative persuasion, any problem in Ireland could be traced back to the deployment of violence. O'Hegarty argued that physical-force nationalism had caused Ireland to become 'degenerated morally and spiritually' (179), experiencing 'a grave increase in sexual immorality, and a general

abandonment to levity and dissipation' (179). Complaining that 'jazz dancing, joy rides, fétes, and bazaars have never built a civilisation, and never will build one' (180), O'Hegarty came to argue that Sinn Féin's potential as an 'unselfish and spiritual and constructive movement' (171) had been squandered by military action. A satisfactory Irish society having not appeared after independence, O'Hegarty found the fault to lie in the abandonment of constructive methods.

I will argue that O'Brien too was concerned with the sort of society being constructed in Ireland and saw it in a manner similar to that of the counter-revolutionaries. However, it must be noted that O'Brien cannot be neatly assimilated to the counter-revolutionary position. O'Hegarty, seeking to explain how the catastrophe of civil war had occurred, laid considerable blame upon republican women, writing that:

> the women who were connected with the Volunteers … became practically unsexed, their mother's milk blackened to make gunpowder, their minds working on nothing save hate and blood … having taken sides, the women at once proceeded to worsen the situation … the women were the implacable and irrational upholders of death and destruction. They never understood the political situation and they never tried to understand it' (102-104)

O'Hegarty's attack on republican women as having plunged Ireland into destruction through their renunciation of their traditional roles was one which found support throughout Free State politics, even if it was not often phrased as graphically. Rosemary Cullen Owens, using language similar to Regan's, describes how 'the Irish [Catholic] hierarchy's revulsion against the anarchy and breakdown of social and familial bonds during the civil war was a strong element in determining the shape and ethos of the Irish Free State' (259). A general opposition developed against Irish society providing 'a public role for women' (276), an opposition found as much within Fianna Fáil as Cumann na nGaedheal.[8] Both political parties, in attempting to develop an independent Ireland for the Free State, created one

[8] We can cite as evidence of this shared dislike of women's participation in public life two bills, the 1927 Juries Act and the 1935 Conditions of Employment Act. The former bill, which sought to restrict the right of women to serve on juries, was defended by O'Higgins. The latter, brought by Sean Lemass, proposed a range of restrictions of women in employment, pushing women out of industrial work as a means of protecting the wages of male labourers. For Lemass, applying the application of the principle 'equal pay for equal work' to male and female labourers would 'result in a general disimprovement of the conditions of employment of male workers' (Lemass) rather than an improvement in the lot of women.

which provided a severely limited form of freedom for Irish women. Interpreting Ireland's deployment of violence to be, in major part, the fault of politically-active women, a redeemed Ireland was understood to be one where women took no part. When Regan writes that 'the collapse of the revolution was [seen] in terms of the Fall' (181), we can see the accuracy of such a remark. Revolutionary action and violence were gendered as feminine, thus also making the more conservative civic politics of Cumann na nGaedheal masculine. The radicality of republican women was understood to be the most extreme expression of the general failing of the Irish and, as such, was felt to require a more severe reaction.

Subversion and reconciliation in O'Brien criticism

Faced with the seeming incompatibility between a patriarchal and authoritarian state and a feminist and individualist author, critics of O'Brien have often argued that her work launches attacks on the Irish state. Walshe describes O'Brien as 'a subversive' (2), rightly pointing out that O'Brien's novels 'smuggl[ed] in forbidden topics, such as adultery, lesbianism and venereal disease through the medium of her civilised, graceful narratives' (2). Mary Breen has talked about the 'radical and subversive critique' (167) of Ireland found in *The Land of Spices*, while Lorna Reynolds has claimed that O'Brien 'detested the complacent self-regarding, Puritanic pietism of the thirties and forties in Ireland and saw it as an aberration from the great European tradition of Catholicism' (131). For Adele Dalsimer, O'Brien's 'novels … tell a single tale: one writer's struggle to flee the forces that would crush her gifts and impede her self-expression' (xvi), and Ailbhe Smyth has described O'Brien as 'strik[ing] out… towards freedom' (34). O'Brien's novels, so these critics say, explore the work of achieving one's independence in the face of social pressures which seek to manage individuality, renouncing any claim Ireland has over the individual.

Some critics have sought to complicate this reading of O'Brien as a subversive celebrating the individual's battle against the Irish state. Anne Fogarty, for instance, has argued that O'Brien's 'novels are compelling because they are misshapen, open-ended and lacunary' (101). For Fogarty, the complexities of O'Brien's identification with a class which rejected her is staged throughout her work, as, 'no matter how much Kate O'Brien's heroines succeed in dissociating themselves from the story of the Irish family romance, they remain lodged within its confines' (116). O'Brien's novels, says Fogarty, conclude by placing their characters in a position where they are 'torn between their private unease with the world and their need for the security and happiness of human fellowship' (102). O'Brien's characters,

so Fogarty argues, do not escape at all and are instead obliged to reconcile themselves with their situation. Fogarty, then, disturbs the idea of O'Brien as a subversive by arguing that her novels conclude with characters who 'remain lodged within [the] confines' (116) of the bourgeois family. This is open to some contestation, as *Mary Lavelle*, at least, ends with its protagonist choosing to leave her husband, her family, and even Ireland, without making any decision about what she will do next. With that said, Fogarty is quite right to note that O'Brien is not dramatizing unproblematic or heroic breaks. While her characters 'shape themselves through a quarrel with their social environment' (102), this quarrel is not one-sided and this social environment is never rejected outright. This ambivalence in O'Brien has been mapped by Cronin, who argues that 'to describe O'Brien's politics as radical or subversive is seriously to underestimate the strength of her commitment to bourgeois liberalism' (32). The model of individuality O'Brien endorses, so Cronin's reading goes, is 'in step with the gradualist, counter-revolutionary value-system shared by many liberal and conservative intellectuals at that time' (33). Although agreeing that 'O'Brien launches an assault from within on the prevailing public morality discourses' (51), Cronin insists that her criticism 'is fundamentally underpinned by nineteenth-century bourgeois liberalism' (51). Certain ideas of what an individual is and how she should behave are being retained from the class O'Brien is supposedly rebelling against.

There was an element of contradiction within this counter-revolutionary thought, inasmuch as it sought to simultaneously value the individual, in opposition to the mob, but was also, in practice, an adherent of state centralisation. The individual could be civic, but not cultural. As Cronin explains, the ideology of the counter-revolution allowed the individual to make class or civic identifications but, in more extreme manifestations such as were found in O'Higgins, opposed identifying the individual with nationalist ideas.[9] Reading, for instance, *The Land of Spices*, Cronin finds that although the novel can portray Helen Archer finding a 'productive reconciliation between her commitment to the liberal values of personal freedom and "detachment" … and the collective commitment of being part of a religious order' (49), it ends with 'the idea of commitment to a project of national

[9] This awkwardness within counter-revolutionary thought is clear in James Hogan's 1935 *Could Ireland Become Communist? The Facts of the Case*, which argued that 'the spirit of state idolatry' (15) was most apparent in nationalist thought. For Hogan, 'ultra nationalism' (15) 'look[ed] to the State as the be-all and end-all of human activity' (15). Hogan was here seeking to oppose 'civic' to 'totalitarian' modes and while such an argument was fair enough in itself, it did not really respond to the political situation in Ireland. It was Cumann na nGaedheal who had failed to introduce civic or republic politics into Ireland and, while they had not produced totalitarianism, Hogan's own sympathy for Franco in Spain revealed he was far closer to the Falange than he was to any republican spirit.

development [being] entirely anathema to her liberal values' (49). O'Brien's position is 'the radical counter-revolutionary position that the roots of Ireland's failures in the 1930s and 1940s do not lie in a "wrong turning" sometime after 1922, but were inherent in cultural nationalism from the outset' (49). The battle fought in O'Brien's novels is too complex to be rendered as a battle between Free State and sovereign individual. O'Brien is aware that the individuals she describes have roots in and are determined by Ireland's Catholic and nationalist bourgeoisie. The question O'Brien asks instead is what is of value in these traditions and what must be abandoned.

O'Brien's early works: *Without My Cloak* and *The Ante-Room*

To explore O'Brien's response to these questions, I will begin by looking at O'Brien's first two novels, *Without My Cloak* and *The Ante-Room*, before turning to later works, *Mary Lavelle* and *The Land of Spices*. This is because O'Brien's debut novels stand distinct from the rest of her work in that, as Walshe notes, these are the only novels of O'Brien's in which 'the central character fails to sever her ties with family and country' (22). *Without My Cloak* and *The Ante-Room* both end with their central characters resolved to live in Ireland, although the nature of these resolutions differ extraordinarily between the two texts. *Without My Cloak* concludes by satisfying the more bourgeois desire of its characters, as the main character marries well and settles down to a compromised, but more-or-less satisfying life. By contrast, *The Ante-Room* ends with tragedy, as the main character chooses a life of self-denying religious devotion rather than pursue a forbidden love. *The Ante-Room*, then, provides a conclusion as different from *Without My Cloak* as from *Mary Lavelle*. There is an evolution, rather than revolution, in O'Brien's thought, but to track this change it is useful to explore the different ways O'Brien imagined reconciliation with Ireland, before she began to imagine rebellion against it.

Without My Cloak is a story of several generations of a bourgeois Limerick family which both Dalsimer and Vivian Mercier have compared to John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*. Parallels to European novels such as the work of Honoré de Balzac or Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* can also be suggested. After a brief prologue which describes the appearance of Anthony Considine, a 'horse-thief' (5) in the town of Mellick, the novel explores three subsequent generations of the Considine family. Anthony's son, 'Honest John', appears as an aging patriarch, the 'autocratic owner of "John Considine's", the most extensive forage dealer and exporter in Ireland and one of the wealthiest men in the south' (15-16), watching

over the struggles of his adult children to balance love and security. As John passes from the narrative, focus turns to his son Anthony, inheritor of the family business, who experiences his own struggles to keep his beloved, but renegade, son Denis within the family, as Denis attempts to pursue artistic dreams and chases a socially-scandalous affair. The novel's interest, as Dalsimer writes, 'is the merciless encroachment of social position and religion o[n] emotions and human relations' (5). First John's children, and then Anthony's, are forced to reconcile their own desires with the ambitions of their family firm to maintain and develop its power within the Limerick bourgeoisie.

Whereas *Without My Cloak* is a story of generations, spanning almost a century, *The Ante-Room* covers only three days. A sequel of sorts to *Without My Cloak*, the novel explores the struggles of Agnes Mulqueen – niece to Anthony, through her mother Teresa – to overcome her love for Vincent, husband to her sister Marie-Rose.[10] Agnes, a devout Catholic who, Dalsimer explains, experiences 'Irish Catholicism as an inner, psychological dynamic rather than an external social force' (21), is shown to alternate between drawing on these religious resources to overcome her love, and giving herself over to Vincent. As this romance proceeds, she is also courted by the local doctor, Dr. Curran, while her brother Reggie, infected by syphilis and housebound, is courted in a more prosaic, economistic manner by the family nurse, Nurse Cunningham. While *Without My Cloak* is not without doomed romances, *The Ante-Room* is more severe in suggesting that romance and happiness, the latter meaning social and familial satisfaction, are opposites. Denis ultimately marries the entirely middle-class Anna Hennessy; by contrast, *The Ante-Room* ends with Vincent's suicide, Agnes having rejected his love entirely.

As noted by Fogarty, O'Brien's work is constituted out of a fusion of romance and realism. If these chaotic romances serve to portray 'the "imperious charge" of … private desire' (116), surrounding these is a bourgeois social context O'Brien takes great care to develop. Historical events, Irish and international, appear as pressures throughout the novels. Even *The Ante-Room*, more narrow in its historical focus, makes room for an argument about the Land League and the rights and wrongs of boycotting. *Without My Cloak* describes how 'political agitators … the Potato Blight … the Crimean War … [and] the Indian Mutiny' (15) were all obstacles 'Honest John' has steered his company beyond. We

[10] Teresa and her husband Danny, a board member at Considine's, appear as background characters throughout *Without My Cloak*. The events of *The Ante-Room* are briefly foreshadowed towards the end of *Without My Cloak*, with the narration describing how Agnes 'aged twenty-two now … had fallen in love with her sister's fiancé' (424). Vincent's reciprocal love, however, is not mentioned, although the narration does wonder, perhaps with irony, how he 'could have overlooked all [Agnes's] splendours' (424)

also find the America Civil War to be another context within which the family acts. Notably, however, this is merely an economic, and not a moral or political, context. 'Honest John', we are told, 'hailed that war with callous pleasure, foreseeing that American trade would not ride the sea very easily while it lasted' (107). The callous attitude towards historical events is already in evidence in the association of political agitation and the Great Famine as merely equivalent problems for a family business. As far as politics goes, we are told that 'political feeling never ran high in Considine blood' (43), beyond Honest John's 'enthusiasm … for Dan O'Connell, "the Liberator," as he unfailingly called him' (15). That history only exists for the Considines insofar as it allows them to enrich and empower themselves is embodied even in the Considine family home, built on the 'estate of River Hill, which had been on the market since its house had been blown up in '48' (32). O'Brien's bourgeoisie is not political. Its interests are family, wealth, and status, not necessarily in that order, and political action is only relevant insofar as it aids one of these.

Romance and reconciliation in *Without My Cloak*

Taking up about half of the novel's length, the principle romantic drama in *Without My Cloak* is the love affair between Denis Considine and Christina Roche, a peasant woman of no social standing. Before this drama, however, the novel describes a less dramatic affair between Caroline Lanigan, one of 'Honest John's' daughters and wife to Jim, and the Englishman Richard Froude. Caroline, introduced as someone seeking 'to put her life in order' (97) through marriage, is found to have married poorly and has become repulsed from having any sexual contact with Jim. Jim, 'dumbly happy in the possession' (86) of Caroline, is entirely unfitted to the problem, 'belong[ing] chronologically and in spirit to a time when the sexual problems of marriage had to be left dumbly to darkness and the night' (87). Caroline's repulsion anticipates the sexually-charged dilemmas of later O'Brien characters and problematics, but whereas later novels explored escape from the middle-class, *Without My Cloak* explores reconciliation with it. Having travelled to England to be with Richard, Caroline is drawn back into her Limerick home by memories of 'her father … her religion and her children' (193). Bound 'by her sex and training and tradition' (193), Caroline retires from the affair and from personal happiness.

Caroline, then, is unable to surmount the determining pressures her society places upon her. These pressures are, however, intensified by her family. We are told that it was impossible for her brother Anthony to think 'to set his sister Caroline above his surname.

They could be kind, but she must be submissive' (159). Caroline is not understood to possess independence. Denis's case is quite different. The favoured son of his father Anthony, Denis is intended by father and grandfather to 'be third chairman of Considine's' (238), thus continuing the family line within their business. This familial determination, however, is alleviated by the 'secret thread of love that ran from [Denis] to his father' (106). Denis, who finds 'the putting on of manliness … both wearisome and frightening' (232), dreams instead of being 'an architect of gardens' (233). He is allowed by his father to remodel the grounds of the house Anthony has built for his family, in the face of disagreement from Anthony's siblings. Even when his son's affair is uncovered, Anthony offers some defence of his son to the local priest, thus 'signalling his love to Denis' (365). Denis, then, has measures of freedom which are denied to his aunt Caroline, while Anthony himself is able to behave with greater freedom than society expects him to, such is his love for his son.

The scandal that is Denis's affair, however, is severe, and O'Brien goes to great lengths to demonstrate the class distance between Christina and Denis. Christina belongs to 'what [Denis's] relations called "the lower orders"' (290), being the illegitimate daughter of an aristocrat father and a mother dead in childbirth and amounting in adult life only to 'a peasant girl in a cheap stained cotton dress' (290). As she is 'without a penny of fortune, her chances of marriage among the small, respectable farmers round about were non-existent' (293) and, although well-liked among her community, 'even a common labouring man … would look for a girl with five pounds, maybe, or a cow, before he'd court Christina' (293). Anthony imagines her to be 'the bastard of a scullery maid – stupid, quiet, unremarkable, out of a thatched cottage; illiterate, spiritless, rough with farm slavery' (366) and so on. To Denis, however, she is 'someone older and wiser than he had guessed, in whom a habit of courage and purity had called up aristocratic grace' (307). If she is maligned by Denis's family, Christina is idealised by Denis, an idealisation which facilitates the beginning of a sexual relationship. Nonetheless, her class background proves crucial, as the affair is broken up after its discovery by the local priest, who organises to have Christina emigrate to America to spare further scandal.

What we can see here is the problematic O'Brien wishes to explore and which remains central to her novels for the entirety of her career. For Dalsimer, 'one of [O'Brien's] most persistent and passionate themes [is] the costs as well as the rewards of ardent familial attachments' (22). Walshe provides a somewhat similar reading in suggesting that O'Brien 'believed in freedom in art and freedom of the individual imagination, yet, conversely, she admired the surrender of self that Catholicism demanded' (119). For Walshe, 'somewhere

between these two contradictory beliefs, Kate O'Brien created her Catholic characters' (119). Certainly, these tensions are evident in Anthony's reaction to his son's affair. If, on the one hand, Anthony's familial attachment to his son leads him to strike, if only very briefly, against the Church he receives his morals from, investment in his family's success leads him to appreciate that the Church has intervened and, so he believes, saved his son from ruin. Aware of the pain which Christina's exile has inflicted upon his son, Anthony nonetheless 'applauded the swift and ruthless cunning with which a source of folly had been removed from the Considine path' (365). Caroline, whose attachment to her family, class, and religion is strong enough to overwhelm love, serves as another example of Dalsimer's argument. Romance, in *Without My Cloak*, is never allowed untangle the family web, although this is often ensured through underhanded or 'ruthless' means. Denis complains that 'we own one another here' (435), as each member of the family, although shown to have their own desires, is subordinate to the larger family unit.

Admittedly, whereas Caroline goes unsatisfied, Denis is provided with a happier ending. Christina being lost, and Denis being resolved to leave Mellick and his family, Denis's relationship with the Considines is repaired by the appearance of Anna Hennessy, daughter of John Aloysius, who 'stood for the autocracy of wealth and the supremacy of the bourgeoisie' (452). Anna is a woman 'whose mind worked sensitively and critically' (456), just as Denis's does, and who will not 'be content in the genteel, virginal idleness that filled the days of her contemporaries' (457). She is, in other words, a perfect personal and social match for Denis and he immediately falls in love with her. For Walshe, this eleventh-hour solution to the problem of love and social responsibility amounts to a 'failure of nerve' (53) on O'Brien's part. O'Brien, Walshe suggests, was 'not yet ready to break with the conformities of her Irish middle-class world' (53). Certainly, Anna provides Denis with an entirely unambivalent solution to the dilemma which has confronted each other member of his family, that of the choice between duty and desire. With that said, while *Without My Cloak* does avoid the possibility of breaking from middle-class Ireland, it does not avoid the possibility of a different type of break, and, here, it is necessary to turn to the other side of Denis's doomed love, Christina Roche.

Modernity and emigration in nineteenth-century Ireland

Although Denis's relationship with Christina is initially broken up by Father Tom, this is carried out under Tom's mistaken assumption that the affair has not become sexual. Having

discovered the truth, the Considine family do concede 'to receive a bastard maidservant as one of themselves' (374). This gesture, carried through with reluctance, fails however when Denis, reuniting with Christina in New York, finds that she no longer wishes to return to him or to Ireland. Christina, introduced as someone who 'found ease in the quiet ways and places of her childhood' (292) and whose 'religion sufficiently explained' (294) life, is found to have been transformed by her experiences in America. Feeling 'that a great deal of nonsense was talked about the dangers of city life' (404), Christina finds New York to be 'negotiable' (405), an invigorating city 'whirl[ing] with passion towards some greedy ruthless dream that no one seemed to have time to explain' (405). Although 'shocked by the squalor in which she had to work' (404), it proves 'possible to walk safely among the wolves, keeping one's own thoughts … she discovered too that the harbour where the sea came up bearing ships was at midnight full of peace' (405). Having once been 'frightened beyond reason when her aunt spoke coaxingly of the fairy gift of emigration' (292), Christina is able to acclimatise to modern urban life. Although retaining her religious devotions, and still capable of suffering a 'wound [to] her Irish puritanism' (404), she is transformed. Notably, when she rejects Denis's overtures, she believes herself to be 'giv[ing] him what Anthony Considine could not – freedom' (411). Having once 'had no particular ambitions' (293), Christina has become a partisan for personal freedom. Furthermore, she has chosen to do so in America, the so-called 'New World', suggesting that modernity is better found outside Ireland, away from one's roots.

The ecstatic language used to describe Christina's experience of New York, with its references to a city which 'whirled with passion', and the attention paid to the liberating-but-dangerous quality of the freedom the modern city offers, can usefully be explored with reference to Marshall Berman's account of modernity and influential literary depictions of it. Berman, in his 1982 work *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, argues for there being 'a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils' (15) that should be understood as the experience of modernity. Modernity, Berman says, is a 'paradoxical unity' (15) which 'pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish' (15) and has been best represented in literature, he argues, by 'the dynamic and dialectical modernism of the nineteenth century' (35). Goethe, Marx, Baudelaire, and Dostoevsky are Berman's major examples of this, these being thinkers who 'were simultaneously enthusiasts and enemies of modern life, wrestling inexhaustibly with its ambiguities and contradictions' (24). Berman's point is that modernity is an experience of contradiction. Modernity produces a

freedom which liberates the individual from the stasis of rural life, but this freedom in turn destroys the securities and certainties which came with that life. Modern society lacks certainty and must be endured, fought, and mastered. 'Nobody in bourgeois society can be so pure or safe or free' (119) and the task presented to the modern individual is to master these circumstances.

Certainly, this emphasis on modern impurity is found in *Without My Cloak*. Christina repeatedly remembers her love with Denis as occurring in a 'Vale of Honey' (407), a trope reused in *Mary Lavelle* to describe activity in a Flying Column. Christina's modern present is contrasted to her Edenic past, but she nonetheless chooses that flawed present for her home. Hence, we do find in *Without My Cloak* a portrayal of a break from Irish society, with the caveat that it is carried through by a peasant character and not by one of O'Brien's far more commonly represented middle-class. Although the idea of a break is being entertained, it is also being kept at a distance from the preferred subject of O'Brien's novels. With that said, there are good historical reasons for O'Brien's decision here. Marjorie Howes has noted that 'Irish migration patterns were virtually unique worldwide because the number of women migrating equalled or exceeded the number of men' (84). Whereas 'Irishmen migrated voluntarily and then later came to see migration as forced exile' (84), Irishwomen 'left Ireland more willingly and with less emotional trauma than men' (84). Christina, then, is a representative of a historical trend of Irish emigrant women embracing modernity. Howes describes how 'the major personal and cultural meanings of female migration were organized around women's sexuality, women's labour, and upward economic mobility' (86). Migration, for women, was to be thrown into modernity, while men, raised to work the land, experienced it as exile. Christina, then, if she anticipates the fate of characters in O'Brien's later fiction, also ties this fate to a broader historical trend of Irish migration.

Uncertainty and the retreat from reality in *The Ante-Room*

As noted above, *The Ante-Room* is a distinctly different work from *Without My Cloak*, although the two novels can and have been seen to be united in their lack of interest in portraying a break from middle-class Ireland. We have seen Dalsimer's point that, unlike in *Without My Cloak*, *The Ante-Room* portrays 'Irish Catholicism as an inner, psychological dynamic rather than an external social force' (21). This is true, and will be examined below, but we can also say the same for the portrayal of modernity. The experience of a radically uncertain, transformative world in *Without My Cloak* becomes, in *The Ante-Room*, a philosophical and

psychological struggle. Vincent, attempting to explain his love for Agnes, declares that 'nothing is fixed. Nothing is what it appeared a moment ago to be' (126), while Agnes wonders 'what was one to make of a day, an hour, which at one minute seemed child's play, and at the next became fantastic in its painfulness' (142). Agnes worries too that the 'once so solid life' (135) of her house at Roseholm has collapsed, with 'change … very busily at work now upon the changelessness' (134-135) her home had once represented. This sense of an uncertain world where secure values risk vanishing into a radical unknown is given explicit voice in a conversation between Vincent and Dr. Curran as to whether there is a '*status quo*' (126), political or philosophical, which should be respected. Vincent argues that one can break from one's inherited identity, arguing that a man 'can detach himself from those others he was born with' (127) – that is, those beliefs he was born into – while Curran insists that one's 'labels' (126) – i.e., Catholic, Irishman, homeowner – are one's permanent identity. Agnes herself avoids committing to one side of this debate, offering a qualified support to Curran's position, but feeling that Vincent's scoffing response to Curran 'was her own' (128).

Curran, as Gerardine Meaney argues, represents 'those [who will] define the territorial and philosophical boundaries of the new Ireland' (69). He is, the novel tells us, a 'Victorian bourgeois, rationalist … eager to harness feeling into usefulness' (57). Love is an intense psychic experience for Agnes and Vincent, as it was for Denis, Christina, and Caroline, whereas Curran 'deplored the mischief which the amorous instinct had done and continued to do to the human race' (55). He finds women 'hardly more important to him than so many decorative toys' (55). It is this incapacity for passion which thwarts his ambition to marry Agnes. She finds that 'in William Curran's arms she had not felt natural' (249), his kiss being 'an anaesthetic' (250). Faced with an uncertain world, Curran erects boundaries against it using his learning, for instance taking 'prayer as a matter of course' (67) and believing that 'the Catholic Church provided as good a system as might be found for keeping the human animal in order' (67). In a novel that wishes to explore Catholicism as a 'inner, psychological dynamic' (Dalsimer 21), Curran represents a bookish insulation from those realities Catholicism is to wrestle with. As Meaney puts it, this 'conservatism and dogmatism … [is] rooted in insecurity' (69). Curran registers the presence of uncertainty, but negatively, through the formulaic and, ultimately, self-defeating attitude he takes towards life.

Curran's failure to confront uncertainty, represented most viscerally in his failure to appear a satisfying prospect to Agnes, is only one of several failures found in the novel. Vincent himself is shown to be as insulated and protected as Curran, albeit through different

means. Vincent, we are told, was as a child and young man greatly attached to his mother until her death, 'the only human creature who could rouse the discomfort of great feeling in him' (100). Deprived of his mother, Vincent is described as becoming 'more than ever neutral towards the rest of life' (100) and has 'remained detached from actuality' (101) until his discovery of his love for Agnes. As he commits suicide, his thoughts turn back to his mother and he dies with 'his thoughts far off in boyhood' (306), remembering his 'darling mother' (306). Dalsimer finds that 'Vincent's suicide in *The Ante-Room* suggest[s]: a life predicated in the past is doomed' (32), or, to put it another way, a life that rejects the present is doomed. Vincent's weakness in the face of reality is starkly drawn when, Agnes having rejected their love, we are told that he 'could not do without what he could never have' (274). Agnes, the heroine, by contrast 'could not do without what she must never have' (273). Agnes is capable of acknowledging that there is an order she cannot trespass, whereas Vincent cannot grasp why their love has failed.

An incapacity to cope with modern life is most explicitly thematised in the portrait of Agnes's syphilitic brother, Reggie. Having become ill, Reggie has returned to live at home under the doting care of Teresa, his mother. Teresa has dedicated herself to 'ten years of bulwarking' (21) and has 'built for her wasted son a life that was safe from life' (19). Reggie, in effect, has been completely insulated from life beyond the walls and familial relations of his house, his only companion in life being his mother. This arrangement is looked on with pity and disgust by his sister Agnes, who recognises that this 'long chain of small unselfishness' (21) organised by her mother, is 'founded on a mighty selfishness' (21), that of her brother's need for a sheltered existence. Already defeated once by life, we are told that Reggie 'went to pieces … when an ordeal of reality could not be circumvented' (48) and, so, is entirely in denial about the prospect of his mother's death. Despite the many differences between Reggie and Vincent, here the two characters express the same problem. The sickly homebound son and the Byronic 'god in marble' (96) are equally dependent on their mothers and equally unable to respond to external challenge. Reggie is spared having to face the consequences of this, however, through his unexpected marriage to Nurse Cunningham. This is entirely a loveless marriage of convenience for each of them. Nurse Cunningham, aware that 'she was pretty, she had feeling, she had sensuality' (222), all things which will be betrayed by marrying Reggie, reasons that 'such comfort and prosperity as she found in this house were not offered by normal men to women in her circumstances' (222). The prospect of a married life 'of difficult good humour, difficult flattery, difficult nursing' (222) will be a 'fair bargain' (222). For Reggie, the matter is simpler. Through marriage, 'his

world, in wasteful fashion, ha[s] been rebuilt' (300). O'Brien's references to building and bulwarking in describing Reggie's attitudes reinforce her point that Reggie is finding ways of insulating himself from the uncertainties which should be the destiny of any modern individual.

Integrity and uncertainty: the authentic life as a response to modernity

On the face of it, Agnes does not appear to represent an embrace of uncertainty, as Christina does. Rather, she suggests some affinities to Caroline, denied love through familial responsibility. These affinities, however, should not conceal the point, already noted, that Agnes is an intellectually active character who seeks to resolve her personal conflicts through reference to her Catholic learning. Agnes is a woman who considers whether her life has 'spiritual consistency' (5) and who takes the rituals of the Church seriously. As Dalsimer explains, 'Agnes's faith is as affecting within her as it is around her; it frames her thoughts, directs her actions and keeps her safe for Mellick' (26). Agnes's 'thoughtful, intense consciousness puts its faith to the test, examines every thought and every impulse scrupulously' (26), ultimately finding these 'bonds to her faith and to her family are not simply intense, they are inseparable' (26). Loyalty to faith is understood to be equivalent to loyalty to family, while the pursuit of desire is shown to be threatening to a 'fervent Catholicism' (25) which 'imparts structure and meaning' (25) to the lives of these middle-class characters. What we find, in *The Ante-Room*, is a text which measures uncertainty and the pursuit of desire against a painful reconciliation with a more fixed life

How Agnes's interaction with Catholicism operates can be gauged with reference to the long scene which details her practicing Confession and explaining her romantic turmoil to her priest. Initially embarrassed by performing an unscheduled Confession, as 'respectable young ladies did not ring the emergency Confession bell' (77), Agnes's thoughts thus begin by acknowledging Catholicism as the religion of her class, and the performance of Catholicism's rites as an important part of belonging to this class. This social understanding of religion, however, gives way to her introspective and intellectual approach, as she first reflects on smaller sins, 'pride and detachment' (79), before coming to remind herself that 'to stage one's miserable narration in terms of distress and tragic uniqueness was nothing short of idiotic' (83). Religion allows her a new frame for understanding her problems, as she sees how 'cheap and commonplace the whole thing [her love] is' (87). It is, she insists, 'God who hears us in confession' (87) and who, so she believes, sees the smallness of her

problems. This direction of her thought finds itself fulfilled after Confession, when she finds as her 'immediate reward – the cold comfort which assured her with gentle contempt that everything dies except the idea of God' (90).

It is entirely true that religion is serving here to extinguish Agnes's desire. The point, however, is not that Agnes has achieved some tawdry compromise, as seen by Reggie and Nurse Cunningham, or with Caroline in *Without My Cloak*. Agnes here makes the sort of either/or commitment Christina makes, albeit coming down on the opposite side. Rather than embrace passionate uncertainty, Agnes lives fully the austere life of religious devotion. Indeed, she herself considers these to be the two options facing her, declaring to Vincent that, should he wish it, she will 'give [him] my vow of chastity and go away at once, right, right away, a thousand miles from Ireland, and live an old maid devoted to good works' (256). Interestingly, we can read into Agnes's decision here an argument from Berman that a rejection of modern life, if it is carried through to a sufficiently intense pitch, remains a legitimately modern reaction. In an account of Goethe's *Faust*, Berman notes that the embrace of modernity, although more typical, is not the only possible response to the maelstrom of modernity. Exploring the fatal romance between Faust and Gretchen, which ends with Gretchen's imprisonment and death after her affair with Faust is exposed, Berman notes that Gretchen provides a model of an alternative response to modernity. This is one where, in the face of 'the rigid enclosures of family, church and town, a world where blind devotion and self-abasement are the only roads to virtue' (58), Gretchen chooses 'to take the old values seriously, to really live up to them' (58). Just as modernisation tears up the fixities of traditional life, so too does Gretchen's fundamentalism, by treating 'the conventions of [the traditional] world as empty forms' (58), but attempting to live the values they professed. Faced with the deadening certainties of traditional life, Gretchen 'assert[s] its noblest human qualities: pure concentration and commitment of the self in the name of love' (58-59). If the response of modernisation to 'the idiocy of rural life' (Marx 225) is to destroy rural life, then the 'Gretchen' response seeks to destroy the idiocy. Agnes's decision is quite different from that made by her aunt Caroline. Rather than achieve some compromised existence within bourgeois society, Agnes suggests a more legitimate response is to live to the full at least some of the values – in this case, the religious values – of that society. Agnes is Christina's mirror image, fully embracing an existence which the other characters live only in part.

Modernity and counter-revolution

That O'Brien's work was a representation of the Irish bourgeoisie was something she took quite seriously. Walshe relates how O'Brien, when describing one of her early plays, remarked that 'I am now writing a play about Ireland, but it is not an Irish play of the usual type. All Irish people are not peasants, you know' (40). It was O'Brien's ambition, Walshe explains, to teach her English readers that 'Ireland had a civilised and educated bourgeoisie' (40).[11] This ambition, expressed with a hint of parochial embarrassment in the face of English society, is part of an important literary context for understanding O'Brien's portrayal of the Irish bourgeoisie. The point is made to exaggerated effect during a short interlude in *The Ante-Room* when an English doctor, Sir Godfrey, is brought to the house to examine the ailing Teresa. Sir Godfrey imagines himself to be making a 'journey into the dark interior of Ireland' (201), where the women will be 'shy and wild … and in need of masterly coaxing' (203). He is instead overcome by the culture possessed by Agnes and flees the house so as to escape that 'soft, sweet Irish rose' (283). O'Brien's desire to show off, so to speak, the Irish bourgeoisie is evident and it is for this reason that Walshe has described O'Brien's work as 'in many ways, the angry riposte of the colonised writer' (144). If O'Brien's is a class of people trapped in complicated, impossible webs of personal and social duties, it is also a class of people such as Agnes, whose values remain strong even in the face of social conflict.

Here, O'Brien was continuing work which Emer Nolan has argued began with Catholic writers of the nineteenth century such as Thomas Moore and Charles Kickham. These novelists, Irish, Catholic, and bourgeois, had sought in their work 'a concept of Irish national identity that would be at once faithful to a revamped notion of the traditional and appropriate to a modern civil polity' (*Emancipations* ix). They were trying to recreate in Ireland a sense of the stature and power of the middle-class as was found in the English, French, and Russian fiction of the nineteenth century. Such grandeur, once proven, would lend justification to the cause of independence. These novelists were seeking 'to perform a "major" cultural function' (xii) by having their work imagine the historical course of the Irish Catholic middle class as one tending towards their possession of a state and their own acquisition of social and political power. By the time O'Brien wrote, of course, this work had long surpassed the early nineteenth century need of defeating English claims 'that

[11] Walshe further notes, as a measure of O'Brien's success in doing so, Evelyn Waugh's praising O'Brien for 'wak[ing] England to the realisation that there is, and for over a century had been, a very considerable Irish bourgeoisie' (qtd in Walshe 80).

Catholics were inherently disloyal or violent, or that their religion was inimical to self-discipline and economic improvement' (xiv). This did not mean that the project of elaborating a civic national identity had ceased. Indeed, as seen, this was a vital aspect of the counter-revolutionary project.

It is in the context of this 'civilising mission' that O'Brien's recourse to modernity should be seen. O'Brien was no cheerleader for modernity as it manifested through mass culture and technologization. We find, in *The Land of Spices*, complaints about 'the twentieth century assault of "progress"' (59) and a desire to hold to 'the Christian way, as long as possible, amid the lures of progress' (59). *Mary Lavelle* finds its Spanish anarchist characters worrying about the coming of 'centralisation and the slave state' (138), suggesting a fear of bureaucratic overreach similar to the sentiments found in, say, Weber's account of the 'iron cage'. This dissatisfaction with modernity is made even more explicit in O'Brien 1937 travelogue of her journeys through Spain, *Farewell Spain*, which worries that 'science … will follow all lines that lead from it to a smooth international uniformity' (5), a flattening of 'romantic differentiations' (5) which will be the legacy of 'the twentieth-century shambles' (5). What must be noted here, however, is that O'Brien entirely supports what, as seen with Berman, is the great theme of modernism, that of the individual thrown into the world. Indeed, that the individual in modernity must fight, both against modern uncertainty and its mirror image, modern uniformity as expressed through the state, is voiced by *Mary Lavelle*'s anarchists. These characters imagine, on the one hand, that all people must 'take the cuts, blows, shocks and delights that were the due of Unamuno's "Man of Flesh and Bone"' (142), and, on the other, that there is an 'inevitable battle' (138) to be fought between individual and state.[12]

Mary Lavelle and *The Land of Spices*: the pivot to exile

As noted, after *The Ante-Room*, O'Brien abandoned the idea of exploring characters who remained in Ireland. In truth, the idea of a reconciliation, in the manner of the nineteenth century realist novel, was abandoned after *Without My Cloak*. Franco Moretti has claimed that 'in the classical *Bildungsroman* the significance of history does not lie in the "future of the species", but must be revealed within the more narrow confines of a circumscribed and

[12] Although the reference is not elaborated on, O'Brien is presumably referring here to Miguel de Unamuno, a nineteenth-century Spanish writer, whose 1913 work, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, contained a chapter titled "The Man of Flesh and Bone".

relatively common individual life' (35). The hero of the *bildungsroman* is 'a pliant character: no longer "alone", and still less at odds with the world' (21). If such pliancy is in evidence, to an extent, in *Without My Cloak*, it is absent thereafter in O'Brien's work. *The Ante-Room* portrayed an either/or choice without the option of mutually-satisfying and mutually-disappointing reconciliation. The connection Mentxaka has suggested lies between O'Brien and existentialism may be useful here, as it draws attention to O'Brien's focus on these expressions of autonomy. In some ways, *The Ante-Room* is closer to its successors than its predecessor, as it begins this interest of O'Brien's in having middle-class individuals make existential choices. What I want to argue for the remainder of this chapter is that *Mary Lavelle* and *The Land of Spices*, despite being novels which end in a middle-class Catholic woman leaving Ireland and Irish society, remain part of the counter-revolutionary project I have sketched above. This manifests not so much in their ideas of a European Catholic identity which is to be juxtaposed to an insular Irish Catholicism, as it does in the portrayal of the sovereignty of the Irish bourgeois individual.

Mary Lavelle, set in the 1920s, is another story of impossible love, here between the titular character, a governess in Spain, and Juanito, the married son of the Areavagas, the family whose daughters Mary has been employed to teach. Mary, herself engaged to marry in Limerick to the reliable, if unexciting, John MacCurtain, has taken up her role as a governess partly in the hope that 'foreign life … will improve [her] mind' (10) for her fiancé. Secretly, however, she finds herself attracted by the prospect of 'be[ing] alone for a little space, a tiny hiatus between her life's two accepted phases. To cease being a daughter without immediately becoming a wife' (30). Mary's problem is similar to Agnes's, although Mary chooses the alternative option. Despite being a 'well-trained Irish Catholic … easily made to understand that human nature, left to itself, can be not merely incredibly sinful but incredibly foolish' (156-157), Mary pursues her love for Juanito, with the pair making love. The novel ends with Mary returning to Ireland to break off her engagement and 'go away' (300), not necessarily with Juanito, in a gesture of individual sovereignty.

The Land of Spices, unlike the other novels examined here, is not a novel in which a central character becomes involved in a forbidden love. It is, more overtly than O'Brien's other work, a *bildungsroman* or novel of education, following the education and experiences of Anna Murphy through the convent of *La Compagnie de la Sainte Famille*, from her entry, in 1904, at the age of six to her graduation a decade later. Parallel to this, we find a narration of the life of the convent's Mother Superior, *Mère Marie-Hélène*, or Helen Archer, an English nun. Helen, who became a nun as a young woman after accidentally seeing her father making

love to his male student, Etienne, is introduced as being on the verge of resignation from her position, feeling that to be an English nun at the head of a European religious order in an increasingly nationalist Ireland is both self-defeating and out of touch. Charmed by Anna's precocity, Helen chooses to remain, becoming a distant, but crucial intellectual support for Anna as the latter's dream of artistry and education is threatened by familial pressures to marry well. As Michael Cronin explains, the novel offers two competing narratives, 'a difficult and testing but ultimately constructive formation of an ethical liberal subject, or a more dramatic descent into moralizing hatred to which a liberal subject can easily succumb when confronted by taboo sexuality' (45). Interestingly, although *The Land of Spices* has been seen as another novel of escape from Ireland, Helen can be seen as a version of Agnes, choosing austere religious devotion rather than throwing herself into the chaos of modernity. Helen, although not Irish, serves to illustrate the values of the sort of religious devotion O'Brien has argued Irish women to be capable of.

Both novels share at least one thing: both were banned in Ireland by the Censorship Board, with the ban on *The Land of Spices*, officially imposed for its reference to homosexuality, lifted after a campaign in 1946. *Mary Lavelle* was never officially unbanned until the general amnesty offered to banned works by the Censorship of Publications Act, 1967. As Jana Fischerova explains, while it was *The Land of Spices*'s 'reference to 'homosexuality [which] served the purpose of identifying the novel as sexually indecent and thus transgressive' (78), this was for the Censorship Board only a pretext. It was, says Fischerova, O'Brien's 'ethos of tolerance, intellectual freedom, and individual conscience' (78) which was the truly controversial point in her work. *Mary Lavelle*, which celebrated a middle-class Irish Catholic woman having pre-marital sex with a married man, while being engaged herself, was an attack on 'Ireland's Gaelic and Catholic identity' (78). O'Brien was being banned for, as Fischerova puts it, 'promoting an open mind' (78). Lorna Reynolds has argued that 'the Censorship of Publications Board took alarm at the audacity of an Irish girl daring to exercise individual judgement, not being led astray – which would be regrettable but pardonable – but choosing to do something which she and they regarded as a grave sin' (62). O'Brien's crime, in other words, was the central theme of her works: individual choice.

Heroic individualism and exile in *Mary Lavelle*

Certainly, the Ireland of *Mary Lavelle* is seen to be a suffocating place. John, Mary's fiancé, although apparently a decent man, is a thoroughly unexciting one, and entirely in hock to the conventions of his society. Although Mary wishes for them to be married immediately, John insists they wait for the death of his uncle, who will pass on his estate of 'at least £50,000' (26) to John. Mary's marriage, then, is associated with death from the outset. Furthermore, she is dimly aware that she finds John unsatisfying. Mary, we are told, 'did not find' (28) pleasure in John's kisses, this despite her being 'orthodox in feeling' (28) and seeking 'with expectancy for pleasure' (28). Whereas John is thoroughly materialist, believing that marriage cannot begin until his wealth allows it, Mary feels love to involve sensual pleasure and an expression of individuality. What does satisfy her in John is their plans for married life, Mary being 'surprised … that a scheme which is or has been everyone's should seem at the personal proof so especial and exacting' (27-28). Neither is John the only avatar of Ireland's dissatisfying closedness. Mary's father, Dr. Lavelle, is a man with 'enough nervous energy to keep life jogging somehow in its monotonous track' (22) and is shown to have tried, although with no success, to force all his children into deadening careers. Monotony surrounds even the maid at the Lavelle house, who 'would open [Mary's room], as always, unassisted, and sweep in, as always, at the double, dishes rattling' (20). Life in Ireland, so *Mary Lavelle* claims, is repetitive, monotonous, and without excitement or courage.

This portrait is thrown into sharp relief through the contrasting portrayal of Spain. Spain, for Mary, is a land of independence, where she can 'hide awhile from even the most agreeable certainties' (63) and pursue her desire 'to be where she was mistress of herself' (136). It is also a place when sensuality is indulged. Whereas 'in Ireland in 1922 no respectable girl used lipstick or plucked her eyebrows' (64), Mary finds herself shocked by Spanish women who 'left as little as possible of themselves to nature' (64) and is 'enchanted' (64) by Spanish cosmetics. More significant still is bullfighting, which Mary is persuaded to attend by a group of governesses – known as the 'Misses' amongst themselves – she encounters. Bullfighting, to Mary, is 'burlesque, fantastic, savage … but more vivid with beauty and all beauty's anguish, more full of news of life's possible pain and senselessness and quixotry and barbarism' (101) than anything else. As Walshe explains, bullfighting is, in *Mary Lavelle*, an 'epiphany, a coming to knowledge' (64) and the language O'Brien uses to describe it, Walshe points out, 'echo[es] in the love-making scene' (65) between Juanito and Mary. The novel tells us that watching a bullfight was 'the gateway through which Spain had

entered in and taken' (112) Mary, again employing sexualised language, but also indicating the novel's construction of Spain as a violent, uncertain, sensual, and heroic alternative to the flatness of Irish society.

Additionally, if the calculation and repression evidenced in John suggest that Ireland, in *Mary Lavelle*, is a land of personal submissiveness, O'Brien goes to lengths to emphasise the importance of anarchism in Spanish society. The Spanish person, we are told, is 'convinced to the last drop of his blood of the absolute dominion of personality over system' (44) and, if O'Brien is here engaged in a slightly reductive account of the Spanish people, this is at least belied by the diversity of individuals and political positions encountered in the novel. What is, however, certainly true is that Spain as O'Brien renders it is a country well populated with anarchists, a group which loosely includes Juanito and his father Pablo. For Juanito, Spain is to be understood in historically dramatic terms as 'the field in which the eventual inevitable battle would be fought against centralisation and the slave-state' (138).[13] Pablo, somewhat living a life of bourgeois compromise, is said, in his youth, to have 'been an idealist … with simple, if somewhat anarchistic projects pressing on him for human justice and the betterment of his fellow-men' (47). He is 'Christian, cultured, somewhat Jansenistic' (44) but nonetheless a man of 'conscience, intellect, and individualism' (44). Spain, then, is a country which respects the individual, quite unlike Ireland as *Mary Lavelle* imagines it.

Mary too is a character whose desire for individual freedom is better satisfied by Spain. As a child, we are told that Mary wished 'to go everywhere one day, know everything, be committed to nothing. She would wander always, be a free lance always, belong to no one place or family or person' (24). As Dalsimer rightly notes, 'in succumbing to Spain, Mary will grimly fulfil her childhood fantasy of endless wandering' (39), abandoning her connections and roots in the name of 'perpetual self-government' (24). *Mary Lavelle* provides, Dalsimer adds, an image of what this future will look like in the form of the Misses, women who the novel tells us live in 'obvious poverty and social isolation' (80), shocking Mary with their 'insolence towards the life that went on about them' (80). These Misses are, like Mary, 'of that not easily definable section of society, the Irish Catholic middle-class' (80) and, so, are clear representatives of what awaits Mary. Indeed, the situation of the Misses is itself

[13] Juanito's thinking here is awkward and, as the novel notes, idealistic. For Juanito, the 'slave-state' refers to Communism, the 'ruthless establishment in every cranny of the peninsula of justice, order, health and knowledge' (138). A seemingly-totalitarian Communism is to be established in Spain, so as to purge 'all precedented establishments' (139), only to be overthrown in turn by a Spanish individualism, resurgent after Communism has mended Spain's social inequalities. As Pablo points out, Juanito's plan involves 'the risky imposition of citizen-servility' (140), but the point is not so much the practicality of Juanito's plan as the evidence it provides of his – and, in her own way, Mary's – problem of reconciling individualism and communal good.

expressed in the Spanish landscape, an object of 'poverty, beauty, and heroic, gentle intransigence' (188). Physically and politically, Spain is the land of the embattled but free individual.[14] The novel, in other words, does not romanticise Mary's decision to abandon her class, but, for Mary, her decision is justified on the basis that 'there were truths that were indefensible … that were sins and cruelties – but yet were true and had a value there was no use in defending' (300). Unlike, say, Stephen Dedalus, she does not end the novel with a plan for her exile, but only resolved to 'go away. That was all' (300). Finding the individualism of Spain to be true, at least to her, Mary embraces this, despite the pain this individualism has been shown to promise.

Nationalism and political hysteria in *Mary Lavelle*

What we might say, then, is that Mary is an example of the moral strength of the Irish middle-class, expressed in her willingness to embrace independence wholeheartedly, in full recognition of its consequences. In this way, she is a mirror to Agnes, who accepts her religious doctrine wholeheartedly, in full recognition of its consequences. With that said, *Mary Lavelle* complicates its otherwise negative portrayal of Ireland by associating the War of Independence with the very individuality it otherwise claims Ireland cannot support. We are told that John, a symbol of Irish repression, is a veteran of the First World War, being one of those who took 'John Redmond's advice … [and had] gone off in private's uniform to the assistance of gallant little Belgium' (25). The irony of this reference to 'gallant little Belgium' would not have been lost on any Irish reader of the 1930s, being aware of the hypocrisy, well-advertised by Irish separatists, of an imperial power fighting on behalf of small nations. Fighting in the First World War, then, is satirised as a failure to express independence. This satire is strengthened through the description of Mary's brother Jimmy's decision to avoid enlisting and instead become a Volunteer with the I.R.A. Jimmy's decision is made in spite of his father's desire to use the war as a means 'to dispose of a son' (22),

[14] Said has discussed how the novel form requires 'the accumulation and differentiation of social space' (93) in order give weight to its 'appropriation of history [and] historization of the past' (93). Possession of territory 'makes possible the construction of various kinds of knowledge, all of them in one way or another dependent upon the perceived character and destiny of a particular geography' (93). O'Brien, of course, is not seeking to control Spain. However, her rendering of the Spanish landscape is explicitly exclusionary. Mary, looking 'out on the landscape through which she travelled' (187) finds that 'the white-skinned Western Christian in her could not bear the suggestion that Africa began beyond the Pyrenees' (187). Although the 'heroic, gentle intransigence' (188) of the Spanish landscape does have 'some suggestion of the east' (188), Mary scoffs at any Arab, Muslim, or North African influences in Spain. Her vision of Spain as the land of anarchism, then, is indeed an attempt to secure Spain for values she deems Western and Christian.

reminding us again of the moral vacuity of the First World War, and also further emphasising the individualism in Jimmy's decision. We find here, then, the War of Independence celebrated, as Spain is, for being a force for individualism.

Indeed, just as Mary's ultimate decision to exile herself is shown to have value only in its own right and not as a source of external reward, Jimmy's decision is not rewarded as such. Independence having been secured, Jimmy has found no place within the new state and is said to have emigrated to California, writing letters that 'did not suggest that he was happy' (23). Happy or not, Jimmy's decision to fight is shown to have been one which endorsed personal independence. Jimmy, we are told, found 'the fight for individuality severe' (24) but saw 'it to be necessary' (24). He is said to share this attitude with his brother who, a non-combatant in either war, has become a journalist in Leeds and, too, has rejected his father's demands, this time to take up a position in the Bank of Ireland. Hence, Jimmy's decision to fight in the War of Independence is not condemned and even seen as analogous to a decision to pursue a literary career. What matters is the assertion of individuality, something absent from John's decision to fall in with the national trend and enlist.

What this demonstrates is that O'Brien is treating the War of Independence with seriousness and not with the sort of hysterical denunciation found in O'Hegarty. The seriousness with which O'Brien wants to treat the subject is emphasised when Luisa, wife to Juanito, brusquely condemns the decision to sign the Treaty, suggesting de Valera and the anti-Treatyites have the right cause. The flippancy with which Luisa is treating Irish politics is immediately exposed by Mary, who asks if Luisa would support Catalan and Basque separatism, something this 'exquisite, aristocratic wife' (146) is unwilling to do. Irish politics is not something one should be casual about. This sort of severe practicality is evidenced in Juanito's account of his political position, which he describes as 'pure Utilitarianism, plain, materialistic justice. With no spiritual attack or message' (226). For Juanito, 'the spiritual basis of life must be left alone' (226) as 'all politicians can give is fundamental health and the roots of knowledge' (226). Juanito describes this as a plan for 'a Communism very different from Lenin's' (226) and while this reference to Lenin is left unexplained, the sense that Juanito aims for a rigorously realist approach to politics is evident. In celebrating such an aim, O'Brien remains entirely within the wheelhouse of counter-revolution, if not quite on the most radical side. Regan talks about how Cumann na nGaedheal politicians sought to roll back 'linguistic hyper-inflation' (138) while, as Charles Townshend records, observers of the Irish revolution had noted that Sinn Féin demonstrated 'the clear and deliberate determination to ignore what is, and to take account, nay, to admit the very existence, only

of what ought to be' (21). In effect, what O'Brien does in the background of *Mary Lavelle* is rewrite slightly the Irish War of Independence, recasting it as a leap into individualism, but nonetheless insisting that the correct political attitude is sober realism, devoid of sentimentality or romance.

Irish nationalism and authoritarianism in *The Land of Spices*

This recasting is entirely absent from *The Land of Spices*. Here, we find nationalism, represented by a series of religious figures engaged in political struggle with Helen, as an authoritarian force seeking to subdue all independent powers to its will. Helen's political problem is that her convent, an Irish branch of *La Compagnie de la Sainte Famille*, a Catholic religious order based in Belgium, has drawn 'the Irish hierarchy's distrust of an independent religious Order' (96). For Helen, 'nuns *are not* a nation, and [their] business is not with national matters' (16). It is not that the Order is a passive institution. It is 'ambitious to be an educational force in the century just opening' (57) and is indeed responsive to Irish cultural demands. Across the decade narrated it is shown that the convent does make 'study of the Irish language … a living part of the *Sainte Famille* curriculum' (176). Aware that 'the European populations were not producing nuns; the Irish populations were' (57), the Order is said to be pivoting to having an Irish, or Irish-based, leader. The Order is shown to be trying to maintain 'the European and polite tradition … indifferent alike to the future needs of Gaelic Leaguer or British Officer' (177). In other words, it is continuing to act independently while acknowledging as much as possible shifts in the balance of political power.

The problem for Helen is that Irish nationalism is shown not to be in the mood for such compromise. This lack of compromise is represented by Father Conroy, the Convent's chaplain and a 'country boy fresh from Maynooth' (14) who thus is a representative of a coming generation of religious and nationalist figures, and Bishop O'Dwyer. Crucially, both of these figures are, when nationalism is not a concern, positively drawn. The Bishop offers Anna assistance in securing a university scholarship, in the face of protests from her aunt, who 'disapprove[s] of money wasted on the academic education of girls' (270), while Father Conroy is shown to be capable of treating the convent students with sympathy and tact. On the national question, however, the pair are extreme. The Bishop, supporting the message of Sinn Féin which, he says, 'means ourselves' (221), and believing 'education … should be very nationalistic' (220), finds the *Sainte Famille* to be 'too European for present-day Irish

requirements. Its detachment of spirit seems to stand in the way of nationalism' (220). Father Conroy is even blunter, complaining that Irish novices are sent to Bruges, which he considers to be 'a barbarous place' (9) inasmuch as it 'isn't Irish' (9). Father Conroy's is 'only an untutored, unbridled nationalism' (96) but, as the political compromising of the Order makes clear, his is also the nationalism of the future.

For several critics, throughout her career O'Brien compared the parochialism of Irish nationalism and its religious hierarchy to a more enlightened and open European Catholicism. Walshe, for instance, writes that O'Brien tried 'to contrast the cultural insularity of the Irish Free State with the enlightened, European Catholicism' (77) she imagined to be possessed by the Irish bourgeoisie. As Michael Cronin notes, this:

> contrast between "Irish" and "European" Catholicism was a characteristic trope used by mid-century Irish intellectuals … for whom a democratic Catholic European worldview offered a sustaining alternative both to an Irish Catholic nationalism, in which the individual is suffocated by the imperatives of collective development, and to an Anglo American secular liberalism, in which the individual is rootless and alienated without the co-ordinates of a collective, historical tradition (32).

Unsurprisingly, critics have tended to interpret this European dimension as a positive in O'Brien's work. Mary Breen, for instance, describes *The Land of Spices* as expressing a 'determinedly outward-looking, European perspective' (169) which attacks the repressiveness of the Irish Constitution. Walshe supposes that, in response to 'de Valera … creating an imaginary sense of nationhood by idealising Gaelic rural self-sufficiency and frugality' (77) O'Brien 'was actively countering this with her mythical version of an Irish bourgeoisie, made noble by a kind of gentrified austerity and by the civilising traditions of European Catholicism' (77). The problem here, as Cronin rightly notes, is that these attacks overlook the Irish political coordinates O'Brien was locating herself within, not to mention the barbarities associated with modern European Catholicism, not the least of which was its opposition to the Spanish anarchism O'Brien admires.

Boland has described O'Brien as having held 'to the nineteenth-century view that the extraordinary define themselves against and not with the many' (18). O'Brien, says Boland,

'had a clear perception of the small doomed group … in which the elegy for order produces a conflict of identity' (18). What Boland is echoing here is the personal mythology of the counter-revolutionaries, who, in O'Higgins words, had been 'simply eight young men in the City Hall standing amidst the ruins of one administration' (*Three Years* 7). Referring to the original cabinet of the Free State government, after the deaths of Collins and Griffith in August 1922, O'Higgins was seeking to promote exactly this idea of an embattled group. For O'Higgins, 'only a grim sense of duty and the inspiration of the example of the dead leaders [had] kept each man to his task, toiling with empty heart and sorrow-stunned mind only because the men who were gone had left a message of toil' (8-9). The foundational myth of the Free State, so the counter-revolution insisted, was that it had been wrested into existence out of the chaos of revolutionary violence by a select and self-sacrificing elite. It is this sort of heroic individualism which is entirely absent from the portrayal of nationalism in *The Land of Spices*, where the demand that 'our young girls must be education *nationally*' (97) is justified by Father Conroy on the grounds that the convent must 'meet the changing times' (97). Father Conroy's nationalism might be activist and interventionist, but it is not individualist, in the heroic sense O'Brien sketches in her novels, of demanding extreme, either/or choices of its practitioners.

Alternative independences in *The Land of Spices*

Indeed, despite *The Land of Spices* ending with Anna choosing to reject family demands and social codes, instead going to university to study and, perhaps, pursue a career as an artist, the novel demonstrates that O'Brien has not abandoned the alternative model of individuality explored in the character of Agnes in *The Ante-Room*. Helen Archer, we are told, 'turned her back upon herself, upon talents, dream, emotions' (19) by 'undertak[ing] the impersonal and active service of God' (19). Her service has taught 'lessons of elimination, detachment and forgoing for which, as it happened, her hurt spirit craved somewhat hysterically at that time' (12). The language here does imply that Helen's service has been an error, the sort of self-denial exhibited in Caroline's submissive marriage in *Without My Cloak*. Indeed, this sense is strengthened through the explanation of why Helen became a nun. Her decision is brought on solely by her discovering her father's homosexuality, which provokes in her a disgust towards 'the extremity of what the sin of the flesh might be' (166). Alienated from life, religious devotion offers a path away from 'the devilry of human love' (167) and the only 'bearable use to make of life' (167).

Reflecting on this decision, Helen sees herself as having committed a 'sin of arrogant judgment' (168). Helen is guilty of having denied what Emma Donoghue has called O'Brien's desire for 'sexual self-determination' (39). For Donoghue, O'Brien's portrayal of same-sex relationships and loves 'concentrates on the similarities between all relationships' (45). For instance, in *Mary Lavelle*, we find Agatha Conlon, another of the 'Misses', declare her love for Mary. This love is explicitly stated to be an equivalent love to that between Juanito and Mary, both being 'fantastic longings' (249). Having heard Agatha's confession, Mary feels herself to be closer to Agatha, rather than repulsed as Catholic morality might demand, because, 'like [Agatha], she was fantastically and perversely in love' (258). For Donoghue, what O'Brien 'stresses above all is the equivalence between Agatha and Mary, whose sexual sins have the best motives' (45). It is awareness of this equivalence which is shown to be lacking from Helen's reaction to her father and which Helen criticises herself for later in life. Although, as an adult, Helen still considers her father 'to be a sinner' (168), she finds her own sin to be worse, it being 'not merely against God but against His creature' (168). Her sin, in other words, is to have judged and imposed on another's individuality.

That said, the very fact that Helen's self-criticism occurs through religion, reminiscent of Agnes's internalisation of doctrine, demonstrates that Helen's Catholicism is not merely repressive. It is, instead, an identity, albeit one which demands self-denial. Just as for Agnes, for whom religious devotion served to impart that her travails were 'cheap and commonplace' (87) when compared to the majesty of God, so too does Helen remind herself that 'she was a nun in order to serve God – not her capricious self' (54). In *The Land of Spices*, as in *The Ante-Room*, religious devotion is a form of self-denial quite different from that experienced by characters such as Caroline or Dr. Curran. It is a total commitment to an ideal. Furthermore, although *The Land of Spices* makes less reference to uncertainties when dealing with the question of the individual, a sense of modern shock underlies Helen's decision to pursue a religious life. We are told that, uncovering her father's secret, 'she had been hurled by dynamic shock into the wildest regions of austerity' (23). Although less prominent than in earlier works, then, the terror of modern life – with modernity here expressed in her father's sexuality – remains a vital factor in the decisions made by O'Brien's protagonists.

Bourgeois nobility and counter-revolution

The Land of Spices ends with Helen being appointed the Mother Superior of the entire *Compagnie de la Sainte Famille*, a position which requires her to leave Ireland and serve in the Order's Belgian headquarters. Helen's personal success here serves to secure O'Brien's point that Helen's vocation is a legitimate one. Service is still a career and a path in life and Helen concludes the novel being said to have acquired power and advancement, progressing her career precisely in the manner of a protagonist of a realist novel. Indeed, that she ends the novel leaving Ireland for Europe recalls characters such as Stephen Dedalus, who too were called away. With that said, however, if the call Stephen hears from Europe, in *Portrait*, is a call to escape, *The Land of Spices* is aware that Helen, by being called to lead a religious order in Belgium in 1914, will remain an embattled subject of history. Helen is aware that 'shadows of evil and danger were indeed gathering … Germany, Austria, the Balkans, all seething' (293). Helen anticipates that 'all human hopes and dreams might have to undergo an ordeal impossible to imagine' (293) but, as her vocation demands, she imagines that the ordeal of war will bring 'its complementary duty' (293) and that, regardless of what is to come 'the training of the Christian mind would go on' (294). As in *Mary Lavelle* and *The Ante-Room*, then, there is to be no ecstatic escape, but only the demand that one continue to show integrity to one's chosen way of life, whether it is Mary's 'perpetual self-government' (24), Anna's education, or Agnes and Helen's devotion.

Shortly before receiving this call to Europe, Helen describes how she believes Ireland to be 'an island *for* if not *of* saints' (298). This comment is inspired by a pastoral backdrop which appears to Helen as an 'unaccountable landscape' (298) of lakes and forests, made to 'seem holy for a minute' (298) by the sunlight. Here, the counter-revolutionary project comes clearly into view. Ireland is not in question; it is a holy land. What O'Brien understands to be in question is the character of the Irish people. Hence, her approach to the problems of post-independence Ireland is to identify a group worthy of Ireland. This she finds in the women of Ireland's Catholic bourgeoisie, who are shown to be women of integrity, practicality, deep thought, and moral righteousness. O'Brien inverts the counter-revolutionary attack on Irish women, demonstrating them to be people of civic virtue rather than of unrestrained violence. O'Brien retains, however, the counter-revolutionary criticism of the Irish people and of nationalism.

O'Hegarty complained that, after the Rising, the nationalist movement had become 'a mob movement, run by a political machine more effective and more unscrupulous, and more intolerant of ability and independent judgement, than even the Parliamentarian movement had been' (171). What had been exposed was that nationalism's 'deep-rooted belief that there

was something in us finer than, more spiritual than, anything in any other people, was sheer illusion, and that we were really an uncivilised people with savage instincts' (126). The Irish had, so O'Hegarty believed, been shown to be crude, violent, and thoughtless, and the country was now faced with a great work of practically demonstrating this not to be the case. O'Brien's heroizing of the Catholic middle-class is of a part with this practical work. Walshe, we find, is entirely right to have said that O'Brien 'invented a literary tradition for her own Irish bourgeois class and a successfully realised fictive independence for and viability for her young Irish female protagonists' (2). The point of this invention, however, was to demonstrate that such a class and such an independence could exist in Ireland. O'Higgins had asked the question as to whether there was, in Ireland, 'a fitness for [the] responsibility' (4) of 'the fullest self-government' (4). O'Brien responds that such fitness can be located in the Irish bourgeoisie.

Conclusion

Irish literary modernism was not a protest movement. This is not to say that it was incapable of protest. It is only to say that protest was not inherent to its forms. In a combination repeated by modernists across the world, vivid formal experiments could and did serve Irish writers as a vehicle for reactionary or conservative politics. Even in the novelists studied here, we can see the various ways in which one could seek some form of positive relationship with the Free State. Declan Kiberd has suggested that 'the birth of the new state signalled the slow end of the national project … as political hopes were annulled, culture became in many ways more important than ever' (*After* ix). While Kiberd is projecting this claim across the twentieth century as a whole, and so beyond the timeframe of this study, we have seen here that this is not true of the 1920s and 1930s. Political hopes remained invested in the Free State despite the evident weaknesses it possessed. Writers, although remaining cognizant of the transformations which had been – and in some cases, still were – promised by culture, reconciled themselves to the Free State. The politics of state, and not of either insurrection or culture, were now of prime importance.

John Regan argues that it is precisely this prioritisation of state politics which constitutes the counter-revolution in Ireland. For Regan, 'the process by which revolutionaries evolve into constitutional politicians exists as a central theme throughout twentieth-century Irish political history' (xvi), with counter-revolution amounting to the 'defence of constitutional politics' (xvi) against insurrectionary violence. The Free State, so the counter-revolutionary tendency said, had to be accepted and worked within. If it could be improved, then this would be all to the good. The first principle of counter-revolution, however, was that the Free State had to be preserved from external threat. Regan's "counter-revolution" thesis has been useful because it provides a synoptic concept for understanding post-revolutionary Ireland, one which provides greater nuance than does the more common explanation of post-revolutionary disillusionment. Cultural work, and the politics of those works, can be opened up in directions not explained when these works are read as expressions of, or reactions against, post-1922 disenchantment. Where we do see retreats from revolutionary optimism, we can understand these as expressions of a general rejection of revolution. Where we find criticism of the Free State – and, without doubt, there was much criticism of the Free State – the concept of counter-revolution reminds us to be aware of the other side of this criticism. As I have shown throughout this study, attacks on the Free State was often

double-sided, with the revulsion against independence's disappointments concealing a political investment in the Free State.

Employing Regan's concept of counter-revolution has brought this work into conflict with some vital premises of postcolonial theory. Theorists and scholars such as Seamus Deane, Terry Eagleton, Luke Gibbons, Marjorie Howe, Declan Kiberd, Emer Nolan, and numerous others, have been central to this thesis, but not unproblematically so. The problem I have encountered in using this scholarship is that in some cases, although far from all, the approach it provides to culture proves incompatible with applying the concept of counter-revolution to Irish literature. I do not dispute the account which postcolonial criticism provides of Irish culture in the years before 1916. In this account, the emphasis on culture as the source of political activity has had major explanatory capacity. After all, central revolutionary figures such as de Valera or Pearse first emerged through cultural activism. The problem I find is that to insist culture continued to lead politics after 1922, one must assume there was a clear division between politics and culture in the Free State, political life in the Free State being so alien to many of the old ambitions of the Revival. This thesis has not accepted this. Instead, I have argued that our understanding of the relationship between culture and politics in the post-revolutionary era must be recalibrated. In some cases, I have explored how these Irish modernist works directly express or engage with these counter-revolutionary themes. In other instances, I have examined how an intermediary or mediating device is used. For example, my study of *Finnegans Wake* demonstrates how Joyce's engagement with avant-garde themes and ideas served as a means of exploring counter-revolutionary political concerns within the frame of his own interrogation of art.

In part, what I have sought to do is to emphasise a sense of these writers as individuals operating within a history, being obliged to make choices and commitments. Emer Nolan has rightly argued that postcolonial criticism too often ignores how 'real historical actors *must*, after all, decide to ally themselves with one side of another of a particular question' (87 "State"). While literature operates on levels other than those of direct commitment, this should not lead us to ignore that writers are still confronted with immediate issues and problems and with a context within which they must orientate themselves. It is this which Nolan draws attention to, arguing that 'intellectuals are surely not confined to either a passive acceptance of the existing forms of the state or its utter repudiation' (90). It is this uncertainty in political allegiance, one born out of a confusion of political, aesthetic, and social commitments, which I have drawn out in this thesis. In various ways, we have seen how the Free State was not without a political attraction for these writers. They had no possibility of

judging Irish politics from afar, through what Nolan calls an 'Olympian vision' (87). Instead, they were obliged to work and write from within a situation in which no position was adequate, but one nonetheless had to be adopted.

Ulysses is a novel which, I have shown, is deeply embedded in this problem. Although set in 1904, the problem of how one engages with living history is central to the dilemmas the novel explores. Stephen serves as an example of how the position of the alienated intellectual struggles to find any positive, transformative relationship with events. For Stephen, history is a 'nightmare' and, as seen, although critics have often taken this to be Joyce's final word on history, setting *Ulysses* in its context shows this not quite to be the case. History is also the history of Ireland's movement towards independence and although this movement contains its repulsive elements, Joyce's nationalist leanings remain intense enough for him to welcome this movement. To be sure, it is not that Joyce is straightforwardly committed to the national struggle. He has serious reservations about the direction it is taking, as evidenced in "Cyclops". What I emphasise is that these are reservations rather than rejections. Joyce was an artist whose work had exposed, in greater depth than almost any other, the social and political conditions of colonial Ireland. That a movement to resolve these practically was having political success was something he could not discount. At the same time, if Joyce was willing to recognise that the nationalist movement was doing more than he to remedy Ireland's ills, he also registered a sense that this movement was not striking at Ireland's capitalist heart. We find this sense in Bloom, a portrait not only of a man buffeted by the historical winds of the present, but also by those of what is to come. *Ulysses*, I argue, is a book about capitalist Ireland as well as a book about colonial Ireland. This capitalism, says Joyce, will survive and even define independence. Building here on work from Emer Nolan and Keith Booker, I have demonstrated that what Joyce portrays as the central problem of colonial Ireland – alienation, as expressed through Stephen – is prophesied to become after independence the central problem of capitalist Ireland. Although a worthy endeavour, says Joyce, independence will not strike at the root of Ireland's difficulties.

This sense of a flawed independence is central to Eimar O'Duffy's work. O'Duffy's critique of the nationalist movement, being based in republican thought and focussed on economics, anticipates many of the themes of twentieth century discussion of Ireland. On the one hand, he is a proto-postcolonialist, aware that an independent state that lacks an engaged and socially imaginative national movement risks maintaining the economic relations established by colonialism. On the other hand, his poisonous criticisms of

revolutionary violence are an unacknowledged forerunner of the revisionist historiography which emerged in the latter half of the century. Whereas the other writers in this thesis are models of uncertainty, coming to decisions only through a torturous process, O'Duffy is a model of commitment. This question of commitment, and the right and wrong ways to make it, are central themes of *The Wasted Island*. They were, indeed, central themes of O'Duffy's life, but by the time he came to write his 'Cuanduine Trilogy', he was a man with nothing left to commit to. Having rejected both insurrectionary and constitutional nationalism, he was a statesman without a state. This is not to say that he was not counter-revolutionary. Indeed, the severity of his desire for social order, even at the expense of the civic values he had once celebrated, has been a major discovery in my study of his work. O'Duffy serves as a warning to critics that even the most utopian thought must be read alongside its context. O'Duffy's Leisure State is an undeniably utopian protest against the repressiveness of interwar capitalism. It is, however, also a response to political chaos in Ireland. When his utopian society of materially secure but passive intellectuals, ruled over by a benevolent technocracy, is read as a response to his account of Irish violence, it reveals O'Duffy considering whether material comfort and political rights can be reconciled. Although exploring the politics of Ireland in the 1920s, O'Duffy thus also anticipates certain debates about national sovereignty initiated by Sean Lemass's decision to open up Ireland's economy after 1959.

Brian O'Nolan's novels, defined by their rich imagination and exuberant formal experiment, have often been taken as implicit protests against the rigid intellectual climate of Free State Ireland. I have made strong arguments against this position here, working to reveal O'Nolan's engagement in social and political panics typical of his class. Despite his undeniable formal inventiveness, O'Nolan's novels register a fear of change. In *At Swim*, O'Nolan's fear is of the mob, which although often rendered comically, is treated as a disruptive agent in a manner other characters, more representative of O'Nolan's own middle class milieu, are not. This disruption is primarily targeted at the intellectual pretensions of high culture and, although the middlebrow does not go unchallenged, it comes out of the novel relatively unscathed. This concern with intellectual pretensions comes to the fore of his second novel, *The Third Policeman*. As I have shown here, O'Nolan's engagement with intellectual debate surrounding quantum theory, an undeniably impressive feat on O'Nolan's part, is again undergirded by an anxiety typical of the Irish bourgeoisie. Cognizant of the philosophical and theological implications of modern science, O'Nolan seeks to parody this science, reducing its horrors through humour. Unlike the other novelists in this study,

O'Nolan was not staging explicit political arguments. What I have shown, instead, is the sensibility he shares with the Irish middle-class, a sensibility that extends to a conservative cultural politics. Again, we can see that O'Nolan uneasily reconciles these politics to his art, sometimes seeking to emphasise a supposed plebeian quality to his work that contradicts the high experimentalism of his fiction. For O'Nolan, if the pull of politics is less felt than it is for, say, Kate O'Brien, the pull of being a part of Irish society is that much greater. Ireland's counter-revolution, we have said, is the replacement of insurrection with civilian politics. O'Nolan's fear for the breakdown of order, brought about by a combination of mob law and reckless intellectuals, is the formally experimental voice of this replacement.

No work I have studied here examines the contradiction between counter-revolutionary politics and radical form to a greater extent than *Finnegans Wake*. I have argued that the *Wake* intensifies the scepticism which Joyce had been begun directing towards the artist in *Portrait* to such an extent that his criticism yields new conceptions of what art and the artist are. Having once believed that the artist was the agent of social transformation, a belief typical of many radical artists in the 1900s and early 1910s, war, revolution, and reconstruction are now seen in the *Wake* as alternatives to such beliefs. Moreover, Joyce registers also that this alternative, one working through states, parties, and large businesses, has a practicality that eludes the artist's engagements. Hence, I have treated the *Wake* as an exploration of avant-garde concepts and themes, arguing that Joyce was a part of a post-war shift radical artists made away from revolutionary optimism. We find again a feeling of uncertainty and divided loyalties, as Joyce's art, radical in form and content, struggles with a sense of its own obsolescence. Furthermore, and building on vital work by postcolonial scholars, I have insisted that Joyce's thinking here must be seen in an Irish context. In the *Wake*, it is Irish reconstruction, carried out by the Free State, which serves as Joyce's leading example of how the politician has more power than the artist. It is because Ireland provides these examples that the question of state and artist is so acute for Joyce. The character of Shaun, for all that he represents the ugly, repressive side of Free State Ireland, remains the mirror image of the artist Shem. The former achieves through politics and repression what the latter cannot achieve through his art. Exile though he may have been, Joyce remained willing to concede to the Free State that there was value to its project.

There is an irony in saying that Kate O'Brien is, of the four writers surveyed here, the most committed to the middle-class project in Ireland. After all, it was O'Brien alone who was censored, although Joyce was certainly ignored. O'Brien's work is an account of the bourgeois class which came to power after 1922, one which seeks to reveal the values of

their religious commitments, the struggles of their familial responsibilities, the suffocation imposed by their social codes. We find, again, a sense of uncertainty in O'Brien's work. Her characters are shown wrestling with the question of how bound they are to their community or whether they have the right to break free of it. In many ways, her novels dramatize the issue I have been arguing is central to all of the writers studied here. What forces O'Brien to break from the Free State project is her sense of individualism. Whereas a text such as *Finnegans Wake* imagines the individual to be the product of an enormous confusion of social and cultural forces, O'Brien's novels have a more liberal sense of the individual. Her characters meet the world as individuals and succeed or fail in their own right. What I have demonstrated here is that this individualism should not be mistaken for outright rebellion. O'Brien's point is that these characters, in the dignity their decisions bestow upon them, are the worthy subjects of an independent Irish state. In her own way, she is like O'Duffy in her concern for the Irish character, but whereas O'Duffy views the Irish fatalistically, O'Brien finds within her own class a resource worth building upon.

Often, in this thesis, it has been shown that artists held opinions which were not radically different to those held by politicians and intellectuals who had identified themselves with the Free State. P. S. O'Hegarty argued that Irish people had 'been so long criticising [colonial] Governments … that we fail to realise that an Irish Government has a right to more intelligent treatment from its own people' (143). If O'Hegarty was being quite bald in his attitudes, the problem he described was one that all artists were obliged to reckon with. Kiberd, indeed, describes Joyce as having expressed exactly these sentiments, telling Arthur Power:

> that there had actually been more freedom when he was a youth in Ireland, because the English had been in governance then and the people, unfettered by any sense of social responsibility, said what they pleased: now that they were responsible for their own fate, they appeared to have gone all cautious and middle-aged (*Inventing* 265).

Joyce is being more wry and less condemnatory than O'Hegarty, but his understanding of how independence transformed the relationship between the Irish and Irish society is similar. For both, independence, however attenuated it may have been, had brought about a qualitative transformation of the relations between the Irish citizen and Irish society. How one spoke and wrote about Ireland would have to change now that Ireland itself had been

politically overhauled. These sentiments can be compared to Yeats's claim that Ireland, in the immediate aftermath of Parnell's fall, had been 'hot wax'. It had been, said Yeats, a country open to being moulded and this was exactly what he, through ventures such as the Abbey Theatre, had sought to do. After 1922, if not long before, the mould had set. We find again the idea that the context within which cultural activity operated had changed radically with the appearance of the Free State.

This is not to say that dissent was impossible. Indeed, Kate O'Brien would publish in one of the most famous Irish publications critical of the Free State, Seán O'Faoláin's *The Bell*. *The Bell*, however, would not begin publication until 1940. Of the works examined here, only *The Land of Spices* and *The Third Policeman* were published after this, and *The Third Policeman* only because it had been rejected for publication when first presented in 1940. Furthermore, O'Duffy had been dead for some five years by the time *The Bell* appeared, having passed in 1935, and Joyce of course would die soon after in 1941. The works I have examined here dealt with a different context, one that felt the legitimacy of the Free State to be imperilled and in need of defence. O'Higgins said that what this period had demanded was 'a grim sense of duty' (*Three Years* 8) and while this command for duty concealed a repressive demand to follow Cumann na nGaedheal, we have seen how the question of allegiance weighed heavily on these writers. This allegiance was often framed through class, religion, or even philosophy, but it remained the case that all felt that the Free State constituted something which could command, if not support, then at least recognition.

O'Higgins's remarks here can be used to sum up the whole spirit of counter-revolution. In 1924, four years before these statements and with the revolution still in the balance, O'Higgins had written that 'the whole history of the world is the triumph of the mind over matter' (qtd in White 38). Comparing the Irish revolution to 'the beauty of the Resurrection' (38), O'Higgins declared that the nationalist revolutionaries were 'backing our Idea against the triumph' (38) of physical realities. O'Higgins was writing here in the white heat of revolution and a sense of revolutionary optimism is clear. Indeed, in his claim that the Irish rebels were 'backing our Idea against aeroplanes and armoured cars' (38) we can hear some presentiment of a warning made by Fanon. For Fanon, revolutionaries who have 'in the innermost recesses of their brains the settler's tanks and aeroplanes' (49) are doomed to failure. By this measure, O'Higgins was fated for success. His transformation into a man who could dismiss the ideals of the 1919 Dáil's Democratic Programme as 'largely poetry' (qtd in Lee 124) is an example, albeit a quite extreme one, of the sort of process I have examined here. With Joyce and O'Duffy, we can see this transformation from beginning to

end; with Brian O'Nolan and Kate O'Brien, we can see how a memory of radical transformation finds itself in an uneasy relationship with a pragmatic concern for immediate realities.

It would not be this post-revolutionary pragmatism which would be passed on to another generation. Rather, it would be the battle against Ireland which O'Brien was beginning in *The Land of Spices* which anticipated writers such as John McGahern or Edna O'Brien. Although the notes of tortured uncertainty found in *Finnegans Wake* would continue to echo, the political concerns we have explored here would increasingly lose their resonance. The longer economic decline persisted in the Free State – the Republic of Ireland after 1948 – the less the independent state could command respect. This problem was intensified by the unceasing power of the Catholic Church. The return of revolutionary violence in Northern Ireland in the 1960s would serve as one more piece of evidence of the rottenness of the post-1922 establishment. That the political situation of the interwar years would pass, however, does not mean it should be forgotten, or that later dilemmas should be projected back into it. In 1922, an independent Ireland was an idea of great magnetism. What we have seen here is how that attraction exercised itself over the course of twenty years, always declining in power but capable of turning the head of radical artists. Declan Kiberd has shown how the project of inventing Ireland captured the imagination of two generations of artists working before 1922. The Ireland that was invented, constructed out of the Treaty and the ruins of Civil War, was an object of less grandeur. Nonetheless, for many, it was something worth defending.

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