





# **TRADITION AND MODERNITY**

## New Essays in Irish Studies

Edited by

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## INTRODUCTION

The crucial dynamics of tradition and modernity lies at the core of all literature and art in general. Even the most original writer needs something to be innovated upon, be it the approach of the previous generation, generic conventions or the raw material of any literature, language. Hence the importance of tradition in the broadest sense of the word. Moreover, tradition in modern society is not something we simply passively receive but something that has to be created, or even “invented.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, the establishment of tradition may be analogical to the writing of history from the traces of the past, as Hayden White has it – elements of past culture are selected, arranged in a meaningful whole and then imitated, reshaped, or both.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, tradition does not necessarily have to be restrictive, but it can also become a powerful innovative force.

Arguably, Irish literature with its long history reflecting the linguistic and cultural diversity of the island, is a particularly rich field where this dynamics can be observed. This is also evident from the present volume, a collection of essays by postgraduate researchers in Irish Studies. The contributions are devoted to a wide variety of subjects ranging from medieval Irish writing to contemporary plays on Northern Ireland, testifying to the abilities and broad outlook of young scholars in the field.

<sup>1</sup> See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Hayden White, “Interpretation of History,” *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

The importance of (post)-modernism as a repository of novel approaches to tradition is reflected in the fact that four of the contributions deal with various aspects of the work of Samuel Beckett. The opening essay by David Vichnar makes a significant contribution to the discussion concerning the nature of Beckett's debt to James Joyce, a possibility implied by Beckett's personal closeness to Joyce and his widely recognised early-phase fascination with his 'master.' With a high degree of erudition, Vichnar scans the critical terrain, discovering significant shortcomings in the most typical treatments of this issue of influence, which he divides into two broad classes of "there is none" and "there is some." The general reluctance to acknowledge a more profound relationship between the works of both writers stems from Beckett's own statement about how he differs from Joyce on the issue of the power of language and the artist.

Vichnar argues, however, that all these critical evaluations err in positing *Finnegan's Wake* and, to a lesser degree, *Ulysses*, as Beckett's fundamental Joycean reference points. Taking a cue from P.J. Murphy, the main thrust of the argument is that it is rather *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* that should be regarded as the most significant text for the Joyce/Beckett relationship. While Murphy focuses mainly on Beckett's novels, Vichnar expands his argument by zooming in on two of Beckett's earliest published texts, his famous essay "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce" and the short story "Assumption." Although Beckett's essay takes *Finnegan's Wake* (or rather, *The Work in Progress*) as its subject, it draws from Stephen Dedalus's famous aesthetic theory and makes constant recourse to *A Portrait*, whether explicitly or implicitly. The short story, in turn, displays structural parallels to Joyce's famous *Bildungsroman* and contains a number of direct verbal echoes. Moreover, both works are similar in that they make a connection between the erotic and the linguistic by pointing to their common source – the bodily, or physical.

Galina Kiryushina explores a particularly creative, cross-media approach to tradition that can be observed in the use of the techniques of silent film in Samuel Beckett's late prose. In accordance with the available evidence about Beckett's interest in early twentieth-century film makers and film theorists, especially Sergei Eisenstein, the essay offers a "cinematographic" reading of



Beckett's 1983 novel *Worstward Ho*. In one of the numerous inventive metaphors coined to grasp this difficult text, Kiryushina translates "cinematographic" literally as "movement-writing," referring both to the title and method of the novel.

The interpretation revolves around the irreducible image of the "dim void," which points to the *camera obscura*, both a metaphor of the human mind and a predecessor of the modern film camera. Into this void, various shades or images are projected. To explain the precise manner of their projection, Kiryushina makes use of Eisenstein's theory of montage, in which "each sequential element is arrayed, not *next* to the one it follows, but on *top* of it." Similar to the effect of portmanteau words, the shots are superimposed on one another, urging the spectator to construct a unifying mental image yet retaining their individual qualities. According to Kiryushina, analogical techniques can also be observed in *Worstward Ho*. One example is the constant "undoing" or "dimming" of images by superimposing their "worsened" versions on them, with the result that they become blurred but never disappear. Another instance is the intense polysemy of Beckett's language, which again forces the reader to layer various readings on top of each other, without the necessity of choosing a 'correct' option. The result is a profound sense of movement that defies any definitive answers.

The essay by Einat Adar also discusses Beckett's sources, this time focusing on his preoccupation with philosophy. The subject is *Film* (1964), the author's only work centred around a philosophical premise as it takes its motto from the famous statement by George Berkeley, "to be is to be perceived." The film features two 'characters' – the man who is perceived and the unseen perceiver, equated with the camera. The established interpretation, represented by Gilles Deleuze, takes the action in *Film* as an attempt to escape being seen, ultimately successful only due to the protagonist's "ceasing to be" in order to avoid self-perception. Implicit in this view is that Beckett does not significantly depart from Berkeley in *Film*, only adds a dimension of modern human anxiety in front of the observing eye.

Nevertheless, Adar's article suggests that this interpretation is deficient in that it adopts solely the perspective of the observed character in the movie. A close analysis of the perceiving eye, or

camera, reveals that it is, in fact, identical with the man perceived. This implies, in contrast to Deleuze's view, the protagonist's active *pursuit* of full self-perception, which is, however, a philosophical impossibility and can only end in horrifying madness. In the concluding part of the article, Adar manages to find a source for Beckett's departure from Berkeley, i.e. the Flemish post-Cartesian philosopher Arnold Geulincx, whose notion of *inspectio sui* leads to the realisation of human ignorance and impotence and thus to Christian humility. Therefore, Beckett does not merely modernise Berkeley's philosophy by psychologising it but plays it against another tradition, represented by Geulincx. In cases like Beckett, the tradition/modernity dichotomy can become excruciatingly complex.

A mark of a living tradition is its continuation in the present, and therefore it is highly apposite to conclude the 'Beckettian' half of the volume with an essay focusing on Beckett's influence on later writers. This is the article by David McKinney, which traces the similarities between Beckett's *Molloy* (1951) and the recent novel by Emma Donoghue, *The Room* (2010), applying a psychoanalytical approach. The most important common motif is the struggle of both main characters, Molloy and Jack, to return to the security of the mother after leaving a confined but comfortingly familiar place, represented in both novels by the "room." Viewed through the lens of psychoanalysis, this room is a clear symbol of the womb. In their search for security, both characters become attached to "transitional objects" – both human and non-human entities that serve as a surrogate for the mother. For Molloy, instances include the famous "sucking stones" sequence as well as his relationship with the social worker Mrs Lousse. Among analogues in *The Room* are the mother's tooth, which Jack significantly often keeps in his mouth, the rug he is wrapped in during his escape and, finally, his maternal grandmother. All these examples are carefully related to relevant concepts in psychoanalytical theory.

McKinney not only argues for recognising Donoghue's debt to the Beckettian aesthetic but places her novel in an elaborate network of influences. These include not only the widely recognised influence of Beckett's plays on later drama, but also the fact that while writing these plays, Beckett drew from his own earlier novels. Considerable space is also devoted to a biographical reading of *Molloy* that implies the central importance of Beckett's

own mother. The findings of McKinney's article corroborate the views of critics such as Declan Kiberd and Stephen Watt, who argue for the omnipresence of Beckett in (not only) Irish literature.

The essay by Hana Pavelková also discusses contemporary works, this time from the wide field of Irish drama. The focus is on the latest plays of two well-established playwrights, Owen McCafferty's *Quietly* (2012) and Frank McGuinness's *The Matchbox* (2012). The principal issue addressed is why the authors, famous for their experimentalism, opted for conventional means of expression in these specific plays. It transpires that an approach in keeping with the traditions of Irish theatre can still be suitable for the treatment of contemporary, topical subjects, i.e. the problems of reconciliation related to the conflict in Northern Ireland in both cases. Pavelková's essay also features a comprehensive survey of the critical reception of the plays and relates them to other recent and contemporary dramatic works.

While *Quietly* resembles a great number of previous Irish plays in the use of the pub setting and the fact that it is based almost solely on language, it is able to make important original points. For example, it addresses the concept of confession and it includes a Polish bartender as one of the characters, making a bridge between the Troubles and more contemporary issues concerning immigration. A definite drawback of the play, however, is the absence of women characters and female perspective in general. However, this perspective dominates in the second of the plays discussed, *The Match Box*, which is a monologue by a desperate female protagonist haunted by the ghost of her murdered daughter. Although criticising the overly conventional, picture-postcard setting of the play, Pavelková highly commends it for its remarkable emotional impact comparable to the effect of Greek tragedy. The ultimate conclusion is that even plays that observe the classical unities, use monologues and rely mostly on words are able to offer fresh perspectives.

Maciej Ruczaj focuses on Patrick Pearse as one of the most paradoxical figures in Irish history and literature, as far as the tradition/modernity dichotomy is concerned. At the beginning of the essay, a dual critical perception of Pearse is noted – on the one hand, his progressive and innovative role in education and in the establishment of Irish-language literature is widely acknowledged,

but on the other hand, he is generally regarded as an essentially backward-looking political thinker, indulging in narrow-minded nationalism. Ruczaj draws on important concepts from political theory, cultural nationalism and primordial modernism, to present a more nuanced view of Pearse's political views. By portraying Pearse as a cultural nationalist according to John Hutchinson's understanding of the term, the author shows that Pearse's invocation of the nationalist mythical narratives, most notably that of the "golden age," did not imply the desire to return to some prelapsarian state located in the distant past. Rather, the past was recalled in order to further the progress towards modernity, albeit one built predominantly on native models.

The second of the concepts, primordial modernism is applied to explain the disruptive, revolutionary moment in Pearse's thought. It is characterised by a rather violent "resynthesis" of unconnected elements of the past in order to bring about a radical change in the present. The concept is used to clarify Pearse's conflation of Cuchulainn and Christ, as well as his inclusion of Protestants and agnostics into his pantheon of nationalist "saints." An inherent feature of primordial modernism is also the discourse of generational conflict which rejects the liberalism and rationalism of the ruling political class. However, the solution for Pearse is not, as was often the case with "primordial modernists" in Europe, the adoption of authority but a "messianic breakthrough conducted by the few." To discover the deepest layer of Pearse's thought, therefore, one has to reach into the realm of theology.

The last two essays in the collection deal with medieval Irish literature, its reception in modern times and its own tradition/modernity dynamics. As a substantial part of this literature was written in Old and Middle Irish, it seems only fitting for the essays to be written in modern Irish, thus emphasising both the ancient roots and the continuing vitality of the language. As in our second volume, *Boundary Crossings* (2012), the inclusion of essays in Irish recognises the need for a healthy degree of bilingualism in the field of Irish studies, which would acknowledge both major Irish linguistic traditions. May it not be too unrealistic to hope for bilingual conferences and essay volumes such as this to become a meaningful platform for the highly desirable meeting of scholars working in the two languages.

The contribution by Ken Ó Donnchú explores both the scribal history and the modern reception of the medieval tale *Comthóth Lógairi co Cretim 7 a Aided* [Lógairi's Conversion to Christianity and His Death], preserved in *The Book of Leinster*. It is a comprehensive expository article, comprising valuable information on various aspects of the text. Of interest are the numerous problems concerning *The Book of Leinster* itself, particularly the number of the scribes and the relationship between them. Perhaps not surprisingly, scholars are unlikely to come to an agreement about these questions. Concerning modern reception, the most notable fact emerging from the analysis is that there has been a distinct lack of critical interest concerning *CLcC* in contrast to other texts from the manuscript. The reasons Ó Donnchú suggests are the paucity of native scholars of medieval Irish and the tendency of foreign scholars to prefer texts that would provide evidence of older forms of the language. This, in turn, was caused by the specific circumstances at the time Celtic Studies was established, when the emphasis was on the search for the Indo-European foundation of Celtic languages.

The main focus of the article, however, is on the work of Charles Plummer and Whitley Stokes, who managed to publish the first two editions of *CLcC* in the 1880s. After providing valuable information on the work and personal traits of these remarkable scholars, the essay examines the reasons that led them to work with this particular text. Ó Donnchú argues that their main interest was lexical – to add to the knowledge of the vocabulary of medieval Irish at a time when no dictionaries were available. This narrow focus, however, led them to neglect historical and literary aspects of the texts they were editing. With its broad scope, Ó Donnchú's article is a valuable commentary on the history and current state of the study of Irish medieval literature, exposing a number of lacunae and limited approaches.

The last essay in the collection, by Hynek Janoušek, serves as an excellent illustration of the tradition/modernity issue in medieval times, represented by the pagan heroic tradition on the one hand and Christianity on the other. It focuses on the various versions of the tale *Aided Chonchobuir* [The Death of Conchobar]. In the first part of the article, Janoušek offers an interesting discussion of the *aided* (death tale) genre and shows that it was sometimes used in

order to ridicule traditional heroic values and to convey a Christian moral message. This happens, for example, in the death tale of the warrior Loégaire Búadach, who in his fury forgets the topography of his own house and splits his head against the doorframe, or in that of Fergus, who is killed while committing adultery.

Janoušek argues that *Aided Conchobuir* goes even further in connecting the heroic and Christian elements. This is best seen in the second part of the tale, which underwent considerable development in the various versions. The pagan king Conchobar is, albeit in a rather grotesque way, transformed into a martyr when the brain of Mesgegra springs out of his head due to Conchobar's rage after learning about the Crucifixion, thus causing the king's death. In one of the versions, the blood gushing out of his head is equated to baptismal water, applying the concepts of "baptism by blood" and "red martyrdom" to the pagan hero. The Christian message, however, is most explicit in the poem that the king utters after learning about Christ's death, where he puts in doubt the very concept of revenge, integral to the heroic ethos. The most remarkable point emerging from Janoušek's analysis, however, may well be the particular way in which pagan and Christian elements are combined in the story – a manner which juxtaposes serious and grotesque elements without the slightest hesitation. This feature rightly reminds us of Irish modernists and post-modernists such as James Joyce or Flann O'Brien, making a full circle back to the period where this volume starts.

After the third successful postgraduate conference at Charles University and the publication of the volumes *Politics of Irish Writing* (2010) and *Boundary Crossings* (2012), the meeting of young scholars of Irish Studies on this platform has now become a valuable tradition. May it last and be constantly renewed by fresh impulses, thus developing its own tradition/modernity dynamics.

Radvan Markus  
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## COINCIDENTAL OPPOSITES: A PORTRAIT OF SAMUEL BECKETT AS A YOUNG JOYCE

David Vichnar

(Charles University in Prague / Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris-III)

The sheer fact of his exceptionally personal closeness to Joyce and his well-documented lifelong fascination with his acknowledged master turns Samuel Beckett into a most usual suspect of Joyce's influence in post-WWII fiction. However, his idiosyncratic relationship with Joyce, the multiple fresh starts and breaks with the past throughout his writing career (from English to French and from poetry to prose and drama), and, finally, the very singularity of Beckett's own poetics have all made the seemingly indubitable influence highly contested. For obvious reasons,<sup>1</sup> this essay cannot aspire to cover the many biographical or textual ties and connections between the two.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the present discussion of the

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the plethora of essays and papers, there are no fewer than four major monographs and essay collections to date devoted solely to the Joyce/Beckett personal relationship and artistic intertext; cf. Barbara Gluck, *Beckett & Joyce* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1979); *Re: Joyce 'n' Beckett*, eds Phyllis Carey and Ed Jewinski (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992); *In Principle, Beckett is Joyce*, ed. Friedhelm Rathjen (Norwich: Page Bros, 1994); P.J. Murphy, *Beckett's Dedalus: Dialogical Engagements with Joyce in Beckett's Fiction* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: Toronto University Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> These are already recorded to great detail in both Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) and James Knowlson's *Damned to Fame* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).

Joyce/Beckett intertext aims to depart from an overview of the various conceptualisations of this influence in literary criticism over the past half-century and to test some of their more productive discoveries where they can be most easily traced – in Beckett’s earliest work.

# I

The critical conceptualisation of the Joyce/Beckett intertext can roughly be divided into two groups. The first seems to have taken cue from the frequently quoted comment on the subject made by Beckett himself in an interview with Israel Shenker. Here, on the basis of the antithesis between Joyce and himself, Beckett also foreshadowed the many conventional oppositions between modernism and postmodernism:

With Joyce the difference is that Joyce is a superb manipulator of material – perhaps the greatest. He was making words do the absolute maximum of work. There isn’t a syllable that’s superfluous. The kind of work I do is one in which I’m not master of my material. The more *Joyce* knew the more he could. He’s tending toward *omniscience and omnipotence as an artist. I’m working with impotence, ignorance*. I don’t think impotence has been exploited in the past.<sup>3</sup>

One has difficulty grasping how Joyce’s “omnipotence” should lead to absolute control over his ever incremental, constantly proliferating material, and how exactly – given his own tendency toward minimalism – Beckett’s control over his own work should be forfeited. The obvious problems posed (yet not properly addressed) by Beckett’s statement notwithstanding, until very recently, this antithetical relationship was the starting point for a range of accounts of the Joyce/Beckett relationship. At worst, it was parroted as the ultimate evidence of the irrelevance of the relationship. At best, it was further rarefied and reconceptualised.

<sup>3</sup> Israel Shenker, “An Interview with *Beckett*,” *New York Times*, 5 May 1956: 3; emphasis added.



Beckett had devised such an idiosyncratic style in his post-war writing that by the time he turned his attention to increasingly minimalist theatre, Joyce's importance for his writing was – in the literary criticism devoted to the issue – not only under-recognised but explicitly defied.<sup>4</sup> Instances of the “there-is-none” approach abound: in *Afterjoyce: Fiction after Ulysses*, Robert Martin Adams does little more than paraphrase Beckett's own oppositional stance.<sup>5</sup> More recently – despite its provocative title *In Principle, Beckett is Joyce* – Friedhelm Rathjen's edited collection of essays casts very little light on the “principle” in question. The points of connection between Joyce and Beckett remain only tangential, metaphorical, biographical, matters of critical construct. In his own contribution, the editor of the collection seems to take the Beckett-is-anti-Joyce position to an extreme when claiming:

The Joycean influence does not manifest itself in direct Joycean traces that can be found in Beckett's work but rather in the absence of any superficial traces: Joyce was Beckett's starting point not in the sense of Joyce's showing Beckett where to go but in the sense of Beckett's realizing what to avoid: he had to avoid the Joycean “apotheosis of the word” in order to create something of his own.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> As was shown in Barbara Gluck's pioneering study, “for the majority of critics, the answer to the question of Joyce's literary influence on Samuel Beckett is the same now given to speculations about life on the moon: there is none. While, until recently, only a few actually attempted to explore the issue, nearly every writer who has commented on Beckett's works has had a definite – and definitely negative – opinion on the matter. Dismissing what they disdain to investigate, most have vehemently denied the presence of any Joycean voice in Beckett's fiction.” Gluck 9.

<sup>5</sup> “Joyce, in brief, was a man who aspired by a process of addition to put everything into his volumes; Beckett, working by a contrary arithmetic, has steadily subtracted more and more from his books, emptying them of substance, and working toward the cold and dark of a naked consciousness, aware only of itself, confronting the absolute zero of non-experience. [...] Beckett's is an implosive imagination at odds with its own premises; Joyce gives us the feeling of infinity.” Robert Martin Adams, *Afterjoyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 93.

<sup>6</sup> Friedhelm Rathjen, “Maximal Joyce Is a State of Beckett: Joyce, Beckett, and Bruno's *Coincidentia Oppositorum*,” *In Principle, Beckett is Joyce* 100.

Noticeably, what these and other similar evaluations share is the consensus that the absent Joycean voice in Beckett is the voice of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's "apotheosis of the word."

The other, more refined critical approach to the question – and the thesis of this, analogically to the first one, could be termed "there is some" – investigates the other major Joycean text, *Ulysses*, as Beckett's point of departure. An early case in point of this approach is Hugh Kenner's widely influential study entitled *Stoic Comedians*. As long as the Stoic is understood as "one who considers [...] that the field of possibilities available to him is [...] closed,"<sup>7</sup> then Joyce is the "comedian of the inventory" and Beckett the "comedian of the impasse," departing precisely from the impasse at which Beckett perceived Joyce to have left off. Beckett took the novel genre up "at the point to which James Joyce had brought it," and did so "by an act of imaginative superfoetation" through which Beckett "sought to solve the general problem, how to deal with an impasse, as Joyce of the inventory and Flaubert of the encyclopaedia."<sup>8</sup> Kenner posits that Beckett's first step was to start where *Ulysses* left off, with the inventory – and so *Watt*, Beckett's last novel written in English, takes as its "point of departure" the "Ithaca" episode of *Ulysses*.<sup>9</sup> It is the comedy of the inventory – the attempt to exhaust all possible narrative possibilities and spatiotemporal arrangements – that Beckett inherited from Joyce, although any comparison between an "Ithaca" and a *Watt* passage reveals, for every superficial resemblance, a profound dissimilarity – as does Kenner's.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the backbone of Kenner's narrative of the progression from Flaubert to Joyce to Beckett is a relatively straightforward one. If Joyce's *Ulysses* is

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Kenner, *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962) xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Kenner 70.

<sup>9</sup> Kenner 75, 77.

<sup>10</sup> "If this, in the abstractness of its language and the gravity of its cadence, evidently resembles the Ithaca section of *Ulysses*, it differs still more markedly. It is more general; it tells us about Watt's way of advancing due east, for example, not of how Watt went to a particular place; [...] Yet strangely enough it is at the same time more particular, since Bloom jumps as any man would have jumped, but Watt's way of advancing due east, for example, is so far as we can tell peculiar to Watt." Kenner 80.

cluttered with objects, it is because Joyce – the comedian of the inventory – was “in obedience to the rules of the game he was playing, had continual need for more and more of them”; Beckett, on the other hand, seems to go about things differently in that “he selects elements from a closed set, and then arranges them inside a closed field.”<sup>11</sup>

A strange amalgam of the two prevalent positions – the “there-is-none” and “there-is-some” – is Barbara Gluck’s study from the late 1970s, pioneering in its attempt at what neither Kenner nor Adams undertook: the project of unearthing and cataloguing the variety of Joycean echoes, nods, even direct allusions, in Beckett’s work. Gluck’s *Beckett & Joyce* partially achieves this by painstakingly surveying Beckett’s oeuvre spanning the three decades from “Whoroscope” (1930) to *Endgame* (1957). Like Kenner, she views Beckett as departing chiefly from the “Ithaca” chapter of *Ulysses*. However, like Adams or (later) Rathjen, Gluck quickly shifts focus onto the polyglot polysemy of Joyce’s *Wake* and onto Beckett’s “increasing dissatisfaction with his mentor’s *Weltanschauung*: the universe as a cyclical closed system in which every object and event relates to every other one, and the key to all is man’s mastery of his own tongue – language.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, to Gluck’s mind, after Beckett’s early dabbling in multilingual poetry (“Whoroscope”) and his own pseudo-*Bildungsroman* (*More Pricks than Kicks*), his early novels – i.e. *Murphy* and *Watt* – already show how “although the stylistic and thematic influence of Joyce remains strong, Beckett is beginning to assert his own literary individuality and use what he learned from his mentor for his own artistic ends,” especially in pursuing “a finality that the closed but infinitely renewable universe of *Finnegans Wake* excludes.”<sup>13</sup>

In his *Trilogy*, Gluck contends, Beckett’s divergence from Joyce becomes almost complete. Gluck’s first book-length attempt at scrutinising (rather than merely surveying) the Beckett canon vis-à-vis his engagement with Joyce does much useful textual and archival work. However, its founding premise that Beckett’s prose

<sup>11</sup> Kenner 92, 94.

<sup>12</sup> Gluck 11.

<sup>13</sup> Gluck 69, 104.

constantly struggles to escape from Joyce's theory of circular time is ill substantiated (at no point was Beckett recorded to have raised any serious objection against it) and operates on the basis of two false assumptions. First, there is little else about the *Wake* that Beckett could have been drawn to apart from its circularity (and his *transition* essay disproves that clearly). And second, and more importantly, once again, *Finnegans Wake* is to be regarded as Beckett's fundamental Joycean reference point.

## II

Given this precarious and reductive genealogy, the most recent book-length study on the subject, P.J. Murphy's *Beckett's Dedalus* and its central thesis (*pace* Rathjen) that "there are indeed 'direct Joycean traces,'" that "in many ways Joyce did initially 'show Beckett where to go,' and that Joyce's influence is not left 'blank' the greater its impact on Beckett"<sup>14</sup> seems close to revolutionary. The contention of Murphy's book is surprisingly simple: the supposed "untraceability" of Joyce's impact on Beckett is only due to the mistaken critical assumption that the most crucial of Joyce's texts for Beckett are those with which he was personally connected – i.e. *Ulysses* and, in particular, the *Wake*. In fact, this is not the case at all: despite possessing "a thorough knowledge of *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*," Murphy argues that the most "important and influential Joycean text for Beckett"<sup>15</sup> is Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Beckett read *A Portrait* as early as 1927 and, as late as 1989, his biographer Knowlson records his admission of having "admired Joyce's *Portrait*" since "there was something about it."<sup>16</sup> Although not original in drawing attention to the importance of *A Portrait* for Beckett,<sup>17</sup> Murphy's book is invaluable

<sup>14</sup> Murphy 16.

<sup>15</sup> Murphy 4.

<sup>16</sup> Qtd. in Murphy 6.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the entry on "James Joyce" in the *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, which calls attention to the fact that Beckett arrived in Paris "having read *Dubliners* and *Portrait* but not yet *Ulysses*," that his hands-on experience with Joyce's "Work in Progress" taught him little beyond the lesson of "reading for the sake of writing," and, crucially, that "more lasting was an understanding of what words could do, in echoes and implications," since "*Beckett's 'Joyce' is the Stephen of*

in painstakingly documenting two crucial facts: that Beckett's was a lifelong admiration for Joyce, marking the entirety of his canon, i.e. not only its earliest phase; and that it was based on *A Portrait*, rather than *Ulysses* or the *Wake*:

From "Assumption" to "What is the Word," Beckett's development of his own aesthetic theory repeatedly targets his rejection and subsequent revision and rewriting of Stephen Dedalus's more traditionalist view that the supreme manifestation or quality of Beauty is "the luminous silent stasis of aesthetic pleasure" (*Portrait*, 186). For Beckett the aesthetic experience is from the very beginning characterized as kinetic in nature.<sup>18</sup>

Murphy stresses the oddity of Joyce's abandonment of both the Dedalus character and the aesthetic theories voiced through him in an "unresolved state," a veritable Joycean "art of failure," in whose wake Beckett forges his own.<sup>19</sup> In the light of Murphy's argument, the Beckett canon takes the following outline: his last two novels in English mark the "critical turning points" in "the testing out of Stephen Dedalus's aesthetic system" in that *Murphy* is structured "around a tug-of-war between the eponymous hero and Mr Willoughby Kelly, a surrogate version of Joyce himself, with Celia the prostitute / Venus figure caught in the middle"; *Watt*, begun shortly after Joyce's death, can "perhaps best be regarded as Beckett's hail and farewell to his friend/father-figure and literary mentor"; *Molloy* is "Beckett's climactic encounter with Joyce," his first, however belated, "full-length portrait of the artist"; and finally, in the post-*Trilogy* prose, Beckett is seen to have "incorporated

*Portrait taken at his own evaluation, the impersonal Artist-as-God, not today's young man who may become an artist but whose every act is tempered with irony."* *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, eds C.J. Ackerley and S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 286-88; emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> Murphy 5.

<sup>19</sup> Murphy contends: "Joyce was compelled to admit the failure of his artistic theory and to move from it to the realm of ethics. [...] A generation after Joyce, Beckett takes up the challenges posed by the same set of very powerful ideas found in Stephen's theorizing in *A Portrait*, testing out the limitations of these theories as well as trying to find ways to overcome the aporias upon which Joyce's aesthetics 'foundered.'" Murphy 8.

Joyce in a number of ways that are decisive in determining the structure and development of particular texts.”<sup>20</sup>

To illustrate just how lasting Joyce’s impact on Beckett appears in Murphy’s argument, Beckett’s last published text, the 1988 poem “What is the Word” is read as “a coda or postscript to Beckett’s relationship with Joyce,” and its central word “folly,” as well as its preoccupation with naming, is related to “the folly of trying to find the word or words that would name a world and our presence in it.” Murphy supports this claim by viewing the longest line in the poem, “folly for to need to seem to glimpse afaint afar away over there what,” as an echo of the ending of *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Beckett’s last text figures in Murphy’s argument as his “most revealing comment on his debt to Joyce and how through his critique and revision of Joyce’s aesthetic, he found his own ways and means to explore his own ‘folly.’”<sup>22</sup> In sum, Murphy insists (and seeks to demonstrate) that

Beckett chose Joyce’s work as his starting point and returned to it again and again throughout his career for the decisive reasons: reading early Joyce, *A Portrait* in particular, and then meeting Joyce led Beckett to work out his relationship with Joyce’s work through a complex relationship between himself and Joyce’s would-be artist figure Stephen Dedalus.<sup>23</sup>

### III

Both of Beckett’s earliest works, his essay on Joyce’s *Work in Progress* (“Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce”) and his first creative text (“Assumption”) appeared in the 16/17 double issue of *transition* (June 1929).

Beckett’s essay contains two of the most famous and often-quoted observations about the language of the *Wake* in the whole of Joyce criticism: “The danger is in the neatness of identifications”

<sup>20</sup> Murphy 5, 9, 10-12.

<sup>21</sup> “A way a lone a last a loved a long the” (FW 628.14-16).

<sup>22</sup> Murphy 226.

<sup>23</sup> Murphy 17.

and “Here is direct expression – pages and pages of it. [...] Here form *is* content, content *is* form. [...] It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*.”<sup>24</sup>

However, despite the neatness of their identifications, neither of these observations engages directly with Joyce’s text beyond observing the general, nor do they contain much by way of evaluation. Moreover, Beckett’s insistence on the language of “Work in Progress” functioning as a performance of the “thingness” of things through writing is evidently derived from Stephen Dedalus’s Thomist aesthetic theory of the *quidditas*.<sup>25</sup> Beckett’s point about reading Joyce’s text pertains to his Dedalian belief that its construction transposes the reading process itself into apprehending an aesthetic image which “is to be looked at and listened to.”<sup>26</sup> Certainly, Beckett’s essay focuses on “Work in Progress” (in particular, its reliance on and reuse of Vico’s cyclical theory of history, his concept of fiction and poetics and Bruno’s principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*), with numerous quotations from the text supporting this reliance. However, Beckett’s recourse to *A Portrait* is constant, whether explicit or implicit:

[Mr Joyce’s] position is in no way a philosophical one. It is the detached attitude of Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist*... who describes Epictetus to the Master of Studies as “an old gentleman who said that the soul is very like a bucketful of water.” The lamp is more important than the lamp-lighter.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Beckett, “Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce,” *transition* 16/17 (June 1929): 242-43, 252.

<sup>25</sup> “When you have apprehended that basket as one thing and have then analysed it according to its form and apprehended it as a thing you make the only synthesis which is logically and aesthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing. This supreme quality is felt by the artist when the aesthetic image is first conceived in his imagination.” James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. John Paul Riquelme (New York: Norton, 2006) 217.

<sup>26</sup> As Kevin Dettmar has observed, Beckett “was perhaps the first critic to use the system of aesthetics set out by Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait* as a yardstick by which to measure the success of Joyce’s later fiction.” Kevin Dettmar, “The Joyce that Beckett Built,” *Beckett and Beyond*, ed. Bruce Stewart (Gerrard’s Cross: Colin Smythe, 1999) 81.

<sup>27</sup> Beckett, “Dante” 245.

The title of this book is a good example of a form carrying a strict inner determination. It should be proof against the usual volley of cerebral sniggers: and it may suggest to some a dozen incredulous Joshuas prowling around the Queen's Hall, springing their tuning-forks lightly against *fingernails that have not yet been refined out of existence*.<sup>28</sup>

These instances in which the argumentation of Beckett's essay falls back on *A Portrait* and the Dedalian aesthetic system shows him actively avoiding any direct interpretive dealing with the text in question, carefully eschewing praise for Joyce and his "Work in Progress" – a symptom of Beckett's ill ease with how Joyce has advanced since the publication of *A Portrait*, forsaking his previous Flaubertian position regarding the function of the artist.

Several of the formal features of the brief narrative text entitled "Assumption," although published at the early age of twenty-three, already presage some of the staple characteristics of Beckett's late minimalist output: its impersonal narrative focuses around a nameless character, vaguely referred to as "buffoon," "prestidigitator" or "artist," and unfolds as a series of unconnected scenes centred around the protagonist's aesthetic/religious dogmas and their disintegration following an intense encounter with the erotic, resulting in the protagonist's death. Thus, the narrative line traces a trajectory from a classical Beckettian impasse of immobility ("He could have shouted and could not") to the emblematic cliché-ridden scene of the dead male embraced by the killing female, equally oxymoronic in its use of adjectives ("They found her caressing his *wild dead hair*").<sup>29</sup>

However, the text can also be productively contextualised as Beckett's rewriting of *A Portrait*. The five paragraphs of the text's segmentation correspond to the five-chapter structure of Joyce's *Portrait*, and the central narrative incident in Beckett's text, the obliquely rendered erotic encounter with the Woman, comes at the end of the second paragraph, just as Stephen's encounter with the

<sup>28</sup> Beckett, "Dante" 248; emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Beckett, "Assumption," *transition* 16/17 (June 1929): 268, 271; emphasis added.



prostitute closes off chapter two of *A Portrait*. Furthermore, there are direct textual parallels between the two texts:

Still he was *silent*, in silence listening for *the first murmur of the torrent* that must destroy him. At this moment the Woman *came to him*.....

[...] From the door she spoke to him, and he winced at the regularity of her clear, steady speech. [...] The voice droned on, wavered, stopped. He sketched a tired *gesture of acceptance*, and prepared to withdraw once more within that terrifying silent immobility.<sup>30</sup>

He stood *still* in the middle of the roadway, *his heart clamouring against his bosom in a tumult*. [...] As he stood *silent* in the middle of the room she *came over to him* and embraced him gaily and gravely. [...] He closed his eyes, *surrendering himself* to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips.<sup>31</sup>

For both Joyce and Beckett, the erotic is connected with the linguistic expression in that both spring from the bodily, the physical. While in Joyce's text, emphasis is placed on hands and mouth both as instruments of communication and as loci of eroticism, in Beckett, the woman's "clear, steady speech" produces the protagonist's reaction of "wincing," her voice described, physically, as "wavering."

In Beckett's text as in Joyce's novel, the erotic exceeds the linguistic in acting as a non-linguistic means of communication (cf. "the stopped voice" of the Woman and "the gesture of acceptance" in Beckett's protagonist and Stephen's futile effort "to bid his tongue speak" and silent "read[ing of] the meaning of her movements") and, as such, a process of the production of beauty, subjectable to aesthetic contemplation. For both Joyce's and Beckett's protagonists, the erotic is an experience of the passive beholder rather than an active agent, and thus beautiful:

<sup>30</sup> Beckett, "Assumption" 270; emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> Joyce 90; emphasis added.

Before no *supreme manifestation of Beauty* do we proceed comfortably up a staircase of sensation, and sit down mildly on the topmost stair to digest our gratification: such is the pleasure of Prettiness. We are taken up bodily and *pitched breathless on the peak of a sheer crag*: which is the pain of Beauty. [...] But in his case it was not a wilful extravagance; he felt *compassion as well as fear*; he dreaded lest his prisoner should escape, he longed that it might escape; it tore at his throat and he choked it back in dread and sorrow.<sup>32</sup>

*Beauty* expressed by the artist cannot awaken in us an emotion which is kinetic or a sensation which is purely physical. It awakens, or ought to awaken, or induces, or ought to induce, an *aesthetic stasis, an ideal pity or an ideal terror, a stasis called forth, prolonged and at last dissolved* by what I call the rhythm of beauty.<sup>33</sup>

In both Joyce and Beckett, the erotic and the aesthetic are shown, in the post-coital broodings of their protagonists, as ultimately linked in the discursive field to which they both belong – the Christian doctrine of sin and punishment:

After a timeless parenthesis he found himself alone in his room, *spent with ecstasy*, torn by the bitter loathing of that which he had *condemned* to the humanity of silence. Thus each night he died and was God, each night revived and was torn, torn and battered with increasing *grievousness*, so that he hungered to be irretrievably engulfed in the *light of eternity*, one with the birdless cloudless skies, in *infinite fulfilment*.<sup>34</sup>

At his first violent sin he had felt *a wave of vitality pass out of him* and had feared to find his body or his soul maimed by the excess. [...] He had sinned mortally not once but many times and he knew that, while he stood in danger of *eternal damnation* for the first sin alone, by every succeeding sin he multiplied his guilt and his punishment. [...] His pride in his own sin, his *loveless awe of God*, told him that his offence was too *grievous* to be atoned for in whole or in part by a false homage to the Allseeing and Allknowing.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Beckett, "Assumption" 269; emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> Joyce 238; emphasis added.

<sup>34</sup> Beckett, "Assumption" 270; emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup> Joyce 91; emphasis added.

Apart from direct textual echoes and word borrowings emphasised in the extracts above, Beckett's "Assumption" follows its Joycean Ur-text in tracing the trajectory from the erotic and linguistic as firmly co-embedded in the physical. In their shared – although variously contested and repudiated – Christian outlook, the linguistic acts upon the erotic by circumscribing it within the discourse of the Christian dogma of sinfulness.

#### IV

These are only a few of the most relevant parallels connecting Beckett's "Assumption" with its Joycean Ur-text. These textual and conceptual echoes make it possible to go beyond Murphy's argument that Beckett's first published works are Joycean in their "highly derivative nature, their dependence upon the works and ideas of others [...] in conjunction with a highly original restructuring of those ideas."<sup>36</sup> They are Joycean in a far more specific and relevant way, particularly in their two crucial thematic concerns: the aesthetic (the sensual static experience of beauty) and the erotic (its sensuous ecstatic counterpart). In both Joyce's and Beckett's texts, these two are mediated through the "thingness" of words, the materiality of language: the sound and visual properties of the words, on the one hand, and the physical realisation of language by means of gesture, on the other. Therefore, while their early critics frequently associated both Joyce and Beckett with the project of destructing language, their common preoccupation with beauty as repetition and rhythm points less to "destruction" than to an "indestructibility" of language. In the context of this volume, the Joyce/Beckett relationship should be viewed as one of the earliest, most complex and productive instances of a (Joycean) type of modernity with a (Beckettian) type of tradition in its wake.

<sup>36</sup> Murphy 22.

## SAYING SEEN AGAIN: A CINEMATOGRAPHIC READING OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *WORSTWARD HO*

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The title of Samuel Beckett's 1983 prose text and the closing novel of the *Nohow On* trilogy speaks movement. Like many of its textual predecessors in Beckett's *oeuvre*, *Worstward Ho* embarks on a quest for a "better worse" (81) expression, stirring towards the unattainable ideal of the "worst word."<sup>1</sup> Both the relative stasis of *Company's* (1980) "one on his back in the dark" (3), enclosed with a light-shedding voice, and the cognitively induced montage-like movement of images in *Ill Seen Ill Said* (1981) increasingly anticipate the cinematography – literally "movement-writing" – of *Worstward Ho*.<sup>2</sup> The text sets out to undermine the conventional constancy of written expression by reproducing visual stimuli while experimenting with language in the process of ever negating and reducing itself. The prose of *Worstward Ho* relies heavily on the idea of (semantic) motion, which is accomplished chiefly by amassing verbal

<sup>1</sup> As Dirk Van Hulle indicates in the preface to Faber and Faber's 2009 edition of the three texts, *Better Worse* was the "provisional title" of the emerging prose work. Dirk Van Hulle, "Preface," *Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho, Stirrings Still*, ed. Dirk Van Hulle (London: Faber and Faber, 2009) xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho, Stirrings Still*, ed. Dirk Van Hulle (London: Faber and Faber, 2009). All further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.

reconstructions of theoretical and technical properties of superimposition, a device typical of cinematography.

Beckett's avid interest in cinematography and montage is well documented, and his later stage and television plays in particular have been viewed as informed by his in-depth study of the writings of early twentieth-century film-makers and film theorists such as Vsevolod Pudovkin, Rudolf Arnheim and Sergei Eisenstein.<sup>3</sup> In 1936, Beckett's lasting fascination with film led the then thirty-year-old author to compose a letter to Eisenstein requesting to become his apprentice in Moscow.<sup>4</sup> Although it remained unanswered by the Soviet director, Beckett retained a certain affinity for Eisenstein's philosophy of editing and film aesthetics, which resonate most compellingly in his own fiction of the 1980s. Reviewing Beckett's *Film* as early as the 1960s, Raymond Federman observed that Beckett's first and only cinematic endeavour makes a return "to the most basic forms of expression, to the primary sources of [an] artistic medium" that is, "in the case of the cinema [...] the moving image itself and its silent origin."<sup>5</sup> Such an artistic anachronism is evidence of Beckett's trademark loyalty to the ideas and concepts he adopted early in his life, and to which he kept returning later. Thus, more than thirty years into his varied writing career, Federman notes, Beckett manages to "transpose," rather freely and, above all, innovatively, the "same themes and devices he has been exploiting over and over again [...] to a new medium."<sup>6</sup> Given that "all Beckett's work [...] develops in the reader or spectator an extra sense of perception," this supplementary perception in *Worstward Ho* is an effect of Beckett's "movement-writing," which seamlessly merges mechanisms derived from the heterogeneous expressive contexts of cinematography and prose fiction.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) 226; James Knowlson and John Haynes, *Images of Beckett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 119.

<sup>4</sup> Knowlson and Haynes 119.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Federman, "Film," *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1966-7), repr. in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, eds Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) 277.

<sup>6</sup> Federman 276.

<sup>7</sup> Federman 280.

The minimal imagery of *Worstward Ho* is completely (re)constructed by a series of (re)formulations and perpetual adjustments revolving around three “shades” – the enigmatic mental images that haunt the “dim void” (83) of Beckett’s scarce narrative. The faint shadows of the kneeling figure, of the “plodding twain” (88) holding hands, and of the head with “[c]lenched staring eyes” (89), all emerge from the narrator’s disorderly elliptical testimony only soon to be verbally reduced to their “meremost minimum” (82). Although the narrator spares no effort to edit out all of the images he previously created, one residual “pinhole” still prevails “[i]n dimmest dim. At bounds of boundless void. Whence no farther” (103). At one point in the text, the narrator even attempts to imaginarily “worsen. *Itself*. The dim. The void” (90; emphasis added). And since in the end “[v]oid cannot go. Save dim go. Then all go” (87), the “so-said void. So-missaid” (91) acts as a form of screen upon which all the shadows are cast, the narrative turned into a peculiar camera obscura, a metaphor for the human mind and the direct historical predecessor of the present-day cinematic camera: “Where then but there see now –” (84).

As the novel opens, the narrative voice initiates the text’s movement “worstward” by struggling to envisage matter where there is “[n]o matter” (81). It mentally conceives “a body. Where none” and “[a] place. Where none. For the body” both *because* of the now existing body, and a necessary arrangement *for* it “[t]o be in. Move in. [...] Only in” (81; emphasis added). The narrator thus builds an imagined, rotunda-like confinement space later to be infused with void and shades that grow variably fainter and lighter, sharper and blurrier, upon his voice command. By devising such a space, mentally zooming out and reflecting upon his own imaginative processes, the narrator of *Worstward Ho* also constructs a meta-narrative that directly comments on the actual experience of reading the text he is creating. The motif of the hollow space recurs in the text, mirroring, according to the principle of isomorphism, the attributes of other imagined shades – that of a staring skull in particular – endowing the text with a mise-en-abyme structure. The “dim” of this “[s]hade-ridden void” (91) is outlined as “[f]ar and wide the same. High and low” (86), and within it a cavernous “grot or a gulf” (86) is later imagined. Indeed, crypts, chambers and

vaults are as essential to the idiosyncratic nature of the text, as is the cryptic language that constructs them. Concepts of the external and the internal eventually become intertwined, as do the narrator and the reader, cast in the roles of co-creative agents processing the telescopic reproduction of the events narrated/read concurrently.

There seems to be a *there* in the primary abyss of void, and this *there* in turn generates other shades and *theres*: “the head said seat of all. Germ of all. All? If of all of it too. Where if not there it too? There in the sunken head the sunken head.” (87) Therefore, the sunken head first imagined by the narrator contains a copy of itself, and mirrors exactly the sunken heads the reader is compelled to project within the immeasurable void of his or her own imagination. The “[c]lenched staring eyes” of the narrator’s inner vision are “clamped to” another pair of “clenched staring eyes” belonging to the skull trope, as he longs to “[b]e that shade again. *In* that shade again. With the other shades. [...] In the dim void.” (89; emphasis added) As the narrator proceeds with the “worsening” of the head, he gradually arrives at a point where “[i]n the skull all save the skull gone. [...] In the skull the skull alone to be seen” (91), thus ultimately relating the mind to a kind of inner theatre, with the skull being the “[s]cene [...] of all.” (90)

The texts of *Compagnie/Company* and *Mal vu mal dit/Ill Seen Ill Said* were composed roughly at the same time in both languages, with their French and English versions edited and reworked with reference to each other.<sup>8</sup> *Worstward Ho*, on the contrary, was written solely in English and Beckett’s inability to translate the novel into French has become notorious. In his biography of Beckett, James Knowlson recalls the outspoken reluctance, on Beckett’s part, to provide a French translation of *Worstward Ho*: “How, he asked me, do you translate even the first words of the book ‘On. Say on.’ – without losing its force?”<sup>9</sup> Undeniably, the remarkable potential of

<sup>8</sup> *Company* was initially written in English in July 1979 and translated into French in less than one month. The French translation was, however, the first version to be published in January 1980, and was followed by the revised English text later in the same year. Beckett began translating the French original of *Mal vu mal dit* into English in the middle of its composition and revision; the publication of the French text in 1981 was followed by that of *Ill Seen Ill Said* a year later. See Van Hulle viii-x.

<sup>9</sup> Knowlson 685.

the reiterated word “on” in *Worstward Ho* does not lend itself to an accurate translation. And yet, paradoxically, the French word “on” bears in fact an interesting potential as regards a translation, or perhaps transposition, of the text into French.

Grammatically, the French “on” functions as a gender-neutral indefinite subject pronoun referring to one or multiple persons, and is more or less comparable to the English pronouns “one,” “you,” “we” or “they” and their syntheses. It is often used to signify a person whose identity is unknown, an unspecified *human* agent. For this reason, such a polyvalent, hybrid pronoun can simultaneously exclude and include the speaker and the listener, with the narrator functioning as both, and the reader, too – a notable reinforcement of the previously discussed mise-en-abyme structure. The word “on” acquires additional significance in reference to Beckett’s text when its etymology is considered. Originally denoting “man” or “human being,” the French “on” is a lexical remnant of the Latin word “homo” and may refer metaphorically to a number of Beckett’s disembodied voices as narrators, voices in the head, the human residua.<sup>10</sup>

The enigmatic narrator of *The Unnamable* (1953) announces, and “it must not be forgotten,” that “all is a question of voices” (339), “of voices to keep going” (329), and that really “no other image is appropriate” (341).<sup>11</sup> This “on-going” preoccupation with vocality is the domain, particularly apparent in Beckett’s prosaic texts, of what I propose to call the “on-narrators” – the impersonal “they” who already appear in *Texts pour rien* and the *Trilogy*, and whose voices continue to resonate throughout much of Beckett’s late prose.<sup>12</sup> In the fifth “Text for Nothing,” the narrator with “eyes staring behind

<sup>10</sup> “Étymologie De ‘On’,” *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles and Lexicales*, 2012, <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/on>, 27 Jan 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 2009). The year indicated is that of the first French publication of the novel.

<sup>12</sup> *Textes pour rien/Texts for Nothing* were composed in French between 1950 and 1951. The trilogy of novels *Molloy*, *Malone meurt/Malone Dies*, and *L’innommable/The Unnamable* was also first written in French, and the novels were published individually between 1951 and 1953. Cf. “Preface” and “Table of Dates” in Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing and Other Shorter Prose*, ed. Mark Nixon (London: Faber and Faber, 2010) vii-xxxv.



the lids" listens for "a voice not from without," or "a kind of consciousness," admitting that "[i]t's *they* murmur my name, speak to me of me, speak of a me [...]. *Theirs* all these voices, like a rattling of chains in my head, rattling to me that I have a head."<sup>13</sup> They are Molloy's murmuring "kind of consciousness" (82) too, and become, in *The Unnamable*, an elaborated grouping of voices "conveyed [...] by the same channel as that used by Malone and Co." (330); they are the "troop of lunatics" (302), "vice-exister[s]" (308), "tormentors" (341), "[t]he dirty pack of fake maniacs" (361) and "their miscreated puppets" (319). Finally, in *Worstward Ho*, they reappear as audible "[w]orsening words whose unknown. [...] Dim void shades all they. Nothing save what they say. [...] Whosoever whencesoever say." (93) No less than Beckett's other narrators, the "on-narrator" of *Worstward Ho* is a medley of incorporeal voices and a confusion of pronominal persons trapped in the narrative machinery of which they are both active creators and passive creations. By saying "on" at the very beginning of the text, the voice is always also said "on" to begin with: "On. Say on. Be said on." (81) The narrative voice of *Worstward Ho* becomes simultaneously "they" and "one" as well as "we" and "you"; the narrator of the text is interconnected not only with the voice that dictates his visual experiences, but also with the reader, who becomes "placed into abyss" where all the "say[ing] seen again" (97) occurs.

This simultaneous signification, thwarting the possibility of identifying only one meaning as paramount, is a major trope running through *Worstward Ho* that also shares certain attributes with the originally cinematic device of superimposition. It is an indispensable facet of Beckett's "movement-writing" and the fixed arrangement of words launches the imaginary permutational apparatus of constantly emerging new lexical and syntactic links. Let us briefly return to Beckett's fascination with the monochromatic silent films of the 1920s, and to Sergei Eisenstein's ideas on film editing as a useful framework for a subsequent reading of *Worstward Ho* in cinematographic terms.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Beckett, "Texts for Nothing," *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989*, ed. S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1995) 117-121; emphasis added.

To elucidate the mechanisms behind montage, in his 1939 essay "Word and Image," Eisenstein explores with reference to Gestalt psychology or to "the field of behaviour" as he terms it, the innate tendency to make a "definite and obvious deductive generalization when any separate objects are placed before us side by side."<sup>14</sup> Gestalt psychology commonly understands the workings of human perception as a tendency to organise visual information into patterns forming a coherent whole to which its constituent parts are intrinsic. The objects become grouped together on the basis of reciprocal cooperation between the perceived parts and the emerging whole in a dynamic fashion, creating a cognitively structured composite that is further superimposed with subjective layers of added signification. This whole is non-existent and illusory, yet it is a mental concept which is imagined "on top" of the individually perceived objects. Similarly, when separate images or shots appear in film, their creative synthesis is, according to Eisenstein, left entirely to the viewers themselves: "it is precisely the *montage* principle, as distinguished from that of representation, which obliges spectators themselves to *create*."<sup>15</sup> Delineating the attributes of the montage principle ten years earlier, in "The Dramaturgy of Film Form (The Dialectical Approach to Film Form)" (1929), Eisenstein explains how "each sequential element is arrayed, not *next* to the one it follows, but on *top* of it," with the key idea of superimposition operating at both the visual and conceptual levels.<sup>16</sup> The former can generally be explained through the "phenomenon of movement" produced by film, in which the individual photographed stills of objects in motion "blend into movement" as they become superimposed on the spectator's retina if shown in rapid succession.<sup>17</sup> The latter, conceptual level is demonstrated using the example of Japanese ideograms that synthesise two diverse and independent significations into a new

<sup>14</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, "Word and Image," *The Film Sense*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (London: Faber and Faber, 1986) 14-17.

<sup>15</sup> "Word and Image" 37; emphasis in the original.

<sup>16</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, "The Dramaturgy of Film Form (The Dialectical Approach to Film Form)," *S.M. Eisenstein: Writings, 1922-34*, ed. Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1988) 164; emphasis in the original.

<sup>17</sup> Eisenstein, "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" 164.

meaning when juxtaposed: “concrete word (denotation) set against concrete word produces abstract concept.”<sup>18</sup> In both cases, the outcome is always a purely imagined construct mentally superimposed over the primary information.

The tendency to organise, connect and group information into comprehensible patterns, it has been said, is the key principle underlying Gestalt psychology. Discussing this “natural phenomenon, a part of our common perception,” Eisenstein notes that human understanding tends to “automatically combine the juxtaposed elements and reduce them to a unity.”<sup>19</sup> Specifically, this is the case with deliberately ambiguous linguistic constructions relying on multiple possible interpretations, such as those found in riddles.<sup>20</sup> However, the prime example of such a unifying impetus for Eisenstein is the portmanteau word, a powerful instance of montage in itself: “The charm of this ‘portmanteau’ effect is built upon the sensation of duality residing in the arbitrarily formed single word.”<sup>21</sup> Eisenstein points out how portmanteaux draw their potential from the simultaneous perception of the distinct parts of the newly created neologism, as well as the new meaning arising from their juxtaposition. Therefore, the effect of superimposition is understood as the layering of one or multiple diverse shots *on top of* another, so that a joint image would emerge from two or more separate ones while also retaining their individual qualities.

A common device employed in film and television from the outset, Beckett was not unfamiliar with the technique of superimposition and its implications. He worked directly with superimposition several times before *Worstward Ho*, perhaps most notably in the broadcast versions of his television plays *...but the clouds...* (1977) and *Nacht und Träume* (1983).<sup>22</sup> Although the technique is not explicitly indicated in the published scripts, and is

<sup>18</sup> Eisenstein, “The Dramaturgy of Film Form” 164.

<sup>19</sup> Eisenstein, “Word and Image” 15-16.

<sup>20</sup> Eisenstein selects a simple riddle “from international folk-lore” to support his theory: “The raven flew, while a dog sat on its tail. How can this be? [...] [W]e understand the query as though the dog were sitting on the tail of the raven, while actually, the riddle contains two unrelated actions: the raven flies, while the dog sits on its own tail.” Eisenstein, “Word and Image” 15.

<sup>21</sup> Eisenstein, “Word and Image” 15.

<sup>22</sup> Years when the plays were first broadcast are indicated.

referred to as “dissolve to” or “fade,” both plays utilise its effects to suggest the evocation of a dream, a memory, or a segment of imagination.<sup>23</sup> Beckett does, however, mention superimposition specifically in his screenplay for *Film* (1963) as a technical option to avoid while expressing the different degrees of perception of E and O.<sup>24</sup> Despite all the possible “technical ignorance” that Beckett rather modestly admits, his meticulous notes and sketches display his great concern with the film’s practical execution, as well as his detailed knowledge of technical discourse.<sup>25</sup>

A striking instance of Beckett’s use of cinematic superimposition in a prose text can be documented by *Ill Seen Ill Said*, a direct fictional predecessor of *Worstward Ho*’s elaborated “movement-writing.” Here, on a purely textual level, the narrative voice uses superimposition in a way similar to a cinematographer who, in editing his film, makes a figure of a woman appear gradually over a fixed background image. Not unlike Eisenstein in his films, Beckett first constructs an environment in which the figure is said to be absent, then superimposes it with increasing clarity over this environment which is reinforced as a background image with the use of additional textual emphasis:

There was a time when she did not appear *in the zone of stones*. Was not therefore to be seen going out or coming in. [...] But *little by little* she began to appear. *In the zone of stones*. First darkly. Then more and more plain. Till in detail she could be seen [...].<sup>26</sup>

Whereas the example suggests the novel’s tendency to use superimposition as a filmic technique transcribed directly into its own genre, in *Worstward Ho*, Beckett works with more implicit, conceptual characteristics of this device. This encourages an exceptionally active participation on the part of readers through constant reimagining of concepts based not only on the forced

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006) 419, 465.

<sup>24</sup> Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works* 331. Written in April 1963, the screenplay was first published by Faber and Faber in 1967.

<sup>25</sup> Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works* 331.

<sup>26</sup> Beckett, *Nohow On* 49; emphasis added.

cognitive regrouping of information provided by the ever self-negating narrative voice, but also on the polysemous nature of the language used. Thus, readers become active inventors and directors of their own experience as the dialectics of montage elevate their role from mere consumers to that of co-creators.

*Worstward Ho* is constructed in a way that ostensibly concurs with the principles of Gestalt psychology and generative mechanics of superimposition as Beckett's late prose makes particular use of the innate cognitive processes of organisation and ordering, a major factor that it both powerfully induces and purposely denies. One of the key techniques that makes it nearly impossible to orientate oneself within the realm of the text's obscure imagery has its conceptual roots in cinematic superimposition. The images first have to be created with the use of words, and then "dimmed" by the self-same quality of these words: "Stare by words dimmed. Shades dimmed [...] Till blank again. No words again. Then all undimmed. Stare undimmed. That words had dimmed." (99) Having invoked, in spite of themselves, an image, the words proceed to overlay this almost photographic still with "little worse" (96) detail each time, causing it to move, blur, and become dimmer, but never to recede: "Worse words for worsen still." (100) The puzzling chaos produced by Beckett's (meta-)narratives demands a great deal of attentiveness and creativity on the part of the reader, with the texts relying on a strong need for systematic arrangement as an inherent component of all human understanding. However, any finite mental unification of either the narrative or its constitutive images is purposely prevented and the information supplied by the text has to exist in a constant semantic movement: "on."

In *Worstward Ho*, Beckett takes montage as advocated by Eisenstein onto the textual level and even further, creating a dynamic profusion of constantly emerging meanings. The do-it-yourself experience for the reader is aided particularly by the use of the device of superimposition as the primal driving force of the text. The many linguistic and poetic uses of the individual words forming the text, and their specific positioning within phrases, unpunctuated sentences, and even larger wholes is precisely what constitutes Beckett's "movement-writing" in *Worstward Ho*. The indeterminacy of the written expression is largely reliant on portmanteau-like coinages and "nego-logisms" signifying the

struggle of the language to achieve its utmost minimum. These are not exactly what Eisenstein understands as portmanteau constructions, since they are not normally combinations of two unrelated lexical or “concrete” words, but rather innovative morphological (prefixal and suffixal) composites that merge and create new meanings on the basis shared with the device of superimposition: “Beyondless. Thenceless there. Thitherless there. Thenceless thitherless there.” (83) This mechanism allows Beckett to ostensibly “lessen” his shades with the language negating itself grammatically. The figures evoked of an old man, a child, or a woman can only kneel on “unseen knees” among other shades with the help of visual techniques such as superimposition: “Try better worse kneeling. Legs gone say better worse kneeling [...] Vast void apart old man and child dim shades on unseen knees” (102). Having retained the memory of all the preceding stages of the shade’s undoing, the reader is now encouraged to imagine the act of kneeling supported by the images of legs and knees, which are subsequently superimposed with the notion of their absence. In the end, nothing is really lost from the narrative, and the act of its diminishing is but an accumulation of images. In one of the last instances of their seeming “unsaying,” the old man and the child are depicted as “[t]opless baseless hindtrunks. Legless plodding on. Left right unreceding on.” (101) The top, base and legs of the “hindtrunks” are linguistically outlined yet virtually not present, with the superimposed images of their absence supplemented by the -less suffix at the end of each word.

The effect of the constant “unsaying” of “worsening words” is therefore merely a saying anew: a layering of the “said” images on top of each other so that they become blurry and dim, which causes them to move, exist and resist the very act of undoing. The word “dim” itself signifies a dual quality and colour of the images: it makes them both “grey” and “bleak,” as well as “blurry,” with all meanings operating at once. So does the word “faint” which, like many other images in Beckett, has a strange internal-external condition: it emphasises the fact that the shades are “not bright” but “feeble,” “about to lose consciousness” and “lacking courage.”

The most significant instance of semantic layering in *Worstward Ho* is achieved through varying the word classes and word order, the use of ellipses, a marked omission of punctuation, and by foregrounding abundant homonymy and polysemy. All of these

are perhaps the most fruitful devices utilised by Beckett in *Worstward Ho*, and the ones that contribute most to the text's overall movement. Take, for instance, the following passage and its possible interpretations: "Head sunk on crippled hands. Clenched staring eyes. At in the dim void shades. One astand at rest." (84) Apart from the vagueness of meaning produced by deliberate elliptical omissions – "One [shade] astand [staring] at [the] rest" or "One [shade is] astand [and] at rest" – the words "at rest" can signal something in a state of repose, asleep, motionless, or even dead.

Additional layers of meaning can then be derived from the text's intrinsic aural quality as a signifying device, including homophony, verbal emphasis necessitated by the lack of punctuation, and the surfacing textual rhythm. In terms of homophony, to mention but a few, the "seen" of Beckett's text may well become "scene" (90), and "knowing" becomes equated with the persistent dull pain suggested by the word "gnawing." (100) In the sentence "Preying since first said on foresaid remains" (86), the word "preying" analogously coincides with its homophonous "praying," thus affecting the meaning of "remains" that can thus be understood as either "bones" or limbs on which a figure is "praying," or indeed something "preying" on the "remains" of a carcass. Furthermore, the word "remains" can also be comprehended as a verb, resulting in yet another meaning of the sentence: "Preying, since first said, on [the] foresaid remains." In such a case, the emphasis must be on the words "preying" and "foresaid," in order to compensate for the absence of punctuation and to determine a fixed meaning. The outcome is a form of multiple superimposition, where all the above – and indeed any other – possible meanings unite in a multilayered overall meaning, without the necessity of selecting one as the only "correct" option. Further uses of metaphorical or symbolic language ("dome" and "temple" [96] in describing the skull), allusion (concerning both the title and the text's more general reference to *King Lear*), alliteration ("The boots. Better worse bootless. Bare heels." [90]) rhymes ("Now for to say as worst they may only they only they." [93]) and other poetic devices lend Beckett's enigmatic narrative yet another dimension of possible meanings.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The allusion in the title is to Webster and Dekker's *Westward Hoe!* (1607), and Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1885). The reference Beckett makes to Edgar's

The near infinity of viable semantic permutations generated by *Worstward Ho* produces a powerful effect of superimposition. Once a written passage becomes subjectively reproduced in the reading process, it immediately creates an appropriate visual image which becomes superimposed with another as soon as a new distinct meaning is registered. In this sense, individual mental images layered on top of each other, with differences in their contours ranging from slight to considerable, produce a complexity of concurrently existing symbioses of meanings, resulting in Beckett's "movement-writing." The effect of the constant "unsaying" of "worsening words" is merely a saying anew; a layering of the "said" images on top of each other so that they become blurry and dim, which causes them to move, exist and resist the very act of undoing. The ensuing dynamics is precisely what develops in the reader the kind of Eisensteinian cinematic perception which defies closure and singularity of meaning. Beckett's novel moves. It proceeds from the opening "on" to another opening "on" at the end of the text, and on its endless journey worstward, it urges the reader to participate: "Say on. Be said on." (81)

lines in Shakespeare's *King Lear* ("the worst is not, / So long as we can say 'This is the worst'") is also widely acknowledged. Cf. Chris Ackerley and Stanley E. Gontarski, eds, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought* (New York: Grove Press, 2004).



## **OR PERCIPERE: HOW BERKELEYAN IS SAMUEL BECKETT'S FILM?**

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Samuel Beckett's 1964 *Film* is his only work explicitly structured on a philosophical premise. Not only is the motto for the script taken from Berkeley's famous dictum "To be is to be perceived," it is also followed by an explanation of how the cinematic script develops this idea. For an author notoriously reluctant to discuss the meaning of his work, these opening remarks are extremely out of character, even if we take seriously the assertion that they are intended merely for "structural and dramatic convenience."<sup>1</sup>

Beckett's reputation as a "philosophical author" and his enduring interest in Berkeley's philosophy<sup>2</sup> are perhaps the cause for the wide acceptance of the script as Berkeleyan without further questioning its philosophical import. This is particularly evident in interpretations of the film by philosophers, two of which will be

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, "Film," *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986) 323.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed reviews of Beckett's interest in Berkeley, see Frederik N. Smith, "Beckett and Berkeley: A Reconsideration," *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 7, *Beckett versus Beckett* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998) 331-47; Dan Watt "Esse est Percipi: Beckett and Berkeley's Silent Conversation," *Beckett Re-Membered: After the Centenary*, ed. James Carney et al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012) 74-88; and Steven Mathews, "'The Books are in the Study as Before': Samuel Beckett's Berkeley," *Sophia Philosophical Review* 1 (2011): 146-68.

discussed in the present paper – Gilles Deleuze’s influential “The Greatest Irish Film”<sup>3</sup> and Branka Arsić’s recent reading of *Film* in *The Passive Eye*.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this paper is to examine whether Beckett’s *Film* follows Berkeley’s philosophy in his dramatisation of the conflict between *percipi* and *percipere* – the perceived and the perceiver – or whether he departs from Berkeley’s philosophical system in a significant way.

According to Beckett’s opening remarks, *Film* is primarily concerned with an attempt to avoid perception which ultimately fails due to the inevitability of self-perception:

*Esse est percipi.*

All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self-perception maintains in being.

Search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception. [...]

In order to be figured in this situation the protagonist is sundered into object (O) and eye (E), the former in flight, the latter in pursuit.<sup>5</sup>

*Film* features the figure of a man with his back to the camera going down the street into a building and up to a room where he destroys or covers objects, animals or anything else that might enable perception. He then relaxes in a chair, when the camera which had been pursuing him from behind throughout the film finally confronts him head on. The viewer then learns that the pursuing camera is in fact the same person as the one pursued. The sundered protagonist manages to escape all external perceptions but in the end succumbs to self-perception.

Gilles Deleuze’s influential interpretation of *Film* in *Essays Critical and Clinical* focuses on the man’s flight from being perceived. Deleuze argues that Beckett’s *Film* posits the question whether “it is possible to escape perception? How does one become

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “The Greatest Irish Film (Beckett’s “Film”),” *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 23-26.

<sup>4</sup> Branka Arsić, *The Passive Eye: Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley (via Beckett)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Beckett 323.

imperceptible?"<sup>6</sup> and answers this in the affirmative. In the street, the perception is a perception of action. Whenever the camera exceeds the angle of forty-five degrees, which Beckett calls the "angle of immunity," the man freezes and the camera returns to its previous position behind his back, so that the perception of action "can be neutralized by stopping the action."<sup>7</sup> In the room, we are dealing with direct perception – whether it is an object's perception as in the mirror, an animal watching the man, or God looking down from a lithograph. Here, perception is stopped by covering or expelling all perceiving eyes from the room.<sup>8</sup> Finally, as the camera confronts the man, it is "the perception of affection, that is, the perception of the self by itself, or pure Affect"<sup>9</sup> from which the character can only escape by ceasing to be, and, according to Deleuze, the protagonist dies at the end of the film and thus manages to evade his perceiving self only by giving up the perceived self, becoming "an impersonal yet singular atom that no longer has a Self by which it might distinguish itself from or merge with others."<sup>10</sup>

Deleuze's lucid and convincing interpretation, however, misses an important dimension of the film – the perceiving camera. For him, the main narrative in the film is that of O, the self-object, an object in the optical sense of being caught by the camera as well as in the psychological sense of the object of self-perception. When we look at the film from the exclusive perspective of the fleeing self, the identity of the pursuing eye is of little importance. It could be the man's eye but it might also be any other eye, and indeed Branka Arsić identifies the eye as the gaze of Berkeley's God who is looking after his creature with a personal care that may be seen as either benevolent or intimidating.<sup>11</sup> A closer look at the film, however, will reveal that E is not God but a specific subject, the perceiving eye of O himself.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze 23.

<sup>7</sup> Beckett 24.

<sup>8</sup> Beckett 24

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze 25

<sup>10</sup> Beckett 26.

<sup>11</sup> Arsić 49.

The basic premise of *Film* is the division of the protagonist into a perceiving part played by the camera and a perceived part played by the actor. This is what Beckett refers to when he writes to *Film*'s director, Alan Schneider, that "Every problem of image in the film is to be solved by reference to the one or other vision."<sup>12</sup> The two visions are of O and E, which were supposed to be clearly distinguishable in the film: "the two visions are to be distinguished not only on the plane of absolute quality, but also dynamically, i.e. in their manner of transferring from one object to the next."<sup>13</sup> Schneider's description of the work also emphasises the splitting of the subject and even describes the perceiving eye as the film's primary concern: "It's a movie about the perceiving eye, about the perceived and the perceiver – two aspects of the same man."<sup>14</sup> Eventually, it was impossible to visually convey the two separate visions in the film and Beckett resignedly writes that "The problem of the double vision [...] is not really solved, but the attempt to solve it has given the film a plastic value which it would not have otherwise."<sup>15</sup> Despite the failure to convey a double vision in the film, the perceiving eye is still a very prominent presence and could be seen as an active character with its own quest and implied volition. As William F. Van Wert notes, "*Film* calls into question the very nature of the camera as a recorder of reality, imbuing it with an obsessive personality that is at once voyeur and victim."<sup>16</sup>

The opening of the film supports its reading as the narrative of the perceiver. It shows a close-up of an eye that the viewer can later identify as Buster Keaton's, the comic genius who plays O. The eye opens, stares as the viewer, blinks a few times and then the movie cuts to a view of a wall in the street, identifying Keaton's eye with the point of view of the camera. At first, the camera is in a fixed

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Harmon, ed., *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998) 158.

<sup>13</sup> Harmon 158.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., "Beckett" *New Yorker*, 8 August 1964: 22, qtd. in James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) 463-64.

<sup>15</sup> Harmon 166.

<sup>16</sup> William F. Van Wert, "'To be is to be perceived'... Time and Point of View in Beckett's *Film*," *The Critical Response to Samuel Beckett*, ed. Cathleen Culotta Andonian (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1998) 226.

position. Its “gaze” scans the wall from bottom to top and from side to side but the camera’s position remains static. The opening scenes of the film are thus focalised through the perceiving eye rather than the fleeing O, starting with perception and a search for the object.

The appearance of O endows E with movement, as the camera makes the first step in its attempt to converge with the actor. When O finally enters the room, the camera moves another step towards converging with him and unites with O’s point of view. Through the eye of the camera, we see what O is looking at, as if we were peeping over his shoulder. This self-perception seems to be reflected in O’s checking of his own pulse, which, interestingly, is never mentioned in the script. The first time O checks his pulse is on the staircase, when he thinks he has escaped the gaze of people in the street. He checks his pulse again once he is inside the room and has locked the door, and again after he has covered or removed all sources of perception in the room. It would seem that O is checking to see if, as Beckett phrased it, he “maintains in being.” If O follows the dictum that to be is to be perceived, he may expect to die or disappear when he is no longer perceived. Each attempt to escape from being perceived – by people in the street or by animals and objects in the room – repeatedly fails as O discovers that he still has a pulse. The close-up of O’s hands when he checks his pulse implies that E, the camera, is just as interested in finding out the results of the test, reinforcing the identification of the sundered parts of the subject.

In the final part of the movie, when O is relaxing in the chair, E sees its chance to complete the movement and unite with O. According to Deleuze, the man in the chair “defends himself and curls up, ever more feebly. The camera perception takes advantage of this; it surpasses the angle definitively, turns around, faces the sleeping character, and draws near to him.”<sup>17</sup> This description is rather different from what we see in the film where the camera makes two attempts to confront the sleeping O. The first time, it slowly exceeds the “angle of immunity,” but as soon as it does so, O wakes up in fright and the camera resumes its former position. The second time, the camera turns away from O and mimics his

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze 25.

movement around the room, hugging the walls. The perceiving part cannot achieve its goal by forcing its will directly on the protagonist. Instead, it must identify with O's furtive movements in order to cover the distance between them, get in front of the sleeping O and look at him directly. The indirect approach brings about the moment of "investment" when O and E unite and it is revealed that the pursuing gaze in the film has been O's all along and the perceiver has successfully completed his quest. The movie ends with another close-up of Keaton's eye, framing it as a narrative of the eye.

In *Film*, Beckett seems to dramatise the dictum he uses as the motto for the script. The essence of O is being the object of perception, being *seen*. This accords well with Berkeley's famous contention that matter does not exist without the mind, and its existence depends on it being perceived, or seen. What we think of as the material world is in fact made up of spiritual sensations, a collection of sense impressions that can only exist in a human or a divine mind:

all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence, without a mind, *that their being is to be perceived or known*; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some internal spirit: it being perfectly unintelligible and involving [...] absurdity [...] to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit.<sup>18</sup>

If things only exist in the mind perceiving them, then O's flight from perception is undoubtedly a flight from being, as pointed out by Deleuze.

Berkeley's ideas seem outrageous at first sight, and perhaps even more outrageously, he claims that they are derived from a reasoning grounded in common sense, which he attempts to show

<sup>18</sup> George Berkeley, "Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," *Philosophical Works, Including the Works on Vision* (London: Everyman, 1996) 91; emphasis added.

supports his argument. For Berkeley, the source of all human knowledge is sense impressions:

By sight I have the ideas of light and colours with their several degrees and variations. By touch I perceive, for example, hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance [...]. Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes, and hearing conveys sounds to the mind [...].<sup>19</sup>

When we study an object, we can only know what our sense impressions convey to our mind about it. A table, to use Berkeley's example, is a conjunction of certain colours with a resistance to the touch, the sound made when knocked on, etc. In order to believe that things have an existence of their own, we would have to assume that all these impressions are but manifestations of a mysterious underlying "matter" which we cannot perceive directly. However, Berkeley finds it unreasonable and unnecessary to assume the existence of such unperceived "substratum" which produces all sensual effects, nor are there any grounds to prove its existence, given that we can neither perceive nor discover it in any direct manner. All we can know is what our senses tell us, and what they tell us, says Berkeley, is always an idea in our own mind.

For Berkeley, the dependence of existence on perception is part of a religious world view and it should be comforting to learn that the world we perceive is absolutely true and there is no discrepancy between what we perceive and the nature of the real world. This can be seen as a response to Descartes' evil demon who deceives our senses and make us see things that do not actually exist:

some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me [...] the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgment.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Berkeley, "Principles of Human Knowledge" 89.

<sup>20</sup> René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II, trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 15.

Although Descartes subsequently dismisses the idea of the evil demon, the suspicion that the senses provide us with false information lingers. By denying the existence of matter and affirming the accuracy of sense impressions, Berkeley reassures us that there is no terrible truth lurking behind the appearance of the world, no hidden essence or matter, but rather that the “truth” of the world is directly manifest in its appearance.

Beckett’s *Film* disturbs this reassuring world of truth by revealing the anxiety of constant perception. To exist, everything and everyone must be watched constantly, either by other spirits or by God – an idea that may appear less appealing in the twentieth century than it did in two centuries earlier. This anxiety, however, is presented in the film as psychological, not political. Beckett infuses the relation between perceiver and perceived with a dark psychological realism that is completely absent from Berkeley’s optimistic outlook. In this reading, Beckett confronts Berkeley’s attempt at creating a Christian philosophy with the realities of human anxiety.

If we follow Deleuze in considering the film as primarily concerned with the flight of O from perception, then Beckett can be said to follow Berkeley quite closely, although bringing his own bleak view of human nature to bear on Berkeley’s Christian benevolence. Branka Arsić also takes *Film* to be a pessimistic version of Berkeley’s constant perception. For her, “One could argue that everything Beckett tried to achieve in his ‘Film’[...] constitutes a remarkable interpretation of Berkeley’s theory of vision.”<sup>21</sup>

However, it is Arsić’s own work on vision that emphasises the “mad” nature of Beckett’s main device in his film – self-perception. She interprets Cartesian optics as an attempt at self-perception: “The entire science of Descartes’ optic will be moved by this fundamental desire – [...] to enable the human eye to see its gaze.”<sup>22</sup> The spectator attempts to perceive his own perception, yet this is a contradictory and impossible desire, since the gaze “is found in the place of the blind spot, visible as invisibility.”<sup>23</sup> This is because in

<sup>21</sup> Arsić xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Arsić 22.

<sup>23</sup> Arsić 36.



order to be able to see, the eye must position itself outside the visible plane to create perspective, it must distance itself from what it sees and thus cannot be included within the visible. The main metaphor is of a spectator looking at a perspective painting; the technique of creating perspective by foreshortening creates an ideal position from which to view the painting, which must be at a certain distance from the viewer in order to encompass it as a whole. The painting's perspective thus creates a place for the subject, yet this subject necessarily remains outside the painting.<sup>24</sup>

This can be clearly seen in *Film* where self-reflection requires a splitting of the protagonist into two parts – perceived and perceiver. On the perspective canvas which is the screen, perceiver and perceived cannot become one. They are retained as two carefully separated images, a mirror image of each other expressed as shot and counter-shot, alternating between the point of view of the menacing perceiver E and that of the cowering perceived O. This presentation of the moment of investment belies Arsić's claim that at the end of the film "Everything merges into a single gaze. Everything becomes a single eye."<sup>25</sup> The protagonist may well wear an eye patch to focus his gaze through a single eye, but in order to show self-perception, the subject must of necessity be split into two, an effect that can only be achieved through cinematic editing.

A closer look at the reaction of people to the gaze in *Film* may serve to illustrate the special role of self-perception in the movie. On three occasions, people gaze into the camera, first an elderly couple in the street, then a flower seller on the stairs and, finally, O at the end of the film. Each time the reaction is similar: a gradual realisation that turns to horror. In a work where the protagonist is trying to escape from perception, this anxiety may seem to be related to any type of perception, yet the couple in the street are not horrified by O's glance as he pushes them aside in his haste, nor are they afraid to look at each other. The fact that the couple are evidently comfortable looking at each other suggests that not every

<sup>24</sup> Arsić goes on to interpret Berkeley's theory of vision as an alternative to Cartesian optics and as a decentering of the subject. Although this development is very interesting, it will not be addressed here since Arsić does not relate it to the problem of self-perception in *Film* as will be shown below.

<sup>25</sup> Arsić 139.

perception is horrifying, only that of the camera. Moreover, the camera is not immediately perceived as horrifying; it takes a few seconds to realise the nature of its gaze and its horror. Bearing in mind that in this film about self-perception, the camera is part of the protagonist, the inevitable conclusion is that the look of the protagonist is unusual and frightening beyond any normal gaze. The peculiarity of the protagonist's gaze is also evident in the room from O's reaction to different types of perceptions. He is bothered by the look of the pets, but it is the mirror that he cowers away from in fright, reinforcing the idea that not all gazes are equal, with the protagonist's being the most terrible.<sup>26</sup>

The reason for the horrifying gaze of the protagonist may be that E's desire for self-perception is an impossible pursuit that can never be fulfilled, neither in philosophical speculation nor through cinematic technique. E's desire for self-perception aspires to a state of full presence that can only be called madness, which may explain its horror.

Interestingly enough, the first to concur would be the good Bishop himself. Berkeley emphatically denies that examining one's mind can be a source of knowledge, writing in "The Commonplace Book" that:

We think we know not the Soul, because we have no imaginable or sensible idea annex'd to that sound. Certainly we do not know it. Neither doth this argue any defect in our knowledge, no more than our not knowing a contradiction.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, for Berkeley, self-perception is an impossible and contradictory notion, resulting from a confusion of perceiving with the things that can be perceived, as Arsić shows. It is important to note that the Berkeleyan motto for the script – *esse est percipi* – was never formulated as such by Berkeley. Beckett is not quoting Berkeley directly, but rather using a later formulation that has

<sup>26</sup> Similar observations were made in Garin Dowd, *Abstract Machines: Samuel Beckett and the Philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) 89, and Van Wert 222.

<sup>27</sup> George Berkeley, "The Commonplace Book," *The Works of George Berkeley*, Vol. 1, ed. A.C. Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901) 27.

become common. Berkeley's closest formulation is taken from "The Commonplace Book," where he writes that "Existence is percipi, or percipere," i.e. to be is to be perceived or to perceive.<sup>28</sup> The "or" between the terms does not imply equivalence, but rather a dichotomy. In Berkeley's philosophy, there is a clear distinction: only ideas are perceived and only spirits can perceive. Ideas are passive, spirits are active:

But besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call *mind, spirit, soul* or *myself*. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived; for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived.<sup>29</sup>

The clear separation allows Berkeley to reconcile the scientific demand for empirical sources of knowledge on the one hand with the belief in a God which cannot be directly known on the other. The ideas, his term for everything we know through sense impressions, can be studied and used by man, whereas spirits can never be perceived, so that asking for empirical proof of the existence of God becomes absurd.

The idea of self-perception, which goes against the grain of Berkeley's philosophy, may have been taken from another devout philosopher, the post-Cartesian Arnold Geulincx whom Beckett studied carefully in the 1930s. As observed by Marculescu<sup>30</sup> and others, the character in the film seems intent on obeying the Geulingian dictum *inspectio sui*, an inspection of the self that can only lead the contemplator to realise "the spirit's impotency of probing into the abyss of matter and of itself."<sup>31</sup> Geulincx holds the extreme position that the human mind has no influence on the body or anything else in the material world. Because we do not

<sup>28</sup> Berkeley, "The Commonplace Book" 10.

<sup>29</sup> Berkeley, "Principles of Human Knowledge" 90.

<sup>30</sup> Illeana Maculesco, "Beckett and the Temptation of Solipsism," *The Beckett Studies Reader*, ed. S.E. Gontarski (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 225.

<sup>31</sup> Maculesco 216.

know how the hand moves, it follows that we cannot be said to move our hands. For Geulincx, the most basic human experience is that of ignorance and impotence, having no control over the body or the material world. Unlike the Socratic “know thyself,” the Geulingian *inspectio sui* urges us to gain knowledge of the extent of our ignorance. This knowledge or realisation of the futility of human knowledge is essential for Christian humility but was also very attractive to Beckett’s pessimistic thought.<sup>32</sup> O’s attempt to “know himself” through the unification of the camera and the actor does not yield any deep insight into the character; it only reveals the horror of the impossibility or futility of self-perception. Further, self-perception does not lead O to any action; he only slumps back in the rocking chair in what may seem to be an acceptance of what self-inspection has revealed.

In *Film*, Beckett forces one philosophical dictum, *inspectio sui*, upon another philosophical dictum, *esse est percipi*, in much the same way as the eye of the camera is forcing its perception upon the man in the film. This collision of different philosophical systems creates multiple contradictions related to the conditions of possibility of self-perception. In the final analysis, Beckett engages with Berkeley’s philosophy in a creative way, generating a contradiction that cannot be solved theoretically but has given rise to a work of art. Beckett may seem to modernise Berkeleyan philosophy by adding a psychological aspect to it, but in fact he challenges this very tradition through the notion of self-perception which he draws from another “traditional” source of Christian humility. His artistic intervention both actualises and challenges tradition, as well as the seemingly clear-cut division between the traditional and the modern.

<sup>32</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the philosophy of Geulincx and its relevance for Beckett, see David Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing ‘A Literary Fantasia’* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012) esp. 12-20.

## **“A ROOM IN BECKETT’S HOUSE”: MOLLOY AND EMMA DONOGHUE’S ROOM**

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*Something is taking its course.*  
Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (1956)

The legacy of Samuel Beckett is conventionally seen to lie in the sparse landscape of *Waiting for Godot* (1952), the hellish half-light of *Endgame* (1957), the fearsome sunlight of *Happy Days* (1961) and the eternally dwindling twilight of *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958). These four plays in particular have come to influence at least three generations of playwrights, in both the European and American canons, while the term “Beckettian” has become a shorthand description for the bleak, sparse and existential aesthetic of much contemporary art. Such is the great shadow cast on drama in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by Beckett that his other work, spanning the forms of novels, poetry and radio plays, has come to represent a footnote for many when considering Beckett’s fifty-year creative output. However, the looming giants of *Endgame* and *Krapp* are haunted by the same ghosts that have come to haunt recent Irish fiction: Beckett’s middle fiction has dutifully haunted the twenty-first century in the same way as it haunted some of Beckett’s great dramatic works. Most notably, *Molloy* is one of the principal works on which Beckett draws for the drama of the 1950s and 1960s, but it remains deeply influential in contemporary fiction. In *Beckett and*

*Contemporary Irish Writing*, published in 2009, Stephen Watt makes the case for Beckett's palpable presence in the work of several recent Irish writers, including Marina Carr, Brian Friel and Derek Mahon. Watt cites Charles Lyon's assertion that Beckett's work "belongs to and continues to compel the thought of our time,"<sup>1</sup> and that the adaptation of Beckett's work through the process of age suggests that Beckett is omnipresent, and a point of reference for writers who are part of the canon in Ireland or abroad. Watt begins his book with a reference to Anthony Roche's review of a 2001 production of *Krapp's Last Tape* for RTÉ, citing Roche's comment on the play's "ongoing prophetic ability to address world events long after its composition."<sup>2</sup> In *Beckett and Contemporary Irish Writing*, Watt also cites Declan Kiberd's assertion in *Irish Classics* (2001) that Beckett had become omnipresent even before his own time, commenting that "Beckett is not only *our* contemporary, Kiberd seems to suggest, he has been nearly every major Irish writer's contemporary for something like four centuries."<sup>3</sup>

Notably, in *Irish Classics*, Kiberd avoids a single chapter on Beckett, preferring to evoke Beckett's far-reaching, hierarchical influence with references to his work littered throughout every chapter. Since the "father" of influence looms large in such critical constructions, psychoanalytical models provide a particularly appropriate lens for studying the influence of Beckett on recent writing.<sup>4</sup> Watt's comment that "Beckett resides in a mystic writing pad, a deep etching in a waxy substrate lying below recent Irish writing and Irishness itself,"<sup>5</sup> also obliquely suggests the aptness of a psychoanalytical approach to the question of influence. Both Kiberd's and Watt's assertions prove valid when reading Donoghue and Beckett in parallel, as the ghost of Beckett is clearly visible in *Room*, a novel concerned with the existential questions of human

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Watt, *Beckett and Contemporary Irish Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 17.

<sup>2</sup> Watt 1.

<sup>3</sup> Watt 6.

<sup>4</sup> Moynagh Sullivan elaborates on the notion of "play" in Donoghue's novel, a psychoanalytic term denoting self-development through creativity in a TEDx Talk, "Creativity and Play as Social Transformers in Emma Donoghue's *Room*" delivered on 5 April 2014, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_rJ05xntAPA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rJ05xntAPA), 29 June 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Watt 7.

entrapment and the compulsive nature of survival. As a result, the recurring motifs so well known in the field of Beckettian criticism are clearly echoed, even duplicated, in Donoghue's aesthetic in *Room*, a novel in which a mother and child are held captive in a garden shed by a shadowy captor known only as "Old Nick." Imprisonment and alienation, existentialism, malleable reality, scarcity, cruelty, paralysis and entrapment all form a recognisably Beckettian ether from which Donoghue's 2010 novel was born. The trapped, dependent creatures of *Endgame*, *Molloy* and *Malone* appear once again accompanied by the very same survival strategies, including ritual, self-delusion, and distortion of reality in order to make difficult, trapped lives easier. The recognisably Beckettian locked door and the single window of *Room* strongly echo *Endgame*; Ma cannot escape *Room* because, like Clov in *Endgame*, she does not know the combination for the door. Captor and prisoner are held together as a result of mutual need.

Resourcefulness and invention, along with the cruel nature of mutual dependence, are key elements of the tortured souls of Beckett and Donoghue's texts. This essay argues, therefore, that Donoghue's *Room* is directly influenced by the Beckettian aesthetic. Just as *Endgame* and *Krapp* are haunted by the ghost of *Molloy*, recent Irish fiction has been haunted in the same way by Beckett's fiction *and* drama, rather than solely Beckett's drama.

### Transitional Objects

Beckett's work has been the subject of attention from a great deal of psychoanalytic critics, including J.D. O'Hara and Steven Connor, among many others. As such, *Molloy* lends itself to a psychoanalytical analysis, and the treatment of tangible objects as "transitional objects" by the protagonists of *Molloy* and *Room* suggests itself as a common trope in both texts. One of the key traits of characters in Beckett's middle fiction is illuminated by one of the tramps in Samuel Beckett's play *Rough For Theatre I*: "I can't go without my things."<sup>6</sup> This central motif can be explained (and elucidated) by the concept of "transitional objects." Much has been

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006) 230.

written in the last century about the nature and role of transitional objects for children as a part of their development in relation to the outside world. In seminal works such as *The Child and the Outside World* (1957) and *The Family and Individual Development* (1965), Donald Winnicott writes of the profound and enduring nature of the relationship between a child and a given object (e.g., a blanket, doll, etc.), and the importance of that relationship as consistent, and deeply personal to the child. Winnicott writes much about *transitional phenomena* throughout his career, using one particularly effective example to illustrate the nature of these phenomena. Winnicott is clear about the role of such an object, writing that “all these transitional objects and transitional phenomena enable the child to stand frustrations and deprivations and the presentation of new situations.”<sup>7</sup> It is also important to note the influential nature of Winnicott’s work throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, as Winnicott became a serial broadcaster for BBC Radio in the 1950s and 1960s on the subject of child development and child psychology. Winnicott’s seminal spatula game made a major contribution to clinical practice,<sup>8</sup> and became a diagnostic tool, as Michael Jacobs writes, to provide “clues both to the psychological state of the child and to the relationship between mother and baby.”<sup>9</sup> The spatula itself becomes a transitional object, as well as an insight into Winnicott’s methodology, as the child’s relationship with the outside world is examined through his or her relationship with one particular given object. Often, the solid tangible object becomes an antidote to the insecurity of the world outside the womb. The dolls and teddy bears that the child cannot go without are symptomatic of the insecure nature of the outside world, as well as children’s dependence on the tangible world against the difficulty of survival outside the womb. Transitional objects such as

<sup>7</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *The Family and Individual Development* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1968) 144.

<sup>8</sup> This innovation in clinical practice involved putting a metal spatula in front of a child, and examining his or her reaction to the implement. Whether the child was reticent to pick it up and play with it, or examined Winnicott’s and the mother’s reaction to the baby touching it, was deemed as a way of determining the child’s relationship with his or her mother.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Jacobs, *D.W. Winnicott* (London: Thousand Oaks, 1995) 68.



these appear frequently for Beckett's characters (albeit less with every passing work), with examples including Krapp's banana (*Krapp's Last Tape*), Malone's stick (*Malone Dies*) Hamm's toy dog (*Endgame*), Murphy's chair (*Murphy*) and Winnie's handbag (*Happy Days*). The function of these objects and the reason for their creation is, for children and Beckett's characters alike, to provide comfort to those who have no-one on whom they can depend.

### **Samuel Beckett: *Molloy* (1955)**

*Is your mother's name Molloy too?*<sup>10</sup>

*Molloy* is a novel which serves as a possible subterfuge of semi-autobiography for Beckett. In *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (1978), Deirdre Bair writes:

Beckett considers *Molloy* his first successful rendering of his own experience into fiction. Molloy's existence, his family and friends are all based on Beckett's life, but are successfully removed from it [...]. The landscape is so much like Foxrock that his family and friends were astonished at how easily they recognised the descriptions [...]. Beckett's characters either have paralysed legs or none at all. In his family, two uncles and a cousin each had one leg amputated due to what the Beckett family refers to jokingly as 'the family circulatory problem.'<sup>11</sup>

Bair also refers to the "siege in the room" which characterises Beckett's mental state in the late 1940s in particular, which arguably informs the text of *Molloy*, and characterises his mood in the late 1950s as "irritable and jumpy, bothered by the flood of people and mail that poured down upon him."<sup>12</sup> This description of Beckett during the period of writing *Molloy* is consistent with the character of Molloy, who resists and resents interaction with members of the public. The surrogate wombs which Molloy seeks so consistently are analogous to what James Knowlson refers to as Beckett's alleged

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (New York: Grove Press, 2009) 19. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.

<sup>11</sup> Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978) 363.

<sup>12</sup> Bair 519.

"prenatal memories of life within his mother's room,"<sup>13</sup> a time in which Knowlson writes that Beckett felt imprisoned, and in pain.<sup>14</sup> Written several years after Beckett first underwent treatment for anxiety attacks and psychosomatic paralysis at the Tavistock clinic in London in the 1930s, *Molloy* shares with the discipline of psychoanalysis the problematic and enduring nature of the relationship between mother and child. In James Knowlson's biography of Beckett, *Damned to Fame* (1996), Knowlson writes about Beckett's experiences as a patient of psychiatrist Wilfred Bion at the Tavistock Clinic. The course of psychotherapy lasted for two years (Beckett meeting Bion three times a week),<sup>15</sup> and was paid for by Beckett's mother: once again, the debt to the mother becomes a recurrent concern in Beckett's own life, as well as in his art. It was also during this time that Beckett read the work of the influential psychiatrists Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank,<sup>16</sup> while one aspect of Rank's work struck him (according to Knowlson) with particular interest; Rank's "anxiety of a child left alone in dark room due to his unconscious being reminded (*er-innert*) of intrauterine situation, terminated by frightening severance from mother,"<sup>17</sup> as well as the analysis of what Knowlson terms Beckett's "love-hate" relationship with his mother and her fierce attachment to her son. Both of these psychological motifs of captivity and isolation loom large in *Molloy* as the main colours on the palate of Beckett's fiction.

In *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (1997), Phil Baker writes about the significance of "projection" and transference in Beckett's work, arguing that "transference is the process by which the subject displaces feelings deriving from previous feelings or scenarios; this involves the transfer of energy from one idea to another, so that the latter becomes an equivalent or substitute to the first [...]" in middle Beckett texts we might say that policemen and nursemaid women are heavily "cathected" in a way that leads to

<sup>13</sup> James Knowlson, *Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Knowlson 2.

<sup>15</sup> Knowlson 175.

<sup>16</sup> Knowlson 178.

<sup>17</sup> Knowlson 178. The work in question is Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (Oxford: Psychology Press, 1999).

serial displacement.<sup>18</sup> The definition of the “object” can incorporate both human and non-human forms. Indeed, the phenomenon of tangible transitional objects recurs consistently throughout Beckett’s oeuvre, albeit less with every passing work. In psychoanalytical terms, the level of comfort offered by the object is dependent upon the extent to which it palpably represents the womb, and the ultimate security of the child. Fetishisation of the object with maternal qualities is a symptom of projection, which in turn creates the transitional object. Phil Baker argues that the correct attitude towards objects is, then, for Molloy, to find an object that for him represents safety, comfort and transcendent security, and carry it with him always as his own.

Throughout Molloy’s short narrative, he comes across various items and people that he retains in order to soothe himself. The most notable (and famous) example of the maternal substitute is the stones he picks up in the latter half of his journey. To Molloy, stones represent an alternative to the fraught relationship he has with his mother: he can suck the stones as often as he likes in order to substitute his mother’s breast, without having to confront her. Indeed, Molloy’s mother never appears in the novel, but rather only tortuous visions of her in Mrs. Lousse, the social worker upon Molloy’s arrest, and most strikingly, the stones he enjoys on the beach. The stone is yet another transitional object which is essentially disposable, as it does not nourish Molloy, but rather ostensibly eliminates the sensation of hunger. Furthermore, the lack of nutrition in the stones also suggests the inevitability of the need of his mother. When Molloy stays in Mrs. Lousse’s prison-like house, with its high walls covered in broken glass, he remarks on the trauma of even imagining his mother in her physical form:

And God forgive me, to tell you the horrible truth, my mother’s image sometimes mingles with theirs, which is literally unendurable, like being crucified, I don’t know why and I don’t want to. (54)

Since the pervasive influence of the mother is so problematic (*Footfalls*, *Rockaby* and *Eh Joe* all feature mothers who haunt and

<sup>18</sup> Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) 33.

torment), the inert and passive nature of stones is an appropriate substitute. He can suck them, move them wherever he pleases, and arrange them in any order he likes, which he does for several pages of the novel.

Ostensibly, Molloy has only confronted a vision of his mother's physicality, rather than having confronted the spectral vision of the woman herself. However, it is significant that Molloy uses the stones during his "journey" toward his mother; they are a totem for Molloy, a souvenir allowing him to remember and control his terrifying mother. The very opening of the novel establishes a debt to the mother:

I am in my mother's room. It's I who live there now. I don't know how I got there. Perhaps in an ambulance, certainly in a vehicle of some kind. I was helped. I'd never have got there alone. (4)

Further, Molloy's dependence on his mother's "room" manifests itself deeply in the corporeal:

In any case I have her room. I sleep in her bed. I piss and shit in her pot. I have taken her place. I must resemble her more and more. (4)

In his seminal psychoanalytical work, *The Trauma of Birth*, Otto Rank comments on the significance of the corporeal in dreams. He suggests, significantly for the character of Molloy, that "in the consciously uncontrollable and apparently automatic ejection of urine and discharge of faeces ('as proof of love' for the mother) the child behaves as if it were still in the womb; *inter faeces et urinas*."<sup>19</sup> This issue will be addressed again in the next section with regard to *Room*. Once again, Molloy has used a facet of the mother in order to substitute for her. The stones represent her breast, while the room represents her womb, the first space ever inhabited by Molloy, who can imagine that he is secure inside this "room" in the most primal stages of being, while also carrying out the same bodily functions as a child in the womb.

The third substitute for the mother arrives in the form of Mrs. Lousse (also referred to as Sophie) who serves as a human

<sup>19</sup> Rank 18.

transitional object, and is ultimately the closest Molloy gets to his mother once he ventures outside her room. Mrs. Lousse's house is like a surrogate womb for Molloy, on a journey at the end of which Molloy will find a ditch to fall into; indeed, it would have been easier if Molloy had simply been born, as Gogo remarks in *Godot*, "astride the grave." Molloy enjoys his peaceful time at the large house, commenting that his "waking was a kind of sleeping" (48), as he slept in either the garden or the house. Molloy has found another room, another womb and another tomb in which he may rest.

While it is possible to project maternal qualities onto others in the absence of a mother, these substitutes may only be temporary for their children, as there is necessarily only one mother. Similarly, Rina Kim uses Kleinian methodology to explain the recurring phenomenon of transitional objects, arguing that "for Klein, splitting an object into good and bad objects is one of the infant's earliest methods of defence in dealing with anxiety and the fear of loss of its good object. In doing so, at least a part of the object is accepted to protect its ego."<sup>20</sup> The maternal substitutes employed by Molloy are therefore part of an attempt to preserve the mother's identity. Molloy describes Mrs. Lousse in a manner which seems to contradict the most immediate descriptions of the maternal, as the flatness of her chest he refers to immediately evokes the absence of the breast, as well as the description of Mrs. Lousse as "not a man rather or least an androgyne" (51), rendering her suitable only temporarily.

### ***Molloy and Emma Donoghue's Room***

*To restore silence is the role of objects. (9)*

Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* focuses on a character who desperately seeks the security of his mother, and all of the trappings incurred by the security she offers. Molloy leaves his room, only to find himself struggling to get back to some other similarly secure place.

<sup>20</sup> Rina Kim, *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2010) 111.

The narrative of *Molloy*, then, is “birth,” followed by a life spent trying to negate that very event. Fifty-four years later, however, Emma Donoghue’s *Room* (written in 2010) tells a remarkably similar story. The protagonist of the novel, the five-year-old Jack, leaves the comfortable captivity of *Room*, only to find that he consistently desires to get back there. Symbolically, Jack attempts to undo his own birth (the moment in which he was separated from his mother) by attempting to recreate a time in which he and his mother share one unique and sealed environment. It is this primary concern of the process of “re-”realising, as well as the ways in which it manifests itself for Jack in his attempts to be reunited with his mother, that he shares with *Molloy*.

The concept of security in captivity unites both *Room* and *Molloy* in terms of ethics and aesthetics. Consequently, Emma Donoghue’s *Room* clearly echoes *Molloy* in its aesthetic of imprisonment, exile and its antidotes, set in a garden shed where five-year-old Jack and his mother are held captive by a jailor known only as “Old Nick.” While the first section of the novel deals with Jack’s essential contentment with life inside the “room” or Room as it is referred to (for he has no real concept of life “Outside”), the latter sections deal with the trauma of discovering the outside world upon their escape. The interior of *Room* is incomparable to the endless foreboding landscape of the outside, in a similar manner to the security of Beckett’s domestic spaces contrasting with the threatening nature of the world outside Room. In the midst of separation and trauma, transitional objects fulfil much the same role for Jack as Molloy once he is separated from his mother for the very first time: to substitute for the presence of the mother and the security of the womb. The depiction of the mother as a distant spectre of security, as well the concept of the matrixial borderspace, also appear as major dynamics of the text in *Room* as they do in *Molloy*.

The issue of the providence of the narrators of *Room* and *Molloy* informs, and even colours the narrative significantly, as both *Room* and *Molloy* portray the process of birth as particularly painful and grotesque. Descriptions of birth are invariably visceral and unceremonious in tone, and highlight the awkward and painful nature of labour and delivery. In Beckett, these descriptions serve to problematise the nature of existence, as a violent and turbulent

birth foreshadows a life fraught with torment. Although Jack in *Room* is told of his birth as a salvation for his mother, the act of being born itself is depicted as painful and traumatic, even when mediated through the eyes of five-year-old Jack:

I look down at Rug with her red and brown and black all zigging around each other.

There's the stain I spilled by mistake getting born. "You cutted the cord and I was free," I tell Ma.

"Then I turned into a boy."<sup>21</sup>

Significantly in this passage, the stains on the rug due to bodily fluids are described in detail. Ostensibly, Jack's birth was a difficult one and his mother had to cut the umbilical cord unassisted. Although unaware of his mother's rape, the chaotic mess of blood and other bodily fluids on the rug serves as a reminder of the brutal, cruel nature of Jack's conception at the hands of Old Nick.

Furthermore, rape is similarly implicit in Molloy's description of his own conception, as well as the resultant cursed life which he must endure:

My mother. I don't think too harshly of her. I know she did all she could not to have me, except of course the one thing, and if she never succeeded in getting me unstuck, it was that fate that earmarked me for less compassionate sewers. (14)

Jack's "birth" into the world "outside" Room is decidedly traumatic, both physically and psychologically. The description of Jack's escape to freedom is fraught with insecurity about the ultimate success of his escape, but also about the strange world in which, like Molloy, he now finds himself. To Jack, even the air is "different" (172), as he is driven, rolled up on the back of a flatbed truck, into the strange city. Ultimately, Jack is deposited, in a manner much like Watt's arrival, as a parcel on a railway line, onto the road, wrapped up in a tattered rug – the last remnant of the

<sup>21</sup> Emma Donoghue, *Room* (London: Picador, 2010) 4. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are given in parentheses in the text.

umbilical cord of Room, and must now cling to any remnants of Room he can find.

Patricia Coughlan argues that, in Beckett's fiction, "to go on becomes an increasingly difficult ordeal since they keep losing the little props on which they depend for comfort."<sup>22</sup> Both Jack and Molloy, then, have a great fear of losing their belongings. The tooth Ma loses and "Rug" (it is a proper noun in the novel) are the two principle remnants or souvenirs from *Room* which remind Jack of his intrauterine existence. Jack's rug is analogous to Molloy's mother's room, the very first transitional object present in Molloy, as both are used as protection from the outside world. Molloy's urination and defecation in his mother's room (symbolic of the womb, according to Otto Rank) is duplicated by Jack once he is wrapped up inside Rug – he too performs these bodily functions due to anxiety, effectively marking his territory in this new surrogate womb. Objects serve, therefore, the same role in *Molloy* as in *Room*, providing a tangible distraction from anxiety through reconnecting with the womb. Molloy's fascination with the horn on his bicycle, for example, provides him with some of the only pleasure afforded him throughout the entire narrative.

Beckett's characters from elsewhere derive pleasure from objects which represent the breast; the best-known example of this is the spools on Krapp's tape recorder in *Krapp's Last Tape*, which he treats as maternal or eroticised objects. Molloy's oral fascination with the stones he sucks performs much the same function: relief from anxiety, and a reminder of the protective presence of the mother. Directly comparable to Molloy's sucking stones is the tooth that Jack retains from his mother. Once Ma stops breastfeeding Jack (due to her relatively lengthy separation from him), Jack becomes increasingly reliant on the tooth for comfort, keeping it in his mouth frequently. Much like Molloy's decision to retain a part of his mother that he can consume forever without eroding it, Jack has taken a souvenir of his enjoyment of breastfeeding; both Molloy and Jack are similarly resourceful in establishing substitutes for the maternal, by means of assembling parts of their mother in order to

<sup>22</sup> Patricia Coughlan, "'A Noise of Wet Kisses and Washing in a Tub': Beckett's Trilogy and the Idea of Fiction," *The Maynooth Review* 6.1 (May 1980): 38.



compensate for her absence. The passage in which Jack describes his attraction towards the decayed tooth illustrates his perceived need to carry a part of his mother with him. It is also significant that Jack chooses to preserve his mother's tooth (or "Tooth") shortly after Ma explains the new concept of the world outside Room. The description of Tooth strongly echoes the description of Rug, as it is "all yellowy with dark brown bits," (87) much like the stained rug indicative of the matrixial borderspace. To Jack, the tooth is undoubtedly a part of Ma's body:

"Bad Tooth?"

Ma nods. She's feeling in the back of her mouth.

That's so weird. "We could stick him back in, with flour glue, maybe.

She shakes her her head, grinning. "I'm glad it's out, now it can't hurt anymore."

He was part of her a minute ago but now he's not. (87)

The notion of being "outside" has been foreshadowed, and Jack's world is ruptured, leaving him with the need to take a part of his mother he can keep with him. Indeed, Jack and Tooth are analogous to one another, as both have come free of Ma's body. Jack's need for the kindred spirit of Tooth is highlighted in his inner monologue during his escape:

Are you there, Tooth? I can't feel you but you must be in my sock, at the side. You're a bit of Ma, a little bit of Ma's dead spit riding along with me. (171)

Jack tends to look for Tooth when he encounters emotionally charged situations in his mother's absence, often as a result of the separation anxiety induced by a new sense of distance between him and his mother for the first time. When Jack lives with his grandmother (his first real living partner apart from his mother), he develops a particular attachment to Tooth. Following Ma's suicide attempt, Jack is unable to access his mother, resulting in a fierce

attachment to Tooth, and an aggressive reaction to his grandmother when she attempts to take Tooth away from him:

She's trying to bend my fingers open to get to him. My hand hits her hard in the tummy.

She stares.

I put Tooth back under my tongue and lock my teeth. (318)

Of particular importance in this passage is Jack's instinct to defend his only remaining souvenir of his mother; consequently, Jack defends Tooth instinctively as he would defend his mother. Tooth, therefore, is able to not only represent but also *embody* Ma, who becomes ubiquitous for Jack as a result of his necessity for her, as well as a result of the powerful Matrixial Borderspace. The haunting and omnipresent mother in Molloy is thus echoed in *Room* for Jack, as Tooth and Rug accompany Jack separately as a surrogate breast and womb, respectively.

*Room* also features a Mrs. Lousse "figure" in the form of Jack's maternal grandmother, whom he meets for the first time after escaping from Room. When he stays with his grandmother in his mother's absence, much like Mrs. Lousse, she becomes a surrogate womb to Jack. When his mother is unavailable, Jack must therefore improvise, creating his own temporary mother. The initial descriptions of Jack's temporary life with Grandma are typically Beckettian, and may be seen to resonate with the first passage of Molloy, as the opening line, "I'm in the house with the hammock" (315), is analogous to "I am in my mother's room" (1). Jack has identified for himself a substitute for the womb in the hammock at which he now finds himself looking. The hammock is, perhaps, a souvenir of life in Room, as Ma herself slept in it as a child. Jack has moved from one womb to another, having identified a womb with "one previous owner" to whom he himself was born. Grandma has at this point replaced Ma as a protector and provider. Grandma later assumes the role of protector once again when Jack is stung by a bee for the first time; Jack calls his mother's name, only to be assisted by Grandma, who puts "special ointment" (335) on Jack's sting. However, Ma is not allowed to be replaced entirely, in the

same way as Molloy never finds a complete mother to replace the one he is seeking.

To conclude, for both Molloy and Jack, it is just enough, in their mother's absence, to glimpse mirages of security, grasping for the safety of transitional objects whenever they can. Just as Winnie in *Happy Days* reaches into her handbag to fend off infinity and oblivion, Emma Donoghue makes use of Beckett's existential props in order to highlight the essential need for security as well as the resourceful and resilient manner in which Molloy and Jack seek the maddening security of a mother. As a result, Donoghue's writing owes a debt to her ancestor Beckett, just as Beckett's Molloy owes an insurmountable debt to his phantom mother. Ultimately, Beckett himself proves to be the ideal transitional object for Donoghue, reaching fifty years into the future to provide an aesthetic for writing about the most desolate and hopeless situations.

## TRADITION AND/OR MODERNITY? OWEN MCCAFFERTY'S *QUIETLY* AND FRANK MCGUINNESS'S *THE MATCH BOX*

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Both Owen McCafferty and Frank McGuinness are well-established playwrights with long and successful careers. In the context of contemporary Irish drama, their work is characterised not only by the “classical richness” of their language, but also by their creative use of other components of the theatre medium, i.e. space, choreography, set, casting, etc. However, with their recent plays *The Match Box* (2012) and *Quietly* (2012), they both seem to embrace more traditional means. McCafferty, whose plays such as *Scenes from the Big Picture* or *Shoot the Crow* famously do not focus primarily on the issues of identity and politics and are so universal that they could be set anywhere in Europe, wrote this play about the problematic reconciliation of the Troubles in contemporary Northern Ireland. McGuinness, whose *Baglady* achieves unique theatrical and emotional complexness, wrote a minimalist narrative monologue about the ghost of a child haunting a desperate female protagonist; again, the Troubles linger in the background. The aim of the present paper is to examine the return of both playwrights to the dominant tradition of Irish drama in contrast to their earlier yet more adventurous work.

The critical response to *Quietly* has been very positive. It won the Scotsman Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

2013 and it has been nominated for the Irish Times Theatre Award for the Best New Play 2013. The main reason for the success of *Quietly* is undoubtedly McCafferty's enormous skill as a playwright. Similarly to Martin McDonagh, for instance, McCafferty manages to capture the musicality of everyday dialogue and crafts his text very well. As Emilie Pine wrote, "*Quietly* is a well-written, powerfully performed, close-to-the bone play about violence and forgiveness. [...] McCafferty's writing feels psychologically nuanced and the emotions conveyed through the script and the performers are acutely visceral."<sup>1</sup> The image of Belfast in *Quietly* is created by two different perspectives. Most of the play presents a Belfast tormented by its violent history from the point of view of the two main characters, a Catholic called Jimmy and a Protestant called Ian, who are both fifty-two years old and have spent all their lives there; but the opening and closing scenes include the perspective of an outsider, the Polish bartender Robert, who is a generation younger than these two customers in the pub where he works. This new part of contemporary life in Belfast, the experience of the new immigrants, though sidelined, significantly enriches the main plot of *Quietly* – the story of the uneasy reconciliation of the Troubles.

As is gradually revealed, the pub had played a key role in both Jimmy and Ian's lives. In the opening scene, nothing much happens, Jimmy is chatting with Robert and they are both watching an incredibly boring football match between Poland and Northern Ireland on television. Jimmy is waiting for Ian and warns the bartender that "there might be a bit of shoutin."<sup>2</sup> When Ian comes, he is welcomed by a violent headbutt from Jimmy. Ian is a former UVF member, who threw a bomb in the very same pub in 1974, killing Jimmy's father who had also been watching football on the television there with his friends. Both Jimmy and Ian then struggle to tell their bitter life stories from two conflicting points of view. In the end, Ian apologises, they shake hands in silence and Ian leaves to talk to another of his victim's relatives. Jimmy finishes his pint and also leaves quietly. They will probably never see each other

<sup>1</sup> Emilie Pine, "*Quietly*," review, *Irish Theatre Magazine*, 23 November 2012, <http://www.irishtheatremagazine.ie/Reviews/Current/Quietly>, 11 July 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Owen McCafferty, *Quietly* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012) 16.

again. McCafferty presents reconciliation as highly problematic and painful, yet there seems to be at least a tiny glimpse of hope for Belfast.

Fintan O'Toole suggested that *Quietly* "is continuous with a kind of drama that has been around for a very long time: some men in a pub; pints downed; lots of talk."<sup>3</sup> In his review, he even uses the term "pub play" and argues that it is a typically "Irish trope that begins with *The Playboy of the Western World* (1904) and reaches its zenith in Tom Murphy's *Conversations on Homecoming* (1985)."<sup>4</sup> McCafferty already used this form in his 2002 play *Closing Time*. The attraction of the pub setting is fuelled by the ultra-realistic staging of the majority of such productions. The traditional Irish pub is usually recreated by using genuine pub furniture, decorations and even real beer taps. The pub space is "a true microcosm of social life [...] reflecting the society that surrounds it [...] and providing the conditions for storytelling to take place."<sup>5</sup> The familiar pub atmosphere thus encourages the audience to engage with the characters, who, usually empowered by alcohol, confess their private thoughts to the bartender, whose function is almost priest-like.

The most obvious recent parallel, however, is Conor McPherson's smash hit from 1997 *The Weir*, not only because of the pub setting, characters, black humour and dialogues, but also the structure of the play. Not only do McPherson and McCafferty work within the classical unities of time, space and action, but both playwrights use monologues strategically to punctuate the key moments of their respective plays. In *The Weir* and *Quietly*, the seemingly everyday dialogues serve as a build-up, an exposition, to the core of the play. For example, in the opening scene before Ian comes to the pub, Jimmy is challenged by Robert about his lack of knowledge of Polish football and the world outside Northern Ireland:

<sup>3</sup> Fintan O'Toole, "Quietly Does It: A Pub Play with Potent Purity," *Irish Times*, 24 November 2012, [www.irishtimes.com/culture/media/quietly-does-it-a-pub-play-with-potent-purity-1556506?mode=print&ot=example.AjaxPageLayout.ot](http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/media/quietly-does-it-a-pub-play-with-potent-purity-1556506?mode=print&ot=example.AjaxPageLayout.ot), 11 July 2013.

<sup>4</sup> O'Toole.

<sup>5</sup> Rhona Trench, "The Measure of a Pub Spirit in Conor McPherson's *The Weir*," *The Theatre of Conor McPherson: 'Right Beside the Beyond'*, eds Lilian Chambers and Eamonn Jordan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2012) 165.

ROBERT: you know a lot about polish football do you

JIMMY: a know a bit

ROBERT: you know nothing – this place doesn't know the rest of  
the world exists

JIMMY: the nineteen seventy-four world cup – i know that bit<sup>6</sup>

Jimmy then gives a detailed account of the matches Poland played, including the names of the players who scored. Robert is amazed, similarly to the audience. Initially, this scene seems to be included mainly for its humour, but in fact it becomes significant later on, when we discover that it was the football match Jimmy's father was watching when he was killed by the UVF bomb. In Fintan O'Toole's words, "the play's purpose is to lead us gently towards the inferno,"<sup>7</sup> i.e. to lead us to the key confessional monologues where the characters reveal most about themselves, both willingly and unwillingly.

In *Quietly*, however, a confession is presented not as something automatically praiseworthy or as a sincere attempt to seek help, but also as a potentially selfish act, one that is cowardly and pretentious. In his first longer speech, Jimmy tells a story about a man who pretended his whole life to be a faithful husband and a dutiful father but, on his deathbed, he confessed to his wife that he had been having affairs for thirty years. Jimmy's commentary hints at the possible complications of the confessions we will hear later in the play. The man "couldn't keep his pain to himself the fucker – he had to offload it on her didn't he."<sup>8</sup> Ian admits he has doubts about his own real motivation, too: "the truth is i don't know why i'm here – not being able to look myself in the eye when i'm havin a shave maybe – that's why i'm here."<sup>9</sup> Despite Jimmy's hatred of "the fucker – [who] had to offload it on her" and his awareness of the dubious effect of such confessions, his later monologues also reveal self-pity. McCafferty thus includes a very important aspect of the dual nature of such confessional monologues and *Quietly* complicates the notion of a confession and is definitely not a "simplistic narrative of reconciliation,"<sup>10</sup> as O'Toole claims.

<sup>6</sup> McCafferty 14.

<sup>7</sup> O'Toole.

<sup>8</sup> McCafferty 24.

<sup>9</sup> McCafferty 27-28.

<sup>10</sup> O'Toole.

There is one more parallel to *Quietly* which has not been mentioned in any of the reviews in Ireland, namely, a British documentary drama by Robin Soans entitled *Talking to Terrorists* which features a former UVF and a former IRA members retelling their life stories from the same era as the events recalled in *Quietly*, i.e. the early 1970s. What is interesting is the fact that although *Quietly* is fictitious and *Talking to Terrorists* is a verbatim play, the way the monologues are written is quite analogous. One of the points made in both plays is that the terrorist organisations purposefully recruit teenagers. Ian explains that “i was approached not by another sixteen-year-old but by men – grown men – men i had been taught to believe – when i was asked it felt like these men had personally given me an identity – and that now my identity would automatically have respect.”<sup>11</sup> In *Quietly*, it is emphasised time and time again that Ian and Jimmy are of the same age; both were only sixteen when the terrible act happened. Inexperience is offered as an excuse. In *Talking to Terrorists*, Soans makes a similar observation, presented by a psychologist Edward, an expert on terrorism: “People are more aware of status in their teenage years. [...] Being in a committed organisation... well you’re all winners now. [...] It’s also a time of enormous peer pressure, particularly with sex. If you are not good at pulling girls, the recruiters give you a way out... who needs girls when you’ve got status?”<sup>12</sup> In *Quietly*, Ian is given a girl as a bonus after the successful attack: “it was the first time [he] had sex.”<sup>13</sup> Another similarity between these two plays is the bonus of free education in prison. Ironically, both Ian and the protagonists of Soans’s play educated themselves in prison, obtaining university degrees, in contrast to Jimmy who had never had the opportunity to do this as he had to support his widowed mother: “i didn’t go to university – either inside or outside jail.” In Soans’s play, the two terrorists from opposite sides realise in prison that they have a lot in common as both come from a working class background. “We both talked... we developed a tremendous friendship. We were both working-class men from Belfast; we had

<sup>11</sup> McCafferty 36.

<sup>12</sup> Robin Soans, *Talking to Terrorists* (London: Oberon Books, 2005) 42.

<sup>13</sup> McCafferty 46.



both put cardboard into our shoes when it rained; by and large, I could have lived his life.”<sup>14</sup> McCafferty does not offer his characters such a utopian conclusion. Jimmy mentions that he was in prison, too, but he is not prepared to give Ian more details: “i’m not giving you the way out – help you by saying i was really one of the enemy – bond –swap jail stories – no – it does not matter what i may or may not have done – you killed my father not me.”<sup>15</sup>

Nothing that has been described so far makes *Quietly* a contemporary play; it is only the character of the Polish bartender Robert that makes us aware that we are not in Belfast in the 1970s or 1980s, but in 2009. The only modern device used to update the production are the text messages in Polish and English projected on the mirrors behind the bar that Robert keeps sending to his Polish lover and his Irish wife. As O’Toole writes, “for audiences of a certain age, indeed, *Quietly* will bring back memories of the way the Peacock used to be in the early to mid 1980s [...] when it produced tough, well-made naturalistic plays that use vivid characters to explore social issues.”<sup>16</sup> What is most remarkable about *Quietly* is that despite the significant changes that have occurred in Northern Ireland, particularly the immigration wave and the peace process that helped to create at least a some kind of peace in Belfast, “the form of the play is virtually untouched. Everything has changed and nothing has changed.” In the time of post-dramatic theatre, devised theatre, open texts, live art and other progressive theatrical forms, *Quietly* might at first sight seem quite outdated, “formally simple, heavy on talk, uninterested in cleverness or experiment.” Moreover, in comparison with McCafferty’s enormously successful *Scenes from the Big Picture*, which featured forty characters and offered a highly theatrical kaleidoscopic vision of a day in contemporary Belfast, the three men sitting at a bar “look like a distinct scaling back of ambition.” And yet the play works. As O’Toole suggests, “the apparent simplicity of the piece becomes a definite case of less is more: the creation of an uncluttered space in which horror can be given its due without overwhelming the audience.”

<sup>14</sup> Soans 88.

<sup>15</sup> McCafferty 48.

<sup>16</sup> O’Toole. All subsequent citations of O’Toole are from this review.

On the other hand, and this is a very important point in the context of Irish drama, *Quietly* might be seen as “yet another narrative of men and violence and the north that stages forgiveness and closure in an unconvincing handshake,”<sup>17</sup> as Emilie Pine wrote in her very observant review. She points out that in *Quietly* there is “an inexorable move towards closure. This movement is so vital to plots about truth and reconciliation, and yet is so problematic [...] This story isn’t over yet, no matter how many times the referee blows the whistle.” She makes another very valid point that, with a few exceptions such as Christina Reid, Anne Devlin, or Jennifer Johnston, “the Troubles is consistently framed as a male-dominated narrative. And now the peace process is being framed likewise.” In McCafferty’s Belfast, women are even more sidelined from the picture than the modern immigrants represented by Robert. In Pine’s words, “While Jimmy’s and Ian’s stories are compelling [...] in both versions of the truth and reconciliation process women are only presented via men’s narratives.” The women mentioned in *Quietly*, i.e. “the wee girl” Ian had sex with, Jimmy’s mother, and Robert’s lover and wife, do not even have names. In the key concluding monologues, the suffering and pain of Jimmy’s mother and the girl are presented merely through their male perspective, “as an aspect of [the men’s] personal haunting.” Robert’s lover and his wife are only present in the text messages and their story is not further developed. The pub space is thus presented as a male environment where women do not belong.

The focus being on the reconciliation of Jimmy and Ian, McCafferty does not further develop Robert’s character either, which is a pity as it is through him that the new issues of contemporary life in Belfast are introduced. In Emilie Pine’s words, “though he is attributed with a personal life (via fairly clunky text messages) and subject to sympathy at the end, at times it feels as if his nationality is purely a handy device.” His role is that of a witness, a neutral observer, but his story is equally important. During the introductory chat with Jimmy, street violence is mentioned a couple of times. Neither Jimmy nor Robert know who is behind it, probably some “wee lads hangin about out there – not

<sup>17</sup> Pine. All subsequent citations of Pine are from this review.

even at the match – no interest in it – just messin’.”<sup>18</sup> The seemingly aimless and unexplainable aggression, this “messin’ and “smashin’ of pubs” arguably links McCafferty’s Belfast of 2009 with London and other European cities that had to deal with violent riots and looting in 2011. The final image of *Quietly* is very disturbing as “the wee lads” start beating on the window shutters of Robert’s pub and shout abuse: “fuckin polish bastard – dirty smelly fucking bastard – go back to where you come from and shite in the street you fucker – polish wanker.”<sup>19</sup> Robert gets a baseball bat and stands waiting silently as the lights fade to dark. His side story of trying to stay afloat in a city entangled in a vicious circle of neverending violence that has just found another target and “where an undercurrent of violent racism has begun to take strength in the uneasy void left by the Peace Process”<sup>20</sup> is arguably the central theme of *Quietly*, although for some critics “the ending felt a little too easily come by, with the message taking precedence over character.”<sup>21</sup>

In the conclusion of her review of *Quietly*, Pine admits that it is a bit unfair to judge “a very good play for being symptomatic of a much wider cultural problem,” but she argues that “the issue that remains to be reconciled, and that is just as important as the reconciliation of men from opposite sides, is the glaring absence of women in too many narratives of the Troubles.” If Frank McGuinness’s one-woman play *The Match Box*, ever makes the transition from the UK to Ireland, it might fill this gap in the narratives of reconciliation, although it is not directly about the Troubles. As with *Quietly*, the reviews of McGuinness’s play have been mainly positive and Leanne Best, who played the central character Sal in the production at the Liverpool Playhouse Studio (June 2012), was nominated for the TMA Award for Best Performance 2013. British critics praised McGuinness for compelling storytelling and for creating such a strong female character, “a woman to be

<sup>18</sup> McCafferty 16.

<sup>19</sup> McCafferty 55.

<sup>20</sup> Dan Sheehan, “*Quietly*,” review, *The Public Reviews*, 25 November 2012, <http://www.thepublicreviews.com/quietly-the-abbey-theatre-dublin/>, 11 July 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Caomhan Keane, “*Quietly*, The Abbey Theatre,” review, *Entertainment.ie*, 28 November 2012, <http://entertainment.ie/theatre/feature/Quietly-The-Abbey-Theatre/211/3625.htm>, 11 July 2013.

pitied and feared in equal measure.”<sup>22</sup> Sarah Hemming in her review for *The Financial Times* noted that “McGuinness’s script reflects both his Irish background and his experience of adapting Greek tragedy. Here is the confessional monologue often seen in Irish drama; here is an enduring onstage limbo as in Beckett’s plays; but here too is the unfettered anguish and rage of a Greek tragic heroine.”<sup>23</sup>

*The Match Box* is set in the present on Valentia Island, which lies off the coast of County Kerry. The protagonist Sal talks to the audience from her bedsit, which “looks like an overhang from Martin McDonagh or J.M. Synge.”<sup>24</sup> McGuinness divides her devastating monologue into eleven episodes: the first and last take place on the island while the other nine scenes are a retrospective of Sal’s life in Liverpool. Sal first muses on the silence of Valentia Island and tells the audience that she can hear the sheep that are all around on “the green fields”<sup>25</sup> of the island talk to her. It is difficult to imagine a more picture-perfect postcard than this bucolic image of Ireland: “Lovely to come here for holidays, see what relations are still living, do the social duties, and then run wild like a billy goat, wild for the rest of the summer.”<sup>26</sup>

In the first few minutes of the play, McGuinness mentions that the local people are superstitious yet religious and well meaning, but that the island is “quite eerie at times”<sup>27</sup> and the green fields “have their own way of talking.”<sup>28</sup> Contrary to Martin McDonagh, who mocks such a traditional setting, McGuinness is serious here; no parody is intended. Although the first scene includes many clichés and would benefit from further cutting, it presents the central visual and aural image of the play: Sal strikes a match and

<sup>22</sup> Alfred Hickling, “*The Match Box*,” review, *The Guardian*, 24 June 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jun/24/the-matchbox-review>, 11 July 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Hemming, “*The Match Box*, Tricycle Theatre, London,” review, *Financial Times*, 9 May 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jun/24/the-matchbox-review>, 19 July 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Carole Woddis, “*The Match Box*, Tricycle Theatre,” review, *The Art Desk*, 13 May 2013, <http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/match-box-tricycle-theatre>, 19 July 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Frank McGuinness, *The Match Box* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012) 7.

<sup>26</sup> McGuinness 3.

<sup>27</sup> McGuinness 3.

<sup>28</sup> McGuinness 7.

watches it burn. This simple yet crucial gesture will be repeated throughout the play, always at key moments, metaphorically punctuating Sal's narrative. Moreover, it will gradually change its meaning, gaining more and more importance for the audience's interpretation of the whole play.

Equally important to the inclusion of gestures is the use of silence in *The Match Box*. Its dramatic function is again multiple. Not only does it form a counterpoint to the fast flow of the oral narrative, a pause during which Sal is gaining more strength to continue, but, significantly, it embodies the more and more frequent gaps in her story. Even more importantly, the silence links Sal's personal tragedy with the Troubles. Her only daughter was shot on her way home from school in a crossfire. As much as an innocent child victim might be viewed as a cliché, *The Match Box* was inspired by a real life event from Liverpool: in 2007, an eleven-year-old schoolboy Rhys Jones was shot in the street and those involved were helped by a wall of silence.<sup>29</sup> The situation in *The Match Box* is the same: the police do not know who murdered the child and ask Sal for a press statement that might help them with their investigation. Sal does a very unusual thing – in front of the cameras at the press conference, she first acknowledges that “so many times before mothers and fathers have appeared on TV begging for information, any information, to assist the police investigating the murder of their children. I’ve watched them [...] and thought for myself, thank God it is not my child [...],”<sup>30</sup> but then she announces that although she does not know how to cope with her loss, she is not going to beg for help:

No, I am going to offer help. I am going to be there for whoever – man, woman, or child – whoever murdered my daughter. I am here waiting for you, because I have something to tell you. It is that I forgive you. I forgive you for having killed Mary. [...] Go and tell what you have done. Admit it. I will be here, waiting for you.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Dominic Cavendish, “*The Match Box*, Liverpool Playhouse Studio,” review, *The Telegraph*, 20 June 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/9342407/The-Match-Box-Liverpool-Playhouse-Studio-review.html>, 11 July 2013.

<sup>30</sup> McGuinness 26.

<sup>31</sup> McGuinness 26-27.

Yet despite this unexpected note of reconciliation, no-one ventures any information as to who the murderer was. Because of the silence from the community, Sal and her parents decide to take justice into their own hands. However, this is never confirmed as they also remain silent and lie low.

In the remaining four episodes, Sal's monologue becomes more and more gapped, silence and the burning of matches more and more frequent. Sal admits having problems with her memory: "Do you think I could remember? It's strange, but that's what started to happen. I couldn't remember things."<sup>32</sup> She is in denial, slowly collapsing with grief and despair. There is a rumour going around who the murders were: a family of three brothers and their mother. Their house is set on fire and the sons burn to death. From Sal's version of the event, it seems that her parents might have their hand in the death of the suspected murderers: "Mum wasn't so much following them as keeping them at a distance, for she said she cannot tolerate the smell of shit. Petrol – she said – a little petrol, it absolves them of everything. And my dad said it was a remarkable fluid, useful in more ways than one."<sup>33</sup> Both her parents seem to have direct experience with the Troubles; her father admits that "we torched a fair few in County Kerry – ones who deserved it. [...] Remove them – a match to their thatch. We let them have the lick of sulphur. Lovely word that. Sulphur. Brimstone and sulphur."<sup>34</sup> Sal's continuous burning of matches perhaps also points to her own role in the family's revenge on the murderers of her young child.

In the final episode, Sal recounts her family's return to Ireland and the early death of her parents, who have never recovered from the tragedy. Neither has she. As Dominic Cavendish writes, "[i]n inflicting her own fiery brand of punishment, an eye for eye, she has become outcast from her own humanity – as dead, in a way, as her offspring. [...] this fugitive creature has found herself in her own kind of hell, lit, as the sun sinks, by the fleeting sulphurous flares of distractedly struck matches."<sup>35</sup> There is no reconciliation

<sup>32</sup> McGuinness 34.

<sup>33</sup> McGuinness 36.

<sup>34</sup> McGuinness 36-37.

<sup>35</sup> Cavendish.

for Sal, just utter despair and silence. The last image of the play is very powerful and dramatic as Sal's hand gestures with the matches reveal her agony. According to the stage directions, Sal smells her hands and holds them out and cries for her daughter to come back. Then her hands start to beat against each other and tear her flesh. In the silence, she starts to shake, imperceptibly at first, then gathering momentum. The shaking ceases when she raises her head and howls. Sal strikes another match in silence and lets it fall, then she gathers all the dead burnt matches from the stage. She holds up her collection, letting one fall as she recites each name: "Father – mother – daughter – friend – foe – sulphur – brimstone and sulphur – father – mother – daughter."<sup>36</sup> This scene echoes the final image of McGuinness's previous monologue play *Baglady* (1985) where such violent hand gestures are also shown and the protagonist similarly creates a heap of objects related to her past life and ritualistically drowns them in the river. The experience of watching Leanne Best's performance is devastating, almost draining, and, as Hickling writes, "you come out feeling like the contents of the matchbox: completely spent."<sup>37</sup> In Mike Pinnigton's words, "There is such horror, madness and violence here as to be genuinely traumatizing."<sup>38</sup>

To conclude, despite possible flaws of both plays, i.e. the predominantly male perspective in Owen McCafferty's *Quietly* and the framing of *The Match Box* in too picture-postcard setting, both plays deal with a very important issue of violence, grief and reconciliation in contemporary Ireland. Both playwrights manage to create powerful parts for their actors who give outstanding theatre performances that are well received by critics and audiences alike. In their latest plays, McCafferty and McGuinness embrace conventional means, i.e. the classical unities of time, space and action, the traditional setting of either an Irish pub or the rural west of Ireland, use monologues, and rely mostly on words to convey their message yet they also enrich their plays by a careful and

<sup>36</sup> McGuinness 48.

<sup>37</sup> Hickling.

<sup>38</sup> Mike Pinnigton, "The Match Box, Liverpool Playhouse Studio," review, *The Double Negative*, 21 July 2012, <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/07/the-match-box-reviewed/>, 11 July 2013.

imaginative integration of metaphoric gestures and introduce perspectives that are not so common – they give a voice to women and to new immigrants. Their recent work is therefore an example of an effective integration of dramatic tradition and modern thematic issues in contemporary Irish drama. Hopefully, the Abbey Theatre will initiate the above-mentioned transition of *The Match Box* from the UK to Dublin, as McGuinness's monologue play would be a very welcome enrichment of the male perspective of McCafferty's Dublin debut *Quietly*.



## “THE NECESSARY SYNTHESIS”: DIALECTICS OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN PATRICK PEARSE’S WRITINGS

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### I. Pearsean Paradoxes

Re-writing Patrick Pearse’s most famous poem “Mise Éire,” Eavan Boland declares that she “won’t go back to [...] old dactyls” of the traditional meta-narrative of the nation, which she characterises as a discourse “where time is time past.”<sup>1</sup> The poem summarises the position commonly associated with the tradition that is symbolised most powerfully by Pearse. In works ranging from Joyce’s *Stephen Hero*, where a young Pearse is caricatured as a narrow-minded Gaelic fanatic, to Boland’s poem, the leader of the Easter Rising was often described as the epitome of backward-looking cultural isolationism or as a sentimental neo-traditionalist dreaming of extending the reality of *Iar-Chonnacht* to the whole of Ireland. Admittedly, Pearse’s juxtaposition of pristine rural Conamara *Gaeltacht* where he says that “I feel that I am in Ireland” and urban

<sup>1</sup> “I won’t go back to it –// my nation displaced/ into old dactyls,/ oaths made/ by the animal fallows/ of the candle –// land of the Gulf Stream,/ the small farm,/ the scalded memory,/ the songs/ that bandage up the history,/ the words/ that make a rhythm of the crime// where time is time past./ A palsy of regrets.” Eavan Boland, *The Journey and Other Poems* (New York: Carcanet/Arlen House, 1987) 10-11.

and Anglicised Dublin, where to feel the same “requires a more rigorous effort of imagination than I am capable of”<sup>2</sup> – certainly seems to justify this opinion. In this respect, Boland’s (popular) view reproduces Ernest Gellner’s thesis referring to nationalist revivalist movements as generally driven by a “fear of modernity” which is counteracted by the escapist embracement of the relics of the past.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Philip O’Leary locates Pearse within the ideological spectrum of the Gaelic League and characterises his mature stance in the internal debate as the most comprehensive “defense of the progressive position.”<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to overlook Pearse’s “modernist” position in the debates over the future of Irish-language literature – where he vehemently opposes its antiquarian and nativist tendencies; or on the educational issues in which he proved to be most receptive to current continental trends. A significant number of contemporary commentaries on Pearse’s artistic achievements stress “newness” as their basic quality.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, in recent scholarship, Pearse’s cultural nationalism earned him the title of the founding father of post-colonial theory who, in his texts, “anticipates much of the thinking associated with pre-eminent [...] theorists of the second part of the twentieth

<sup>2</sup> P.H. Pearse, “Education in the West of Ireland,” *A Significant Irish Educationalist: The Educational Writings of P.H. Pearse*, ed. Seamus Ó Buachalla (Dublin and Cork: Mercier Press, 1980) 313-16.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983) 58-62. See also John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London: Fontana Press, 1994) 49-51. A good example of such a “popular reading” of Pearse is provided by a statement by Pillar Villar-Argaiz: “Pearse’s form of cultural nationalism attempted to create an image of an Ireland which was pastoral, mythic, and unmodernized, a new country that defined itself as ‘not-English,’ and therefore, uncontaminated by foreign influence.” Pillar Villar-Argaiz, *The Poetry of Eavan Boland: A Postcolonial Reading* (Bethesda: Academica Press, 2008) 122.

<sup>4</sup> Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) 108-109.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Mac Kenna’s review of *Macghníomhartha Chúchulainn* may be taken as an example, stating that the performance displayed “a new form of art and a new reason for hope in the country.” Stephen Mac Kenna, “Review of *Macghníomhartha Chúchulainn*,” *An Macaomh* 1.2 (1909): 36-37. There are similar voices praising the “newness” of Pearse’s works such as *An Phais* or his short stories.

century;"<sup>6</sup> and – in the synthesizing view of Declan Kiberd – he became a fellow traveller of Joyce and Beckett on the boat of Irish modernism, a seeker of an alternative route to modernity rather than a mere nostalgist, firmly believing that tradition is not opposed to innovation.<sup>7</sup>

The situation changes, however, when the perception of Pearse's political thought is considered. The tendency to evaluate this as "atavistic" and "tribal [...] reversion to the primitive" (in the words of Eugene McCabe) persists, wonderfully summarised by John Wilson Foster: "Save on the subject of blood-sacrifice for Ireland, Pearse was a reasonable, progressive [...] thinker."<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, it may be claimed that this attitude is derived from a typical "liberal fallacy" identifying "modernity" with the values of the rationalist liberal mode of socio-political organisation. This standpoint, however, overlooks the fact that European modernism viewed itself as a revolt against that particular understanding of modernity, simultaneously articulating a nostalgia for the pre-modern past and expectations of an "alternative modernity." This essay attempts to analyse the apparent paradox of Pearse's thought in relation to the dialectics of tradition and modernity, or – more widely speaking – continuity and change, by locating his writings in a theoretical context of "cultural nationalism" (John Hutchinson) and Roger Griffin's concept of "primordial modernism." Firstly, Pearse's position within two central meta-narratives of Irish nationalism will be discussed, revealing a pragmatic and creative – rather than nostalgic and antiquarian – attitude to the past as well as a preference for a revolutionary change over the stalemate of the

<sup>6</sup> Róisín Ní Ghairbhí, "The Battle before Us Now Is a Battle of Words: Pearse and Postcolonial Theory," *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse*, eds Róisín Higgins and Regina Uí Chollatáin (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009) 157. See also Máire Ní Fhlathúin, "The Anti-colonial Modernism of Patrick Pearse," *Modernism and Empire*, eds Nigel Rigby and Howard J. Booth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 156-74.

<sup>7</sup> Declan Kiberd, "Patrick Pearse: The Irish Modernist," *The Life and After-Life of P.H. Pearse* 79; Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland. The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996) 134.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Pearse, *Selected Poems/Rogha Dánta*, ed. Dermot Bolger (Dublin: New Island Book, 1993) 14; John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival. A Changeling Art* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987) 303.

status quo. Pearse's essentially modernist stance will then be analyzed within the above-mentioned theoretical framework.

## II. Continuity and Change

In the discourse of Irish nationalism as it developed during the nineteenth century, we may identify two central "mythical narratives" – the story of a golden age and the narrative of the unbroken chain of resistance against the foreign rule.

Narrating the story of a nation consists mainly – as Eric Hobsbawm suggests – in "attempts to establish continuity with a suitable historic past."<sup>9</sup> Throughout his entire career, Pearse was deeply involved in constructing this narrative of continuity. This crucial mode of Irish nationalist discourse manifests itself at the most basic rhetorical level in the recurring device of enumerating names of heroic figures such as Owen Roe O'Neill, Wolfe Tone, the Manchester Martyrs and others in order to structure the course of history as a continuous cycle of attempts to gain a sovereign status for Ireland.<sup>10</sup> Pearse's collection of early modern bardic poetry *The Songs of the Irish Rebels* attempts to prove an unbroken line of separatist tradition from the late Gaelic era to that of republican (and English-speaking) United Irishmen and Fenians. His final tetralogy, from "Ghosts" to "The Sovereign Nation," creates a similar sense of continuity within the history of modern nationalism, from Wolfe Tone through Davies, Lalor, and Mitchel, to Pearse himself.

Characteristically, his single *literary* venture into this discourse acquires a form approaching a prayer. The poem "Mionn" takes on the structure of Catholic litany, beginning with the invocation of God, Christ, Mary and turning from the universal to the tribal yet still perfectly orthodox figure of St Patrick. It then follows the structure of the Litany to All Saints, this time, however, from the pantheon of Irish history: "Dar dúnmharú Aodha Rua,/ Dar bás truamhéalach Aodha Uí Néill,/ Dar oidhe Eoghain Rua,/ Dar mian

<sup>9</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Georges-Denis Zimmerman, *Songs of Irish Rebellion. Political Street Ballads and Rebels Songs, 1780-1900* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) 70.

an tSáirséalaigh le hucht a bháis.”<sup>11</sup> Pearse subsequently broadens the scope of reference from the unique heroic figures to the anonymous totality of the suffering nation: “Dar corpaibh an Ghorta,/ Dar deoraibh deoraí nGael,”<sup>12</sup> and asserts the continuity of the narrative in the coda: “Do-bheirimid na mionna do-bheireadh ár sinsir” (“We swear the oaths our ancestors swore”). The poem thus evokes the overall quality of Pearse’s thinking, freely combining the sacred and the secular history into a single national narrative.

The motif of rewriting Irish history as a national version of the “communion of the saints” appears to be quite common in the nationalist press of the time.<sup>13</sup> Where Pearse’s rhetoric starts to differ from the nationalist mainstream is in the embracement of the second part of the dialectical relation – *change*. Characteristically, Pearse, who so often relies on the language of the Gospel, never quotes Christ’s most famous declaration of continuity: “I haven’t come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them” (Mt. 5. 17). On the contrary, one of the quotations most often invoked to support Pearse’s argument was Christ’s words that herald a radical disorder brought into the world by His message: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother” (Mt. 10.34-35).

*The Master*, written in 1915, is a play which stages the tension between continuity and change in Pearse’s thinking most prominently. Although commonly – and quite rightly – interpreted

<sup>11</sup> “By the murder of Red Hugh/ By the sad death of Hugh O’Neil/ By the tragic death of Owen Roe/ By the dying wish of Sarsfield.”

<sup>12</sup> “By the Famine corpses/ By the tears of Irish exiles.”

<sup>13</sup> It is enough to invoke a poem by Terrence MacSweeney revolving around the image of Heaven in which saints and Irish heroes together rejoice at the news of the formation of the Volunteers, published in the issue of *Irish Volunteer* of 30 May 1914. In August 1914 (two years after the publication of “Mionn”), *Irish Freedom* published Adam Mickiewicz’s “Litany of Polish Pilgrim” – an archetypal text of Romantic messianism, freely modifying the model of the Litany to All Saints to the narrative of the oppressed nation – carefully adapted by the author/translator who signed his name as “Giolla Eireann” (pseudonym of Aodh de Blácam) – to the Irish context, but retaining the major feature of the Polish original, i.e. a complete conflation of the religious and national narrative.

as a text revealing his personal doubts about the chosen revolutionary path, it also contains several elements referring to the dialectics of continuity and change. The small community consisting of the teacher Ciaran and his pupils is repeatedly compared to the fellowship of Christ and the Apostles. Ciaran is accused by “the druids” of “overturning the ancient law of the people” just as Jesus was by the Pharisees. Arriving to face Ciaran, King Daire reproaches him for presenting a threat to social concord: “You have come into my country preaching to my people new things, incredible things, things you dare not believe yourself. I will not have this lie preached to men.”<sup>14</sup>

In *The Master*, surprisingly to many, Pearse situates himself on the side of the new against the old, although the doubts about his vocation that Ciaran suffers may to some extent reflect a similar tension in Pearse’s thinking. In search of the answer to a very modernist question that Declan Kiberd articulates as “how to bring newness into the world,”<sup>15</sup> Pearse shrinks from a direct revolutionary response and instead provides a Divine sanction for his argument. The conflict is solved not by Ciaran himself but by a supernatural intervention. Archangel Michael appears onstage, proving the truthfulness of Ciaran’s teaching and – implicitly, as the king kneels before the apparition – confirming the radical change in the socio-political order.

In this particular scene, the essence of Pearse’s attitude towards the dialectics of continuity and change is revealed. Various elements, drawn either from the realm of religion or from the historical narrative of the nation, are employed in order to legitimise the goal towards which the whole ideological construction aspires. This goal is the realisation of an Ireland that is “free” and “Gaelic” (to invoke Pearse’s famous oration), i.e. built upon the remnants of the past (“Gaelic”) yet made possible by an act of radical negation of the current reality.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Pearse, *The Literary Writings of Patrick Pearse*, ed. Séamas Ó Buachalla (Cork: Mercier Press, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Kiberd, “Patrick Pearse, the Irish Modernist” 70.

### III. The Golden Age

In 1904 Pearse wrote in *An Claidheamh Soluis*: “we intend to build the castle of the new learning. For that purpose we must first dig until we strike the bedrock of the old learning. Then we will begin to raise the walls of the castle.”<sup>16</sup> Such a statement might have been uttered by almost any cultural nationalist of that time in any European country. Anthony D. Smith sums up this seemingly backward-looking essence of many a nationalist project, claiming that “nationalism [...] seeks to fashion a future in the image of the past.” It is, of course, not any past, but only the “authentic” and “genuine past of a people in its homeland.”<sup>17</sup> This process necessarily requires, as Aviel Roshwald suggests, disrupting the linearity of history in order “to enclose historical epochs in parentheses” and design “mythical structures” that can serve “to bridge yawning gaps in time” and connect the present community of a nation to some distant events.<sup>18</sup> It is no accident that nationalist movements all across Europe bear a great debt to the generations of “antiquarians” restoring the distant events from the nation’s history from oblivion by means of their “creative archaeology.” At the junction between the antiquarian research and the political movement lies the myth of the golden age as embodying the “true essence” of the community, thus providing the present with a model to refer to and aspire to.<sup>19</sup> Benedict Anderson describes this crucial process of the “re-discovery of glorious past” using the Greek example, quoting Adamantis Koreas’s statement about “this painful discovery” of the “distance separating it [the Greek nation] from its ancestors’ glory.”<sup>20</sup> He could also have used A.E.’s memorable reflection on the emotions stirred by his first encounter with O’Grady’s Cú Chulainn: “like a man who suddenly feels

<sup>16</sup> O’Leary 108-109.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity. A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998) 112.

<sup>18</sup> Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism. Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 55, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 212-13.

<sup>20</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 72.

ancient memories rushing at him, and knows he was born in a royal house, that he had mixed with the mighty of heaven and earth and had the very noblest companions.”<sup>21</sup>

“The myth of the golden age,” which A.D. Smith lists among the “sacred foundations” of nationality<sup>22</sup> appears in Irish nationalist discourse even before O’Grady and the revival. Its first incarnation is provided by the Catholic version of the national meta-narrative. In his pastoral letter on St Kevin’s Day in 1866, Cardinal Cullen summarised this position: “the sixth century was a golden age of our early church. From north to south monasteries and convents adorned our island; [...] his missionaries went forth as new apostles to stem the tide of barbarism, which had well nigh submerged all civilization on the continent.”<sup>23</sup> The (Anglo-Irish) revival brought forth a counter-myth of Celtic pre-Christian Ireland, but the Gaelic League – at once predominantly Catholic and oriented towards the restoration of the “Celtic” past – nevertheless gradually managed to provide a common ground for both versions of the myth. Again, Pearse himself may be viewed as a catalyst of the most radical syntheitising attempt. In his writings, he does not hesitate to pair Cú Chulainn and Columcille as two equal models of virtuous life; and, describing his educational experiment, he may claim to draw inspiration both from St Enda’s Aran monastic community and Conchubar’s “boy corps” from the Ulster Cycle.

A firm belief in the superiority of the old Irish culture suffuses a number of Pearse’s texts. In his youthful essays, he exalted Gaelic literary heritage above Greek antiquity, and later in *An Macaomh*, he posited Cú Chulainn as the ideal model of knighthood.<sup>24</sup> The glorification of “the old” may go as far as describing the physical superiority of ancient Gaels:

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Rafroidi, “Imagination and Revolution: The Cuchulainn Myth,” *Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750-1950*, eds O. MacDonagh, W.F. Mandle and P. Travers (London: Macmillan, 1983) 138-39.

<sup>22</sup> See Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, esp. chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin Collins, *Catholic Churchmen and the Celtic Revival in Ireland, 1848-1916* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) 29.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Pearse, “Our Heritage of Chivalry”, *An Macaomh*, 14 November 1908: 9.



the men are splendid specimens of manhood – just such tall, lithe, graceful figures as one sees in Aran [...]. They can run down the wild boar on foot; they can bear hunger and cold and thirst without complaint [...].<sup>25</sup>

This last quotation comes from an extended essay “In First-Century Ireland” which Pearse published as a serial in the Gaelic League newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* in winter 1907-1908. Significantly, the ending of this imaginative journey into the world of pre-Christian Ireland introduces a metaphor that problematises any straightforward notion of the restoration of the past. Whereas five years earlier Pearse speaks of “the bedrock” of tradition that has to be reached and which provides a firm ground for a Gaelic renaissance, now he declares: “Our civilization has met with shipwreck, and from the battered fragments we in our day are attempting to build up anew that noble ark. A blessing on ye, builders!”<sup>26</sup>

The language of this passage reveals inherent traits of a modernist sensibility at the core of Pearse’s project. Building from the scattered ruins is much more of a creative than a merely restorative task. It signals the futility of any kind of Burkean conservative discourse of tradition as an organic, evolutionary process, contrasting it with an image of continuity that is disrupted, broken and only to be restored by artificial means.

#### IV. Alternative Modernity

In J.J. Lee’s words, “Pearse’s language gives commentators who portray him as the personification of the reaction against modernization, considerable excuse for their misunderstanding [...]” His call for going “back to the sagas,” modelling educational methods on the boy corps of Emain Macha and countless other examples suggests an antiquarian mentality directed at the restoration of the past, whereas in reality Pearse was only mobilising

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Pearse, “In First-Century Ireland,” *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 21 December 1907: 11-12.

<sup>26</sup> Patrick Pearse, “In First-Century Ireland,” *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 11 January 1908: 10.

"the sagas as weapons to achieve his goal of modernization without Anglicization."<sup>27</sup>

Pearse's dialectics of tradition and modernity thus closely follow John Hutchinson's model of cultural nationalism, first articulated in his essay on the dynamics of the Gaelic revival.<sup>28</sup> According to Hutchinson, cultural nationalism – although superficially based on sentimentalising the past and rejecting modernity – in fact views the nation as a dynamic phenomenon, with cycles of decay and regeneration. The evocation of the golden ages of a nation does not serve as a call for a return to some lost prelapsarian community but rather as a mobilising device to stimulate "the young" to reject their parents in the name of "the authentic values for the future." Revivalists are therefore

neither outright modernists nor traditionalists, but ideological innovators. They articulated the shifting options for societies seeking to determine their path to modernization, in a manner that balances their concern to preserve a distinct identity with a drive for progress.<sup>29</sup>

Bearing the Irish example in mind, Hutchinson formulates the position of the revivalists in a very Pearsean manner. They argue with the traditionalists that "tradition is not passive repetition of customs, has continually to be renewed" and they point out to the modernisers that the best embodiment of "modernity" should be sought not abroad but in the nation's own golden age.<sup>30</sup>

Pearse follows this revivalist position in almost every dimension of his public activity. His "updating" of tradition may be very subtle and – on the surface – almost imperceptible. A minor but quite telling example may be provided by one of the first issues of *Irish Volunteer* that features Pearse's rewriting of the eighteenth-century song now known as "An Dord Féinne." In a brief comment

<sup>27</sup> J.J. Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1973) 146.

<sup>28</sup> John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism. The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* 49-51.

<sup>30</sup> John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (London: Sage Publications, 2005) 65-71.

introducing the poem, he claims that it is “an adaptation of Jacobite words to the modern situation.” In fact, there is only a single significant change in the text: a line invoking the help of the “French and Spaniards” who come with Charles Stuart from across the sea to save the Gael is turned into an assertion of Irish autarky, so popular with Griffith, Moran and other ideologues of Irish Ireland: “Gaeil iad féin is ní Francaigh ná Spáinnigh.”<sup>31</sup>

There is only a single – and rather tongue-in-cheek – attempt to visualise the new Ireland to come and this is to be found in Pearse’s *oeuvre*. Writing for the 1906 special *Oireachtas* issue of *ACS*, he describes a dream of awakening – Rip-Van-Winkle-like – in Ireland a hundred years later. Although the text is primarily focused on the renaissance of the Irish language, several insights into the reality of the independent state may be detected in it. Surprisingly, they differ substantially from De Valera’s later vision of the autarkic agricultural Ireland of “comely maidens” and “athletic youths,” of “hard work and simple pleasures.” It is a country of vast economic projects (draining of the bogs and reforestation are mentioned) and booming foreign trade, with its capital humming with Parisian-like outdoor cafés. Nevertheless, it is a Gaelic Leaguer’s vision of a “Celtic Tiger.” First of all, Ireland is linguistically and culturally “Gaelic,” yet with no traits of a neo-traditionalist sentimentalism. The cultural method that moulded the new reality is hinted at in the fragment about the literary movement that “saved Irish poetry from death”: the imaginary writers from the Gaeltacht simultaneously raised “the banner of the Ancients” and “the banner of Liberty” that allowed them to “mock at conventions” and concentrate on their only “sacred duty” – “to utter the soul’s thoughts” rather than keep to any pre-modelled standards, either native or foreign.<sup>32</sup>

In his arguments with the “traditionalists,” Pearse advocates the primacy of the contemporary and the individual – both, of course, deeply rooted in and inspired by the nation’s heritage – over

<sup>31</sup> “An Dord Féinne,” *Irish Volunteer*, 4 April 1914. Pearse’s most famous poems, “Mise Éire” and “Fornocht Do Chonac Thú,” may be interpreted in a similar way as at once deeply immersed in the bardic poetic heritage and subtly subverting and reorienting its traditional motifs and imagery.

<sup>32</sup> Patrick Pearse, “In My Garden,” *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 4 August 1906 (*Oireachtas Supplement*).

slavishly following the defunct norms of the previous epochs. Instead of doctrinal insularism (for instance, the return to the Irish language as a shield against the spiritual perils of modernity), he propounds active contact with other cultures and the centres of modern development in order to enrich “Irishness” and make it competitive in the contemporary world.<sup>33</sup> He attempted to raise the “banner of the Ancient” and the “banner of Liberty” at the same time, conflating the return to what is vital in the native tradition with the daring embrace of the future. In fact, in one of his articles on literature,<sup>34</sup> Pearse stresses “a spirit of daring,” an eagerness to discover new horizons both in the spiritual world and the material reality, as the central feature of ancient Gaeldom. Accordingly, he ends with a call to the creators of the new Irish culture to “[b]e bold and resolute” (which is – to make things even more paradoxical – a quote from *Macbeth*). Contrary to many of his fellow “Gaelic Leaguers,” for Pearse, rendering “the present a rational continuation of the past” (the GL’s proclaimed goal<sup>35</sup>) did not mean moulding contemporary Ireland into some imitation of the lost golden age. Instead, it conveys a notion of a vital, dynamic relationship, close to T.S. Eliot’s understanding of culture as “an embodied experiential mode of the present arising out of and continuously reformulating the past.”<sup>36</sup>

## V. Primordial Modernism

Hutchinson’s theory deconstructs the apparent contradiction in the attitude to tradition and modernity in the discourse of Irish revivalists. Nevertheless, it falls short of explaining the ultimate step made by the generation “schooled by the Gaelic League” towards the revolutionary movement. Significantly, it centres around the figures of Griffith and Moran (pragmatic “Catholic modernisers” without revolutionary and mystical leanings) and

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* 35-36.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Pearse, “About Literature,” *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 26 May 1906.

<sup>35</sup> Qtd. in Aodh De Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1973) 376.

<sup>36</sup> Patricia Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992) 137.

Eoin MacNeill (who opposed the Rising in the end, both on the basis of strategic prudence and the Catholic ethics of just war).<sup>37</sup> In the writings of the separatist inner circle, however, with the approaching insurrection, the language of the rediscovered continuity is often paired with the rhetoric of abrupt change. This new disconcerting mode is most powerfully demonstrated in one of the final paragraphs of "The Sovereign People" quoting Mitchel: "do you take up a reproach against the lightening for that they only shatter and shiver, but never construct? [...] This destruction is creation: Death is Birth..."<sup>38</sup> "Creative destruction" – with its Nietzschean undertones – links Pearse decisively to the rhetoric of various political movements emerging all around Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Turning back to Pearse's vision of a "new Ireland," the ceremony of the opening of the 2006 *Oireachtas* in the new Ireland bears all the features of the "political liturgies" described by George L. Mosse as central "means of mobilization" of the masses in the process of creating nationalism as a modern mass movement.<sup>39</sup> The festival operates within a symbolically structured space. (The procession is marching through places renamed after the heroes of Irish nationalism.) It is bolstered by the transcendental sanction of the Church. (The whole ceremony is opened by a speech by the Cardinal of Dublin.) The demonstration of power and energy of the young nation is mixed with the symbolic invocation of its past and spiritual heritage.

Mosse's "political liturgies" are listed among the crucial elements of the politics of "primordial modernism" defined by Roger Griffin. He attempts to provide a theoretical explanation for the paradoxes of the political modernism which not only articulated a diagnosis of the crisis of modernity in a "traditionalist" fashion (Kermode's "sense of an ending") but, more

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*. See also F.X. Martin, "Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising," *Irish Historical Studies* 12.47 (March 1961).

<sup>38</sup> Patrick Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches* (Dublin: Maunsell & Roberts, 1922) 368-69.

<sup>39</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 2001) esp. chapters 1, 2.

importantly, offered a vision of the new dawn (Griffin's "sense of a beginning").<sup>40</sup>

Griffin formulates a theory of "primordial modernism" – inter-relating two seemingly contradictory notions and claiming that their apparent *aporia* in fact lies at the core of the modernist project(s). The complex "temporal" dimension of these movements resembles Hutchinson's revivalist cultural nationalism: "mythicized past" is used as "the source of the inspiration needed to inaugurate a new, revitalized [...] society." Even if the discourse of the "lost origin or suppressed national essence" occupies a central place in the rhetoric of primordial modernists, the dynamics of the movements are "rigorously futural." The logic of the mechanism of primordial modernism is defined as "mazeway resynthesis" – a tendency to a syncretic incorporation of the traditional elements in the new order. Elsewhere, the dynamics of the process are fittingly referred to (following Arthur Moeller van der Bruck, the German ideologue of *Conservative Revolution*) as "reconnection forwards" – described as "the paradoxical appropriation of elements found in the pre-modern, mythic, 'reactionary' past to serve the revolutionary task of creating a new order in a new future."<sup>41</sup>

In December 1907, discussing Beatrice Elvery's famous painting "Éire" (later to be located at the entrance to St Enda's school), Pearse follows the pattern of primordial modernist attitude exactly. He interprets the image as showing the triad of "Past, Present, and Future – Memories, Disappointments, Hope." The painting features a hooded woman with a child on her lap, surrounded by shadowy figures: the "radiant shapes in the dark sky above her – shapes with heads mitred or cowled or crowned or helmeted" are saints and warriors of the heroic past; "those others who crouch shivering and naked, in the shadow of her mantle" are "our current generation." The small child "who stretches out his hand fearlessly" obviously symbolises the future of the nation.<sup>42</sup> Invoking Tom Garvin, Pearse's interpretation "mingles nostalgia and futurism" to create a "deprecation of the present" in a fashion typical of all primordial

<sup>40</sup> Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism. The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Griffin esp. 107-108, 114-17, 175-79.

<sup>42</sup> *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 7 December 1907: 7.

modernist movements.<sup>43</sup> Pearse's last essays, from "Ghosts" to "The Sovereign People," develop this basic theme through a series of key concepts, mainly tending towards Griffin's "re-synthesis" of various elements of the national past, with a juxtaposition of "old" and "new" in which the generational conflict is rewritten as a moral and philosophical one.

The word "synthesis" provides a key to Pearse's final political essays. At the end of "The Sovereign People," dated 31 March 1916, Pearse declares:

I who have been in and of each of these movements make here the necessary synthesis, and in the name of all of them I assert the forgotten truth and ask all who accept it to testify to it with me, here in our day and, if need be, with our blood.<sup>44</sup>

The chronological dimension of the fragment is present in the dialectics of "the forgotten truth" and "here in our day." The assumed process – movement from "forgetting" to "asserting" – therefore consists in rediscovery, the re-constitution of the fundamental continuity out of the apparent discontinuity. Nevertheless, the stress must be placed on "synthesis," which is, moreover, "necessary," thus implying its functional, deliberate character as means of mobilisation towards action ("testify to it").

Pearse's shameless syncretism allowed him to list – writing for his prevailingly Catholic and Irish-Ireland audience – three figures from a Protestant background (Tone, Davies and Mitchel) among "four Evangelists" of Irish separatism, and to postulate the status of a saint "holier" than St Patrick to the Jacobin agnostic Wolfe Tone. In this inclusive discourse, a "masculine" republican affirmation of "action" – personified by Tone – is paired with the "feminine" guardianship at the "nation's hearthside" symbolised by Davis's Gaelic cultural nationalism. Cú Chulainn may be described as an anti-type of Christ, thus uniting the pagan and Christian tradition of Gaelic Ireland. All the aporias are merged in the indivisible unity of Irishness. It is a similar mental mode that is conveyed in Charles

<sup>43</sup> Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005) 109-16.

<sup>44</sup> Pearse, *Political Writings* 371.

Peguy's diaries from the first weeks of the Great War: "To bring the republican and the reactionary which are within me into harmony I've taken to shouting on alternate days *Vive la Republique* and *Montjoie et Saint Denis*."<sup>45</sup>

Mentioning Charles Peguy in this context is by no means accidental. (A comparison between the French poet and Pearse has already been made by Sean Moran Farrell.<sup>46</sup>) According to Griffin, the mechanism of modernist "resynthesis" manifested itself fully in the fusion of avant-garde and patriotic enthusiasm on the eve of the Great War. The above-mentioned spirit of daring and the affirmation of youthful energy as contrasted with the decadent "elders" manifests itself both in the rhetoric of Marinetti's Futurism and the German "reactionary" *Volkist* movement. Their direct counterpart is the recurring juxtaposition of "the young" and "the old" in Pearse's writings – significantly surfacing in particular in his final utterances before the Rising. "The Sovereign People" ends with the words "And we are young. And God has given us strength and courage and counsel" and one of the final sentences of *The Singer* is MacDara's admonition: "Old men, you did not do your work well enough."<sup>47</sup>

The inter-generational conflict acquires a moral and philosophical dimension throughout contemporary Europe. The rejected present was identified with the "mercantile" values of liberalism and rationalism, which led to the domination of economical thinking in other spheres of life and subsequently – to the evasion of the heroic. "The last generation's" failure – "mean and shameful" – is ascribed to their belief that the nation's future may have been guaranteed by the mechanisms of political and economic liberalism (whereas "it may not be brought into the market places at all or spoken of where men traffic"). Instead of a display of power to act, they allowed the nationalist movement to degenerate into "a debating society" – a statement directly echoed in Carl Schmitt's critique of liberal democracy, which when

<sup>45</sup> Marjorie Villiers, *Charles Peguy. A Study in Integrity* (London: Collins, 1965) 13.

<sup>46</sup> Sean Farrell Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption. The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994) 188-89.

<sup>47</sup> Pearse, *Political Writings* 372; Pearse, *Literary Writings* 125.



confronted with the choice between “Christ and Barabbas” would have responded by “establishing a commission of investigation.”<sup>48</sup> It is a juxtaposition powerfully conveyed in the laconic lines of “Mise Éire” – one between the glorious heritage of “Cú Chulainn cróga” and the present depravation of “mo chlann féin a dhíol a máthair.”<sup>49</sup>

In *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt argues that bourgeois preference for “debate” over “action” springs from the basic key feature of its psyche: the inability to accept the necessity of the ultimate sacrifice. Dying for one’s community transcends the mercantile logic of gain and loss and thus remains unimaginable within a society ruled according to the principles of liberal economy.<sup>50</sup> Pearse’s critique of the “last generation” of Irish constitutional nationalists heralds Schmitt’s arguments. Where the two thinkers differ is the solution they seek in order to redeem the condescended present. Whereas for Schmitt it should be sought in the discourse of authority, Pearse focuses on the moment of the messianic breakthrough conducted by the few. In the final account, he turns towards the *kairotic* moment of revelation/revolution. “The necessary synthesis” of his political and literary writings, directed towards the rediscovery of the “forgotten truths” only prepares the ground for the actual move forwards. As in Elvery’s painting, the present of the purgatorial “crouching” and “shivering” shadows must be overcome and a bridge built between the heroic past and the promises of the future. In this last paragraph of his last essay, the dialectics of past and present are immediately supplemented with an eschatological urging: “The day of the Lord is here.”

## VI. Conclusion

The discrepancy between “Pearse the progressive thinker” and “Pearse the proto-fascist”, outlined at the beginning of this essay, is

<sup>48</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985) 62.

<sup>49</sup> “Cúchulainn the valiant” is juxtaposed with “children who sold their mother.” Pearse, “Mise Éire / I Am Ireland,” *Literary Writings* 35.

<sup>50</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 48-49.

therefore largely illusory. Both as a cultural and revolutionary nationalist, Pearse follows in the spirit of the generational revolt of the modernist children against their modern (liberal and rationalist) fathers. Here, embracing the idea of the messianic blood sacrifice seems to be part of the same continuum as Pearse's educational concepts or his attitude towards the restoration of the Irish language. His thinking retains the paradoxical relation between tradition and modernity characteristic both of the mechanisms of cultural nationalism ("modernization, yet without Anglicization," based on native Irish models) and the discourse labelled by Griffin as "primordial modernism," performing a similar fusion between the futuristic orientation towards the "new beginning" of the national community and the attempt to back this radical change by synthetically recreating the nation's history and heritage. Instead of juxtaposing tradition and modernity and positing this juxtaposition as a form of "either/or" choice that the nation faces (which, in a way, was done by the mainstream of the Catholic "Irish Ireland" or – in fact – the generation of the "Celtic Twilight"), Pearse undertakes the process of "reconnection forwards," mixing a highly creative and functional (though still reverent) attitude towards the past with a desire to design a future which would not be a mere copy but rather "of our own making."

One of the more perceptive of Pearse's Irish contemporaries, Arthur Clery, struggles with this oxymoronic nature of Pearse's conceptualisation of the Rising by calling it "a Catholic Revolution." While here "Revolution" stands for "modernity," it is telling that Clery uses "Catholicism" when he is thinking of "tradition," "the alliance of faith and fatherland" and "rejection of modernity."<sup>51</sup> On a deeper level, Pearse's thought merges a nostalgia for the lost heroic past, a contempt of the "mean and shameful" present and a focus on the dawning future. This triadic structure is representative of the tradition of Christian radicalism, extending from the medieval millenarian movements to the Romantic messianism of the nineteenth century, which translated the theological

<sup>51</sup> Arthur Clery, "Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett: An Appreciation," *Studies. An Irish Quarterly Review* 6.22 (June 1917): 212-21.

narrative of the primordial bliss, fall and salvation into the discourse of revolutionary eschatology.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this essential linearity, Christian perception of time always remains two-dimensional as it also acknowledges another – Divine – time. The redemptive moment represents a messianic breakthrough of the vertical, Divine time into the linear course of the human time, represented in theology by a juxtaposition of *kairos* and *chronos*. Both Pearse's texts analysed here: *The Master* and the last paragraphs of "The Sovereign People" introduce at their climactic moments this intersection of the timeless with the timely. Although Pearse's thought reflects the patterns of cultural nationalism and may be viewed as a representative of "primordial modernism," when seeking the deepest structural framework for his ideas, Pearse intuitively reaches towards the realm of theology.

<sup>52</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism. The Case of Poland* (1982; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994) 250; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and its Bearing on Modern Totalitarianism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961) 4.

## PLUMMER, STOKES AGUS COMTHÓTH LÓEGAIRI CO CRETIM 7 A AIDED

Ken Ó Donnchú

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### Réamhrá

Áirítear *Lebor na hUidre* (LU feasta) ar an lámhscríbhinn is sine dá maireann as traidisiún liteartha na nGael ina bhfuil prós leanúnach le fáil.<sup>1</sup> Má tá “eipic” i litríocht na Gaeilge, in aon ré, is í an “eipic” sin *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, agus is in LU a fhaightear í (nó leagan amháin di ar aon dath). Is in LU, freisin, a thagaimid ar leaganacha de chuid de na téacsanna is tábhachtaí i litríocht na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge, leithéidí *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, *Fled Bricrend*, *Mesca Ulad*, agus *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*.

Ba í breith R.I. Best agus Osborn Bergin, an bheirt a chuir leagan dioplómaitiúil den lámhscríbhinn i gcló i 1929, nár mhair de LU anuas chun ár ré féin ach leath dá raibh inti ó cheart.<sup>2</sup> As na 37 téacs atá caomhnaithe inti, tá 19 cinn acu a bhfuil cuid éigin den insint in easnamh orthu, rud a fhágann i dtuilleamaí leaganacha eile as

<sup>1</sup> Is ionann LU (i gcló Iodálach) agus an lámhscríbhinn féin anseo; is é atá i gceist le LU (sa ghnáthchló) ná eagrán Best agus Bergin (féach nóta 2). Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a chur in iúl do Kevin Murray agus Feargal Ó Béarra as leasuithe a mholadh ar dhréachtaí den aiste seo. Mise amháin atá freagrach as aon locht atá air.

<sup>2</sup> R.I. Best agus Osborn Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre* (Baile Átha Cliath: Royal Irish Academy, 1929) xxiii.

lámhscríbhinní eile sinn (más ann do na lámhscríbhinní céanna) má theastaíonn uainn teacht ar théacs eiseamlárach.<sup>3</sup> Ní haon nuaíocht í seo ag aon duine a phléann le léann na Meánaoise, go mbíonn bearnaí eolais le sárú, agus gur gá saothrú in éagmais na fianaise iomláine go minic. Ina dhiaidh sin is uile, níor cheart go laghdófaí ar thábhacht *LU* gur ar leathchois, más ea, a tháinig sí anuas chugainn, agus go mbítear ag tóraíocht fianaise as foinsí eile go minic le cur leis an tuiscint atá againn ar a bhfuil inti. Is éard is aidhm don aiste seo ná staidéar tosaigh a dhéanamh ar théacs amháin in *LU* agus orthu siúd (scríobhaí/scríobhaithe ar lámh amháin, agus scoláirí ar an lámh eile) a raibh plé acu leis an téacs céanna, sa tseanré agus sa nua-aois.

### Scríobhaithe *LU*

Leagtar tábhacht ar leith ar *LU* i léann na Gaeilge de bharr éagsúlacht agus sheandacht an ábhair inti. Dar le mórán scoláirí nach bhfuil freagraí deimhneacha tugtha fós ar cheisteanna a eascraíonn as an dioscúrsa léannta a spreagann an lámhscríbhinn seo, nó neachtar acu, níl glactha ag an aos léinn leis an uile réiteach a mholtar maidir le ceisteanna éagsúla i dtaobh *LU*. Baineann go leor ceisteanna, mar shampla, le lucht scríofa *LU*: *A*, *M*, agus *H*, mar a thug R.I. Best ar na trí lámh a d'aithin sé sa lámhscríbhinn.<sup>4</sup> Cuid de na ceisteanna is mó a chuireann scoláirí go fóill, is ionann iad agus an gnás arbh éigean do scríobhaithe na hÉireann a leanúint lena ndintiúir a chruthú, is é sin go dtabharfaí le fios *tempus*, *locus*, *persona* agus *causa scribendi* an scéil a bhíodh á bhreacadh acu.<sup>5</sup> Is deacair díriú ar aon ghné amháin díobh seo gan suntas a thabhairt do cheann eile; maíonn Best, de bharr cosúlachtaí a chonaic sé féin idir peannaireacht an triúir, gur as an ionad céanna (*locus*) a tháinig na scríobhaithe éagsúla (*personae*), agus go raibh siad go léir gníomhach in aon ré amháin (*tempus*).<sup>6</sup> Más amhlaidh atá, cad a thug ar *H* roinnt mhaith sleachta a breacadh roimhe a bhaint (i dtéacsanna

<sup>3</sup> Best agus Bergin xxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>4</sup> R.I. Best, "Notes on the Script of Lebor na hUidre," *Ériu* 6 (1912): 161-74.

<sup>5</sup> David Greene, "Leabhar na hUidre," *Great Books of Ireland*, ead. Liam de Paor (Baile Átha Cliath: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1967) 64-76.

<sup>6</sup> Best 163.

go leor eile in *LU*; ina láimh féin amháin atá an téacs a bheidh faoi chaibidil anseo), agus a líonadh le hábhar ab áil leis féin (dul siar ar an *causa scribendi*)? Nó an bhfuil an t-eolas ar a bhfuil an dioscúrsa féin bunaithe cruinn agus iontaofa?

I mí na Samhna 2012, tugadh páipéar in Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann inar áitíodh gur féidir seacht lámh a lua leis an scríobhaí *H*, scríobhaí nár luadh leis, ar ndóigh, ach aon lámh amháin go dtí seo.<sup>7</sup> An díospóireacht a thosaigh Best i 1912, nuair a mhéadaigh sé ar phointe a luaigh John O’Beirne Crowe *en passant* os cionn dhá scór bliain roimhe sin, is é sin go raibh ní ba mhó ná aon lámh amháin le haithint in *LU*, is cosúil go leanfaidh an díospóireacht sin conair nua amach anseo agus scoláirí ag iarraidh dul i ngleic le hionlachas *H*.<sup>8</sup> Is áitiú tábhachtach é seo maidir leis an téacs a bheidh faoi chaibidil anseo, *Comthóth Lógairi co Creitim 7 a Aided* (*CLcC* feasta), toisc gur ar lá(i)mh(a) *H* a leagtar an téacs ina iomláine. Fágann an t-áitiú seo gur ceistanna oscailte a bheidh i mórán dá mbeidh idir chamáin acu siúd a chuireann spéis in *LU* go ceann i bhfad. Seans gur fada sula dtiocfar ar aontacht tuairime maidir le lámha *H*.

## Stair *CLcC*

Is téacs é *CLcC* nár chaith aos léann na Gaeilge mórán dúthrachta leis ó cuireadh in eagar don chéad uair é 129 bliain ó shin.<sup>9</sup> B’fhéidir gurb é a fhad faoi deara do scoláirí gan a n-aird a dhíriú air: 88 líne d’eagrán Best agus Bergin de *LU* a líonann sé, le hais an 2282 líne atá ag *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ann.<sup>10</sup> Mar sin féin, is minic mórphlé á dhéanamh ar théacsanna gearra. D’fhéadfaí cúiseanna eile a lua leis

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Duncan, “The Palaeography of Lebor na hUidre,” páipéar a tugadh ag *Lebor na hUidre: a Conference at the Royal Irish Academy*, Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann, 22 Samhain 2012 (le foilsiú fós). Le *H6* a bhaineann *Comthóth Lógairi co Creitim 7 a Aided*, maille le *Aided Echach Meic Máireda, Tucait Indarba na nDése, Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, agus *Fled Bricrend*, dar le scrúdú Duncan.

<sup>8</sup> John O’Beirne Crowe, “Siabur-charpat Con Culaind, from the Lebor na h-Uidre, a Manuscript of the Royal Irish Academy,” *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland* 1 (1871): 372.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Plummer, “Irish Miscellanies: The Conversion of Loegaire, and his Death,” *Revue Celtique* 6 (1884): 162-72.

<sup>10</sup> Best agus Bergin *CLcC* = LU 9732-9820 (293-95); *TBC* = LU 4479-6722 (142-206).

an neamhaird a tugadh ar *CLcC* a mhíniú; teirce na scoláirí dúchais, mar shampla, a bhí in ann an tSean- agus an Mheán-Ghaeilge a léamh agus a thuiscint tráth ar fhoilsigh Charles Plummer agus Whitley Stokes a n-eagraín siúd den téacs, nó suim na scoláirí iasachta san fhianaise ba shine sa teanga. Ba de dhlúth agus d'inneach bhunú léann na Ceiltise í an tsuim seo. Ní miste a mheabhrú gurbh ó mhór-roinn isteach a tháinig an spreagadh léannta a chuir bonn láidir (teang)eolaíoch faoi léann na Ceiltise sa naoú haois déag. Samhlaítear breith an léinn seo le foilsíú *Grammatica Celtica* an Ghearmánaigh Johann Kasper Zeuss (Leipzig, 1853). Na scoláirí iasachta eile a tháinig i gcomharbacht ar Zeuss: Heinrich Zimmer, Kuno Meyer, Ernst Windisch, Rudolf Thurneysen, Julius Pokorny agus eile, d'fhéach siad le heolas beacht a aimsiú, a chuirfeadh tuairisc níos fearr ar fáil de bhunsraith Ind-Eorpach na dteangacha Ceilteacha. Chuige sin, ba ghnách leo béim a leagan ar na gluaiseanna a breacadh sna lámhscríbhinní Gaelacha a mhair ar mhór-roinn na hEorpa, agus le seantráchtais na ndlíthe, mar shampla, le teacht ar an bhfianaise a bhí uathu.<sup>11</sup>

Ó thaobh ábhair de, áfach, is deacair a thuiscint cén fáth ar fágadh *CLcC* gan scrúdú, óir is eachtraí inspéise, a bhaineann le feachtas scaipeadh an chreidimh in Éirinn, atá sna sleachta difriúla a shníomhtar le chéile chun insint ar leith a chur ar fáil sa téacs. Ríomhann *CLcC* “comthód” nó tiontú Rí Teamhrach, Lóegaire mac Néill, ina Chríostaí, tar éis do naomh Pádraig an ceann is fearr a fháil air trí “fearta” agus “míorúiltí” a dhéanamh os comhair an rí agus a shlua i dTeamhair, de réir an scéil. Ní luaithe an beart sin déanta ag Pádraig ná go dtugann sé faoi chóras dleathach nua a bhunú, córas a bheidh ina réiteach idir an seanreacht Págánach agus creideamh úr na Críostaíochta. Déantar amhlaidh, agus cuirtear an córas úr i bhfeidhm, ach filleann Lóegaire ar a

<sup>11</sup> Bunaithe ar na gluaiseanna cáiliúla atá ar marthain in Würzburg, Milan, agus Turin, atá an chuid is mó den dara saothar is iomráití, b'fhéidir, i ngramadach na dteangacha Ceilteacha, *A Grammar of Old Irish* le Rudolf Thurneysen (bunleagan na Gearmáinise foilsithe in 1909; leagan Béarla foilsithe i mBaile Átha Cliath: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1946). Bailiúcháin ríthábhachtacha de na gluaiseanna éagsúla trí chéile is ea an dá imleabhar den *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* a chuir Whitley Stokes agus John Strachan in eagar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901-1903).

sheanbhéasa, agus féachann sé leis an mbóramha a bhaint de na Laighin, mar ba mhinic leis roimhe sin.

Sa chath leis na Laighin a leanann de seo, ní éiríonn le hiarrachtaí Lóegairi, ach saortar é nuair a gheallann sé nach ndéanfaidh sé a “rátha” a shárú feasta, is é sin nach lorgóidh sé an bhóramha an athuair fad a mhaireann sé beo. De réir tairngreachta (nach luaitear roimhe sin sa téacs) is idir Éire agus Albain a gheobhaidh sé bás, agus dá bharr sin ní chuireann sé cos i “muirchoblach” riamh arís. Maraítear é, áfach, idir dhá chnoc darb ainm Ériu agus Albu, agus é i mbun na bóirmhe an athuair. Baintear críoch an scéil amach le dhá rann ina gcuirtear síos ar a bhás ag “táeb Chassi” i “mMaig Liphi,” sa chath a fearadh “i nAth Dara” (LU 9807-15):

At-bath Lóegaire mac Néill  
for táeb Chassi glas a tír.  
dūli Dé ad-rōegaid rāith  
tucsat dāl báis *forsin* rīg

Bhásaigh Lóegaire mac Néill  
ar thaobh Chaisse, glas an tír  
dúile Dé, a thug sé mar rátha  
Ba iad ba thrúig bháis don rí.

IN cath i nĀth Dara déin  
i rragbad Lōegaire mac Néill.  
násad fír na ndúla Dē  
iss *ed* ro marb Lōegaire.

Ba sa chath in Áth Dara dian  
a gabhadh Lóegaire mac Néill  
fíorchruinniú dúile Dé  
a mharaigh Lóegaire.<sup>12</sup>

Deirtear gur cuireadh sa chré i dTeamhair é lena “armgasciud” [cathéide], agus aghaidh á tabhairt ó dheas aige ar na Laighin “oc cathugud friu ar ropo námasom na bíu do Laignib” [ag cathú leo óir ba namhaid leis na Laighin é lena bheo].

<sup>12</sup> Is liomsa an leagan Nua-Ghaeilge. Is beag má tá an t-aistriúchán “fíorchruinniú” ar “násad” sásúil. Tugtar “a word of doubtful meaning, apparently a gathering or assembly of festive or commemorative nature (esp. a periodically occurring one) and by extension the place where such is held” air sa *DIL* (*sv násad*) agus is é “sanction” an Béarla a chuireann Plummer agus Stokes araon air. Mar sin féin, is dóichí gurb é an chiall seo den fhocal “násad,” pé aistriú is ceart a chur air, seachas “bás,” “cur chun báis” (*DIL*, *sv násad* [2]) is cóir a thuiscint anseo. Tá molta ag Gearóid Mac Eoin (ag leanúint Kuno Meyer) gur caite céasta uatha an bhriathair “naiscid” atá ann, agus aistríonn sé é dá réir. “The Mysterious Death of Loegaire mac Neill,” *Studia Hibernica* 8 (1967): 21-48.



Ó foilsíodh alt Best ar phailéagrafaíocht *LU* i 1912, tá iarracht déanta ag roinnt mhaith den aos léinn dáta cinnte a lua le *H*,<sup>13</sup> agus mar a chonaiceamar thuas is amhlaidh a bheidh ceisteanna go leor a bhaineann le *H* á gcur go ceann i bhfad. Tá iarracht déanta ag scoláirí áirithe gnéithe eile den téacs a phlé chomh maith.<sup>14</sup> Maidir leis an teanga, is é saothar John Carey is fearr a scrúdaíonn stair théacsúil *CLcC*. Is ionann cuid mhór den téacs in *CLcC* agus ábhar atá le fáil i dtrí lámhscríbhinn eile, “the pseudo-historical prologue” den *Senchas Már* mar a bhaist Daniel Binchy ar an ábhar coiteann seo. Is iad na lámhscríbhinní TCD LS 1337, TCD LS 1336, Harleian LS 432, agus *CLcC* a roinneann an t-ábhar seo. Cé go bhféadfaí breathnú ar na ceithre lámhscríbhinn seo mar leaganacha d’aon téacs amháin (nár tháinig anuas chugainn), maireann téacs *CLcC* sa lámhscríbhinn is sine acu (*LU*), agus is é an téacs is éagsúla acu é, leis, i measc na gceithre leaganacha seo. Tá tús agus críoch in *CLcC* nach bhfuil le fáil sna leaganacha eile, agus is eisceacht é sa mhéid gur mar “scéal” ann féin a caomhnaíodh é. Is ceart a lua anseo, freisin, gurb é ceann de théacsanna *LU* é nach bhfuil bearna ann, agus, mar a dúradh thuas, is ar scríobhaí amháin (*H*) a leagtar é. Is é an tátal a bhaineann Carey as an scrúdú a dhéanann sé ar theanga na lámhscríbhinní thuasluaite a roinneann ábhar an “pseudo-historical prologue”:

<sup>13</sup> Hans Oskamp, “Notes on the History of Lebor na hUídre,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 65C (1966-67): 117-37; Tomás Ó Concheanainn, “The Reviser of *Leabhar na hUídre*,” *Éigse* 15.4 (1974): 277-88; Tomás Ó Concheanainn, “LL and the Date of the Reviser of *LU*,” *Éigse* 20 (1984): 212-25; Gearóid Mac Eoin, “The Interpolator H in *Lebor na hUídre*,” *Ullidia* 1 (1994): 39-46; Uáitéar Mac Gearailt, “Deilbhíocht *Scél Láí Brátha* agus *Scríobhaithe LU*,” *Féilscríbhinn do Chathal Ó Háinle* (Indreabhán: An Clóchomhar, 2012) 277-315.

<sup>14</sup> Maidir le bás Lógairi, féach Gearóid Mac Eoin, “The mysterious Death,” agus Cornelius Buttmer, “Lógair mac Néill in the *Bórama*,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 1 (1981): 63-78. Féachann na haistí seo a leanas ar ghnéithe eile den téacs agus den traidisiún a bhaineann le réamhrá bréagstairiúil an *Senchas Már*: D.A. Binchy, “The pseudo-historical Prologue to the *Senchas már*,” *Studia Celtica* 10-11 (1975-76): 15-28; Kim McCone, “Dubthach maccu Lugair and a matter of life and death in the pseudo-historical prologue to the *Senchas már*,” *Peritia* 5 (1986): 1-35; John Carey, “The two laws in Dubthach’s judgment,” *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 19 (1990): 1-18; John Carey, “An Edition of the Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the *Senchas Már*,” *Ériu* 45 (1994): 1-32.

D's text [.i. *CLcC*] is in general inferior to that of the exemplar shared by ABC [na trí lámhscríbhinn réamhluaite]; and [...] it shows unmistakable signs of having been reworked in the Middle Irish period. On the other hand, it does not appear to share secondary readings with any of the other manuscripts – in other words, I do not believe it can be plausibly shown to derive from any node within the attested text tradition of the *Senchas Már* [...] [S]lender though this evidence is, its import seems relatively clear: D appears to derive from a text closely related to, but not dependent on, the exemplar shared by ABC.<sup>15</sup>

Is amhlaidh, mar sin, gur ag tarraingt as leaganacha éagsúla de bhuntéacs eiseamláireach éigin a bhí scríobhaithe ABC, agus *H* in *LU*, agus gur breacadh na téacsanna úd i dtréimhsí éagsúla, cé nach bhfuil gach uile scoláire ar aon fhocal mar gheall air seo.<sup>16</sup>

## Plummer agus Stokes

I 1884, agus arís i 1887, a foilsíodh an chéad dá eagrán de *CLcC*, sular cuireadh an leagan dioplómaitiúil de *LU* i gcló i 1929. Ní háibhéil a rá gur mhórscoláirí i léann na Ceiltise iad an chéad dá eagarthóir seo. Ba é Charles Plummer, deagánach Sasanach, ba thúisce a chuir an téacs faoi bhráid an phobail. Fuair seisean a chuid oideachais in Oxford, agus chuaigh faoi anáil Henrich Zimmer ar ball nuair a chaith sé samhradh amháin ag staidéar faoina chúram in Greifswald na Gearmáine.<sup>17</sup> Bhí suim mhór ag Plummer sa naomhsheanchas, agus d'fhoilsigh sé trí shaothar mhóra ar naoimh na hÉireann, mar atá *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1911), *Bethada Náem nÉirenn* (1922), agus *Miscellenae Hagiographica Hibernica* (1925). In Oxford ba é Sir John Rhys a mhúin an tSean-Ghaeilge dó, agus sa réamhrá dá eagrán de *CLcC* molann Plummer an fear céanna go mór, agus tugann le fios gur as an téacs a léamh i dteannta le Rhys a d'eascair an t-eagrán céanna. Cuireann sé críoch

<sup>15</sup> Carey, "An Edition" 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Féach Liam Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Baile Átha Cliath: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005) 346, nóta 7.

<sup>17</sup> Diarmuid Breathnach agus Máire Ní Mhurchú, "Charles Plummer," *Ainm.ie*, <http://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=2165>, 5 Eanáir 2014.

leis an réamhrá le dáta agus áit a scríofa: Oxford, 7 Bealtaine 1883.<sup>18</sup> Cuimhnítear ar Charles Plummer mar dhuine séimh, dúthrachtach, a bhí tiomanta dóibh siúd a bhí faoina chúram:

Having been ordained deacon in 1875 he was never priested [... Y]et he performed his duties as chaplain with great seriousness: he was responsible for nearly all the college services; for Sunday evensong he played the organ; and he is remembered for his plaintive music. He also served as divinity lecturer for Corpus from 1878 to 1902, and as librarian, dean, and vice-president of the college. He was remembered (and once caricatured) as a little bearded man with a shabby black coat, and loved as one who valiantly, if fumblingly, tried to know most of the undergraduates, inviting each to 'lunch and walk' with him, which comprised offering the student a Gold Flake cigarette after lunch and sherry and then taking them on a vigorous two-hour walk along Oxfordshire lanes.<sup>19</sup>

Is ar éigean a chuimneofaí ar an dara heagarthóir de *CLcC*, Whitley Stokes, ar an gcaoi cheanúil chéanna. Fear ar leith a bhí ann; dlíodóir agus duine de theaghlach clúiteach as Baile Átha Cliath, a rinne a chuid scoláireachta lasmuigh dá uaireanta oifigiúla oibre. Rinne sé staidéar ar an tSancrait agus ar an Teangeolaíocht Chomparáideach faoi Rudolf Siegfried i gColáiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath, ach d'imigh sé leis go dtí an India ar ball agus é ina dhlíodóir. Bhí cáil an chantail ar Stokes i ngeall ar na hionsaithe fíochmhara ba nós leis a thabhairt orthu siúd a chuaigh amú, dar leis, i gcúrsaí léinn. Ba rímhór aige cruinneas agus beaichte, agus ba annamh leis caitheamh go réidh le scoláirí nár aimsigh an sprioc, dar leis siúd, gach uile bhabhta. B'fhéidir gurbh fhusa an dearcadh seo a thuiscint agus clár saothair ollmhór Stokes á mheas againn; deir Nollaig Ó Muraíle:

<sup>18</sup> Charles Plummer, "Irish Miscellanies: The Conversion of Loegaire, and his Death," *Revue Celtique* 6 (1883): 163. Ní foláir nó is botún atá in iontráil *Ainm.ie* a thugann le fios nár thosaigh Plummer ag déanamh staidéir ar an nGaeilge le Sir John Rhys go dtí 1902.

<sup>19</sup> R.J. Schoeck, "Charles Plummer," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.ucc.ie/view/article/62691>, 5 Eanáir 2014.

His prodigious output in Celtic scholarship totalled some 15,000 pages. A large proportion of this consisted of pioneering editions of ancient texts never hitherto available in print. Most of these editions have not been superseded; in the few cases where a more modern one has appeared, it has rarely proved markedly superior to Stokes's work.<sup>20</sup>

I measc na saothar is tábhachtaí a d'fhoilsigh Stokes áirítear *Saltair na Rann* (1883), *The Tripartite Life of St Patrick* (1887, dhá imleabhar), *Acallam na Senórach* (1900), agus *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (1901-3, dhá imleabhar) a d'fhoilsigh sé le John Strachan. Fiche bliain a chaith Stokes san India, mar a raibh post aige i seirbhís choilíneachta Impireacht na Breataine. D'athraigh an post le caitheamh na haimsire; thugtaí arduithe céime dó, go dtí gur bhain sé áit amach ar Chomhairle Dhlíthe na hIndia ar deireadh. D'fhoilsigh sé saothair mhóra ar dhlíthe na hIndia freisin, obair a bhfuil tábhacht ag roinnt léi i gcónaí. Is léir, mar sin, gur oibrí dícheallach díograiseach a bhí ann, fear a raibh eolas mór aige ar réimsí an-éagsúla léinn, ach a bhí ábhairín gann ar bhá agus ar thrócaire.<sup>21</sup>

Cén fáth ar chuir Plummer agus Stokes suim sa téacs áirithe seo? Dar le R.I. Best:

Plummer read widely in Irish literature, both religious and secular, devoting himself particularly to the study of the vocabulary, which in the absence of those lexicographical aids such as other languages possess, constitutes the main difficulty in the study of Irish. The collection of slips which he formed for this purpose, ranging over the entire field of medieval Irish literature, is a remarkable testimony to the sureness of his method and his patient industry.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "Whitley Stokes," *Oxford National Dictionary of Biography*, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.ucc.ie/view/article/36315docPos=2>, 5 Eanáir 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Roghnaíonn Boyle agus Russell léirmheas Stokes (i gcló in *The Transactions of the Philological Society* (1888-90): 203-34) ar eagrán Robert Atkinson de *The Passions and Homilies from Leabhar breac* (Baile Átha Cliath: Royal Irish Academy, 1885-87) mar "the classic example of sustained Stokesian criticism"; Elizabeth Boyle agus Paul Russell, ead., *The Tripartite Life of Whitley Stokes (1830-1909)* (Baile Átha Cliath: Four Courts Press, 2011) 7, nóta 22. Féach Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "Whitley Stokes and Modern Irish," Boyle agus Russell 196-217, maidir le breith scoláirí eile ar Stokes féin.

<sup>22</sup> Diarmuid Breathnach agus Máire Ní Mhurchú, "Charles Plummer," *Ainm.ie*, <http://www.ainm.ie/Bio.aspx?ID=2165>, 5 Eanáir 2014.

Thiocfadh le staidéar ar *CLcC* freastal ar dhá mhórshuim dá chuid, mar atá, spéis sa naomhsheanchas agus spéis i stór focal na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge. Thuig Plummer gurbh ann do leaganacha eile den téacs, agus deir sé i réamhrá an eagráin: “As however the account given here [*CLcC*] is certainly the oldest, and as it has preserved some curious words and facts that have disappeared from the later versions, I have thought it might be interesting to the readers of the *Revue Celtique*.”<sup>23</sup> Thug Plummer cuntas ar roinnt de na “curious words and facts” seo sa ghluais luachmhar a chuir sé le téacs agus aistriúchán *CLcC*, agus leag sé “any correctness in the translation, and any interest in the philological portion of the notes” ar Sir John Rhys, mar ba dhual dó.<sup>24</sup> Tagraíonn nótaí na gluaise do leabhair eile go minic, idir lámhscríbhinní agus scoláireacht, rud a chuireann go mór lena bhfiúntas, agus a léiríonn a dhíograis féin ina chúram. Má b’fhear díograiseach é, b’fhéidir gur roinn beagán coimeádachais leis freisin. Is suimiúil go bhfuil stríoc ghiorrúcháin san aistriúchán in áit an bhriathair “chacait” sa bhunleagan, briathar a bhfuil an nóta “*chacait*: cf. *cacc* excrementum *Ir[ish] Glosses*, 1075” ag gabháil leis sa ghluais!<sup>25</sup>

Is cosúil go raibh plé éigin ag Stokes leis agus an obair seo ar bun ag Plummer, óir leag seisean ceartú an fhocail “sainrodach” (faoi mar a bhí san fhacsamhail de *LU* a rinne Joseph O’Longan sa bhliain 1870) go “sainredach” ar Stokes i nótaí na gluaise.<sup>26</sup> Ina eagrán féin den téacs, chuir Stokes aistriúchán de *CLcC* taobh leis an téacs féin, agus luann sé sa chéad fhonóta den téacs gur chuir Plummer an scéal in eagar roimhe.<sup>27</sup> Tá cúpla fonóta eile curtha leis an téacs, a d’fhéach le soiléiriú a thabhairt ar fhocail nó ar fhrásaí áirithe, agus tá ceithre cinn de thagairtí do shaothair eile aige, *The Book of Leinster* agus *Ancient Laws of Ireland* ina measc. B’fhéidir gur leor do Stokes an méid sin, an téacs agus an t-aistriúchán ina fhochair óir ba chuid den dara himleabhar dá *Tripartite Life of Patrick* é *CLcC*,

<sup>23</sup> Charles Plummer, “Irish Miscellanies: The Conversion of Loegaire, and his Death,” *Revue Celtique* 6 (1883): 162.

<sup>24</sup> Plummer 163.

<sup>25</sup> Plummer 168.

<sup>26</sup> Plummer 169.

<sup>27</sup> Whitley Stokes, “Loegaire’s Conversion and Death,” *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, imleabhar 2 (Londain: H.M. Stationery Office, 1887) 562-67.

imleabhar a raibh an fotheideal “With Other Documents Relating to that Saint” air. Níorbh iad na téacsanna eile seo a bhain le Pádraig, nach raibh le fáil sa *Vita Tripartita*, an chloch ba mhó ar a phaidrín, déarfá, ar an ábhar sin. Is cinnte go raibh cuid mhór den obair a bhain le míniú agus soiléiriú an téacs déanta ag Plummer cheana féin, freisin. Ach oiread le Plummer, bhí spéis mhór ag Stokes i stór focal na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge, agus is dealraitheach go ndeachaigh sé seo i bhfeidhm ar an dearcadh a bhí aige ar ábhar na lámhscríbhinní. Is amhlaidh, mar shampla, a rinne sé neamhshuim go minic den stair a bhí taobh thiar de théacsanna, d’fhonn díriú ar a gcuid gnéithe teangeolaíocha. Ag trácht do Nollaig Ó Muraíle ar an “bleakly utilitarian approach” a bhí ag Stokes i leith théacsanna na Nua-Ghaeilge Moiche deir sé:

One of the main weaknesses of Stokes’ edition of *Expugnatio Hibernica* clearly derives from his patent lack of interest in Irish history. His primary concern in tackling such texts as these was, as he readily concedes, to mine them for linguistic and lexicographical evidence. The actual contents seem to have made little impression on him. He rarely if ever adverts to their merits from a literary or historical point of view.<sup>28</sup>

Ainneoin gur ghnách leis gluaisearna cuimsitheacha a chur lena eagrán de théacsanna, agus go raibh cuid mhaith de na gluaisearna is cailiúla curtha in eagar aige féin, bhí drogall ar Stokes glacadh lena bhfiúntas mar théacsanna iontu féin, mar a léiríonn scrúdú Phádraic Moran air. Deir Stokes i réamhrá *Three Irish glossaries*:

In considering the philological value of the results of Cormac’s labours [i. *Sanas Cormaic*], I need hardly say that his derivations are generally quite as ludicrous as those of most of the other word-splitters who have pursued their harmless calling from Varro down to the predecessors of Franz Bopp.<sup>29</sup>

Áitíonn Moran gurbh é easpa na bhfoclóirí i léann na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge a spreag Stokes chun dianscrúdú a dhéanamh ar

<sup>28</sup> Ó Muraíle, “Whitley Stokes and Modern Irish,” 207.

<sup>29</sup> Pádraic Moran, “‘Their harmless Calling’: Whitley Stokes and the Irish linguistic Tradition,” Boyle agus Russell 178-79.

theangeolaíocht na dtéacsanna a chuir sé in eagar. Bhí Stokes sa chré faoin am ar cuireadh an chéad fhascúl den *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (D-degóir) i gcló sa bhliain 1913.<sup>30</sup> Má bhí féin, is follas an tionchar a bhí ag a shaothar uileghabhálach sna hiontrálacha a thugtar san fhoclóir féin, ach ord na haibítire a leanúint, óna eagrán de *Acallam na Senórach* a d'fhoilsigh sé i 1900, go dtí a eagrán de *Togail Troí*, a cuireadh i gcló i 1881. Níor thaise do shaothar Plummer (an *collection of slips* réamhluaite) é i dtaobh an fhoclóra de; deir E.G. Quin sa “Historical Note” i ndlútheagrán an *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (1983):

So valuable is this collection [i.e. cnuasach Plummer] that it is possible to regret that it was not published as it stood when it came to the Academy in the first place. It was certainly impossible to contemplate publication of any dictionary material without including a large part of what Plummer had provided.<sup>31</sup>

## Suimiú

Dá éagsúla iad mar dhaoine, is léir go raibh aidhmeanna i bpáirt ag Plummer agus Stokes, gur chuir siad beirt spéis sna hábhair chéanna, agus gur theastaigh uathu cur leis an dul chun cinn (teang)eoalaíoch a bhí á dhéanamh i léann na Ceiltise ó d'fhoilsigh Zeuss a shaothar éachtach. Bhí comhoibriú eatarthu ag tréimhsí éagsúla freisin, faoi mar a léiríonn Dáibhí Ó Cróinín,<sup>32</sup> agus mar a léiríodh sa tagairt in eagrán Plummer de *CLcC* a luaitear thuas. Is intuigthe, b'fhéidir, go mbeadh an scéal amhlaidh nuair a mheabhraítear dúinn líon íseal na scoláirí a bhí ag gabháil don obair seo le linn don bheirt a bheith ina mbeatha. Ach ní túisce allagar ná aighneas i gcúrsaí léinn, go mór mór agus leithéidí Stokes i gceist. Níor scríobh ceachtar acu, Plummer ná Stokes, cur

<sup>30</sup> In eagar ag Carl Marstrander. Is féidir *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie* a lua maidir le hiarrachtaí Stokes (agus Kuno Myer) foclóir a chur ar fáil.

<sup>31</sup> E.G. Quin, eag. gin., *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (Baile Átha Cliath: Royal Irish Academy, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Whitley Stokes (1830-1909): The Lost Celtic Notebooks Rediscovered* (Baile Átha Cliath: Four Courts Press, 2011) 47; litir ó Plummer chuig Stokes, dar dháta 18 Feabhra 1908, ag tabhairt le fios gur shroich cóip Plummer de *Beatha Cholmáin maic Lúcháin* é, tar éis do Stokes é a fháil ar iasacht uaidh.

síos ná suirbhé ginearálta ar litríocht na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge, ach shaothraigh siad leo chun mórchuid den *corpus* ollmhór a chur ar fáil don lucht léinn in eagráin scolártha. Bhain an sórt oibre seo go dlúth le ré sin na scoláireachta Ceiltise (mar a bhaineann i gcónaí).

Chuiqe seo, chuir siad beirt CLcC in eagar, agus ó tharla gurbh é Plummer ba luaithe a rinne amhlaidh, is é is dóichí nár bhac Stokes le gluais fhada a chur lena eagrán féin. Ó chuaigh siad beirt faoi anáil scoláirí móra dá ré, Siegfried agus Zimmer, níorbh ionadh go ndearna siad araon obair mhór i réimsí difriúla de léann na Ceiltise; sa Bhreatnais, sa Chornais, agus sa Bhriotáinis, chomh maith lena saothar i ngort na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge. Sin é is mó, maille le méid na hoibre a chuir siad i gcrích, a dhealaíonn iad óna n-oidhrí; gur fhéach siad le bunús Ind-Eorpach na Ceiltise a dhaingniú, agus foirmeacha na dteangacha éagsúla a mheas. Níor chuir Plummer, ar feadh m'eolais, aon téacs eile as *LU* in eagar, ach bhí plé ag Stokes le go leor dá bhfuil sa lámhscríbhinn cháiliúil sin. Maidir le *Comthóth Lógairi co Creitim 7 a Aided* féin, is mithid féachaint arís air, i gcomhthéacs na dtuiscintí liteartha nua atá tagtha chun cinn sa Léann Ceilteach ó ré Plummer agus Stokes i leith, go mór mór agus eagráin úra de théacsanna éagsúla as *Lebor na hUidre* á gcur i gcló fós.



## **“CI DDU DUN ...?” – DLÚS, FORBAIRT AGUS FÓINTIÚLACHT AN TÉASC IN *AIDED CHONCHOBUIR***

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### **Réamhfhocail: Forbairt an scéil mar scáth a úsáidte<sup>1</sup>**

Is é cuspóir na haiste seo scrúdú a dhéanamh ar fhorbairt an scéil *Aided Chochobuir* agus é a léamh i gcomhthéacs buncheisteanna áirithe a bhaineann le téacsanna Críostaí a bhfuil lorg neamhchríostaí orthu. Is dóigh gurb iad na ceisteanna is minice a thagann anuas nuair a chíortar téacsanna de chuid na Meánaoise ná dlús agus brí an téacs. Is féidir iad siúd a thuiscint mar scáileanna de chuid smaointeoireacht na tréimhse agus, ar uairibh, scáileanna a chaith intinn chruthaitheach dhiongbháilte an údair nó na n-údar. Cuirfear an cruth ar leith atá ar na fadhbanna sin i dtéacs/anna *Aided Chonchobuir* i gcomórtas lena bhfeictear in oidheanna eile agus i dtéacsanna atá cosúil leo ó thaobh feidhme agus forbartha de.

<sup>1</sup> Tá údar an ailt seo go mór faoi chomaoín ag an Dr Kevin Murray agus ag an Dr Feargal Ó Béarra mar gheall ar a gcuid moltaí faoi ábhar an ailt agus faoi chaighdeán na Gaeilge. Ina theannta sin, gabhann sé buíochas speisialta leis an mBean Uasal Máire Bríd Ní Mhaoilchiaráin as an alt a chur in ord agus in eagar sular cuireadh chuig an bpríomheagarthóir é.

Caomhnaíodh an scéal atá i dtrácht in ocht lámhscríbhinn,<sup>2</sup> agus aithníodh trí leagan bhunúsacha de.<sup>3</sup> Ar an gcéad dul síos, léiríonn siad fás athmhínithe Chríostaí a tugadh ar ábhar a bhfuil bunús neamhchríostaí leis, is cosúil. Is féidir an méid seo a chur i gcomparáid le forbairt na dtraidisiún éagsúil a bhaineann le hathaímsiú *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, cuir i gcás. Os a choinne sin, léiríonn an t-il-leaganachas seo an iarracht a rinne na heagarthóirí difriúla ar sheanscéal págánach rí Uladh a tháthú lena gcuid nua-insinte Críostaí. Is *prosimetrum* í *Aided Chonchobuir* agus iniúchtar an bhaint atá idir an scéal próis féin agus an dán a chuirtear i mbéal rí na nUladh agus é ag fáil bháis. Feicfear go bhfuil fás an scéil cosúil le téacsanna nuachumtha inar úsáideadh bunábhar na Rúraíochta, amhail *Siaburcharpát Con Culainn*.<sup>4</sup>

Féadann an teachtaireacht Chríostaí a bheith dearfa go leor, mar atá sí in *Siaburcharpát Con Culainn*, nó impleachtaithe i ndlúth agus in inneach an scéil, mar a thaispeáin James Carney agus é ag plé le *Echtrae Chonnlaí*.<sup>5</sup> Baineadh feidhm Chríostaí as téama traidisiúnta, eadhon bás an laoich, agus is dócha gur féidir a shamhail sin a aimsiú sa chaoi a n-úsáidtear móitíf neamhchríostaí ar nós Tír na hÓige sna hiomramha nó in *Echtrae Chonnlaí*, cuir i gcás. Déanann seánra na hoidhe gnó naomhsheanchais in *Aided Chonchobuir*. Iompaíonn an carachtar neamh-Chríostaí ina mhairtíreach ar son an Chreidimh. Is é sin le rá go gcuirtear nuachruth Críostaí ar shaol rí Phágánaigh nach iomaí na suáilcí Críostaí aige sa traidisiún in aon

<sup>2</sup> Helen Imhoff, "The Different Versions of *Aided Chonchobuir*," *Ériu* 62 (2012): 43. Is é seo an t-alt is cuimsithí a phléann le téacsanna na hoidhe a mhaireann sna lámhscríbhinní chomh maith leis an scoláireacht a bhaineann le *Aided Chonchobuir*. Tá liosta bibleagrafaíoch fairsing le fáil ag deireadh an ailt. Faoi láthair, tá Chantal Kobel, mac léinn dochtúireachta i gColáiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath, i mbun eagráin nua de *Aided Chonchobuir* dar teideal "*Aided Chonchobuir*: a critical edition with introduction, translation, textual notes, bibliography and vocabulary."

<sup>3</sup> Kuno Meyer, ead., *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes* (Baile Átha Cliath: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1906) 2. Is don eagrán seo a thagraítear sa pháipéar seo agus cuirtear gach uile thagairt dó a leanas i gcéill le huimhir an leathanaigh idir lúibíní.

<sup>4</sup> Feargal Ó Béarra, "The Otherworld Realm of *Tír Scáith*," *Festgabe für Hildegard L.C. Tristram*, ead. Stefan Zimmer agus Gisbert Hemprich (Berlin: Curach Bhán Publications, 2009) 81-100.

<sup>5</sup> James Carney, "The Deeper Level of Early Irish Literature," *The Capuchin Annual* (1969): 162, 165.

chor.<sup>6</sup> Is fiú a fhiafraí, dá bharr sin, cén chaoi arbh fhéidir le húdair an scéil an t-iompú séimeantach sin a chur i gcrích. Tar éis cáilíochtaí sheánra na hoidhe i gcnuasach Meyer a iniúchadh, taispeánfar gur fhág na húdair Chríostaí lorg soiléir leanúnach ar scéal bhás Chonchúir agus gurb í an *retoiric* buaic an phróisis athmhínithe sin.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Aided*: Traidisiún béil nó seánra liteartha?**

Níor mhiste machnamh a dhéanamh ar an áit a seasann *Aided Chonchobuir* i dtraidisiún an tseánra i dtús báire. Cuirtear an scéal féin ar liosta oidheanna atá ina gcuid de stór scéalta a bhí dlite de ghráid is airde na bhfilí de réir an réamhrá chlúitigh atá le fáil sna scéalrollaí Meán-Ghaeilge. Cé go gceapann Proinsias Mac Cana nach gá go raibh na hoidheanna (ná seánraí eile) ar an scéalrolla bunúsach ar chor ar bith, leagann sé an-bhéim ar ársacht agus ar shuntasacht an tseánra i dtraidisiún béil na Gaeilge.<sup>8</sup> Fiú amháin mura raibh an oidhe ar an liosta bunúsach ónar eascair na liostaí atá againn,<sup>9</sup> is leor mar fhianaise ar thraidisiún na hoidhe mar sheánra an dréacht *Innid scél scaílter n-airich* le Flannagán mac Ceallaigh (†898) ar sine ná na liostaí féin.<sup>10</sup> Faightear a thuilleadh eolais i ndánta ó ré na Meán-Ghaeilge, chomh maith, cosúil leis an saothar a chum an file Cionaoth ó hArdagáin (†975); tá baint níos dlúithe ag na filí seo le forbairt *Aided Chonchobuir* mar a fheicimid ar ball. Ní chruthaíonn na tagairtí sa liosta ná na dánta seo, áfach, gur chaith na scéalaithe béil ná na filí leis an seánra ar an gcaoi chéanna ar saothraíodh sa traidisiún scríofa é. Ní móide ach oiread go gcruthaíonn dánta ar nós *Englynion y Beddau* na Breatnaise go

<sup>6</sup> Is leor cuimhneamh ar an bhfeall gránna a imríonn Conchúr ar Naoise agus a dheartháireacha in *Longes mac nUislenn*.

<sup>7</sup> Cuirtear cruth na Nua-Ghaeilge ar ainmneacha na gcarachtar liteartha agus na bpearsana stairiúla.

<sup>8</sup> Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Baile Átha Cliath: Institiúid Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1980) 29.

<sup>9</sup> Is dóigh áfach go raibh na dá phríomh-sheánra dhéag go léir, agus *aided* san áireamh, ar an mbunliosta. Féach Gregory Toner, "Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists," *Éigse* 32 (2000): 114.

<sup>10</sup> Mac Cana 71-72.

bhfuil bunús Ceilteach leis an oidhe mar atá sí caomhnaithe againn.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Aided: Brí an fhocail agus feidhm an tseánra***

Céard is dual do sheánra próis na hoidhe mar sin? Ciallaíonn an focal *aided* “anbhás” nó “bás foréigneach tobann mínádúrtha” i gcomórtas leis an bhfocal *éc* a chuireann “bás suaimhneach nádúrtha” i gcéill. Tá ciall chinniúnach leis an dá fhocal, go mór mór le *aided*.<sup>12</sup> Is furasta an méid seo a shamhlú le bás den chineál ar a gcuirtear síos sna hoidheanna i gcnuasach Meyer. Deir Mac Cana go sroicheann laoch buaic a réime ina bhás agus gurb é modh a chaillte, thar gach uile ní eile, a léiríonn a charachtar.<sup>13</sup> Ar a shon sin, feictear tréithe an-difriúla ar fad sna scéalta atá i dtrácht anseo agus i dtéacsanna eile chomh maith – tréithe nach samhlóimis leis an laochas traidisiúnta ar chor ar bith. Mar shampla, is cinnte gur sáreiseamláir gaiscíochta é Cú Chulainn i scéalta na Rúraíochta; tá a ráiteas cáiliúil dúshlánach “Buaine bladhad ná sáegal” ar cheann de na manáí is glóraí a chuireann meon an laochais thraidisiúnta i gcéill.<sup>14</sup> Os a choinne sin, déanann *Brisleach Mór Maige Muirthemni*, ina bhfuil a oidhe is luaithe is dócha, cur síos ar a bhás i dtéarmaí siombalachais Chríostaí. Cé go bhféadfaimis *apotheosis* a thabhairt ar an gcaoi a gcuilltear an Cú, díagaítear mar shamhail Chríost é, seachas mar íomhá an leathdhia churata atá in intinn Mhic Cana de réir dealraimh. Tá an teachtaireacht Chríostaí dearfa amach is amach mar go n-athbheoítear Cú Chulainn chun Páis agus Aiséirí Íosa agus slánú an chine dhaonna a fhógairt.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Tá *Englynion y Beddau* curtha i gcomparáid leis na dánta Gaeilge in Mac Cana 30. Féach freisin J.E. Caerwyn Williams agus Máirín Ní Mhuiríosa, *Traidisiún Liteartha na nGael* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar, 1979) 42.

<sup>12</sup> Tatiana Mikhailova agus Natalia Nikolaeva, “The Denotations of Death in Goidelic: To the Question of Celtic Eschatological Conceptions,” *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 53 (2003): 110-12.

<sup>13</sup> Mac Cana 29.

<sup>14</sup> Ruairí Ó hUigín, “Ulster Cycle of Tales,” *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopaedia*, iml. V, eág. John T. Koch (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006) 1712. Féach an téacs *Oidedh Con Ccolainn Siosonna* in A.G. Van Hamel, eág., *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories* (Baile Átha Cliath: Government Stationary Sale Office, 1933) 81.

<sup>15</sup> Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maigh Nuad: An Sagart, 1990) 197.

Murar *imitatio Christi* atá i gceist sna hoidheanna atá curtha in eagar ag Meyer in éineacht le *Aided Chonchobuir*, ní cheiliúrtar éiteas an laochais iontu ar chor ar bith. Go deimhin, d'fhéadfaí a mhaíomh go léiríonn siad gnéithe áirithe i gcarachtair na laochra atá tubaisteach i ndeireadh na dála. Míníonn Elva Johnston bunfheidhm charachtair an tseanshaoil laochta:

The ages of these figures were long gone for the writers of early medieval Ireland. An important study by Kim McCone has suggested that their pasts functioned as a type of Old Testament in relationship to the New Testament present. Tales imagining those pasts could take on the force of Old Testament *exempla*. Through the medium of the saint and hero, distinct but related liminal figures, they allowed the writers and performers of Irish narrative to focus on issues that were crucial to the organisation of society and learning.<sup>16</sup>

Is minic a bhaineann greann dubh géar leis an gcur síos a dhéantar sna hoidheanna ar bhás an laoich agus bíonn ciall mhorálta le baint as an gcaoi a gcailltear é. Tá an seánra in ann an dearcadh is dual do theagasc Críostaíochta a choinneáil is a chothú, rud a léireofar anseo thíos le cúpla sampla as na hoidheanna eile.

### ***Aided* mar scéal morálta**

Cé go n-áirítear Laoire Buach ar dhuine de laochra móra na nUladh, is féidir breathnú air mar charachtar grinn a chuireann barr maise ar ghaiscíocht na laochra eile. Is é Laoire an chéad duine a fhreagraíonn dúshlán Chid mhic Mhághach in *Scéla Muicce Meicc Da Thó*. Is mall spadánta a ghlacann sé leis an gcuireadh chun troda, áfach, agus teastaíonn leid mhífhoighneach Chonchúir uaidh. Náirítear é díreach ina dhiaidh sin. Tagraíonn Cead do ghabháil gaisce Laoire agus dá chamalanga ciotach i ndiaidh don bheirt dul i gcomhrac le chéile den chéad uair. Is é an radharc seo a luann Ailís Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh agus í ag plé leis an aoir i seanscéalaíocht na Gaeilge. Maíonn sí go mbaineann íoróin leis an

<sup>16</sup> Elva Johnston, "The Salvation of the Individual and the Salvation of Society in *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind*," *CSANA Yearbook 1* (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2001) 110.

mbua-aidiacht *buadach* i gcás Laoire.<sup>17</sup> Tá íoróin ghéar le haireachtáil in oidhe Laoire freisin. Táthar ag spochadh as an dásacht dána a bhaineann le carachtar Laoire.

Seo é plota oidhe Laoire i mbeagán focal: tá an file Aodh á bhá sa loch i ngiorracht do theach Laoire de bharr go ndearna sé adhaltranas le bean Chonchúir. Nuair a chloiseann Laoire an scéal, tugann sé léim amach as doras a thí agus é ina ruaig reatha chun cúnaimh a thabhairt don adhaltrach. Buaileann sé a chloigeann faoin bhfardoras agus síobtar a inchinn as. Maraíonn sé deichniúr laoch ar fhichid mar sin féin agus éalaíonn an ciontach gan phionós. Tá ciotail den sórt sin ina bhuntréith ag an tuathalán cróga seo; íocann sé as a thalann thobann. Is géar cruinn an bheachtaíocht a dhéantar san oidhe seo ar chalmacht mheargánta ba dhual do na laochra anallód.<sup>18</sup>

In *Aided Fergusa Maic Róich*, is é ceann de bhunsuáilcí ríoga an laoi ghintlí a dhéanann a chreach, eadhon a rachmall fearga. Tagann tocht éada ar Ailill nuair a fheiceann sé Fearghus ag suiríocht le Méabh sa loch. “Is álaind a ndogní an dam [...] 7 an eilit isin loch” (32),<sup>19</sup> a deir Ailill go searbh le Lughaidh, a dheartháir. Tá sé seo ráite ag Ailill d’aon uaim le go ngríosfaí Lughaidh le díoltas a imirt ar Fhearghus ar son a dhearthár. Beireann Lughaidh maol air díreach tar éis dó craiceann a bhualadh le Méabh sa loch agus maraíonn sé é.

Tagann claochlú ar stádas Fhearghusa de réir a chéile. De réir na scéalaíochta, bhí sé ina rí nó ar dhuine de na huaisle ba mhó le rá in Éirinn. Cailleann sé an stádas sin agus chimid é ina dheoraí ansin, é

<sup>17</sup> Ailís Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, *Satirical Narrative in Early Irish Literature*, Tráchtas PhD, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Maigh Nuad 2007, 63-64; leagan leictreonach in *NUIM ePrints and eTheses Archive*, 28 Aibreán 2009, <http://eprints.nuim.ie/1333>, 26 Samhain 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Chuirfeadh an eachtra seo meargántacht Pryderi i dTríú Craobh *Y Mabinogi* i gcuimhne dúinn. Is é an scéal seo an ceann is liteartha sa chnuasach ar fad. Is ann a dhéantar comórtas idir na luachanna laochta a seasann Pryderi ar a son agus iompar ciallmhar dlíthiúil a leasathar Manawydan, an uasail Chríostaí dheabhéasaigh. Féach Andrew Welsh, “Manawydan fab Llŷr: Wales, England and the ‘New Man,’” *Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies*, eag. Cyril J. Byrne agus araile (Halifax: Saint Mary’s University, 1998) 369-82.

<sup>19</sup> “Nach breá an rud é atá an damh agus an eilit a dhéanamh sa loch.” Is mise a chuir Nua-Ghaeilge ar na sleachta a baineadh as na buntéacsanna in *The Death-Tales of Ulster Heroes*.

díbeartha ó theach agus ó threibh tar éis scaradh le teaghlach Chonchúir a sháraigh an choimirce a thug sé do chlann Uisnigh. Ina dhiaidh sin, bíonn sé ar teaghrán ag banríon Chonnacht agus é iompaithe ina sclábhaí gnéis aici. Faoi dheireadh is faoi dheoidh, cuirtear i gcomórtas le beithíoch allta é agus is mar sin a mharaíonn Lughaidh é.<sup>20</sup> Ní féidir a rá go dearfa gur lorg na moráltachta Críostaí atá le tuiscint as an gcreach a dhéantar ar an laoch de bharr collaíochta; is leor cuimhneamh ar an mbuille sa bhéim a bhaintear as an seandia Gréigeach Úranos. Is cinnte, áfach, go bhfaightear caidéis bheachtaíoch don díoltas a chleachtaítear faoi réim an éitis laochta. “Truag sin [...] mo chomalta 7 m’fer cumtha do marbad dam-sa cin cinaid” (34),<sup>21</sup> a deir Lughaidh go doilíosach. Is dócha go gcuireann na focail seo i gcéill nach ndéanfadh sé an rud a d’iarr Aillil air dá mbeadh breith ar a aithreachas aige.

Is feanntach an tuairisc ar chleachtadh díoltais i scéal eile i gcnuasach Meyer, *Aided Cheit maic Mágach*. Déantar cur síos ansiúd ar an léirscios a fhágann an díoltas ina dhiaidh. Mar chuid de, tá an radharc drámata seo a leanas ina bhfuil dóchas go ndéanfar síocháin idir an bheirt deargnamhad ó *Scéla Muicce Meicc Da Thó*, Cead mac Mághach agus Conall Cearnach. Cuirtear Conall ar lorg Chid a bhíonn ag síorchrá na nUladh. Tagann sé aniar aduaidh air lá sneachta. Tá Cead ag réiteach bia in éineacht lena ara i dteach lom i lár fhásaigh. Gan choinne, tugann Conall a chúl leis an gceann sprice a bhí aige.

Gadaid Conall dual a muing na n-eoch 7 dobeir andlochtan a cinn in carpaít 7 tēit as sair co hUltu. “Fē, a Ceit!” ar an t-ara. “Nī fē,” ar Cet, “is maith in t-anocul tuc for na heocha. Conall so,” ar sē, “7 biaid caradrad de 7 bid maith hē.” (36)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> John Koch, “Fergus mac Róich,” *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopaedia*, iml. II, eág. John Koch (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clío, 2006) 740.

<sup>21</sup> “Is trua [...] gur mharaigh mé mo chomhalta agus mo chomrádaí go héagórach.” Is suntasach an úsáid a bhaintear anseo as an bhfrása *cin cinaid* atá le fáil in *Aided Chonchobuir* freisin ag tagairt do chéasadh éagórach Íosa Chríost: “Tānic and side crith mór forsna dūli 7 rochrithnaig nem 7 talam le mēt in gnīma darónad and .i. Ísu Crist mac Dē bí do chrochad cen chinaid.” (8) [Tháinig crith mór ar na dúile ansin agus chrith neamh agus talamh le huafás an ghnímh a rinneadh ann, eadhon Íosa Críost, mac an Dé bheo, a bheith crochta go héagórach.]

<sup>22</sup> “Sciobann Conall dual as moing na gcapall agus cuireann sé dlaíóg i dtosach an charbaid agus imíonn sé soir go Cúige Uladh. ‘Is mairg sin, a Chid!’ arsa an t-ara.

Ligeann Conall achasán a ara thar a chluasa roimhe sin ach ní hé a fhearacht sin ag Cead é. Ní mór do Chead dul sa tóir ar Chonall, dar lena ara féin, más uaidh nach náirithe go brách a bheidh sé. Ó tharla go bhfuil a chlú i ngeall ar a dhéanamh, géilleann Cead. Maraíonn Conall é, dá bhíthin sin, chomh maith le Béalchú agus a chlann mhac a bhí ag iarraidh deireadh a chur le creachadóireacht na beirte. Is mór an t-iomard é diúltú don mhaithiúnas, ní atá ar cheann de bhunphrionsabail an chreidimh Chríostaí.

Ar an gcaoi chéanna ar bhain Carney bunchiall Chríostaí as an scéal *Echtrae Chonnlaí*,<sup>23</sup> dealraíonn sé gur fhág dearcadh an nuachreidimh lorg a chuid tuiscintí morálta ar na hoidheanna seo. Bíonn teagasc Críostaí le baint astu, é impleachtaithe sa phlota, seachas mioninse go dearfa. Léiríonn na samplaí seo thuas go raibh sé d'acmhainn ag an seánra ábhar neamhlaochta, morálta a léiriú. Is follasach freisin nach buaic chaithréimeach laochais (mar a scríobh Mac Cana) ach a mhalairt ar fad a bhíonn i gceist sna scéalta seo.<sup>24</sup> Ó thaobh reacaireachta de, is féidir tréithe coitianta a aimsiú sna hoidheanna a luadh thuas: an fhoirmle thosaigh (an cheist “Cid di atá aided X” agus an freagra “Ní hansa”), cur síos ar an modh agus ar an áit a gcailltear an laoch, léargas morálta agus greann áibhéalach scigaithriseach. Baineann na gnéithe seo le hoidhe Chonchúir freisin, cé is moite den fhoirmle thosaigh. Tá struchtúr an scéil i bhfad níos casta, áfach. Má tá an chéad leath den scéal, sula ngortaítear Conchúr le hurchar Chid mhic Mhágach, an-chosúil leis na hoidheanna eile sa chnuasach, tá an dara leath an-difriúil. Tá teachtaireacht shoiléir Chríostaí ann agus cuirtear fiúntas an laochais in amhras gan dul ar chúl sceiche leis in aon chor.

### **Dhá bhás Chonchúir: an oidhe i bhfeidhm an mhartarlaig?**

Is follasaí go mór a thaibhsíonn cruinneshamhail an chreidimh Chríostaí in *Aided Chonchobuir* ná in aon scéal eile sa chnuasach. Is féidir an oidhe a phlé ina dhá leath. Is éard atá sa chéad chuid di,

‘Ní mairg,’ arsa Cead, ‘Is maith gur lig sé a mbeo leis na capaill. Conall a bhí ann,’ a deir sé, ‘agus beidh cairdeas dá bharr agus beidh go maith.’”

<sup>23</sup> Carney, “The Deeper Level” 160-71.

<sup>24</sup> Mac Cana 29.



bás Chonchúir trí fheallaireacht Chid agus mhná Chonnacht. Athbheoítear Conchúr sa dara leath le go bhféadfadh sé a bheith páirteach i slánú an chine dhaonna. Iompaíonn an rí gintlí ina eiseamláir don tréad nó ina áis teagaisc i láimh na hEaglaise. Tá a mhacasamhail le feiceáil in *Siaburcharpát Con Culainn* ina n-úsáidtear bunábhar na Rúraíochta chun dráma amhrais, slánaithe agus damnaithe a léiriú.<sup>25</sup>

Tá sé ráite go bhfuil bunús traidisiúin bhéil ghintlí leis an scéal dá mhéid an t-athrú a tháinig air de bharr na hidirghabhála Críostaí.<sup>26</sup> Os a choinne sin, taispéanadh thuas gurb é meon beachtaíoch géarchúiseach an aosa liteartha Chríostaí is cionsiocair le seánra na hoidhe mar atá sí caomhnaithe againn. Is í an iomaíocht mheisciúil dhíomhaoín idir na laochra in Eamhain Mhacha ag tús an scéil i leagan A is cionsiocair leis an tubaiste a bhaineann do Chonchúr. Thairis sin, is mór an t-iomard a thuarann an t-agallamh idir beirt óinmhidí Chonchúir agus iad i mbun cluiche anchúinsigh le hinchinn Mheis-geaghra a ghoidtear tar éis dóibh a chloisteáil go gcinnean an comhramh seo de chuid Chonaill Chearnaigh ar éachtaí na laochra eile go léir. Sa lámhscríbhinn Dún Éideann, Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hAlban, Adv.72.1.5, nach bhfuil cuimsithe in eagrán Meyer,<sup>27</sup> tá sé tairngirthe ag na hóinmhidí go dtitfidh rí ar bhíthin inchinn Mheis-geaghra. Cloiseann Cead mac Madach (.i. Cead mac Mághach), deargnamhaid na nUladh, é sin agus goideann sé an comhramh uathu. Gríosaíonn sé cath idir na hUltaigh agus na Connachtaigh agus tugann sé ar mhná Chonnacht Conchúr a mhealladh. Leagann Cead an rí le hurchar tabhail agus é ag cur gothaí galánta air féin os comhair na mban. Is dóigh gur fonóid faoi mhóráil dhíomhaoín na ríthe saolta atá le tuiscint as an gcur síos roscach ar shuíl an rí díreach roimh chithréim thubaisteach Chonchúir.<sup>28</sup> Is furasta an méid sin a chur i gcomparáid

<sup>25</sup> Feargal Ó Béarra, "A Critical Edition of *Siaburcharpát Con Culainn*," Tráchtas PhD, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh 2004, 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Baile Átha Cliath: Institiúid Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1979) 295.

<sup>27</sup> Dealraíonn sé gur cailleadh an chuid seo den téacs in dhá lámhscríbhinn a d'úsáid Kuno Meyer chun leagan A de *Aided Chonchobuir* a chur le chéile. Tá an t-agallamh idir na hóinmhidí le fáil in Imhoff 56.

<sup>28</sup> McCone 121. Is dóigh go bhfuil sé seo ar comhbhrí leis an tráchttaireacht ar mheath na ríthe saolta a chuirtear i gcomórtas le glóir bhuan fhlaithis Dé sa bhrollach

le creach Fhearghusa de bharr a chollaíochta. Cosúil le *Aided Fergusa maic Róich* agus *Aided Cheit maic Mágach*, is í an tagairt d'áit treascartha an laoiach a chuireann deireadh leis an eachtra a d'fhéadfaí a léamh mar oidhe inti féin.

Má fhanann Conchúr ina bheatha i ndiaidh bhuille Chid, ní aiseag sláinte a thabharfaí air. Maireann sé “isin chuntabairt” (8) [i nguais bháis], é ina aiséiteach dá ainneoin ar feadh seacht mbliana go mbásaíonn sé de bharr na coscartha a fhaigheann sé ón scéala faoi chéasadh Chríost. Is léir go raibh féith an ghrinn dhuibh áibhéalaigh sna húdair seo nuair a léimid faoin gcaoi ar tháinig Conchúr ón mbás. Tá lia feartach darb ainm Fínín ag an rí. Dar leis ní féidir an t-urchar a bhaint as ceann Chonchúir gan é a mharú dá thoisc. Cneasaítear cloigeann millte Conchúir ansin, é fuaite le chéile arís le snáth óir atá ar aon dath lena fholt. Fanann urchar Chid sáite ina mhullach, áfach, rud a fhágann go bhfuil dhá inchinn i gcloigeann Chonchúir, a cheann féin agus ceann Mheis-geaghra dár ndearnadh an t-urchar. Tar éis na hobráide a chuirfeadh ficsean eolaíochta i gcuimhne dúinn,<sup>29</sup> tugtar comhairle a leasa go sonrach do Chonchúr. Ní mór dó fanacht socair gan corraí, gan cumann mná, gan craos a chleachtadh.<sup>30</sup>

Ní beag an tábhacht é gurb é an dara leath den scéal ba mhó a forbraíodh sna leaganacha éagsúla den oidhe. Gan amhras, tugann sé sin fianaise ar a dhúthrachtaí a chaith comhthionól manachúil na n-eagarthóirí leis an scéal chun é a athbhreithniú agus múnla a gcruinneshamhla féin a theilgean air. Is dóigh go dtugann an éagsúlacht agus an t-il-leaganachas sa chuid eile den téacs leideanna dúinn faoi chéimeanna a éabhlóide. I dtús báire, is éagsúil

meadarach in *Féilire Óengusso*. Féach go háirithe na rainn 245 agus 249 in Whitley Stokes, eág., *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (Londain: Harrison and Sons, 1904) 27. Féach freisin Pádraig Ó Riain, “The Martyrology of Óengus: The Transmission of the Text,” *Studia Hibernica* 31 (2000): 223.

<sup>29</sup> Tá an chomparáid chéanna idir seanscéalaíocht Ghaeilge agus ficsean eolaíochta déanta in Johnston 113.

<sup>30</sup> De réir an tseandlí caithfeadh an rí a bheith gan ainimh ar bith. D’fhéadfadh ainimh Chonchúir chomh maith lena choscairt sa chath a chiallú nach cuí dó a bheith ina rí a thuilleadh. Féach Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Baile Átha Cliath: Institiúid Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1988) 18-20. Is dóigh go dtuarann iompar agus caint na n-óinmhídí ag tús an scéil gur bocht an t-eagar a bhfuil an riocht ann agus go bhfuil *fir flathemon* Chonchúir, i. dlisteanacht a fhlaith, i nguais.

an tuairisc a thugtar ar an duine a chuireann scéala na Páise chuig Conchúr agus leagtar béim ar rudaí difriúla sna teachtaireachtaí sin. Tá trí chineál teachtaire ann – draoi/the an rí nó Cathbhadh draoi, file nó draoi Laighneach darb ainm Bachrach agus consal Rómhánach darb ainm Altus (atá ina Chríostaí).<sup>31</sup>

I dtosach breathnaímis ar theachtairacht na ndraoithe i leagan A agus C. Tá draoithe ficseanúla a bhaineann leis an tréimhse roimh theacht na Críostaíochta cosúil le fáidheanna sa Sean-Tiomna.<sup>32</sup> Ar nós Amós, Íseáia nó Míocá a dhearbhaíonn go dtuarann crith talún breithiúnas nó díbheirg Dé, míníonn an draoi i leagan A agus Cathbhadh i leagan C an chúis rúndiamhair atá le suaithheadh na ndúl – céasadh Íosa Chríost. Sa dá leagan deir an draoi gur comhalta le Conchúr é Íosa agus gurbh ar an oíche chéanna a saolaíodh iad cé nárbh ionann an bhliain (8, 16). Ní hionann, áfach, na feiniméin mheitéareolaíocha a gcuirtear síos orthu sa dá leagan. Aontaíonn cuntas an draoi i leagan A leis an *Soiscéal de Réir Mhatha* a deir go dtarlaíonn crith talún (i measc rudaí eile) de bharr bhás Íosa.<sup>33</sup> I leagan C tagann smál ar an ngrian agus tá dath na fola ar an ngealach. Tá an íomhá chéanna le fáil in *Ióeil* agus é ag trácht ar an spiorad tairngreachta a dhoirtfidh Dia ar chách agus cuirtear an sliocht sin i mbéal Pheadair in *Gníomhartha na nAspal*.<sup>34</sup> Ní cheanglaítear an mhóitíf seo le bás Íosa sa Bhíobla féin cé go luaitear í chomh maith le crith talún in *Apacailipsis Eoin*.<sup>35</sup> Cé is

<sup>31</sup> Tar éis dianscrúdú a dhéanamh ar na hocht lámhscríbhinn, déanann Helen Imhoff staidéar comparáideach cuimsitheach ar na teachtairí, a gcuid cuntas agus ar an éifeacht atá leo ar Chonchúr. Go bunúsach, aontaíonn sí le Kuno Meyer a bhunaigh leaganacha A, B, C, D ar an sórt teachtaire atá iontu. Deir sí áfach gur rith na cuntais agus na teachtairí éagsúla ina chéile sna téacsanna a mhaireann. D'fhéadfaí na teachtairí a rangú de réir na háite as a dtagann siad, taobh istigh nó taobh amuigh d'Éirinn. Is é cás Bhachraigh is glinne a thaispeánann comhtháthú na dtraidisiún éagsúil. Tugtar file nó draoi air agus cé gur Éireannach é, tá sé eachtrannach i gcríocha Uladh. Chomh maith leis sin, tá na cuntais agus an ról atá ag Bachrach an-chosúil leis na draoithe i gcuid de na lámhscríbhinní agus le hAltus sa chuid eile díobh. Ó thaobh na lámhscríbhinní féin de, is é *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* is mó a dhéanann iarracht ar na traidisiúin éagsúla a chomhtháthú agus a chur i gcomhréir. Féach Imhoff 53-68.

<sup>32</sup> McCone 230-31.

<sup>33</sup> Matha 27:51.

<sup>34</sup> Ióeil 2:31; Gníomhartha na nAspal 2:20.

<sup>35</sup> Apacailipsis Eoin 6:12.

moite de na tagairtí seo, tá ceal gréine agus dath fola ar an ngealach curtha le tuartha an Chéasta sa téacs apacrafúil *Anaphora Pilati*.<sup>36</sup> Is cosúil go léiríonn na híomhánna seo lá deiridh an tseansaol laochta mar chuid de chatastróf uilíoch an Chéasta. Chomh maith leis sin, tagraítear do Chreach na Cásca, nó urscartadh ifrinn, scéal a thagann as *Evangelium Nicodemi*. Dá bhíthin sin, tá Conchúr ar dhuine d'anamacha na bhfíreán atá i mbraighdeanas ifrinn ó thús an domhain agus a fhuasclaíonn Íosa as an mbroid sa ré idir a bhás agus a Aiséirí. Dealraíonn sé gur mór an tsaiocht Chríostaí, bhíobalta agus apacrafúil, atá taobh thiar de théacs/anna na hoidhe.

Má dhíríonn cuntas an draoi dí-ainm agus cuntas Chathbhaidh ar thuartha na haimsire agus ar chomhaltas rúndiamhair Chonchúir agus Íosa, tá lorg diagachta pointeáilte ar an scéala atá ag Altus, an consal Rómhánach,<sup>37</sup> agus ar an tuairisc a thugann Bachrach, draoi agus file Laighean. I leagan B, insíonn Altus don rí gur céasadh Íosa Críost, gurb é a chruthaigh neamh agus talamh agus gur ghlac sé colainn dhaonna chun an cine daonna a shlánú. I leagan C, tá teachtaireacht Altus níos cuimsithí fós agus is ionann í agus cuntas Bhachraigh nach mór. Deir siad gur céasadh rí neimhe agus talún, gur tháinig sé anuas ó neamh chun an cine daonna a fhuascailt ó pheaca Ádaimh. Tráchtar ar an nginiúint gan smál agus ar mhíorúilt an Aiséirithe.<sup>38</sup> Is ionann an éifeacht atá le caint an teachtaire i leaganacha B agus C. Creideann Conchúr i gCríost agus téann sé le craobhacha mar a bheadh sé ag iarraidh troid a chur ar na Giúdaigh. Scinneann inchinn Meis-geaghra, an t-urchar tabhaill a chaith Cead leis, amach as a chloigeann agus faigheann sé bás.

De réir a chéile, cuirtear craiceann ar chnámha scéal Íosa sna cuntais seo. Ós rud é go dtugann na hinsintí difriúla seo léargas dúinn ar an bpróiseas athmhínithe, is féidir iad a chur i gcomparáid

<sup>36</sup> Féach Bart Ehrmann agus Zlatko Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 497.

<sup>37</sup> Cuireann an cúlra polaitiúil a mhíníonn cuairt Altus ar Chonchúr le réalachas an scéil agus cuirtear é i gcomhthéacs idirnáisiúnta na hImpireachta agus i ndlúthbhaint leis na himeachtaí ar a gcuirtear síos sna Soiscéil, go háirithe sa *Soiscéal de Réir Lúcaís*. Féach Imhoff 68-70.

<sup>38</sup> Ní luaitear Aiséirí Íosa i leaganacha A agus B den scéal ar chor ar bith. Is mór a chuireann an tostail seo le héifeacht aigneolaíoch an scéil phróis agus *retoiric* Chonchúir trí chéile sna leaganacha seo agus is measa an frustrachas atá le haireachtáil sa dán, go háirithe sa chéad leath de.

le leaganacha éagsúla den scéal a bhaineann le hathaimsiú *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. D'fhéadfaí iad siúd a chur ar scála ina bhfuil tábhacht na gcarachtar naofa ag dul i méid de réir a chéile, ag tosú leis na traidisiúin atá caomhnaithe in *Do Fhallsigiud Tána Bó Cúailnge* agus ag sroicheadh na buaice in *Betha Coluimb Chille*.<sup>39</sup> Ar an gcaoi chéanna, dealraíonn sé go raibh eagarthóirí Críostaí na hoidhe ag iarraidh dath a chur ar scéal dhara bás Chonchúir agus é a fhairsingiú le go gcuirfí lena thábhacht spioradálta.

Tá forbairt shuntasach eile le fáil i leaganacha B agus C den téacs, eadhon gurbh é Conchúr an chéad ghintlí a slánaíodh toisc gur baisteadh é lena fhuil féin a doirteadh ar son Íosa.<sup>40</sup> Is *lavacrum sanguinis* [baisteadh fola] agus mairtíreacht dhearg (.i. *dergmartrae* na Sean-Ghaeilge)<sup>41</sup> a spreag an chuid seo den scéal – coincheapa bunaithe ar theagasc na hEaglaise moiche agus ar shiombalachas dathanna ar leith a forbraíodh in Éirinn.<sup>42</sup> Is mór an t-éacht intleachtúil atá déanta ag na cumadóirí a cheap scéal an dara báis. Tá Conchúr ina mhairtíreach agus tá dealramh aiséiteachais ar an tréimhse

<sup>39</sup> Jan Erik Rekdal, "Interaction of Pagan and Christian Traditions in Medieval Irish Narratives," *Collegium Medievale* 3 (1990): 13-15.

<sup>40</sup> I leagan A, tá Conchúr ar dhuine de bheirt Éireannach a chreid i nDia roimh theacht an chreidimh Chríostaí (8).

<sup>41</sup> Cuireann *Homaile Cambrai* síos ar thrí chineáil mairtíreachta – *bánmartre*, *glasmartre* agus *dergmartrae*. Is mar seo a mhínítear an mhairtíreacht dhearg: "issi in dercmartre dó foditu chruche ocus diorcne ar Chríst amail tondeconmuccuir dundaib abstolaib oc ingrimmim inna clóen ocuis oc forcetul recto Dée." [Is í an mhairtíreacht dhearg dó fulaingt chroise agus scriosta ar son Chríost mar a tharla do na haspail de thoisc na géarleanúna a rinne daoine claona nuair a bhíodar ag teagasc reacht Dé.] Féach an téacs in Whitley Stokes agus John Strachan, ead., *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903). 247. Ciallaíonn *derg* sa chomhfhocal *dergmartrae* dearg le "fuil" nó "fuilteach." Féach "*derg*," def. b., *eDIL, The Revised Electronic Edition*, [http://edil.qub.ac.uk/dictionary/results-new.php?srch=derg&&dictionary\\_choice=edil\\_2012&&limit=80](http://edil.qub.ac.uk/dictionary/results-new.php?srch=derg&&dictionary_choice=edil_2012&&limit=80), 24 Meitheamh 2014. I leagan B de *Aided Chonchobuir* deirtear: "Ised isber[at] dee iarum is ē cēt-gentlīde docōid hi flait[h] nīema, fobit[h] robad bat[h]ais dō ind fuil donescmacht 7 rocreit ē do Chrīst." (14) [Is é a deir siad faoi ina dhiaidh sin gurb é an chéad ghintlí a chuaigh chun na bhflaitheas óir ba bhaisteadh dó an fhuil a dhoirt sé agus chreid sé i gCríost.] I leagan C léimid: "robo baithis dó in fuil dobīdg as[a] cinn." (16) [Ba bhaisteadh dó an fhuil a scinn as a chloigeann.]

<sup>42</sup> Johan Corthals, "The Retoiric in *Aided Chonchobuir*," *Ériu* 40 (1989): 52-53. Féach freisin Clare Standcliffe, "Red, White and Blue Martyrdom," *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe*, ead. Dorothy Whitelock agus araile (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 21-46.

seacht mbliana a chaitheann sé i mbuanghuais bháis. Baineann an tréimhse chéanna le staideanna tairseachúlá mínádúrtha a luaitear le Naomh Bréanainn agus le Naomh Caoimhín. Deirtear, mar shampla, gur chaith Caoimhín seacht mbliana gan chodladh ag coinneáil a láimhe in airde go dtí gur fágadh ina staic gan mhothú í agus go ndearna lon dubh nead ar chroí a dhearnan.<sup>43</sup>

In éineacht leis na mínitheoirí eaglasta, is léir go gcuireadh na filí meánaoiseacha an-suim in *Aided Chonchobuir*. Tá dhá dhán curtha leis an achoimre phróis de scéal oidhe Chonchúir i leagan D. Ar an gcéad dul síos, tá dhá véarsa de dhán amháin de chuid Fhlainn Mainistrigh (†1056), ceann acu ag dearbhu a bhfuil ráite sa phrós, eadhon go raibh corp sínte Chonchúir seachtó is trí troithe ar fad. Tá Conchúr ábhalmhór ina bhás, cosúil le Fearghus nuair a thógtar ó mhairbh é le go bhféadfaí *Táin Bó Chúailnge* a chur ar phár le haghaidh na nglún a thiocfas. B'fhéidir gur íomhá í seo a léiríonn tábhacht na gcarachtar seo mar ionadaithe na seanaoise nó ioncholluithe na treibhe go léir.<sup>44</sup> Sa dán "A chloch thall" de chuid Chionadha Uí Ardagáin (†975), tá inchinn nimhneach Mheisgeaghra iompaithe ina taise naofa mhíorúilteach ar a dtugtar "adart

<sup>43</sup> I dtaobh an dá mhóití seo "Saint stands for seven years without sleep," "Ascetic cleric lives for seven years on whale's back," féach Tom Peete Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1952) 521. In *Martyrologium Dungallense* le Micheál Ó Cléirigh luaitear dán ina moltar suáilcí agus aiséiteachas na naomh. Tá sé curtha síos do Chuimín Condeire (a mhair i lár an tseachtú haois) agus luann Ó Cléirigh an rann seo a leanas le Bréanainn: "Carais Brenainn bioth chrabhaidh,/ Do reir senaidh is samhaidh,/ Seacht mbliadhna ar muin an mil móir,/ Ba docair an cóir chrabhaidh." Féach Micheál Ó Cléirigh, *Martyrologium Dungallense, seu Calendarium Sanctorum Hiberniae*, eag. agus aist. John O'Donovan (Baile Átha Cliath: Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society, 1864) xix, 128-31. Maidir le Caoimhín, féach Sabine Baring-Gould agus John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, vol. I (Anrhydeddus Gymdeithas y Cymmrodorion: Londain, 1907) 21. Luann Helen Imhoff barúil T.O. Clancy gur tréimhse aithrí atá sna seacht mbliana agus gur tagairt atá ann do chleachtadh aithrí stairúil. Féach Imhoff 92-93.

<sup>44</sup> Is féidir analacha suimiúla a lua i litríocht na Breatnaise, go háirithe in *Branwen Uerch Lyr* agus in *Breudwyrt Rhonabwy*. D'fhéadfaí comparáid a dhéanamh idir Conchúr agus Bendigeidfran. Is fathach é Bendigeidfran. Cé nach ceann Chonchúir féin é an taise mhíorúilteach, is féidir a mhaíomh go bhfuil acmhainn slánaithe na cloiche naofa (i. inchinn Mheisgeaghra) cosúil le cumhacht fheartach cheann Bendigeidfran. Féach Derick S. Thomson, *Branwen Uerch Lyr* (Baile Átha Cliath: Institiúid Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1961) 15-17.

Buti,” adhairt Bhuithe mhic Bhrónaigh, a bhunaigh Mainistir Bhuithe. Deirtear gurb í an inchinn ba chúis le bás Chonchúir a cheil ina cheann í ar feadh seacht mbliana agus tagraítear d’fheillbheart Chid. Maítear ansin gur fhoilsigh Dia an inchinn do Bhuithe a d’úsáid an chloch ar nós adhairte. Ba mhór an t-ómós a tugadh don chloch ina dhiaidh sin (18-21). Mínítear éifeacht mhíorúilteach na cloiche i gceann de na cuntais phróis atá curtha le chéile faoi leagan A ag Kuno Meyer (9-11). Deirtear go bhfuil na flaithis in áirithe ag an té a theagmhaíonn le hinchinn Mheis-geaghra ar uair a bháis.

Chomh maith leis sin, tá dhá dhán eile ar a laghad ceangailte le traidisiún oidhe Chonchúir, ceann de chuid Fhlanaigín mhic Ceallaigh agus ceann eile darb teideal “Fianna bátar i nEmain” a chuirtear i leith Chionadha uí Ardagáin. Thairis seo, sa lámhscríbhinn Dún Éideann, Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hAlban, Adv.72.1.5, a luadh thuas, tá véarsa a dhearbhaíonn gur scéal iomráiteach é oidhe Chonchúir agus d’fhéadfadh gur sliocht de chuntas meadarach ar oidhe an rí é sin, .i. oidhe i véarsaí nach maireann.<sup>45</sup>

Is léir gur mór an tarraingt a bhí ag aos liteartha na hEaglaise agus ag na filí ar oidhe Chonchúir, go háirithe ar an dara leath di mar a chruthaíonn na leaganacha éagsúla. Chuir na filí féin le tábhacht spioradálta Chonchúir agus tá eolas againn ar ainmneacha triúir acu a chuir snáitheanna úra le scéal an rí ghintlí a d’iompaigh ina charachtar naomhsheanchais, d’fhéadfaí a rá. Tá saíocht bhíobalta, apacrafúil agus dhiagach na hEaglaise moiche fite fuaite le traidisiún dhúchasacha in *Aided Chonchobuir*. Chomh maith leis sin, tá scéal dhara bás Chonchúir ina chuid de leagan amháin den bheatha Laidine, *Vita Sancti Albei*, agus seans go gcruthaíonn an méid sin gur ábhar naomhsheanachais a bhí ann fiú i gcomhthéacs litríocht Laidine na hÉireann chomh luath le deireadh an ochtú haois.<sup>46</sup> Is sáreiseamláir é an scéal seo a thugann léargas dúinn ar an idirghníomhaíocht chasta thorthúil idir an seansaol laochta agus an fhreacnairc Chríostaí, agus idir an dá phríomhtheanga litríocht mheánaoiseach na hÉireann.

<sup>45</sup> Féach Imhoff 50-54, 61-62.

<sup>46</sup> Féach Imhoff 68-81. Sa chuid seo dá haiste, déanann Helen Imhoff scrúdú ar theoiric Joseph Szövérfy a áitigh go mbaineann scéal an chonsail Rómhánaigh in *Aided Chonchobuir* le téacsanna apacrafúla a d’fhorbair as *Evangelium Nicodemi*, .i. *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii* agus *Vindicta Salvatoris*.

### **An *retoiric* agus an scéal próis: scáth i scáthán?**

Is *prosimetrum* í *Aided Chonchobuir*. Tá *retoiric* nó dán roscach curtha i mbéal an rí agus é in arraingeacha a bháis. Más scagach mogallach comhdhéanamh scéalta próis na hoidhe, is téacs dlúthfhite tiubh é an dán. Tá nasc struchtúrach ann, áfach, a cheanglaíonn an pros agus an fhilíocht. Ar an gcéad dul síos, ní dóigh go gcumfaí an dán seo nó go gcuirfí leis an oidhe é murach scéal an dara báis.<sup>47</sup> Ina theannta sin, is sárshaothar teangeolaíoch an dán mar gheall ar an mionaire a thugtar ann do réim agus d'úsáid na teanga chun ársaíocht an ábhair, staid an chainteora agus dráma an iompaithe Chríostaí a chur in iúl.<sup>48</sup> Chomh maith leis sin, is fíorfhíneálta múnlu an dáin ó thaobh comhréire de. Cuirtear casadh i roscadh fíochmhar Chonchúir nuair a aithníonn sé gur saothar in aisce an ruathar troda agus an chaise cainte atá ar siúl aige:

8 Ci ddú dún, nad rochem, rád dúr derchoínte,  
din réil -rochuínem nad n[D]é nderagam? (.i. dígal)  
Duírchoirp crochsiti Ríg do rea -roosat.

9 Ron-ort innar menman méd, nad Ríg roachtamar,  
ron-crádi crochad Críst: ma chuto[n?]-occaibmis, at-bélmis.

10 Ba hassu nad bemmis iar n-Artrag écomnart,  
hóasal-Rí ro-c[h]és croich cóirt ar doíne ndíc[h]mairc.

11 Dia ráith no-regainn hi mbás asmu(?) flaith,  
fo-léicib fachel n-éco. – Niba ní.

12 Nemthuir necht remi-téised do chomrath  
mo chride a clóas im Artrach at[h]gubai.

13 Armu éda inscib, inna roacht fír- fortacht Críst,  
fritom-thá: brón báis cu n-adbair airomun.

Air inrud(?) dom dul druib cen Dúileman dígail.

8 What is the use for us, when we cannot approach (or: do not reach)  
(Him), of our bitter talk of despair, wherewith we clearly despair

<sup>47</sup> Measann Imhoff 96, gur téacs neamhspleách é an dán *Ba haprainn* a cuireadh leis an scéal próis. Aontaíonn sí áfach go bhfuil an dán fuinte go maith leis an scéal próis. Féach an díospóireacht maidir leis an mbaint atá idir an *retoiric* agus na téacsanna próis in Imhoff 80-95.

<sup>48</sup> Carney, *Studies* 298.



thereof that (or: despair while) we cannot avenge God? (i.e. vengeance). They are base bodies who crucified the King who has created the spaces.

9 We have been slain in our pride of mind, while we didn't reach the King; the crucifixion of Christ has afflicted us: if we should have risen (= taken up arms?), we would have died.

10 It were easier, had we not lived after the trouble of the High-King, the noble King who suffered the cross (and) the ring (= the crown?) in redemption of the sin of mankind.

11 Because of Him I would have gone into death out of (?) my lordship, I will let down apprehension of death. – It will be worth nothing.

12 In hearing about the lamentation of the High-King my heart should have hastened to precede the pure heavenly Hero.

13 Because of my words, in which I was not able truly to assist Christ, my Lord heals me: deadly sorrow together with great (religious) fear of (its) cause. For it is a trial(?) to me to go to the abode (= to die) without having avenged the Creator.<sup>49</sup>

Is suntasach an t-athrú a thagann ar mheon an chainteora i véarsa 8. Déanann an *brón báis* a ghabhann an rí ansin i véarsa 13 athléamh ar an *tristitia ad mortem* i nGairdín Gheitséamainí agus is dá thoradh sin a tharlaíonn an tiontú iomlán chun creidimh. Shamhlófá an díoltas a bhagraíonn Conchúr ar dtús le sean-nósanna na laochra. Cuirtear an t-éiteas laochta in amhras leis an gceist dhrámata *Ci ddú dún?* agus diúltaítear go huile is go hiomlán dó sna véarsaí a leanann. Is scáileanna dá chéile an prós agus an fhilíocht in *Aided Chonchobuir*, dá bhíthin sin. Léiríonn siad an choimhlint idir an saol págánach caite agus an fhreacnairc Chríostaí i struchtúr dépháirteach an scéil. Má rinneadh plé íorónta leis na luachanna a bhain le beatha Chonchúir agus é ina rí laochta cumasach, téann siad ar neamhní ina iarbheatha chraplaithe.

## Focal scoir

Déanann na hoidheanna tráchtairacht bheachtaíoch ar an seansaol miotaseolaíoch agus cuireann siad léiriú íorónta ar luachanna an

<sup>49</sup> Corthals 51.

éitis laochta. Más indíreach intuigthe a bhíonn an tráchttaireacht chriticiúil den chuid is mó, nochtann *Aided Chonchobuir* céim eile in éabhlóid an tseánra. I gcomórtas leis na téacsanna eile i gcnuasach Meyer, fógraíonn oidhe Chonchúir gan aon chuntar go sáraíonn an Chríostaíocht ar gach ar tháinig roimpi. Tá idé-eolaíocht dhiongbháilte, il-leaganachas luaineach na seanlitríochta agus ardchaighdeán liteartha buailte suas le chéile in *Aided Chonchobuir*. Is glinn an léargas a thugann an oidhe seo dúinn ar an bpósadh measctha idir an traidisiún agus an nuáil atá chomh sean le litríocht na Gaeilge féin.



